

Proposed Scope of Work for Nassau County Countywide Historic Resources Survey

Nassau County is facing tremendous growth pressure and it is a critical time to inventory and plan for historic and cultural resources. The proposed scope of work for the Nassau County Countywide Historic Resources Survey is comprised of three parts: 1) Update existing Florida Master Site File forms for sites already included on the Florida Master Site File, 2) Survey areas for potential additions to the Florida Master Site File, and 3) Suggest comprehensive recommendations for preservation strategies in Nassau County.

Nassau County is one of the oldest counties in Florida, dating to c.1824. Of course, the history in the county precedes that date extensively. Numerous archaeological sites in the county record evidence of prehistoric communities, and Nassau was the site of early European contact, dating to 1562, with the arrival of the French on present day Amelia Island. The County has seen occupation by the French, English, Spanish, and Americans, and Revolutionary War and Civil War action. Nassau County tells the story of industry, agriculture, seafaring, railroads, tourism, and life in early Florida in general.

The first component of the survey project is to update existing Florida Master Site File forms for currently included sites. Nassau County has many listings on the Master Site File, that describe a range of historic and cultural resources. Archaeological sites, homes, commercial buildings, churches, barns, chicken houses, syrup sheds, bridges, railroad beds, and cemeteries are just an example of the diversity of historic resources already included on the Master Site File. However, many of these site file listings are thirty or forty years old. It is not known whether many of these sites are still extant. Because an archaeological survey was done for the County in 2004 and an archaeological predictive model for Amelia Island was done in 2012, archaeological sites will be excluded from this survey. Also excluded from the survey will be any sites within the incorporated limits of the City of Fernandina Beach, which had a Citywide Reconnaissance-level survey done in 2010, and which is currently undergoing an updated survey of the City historic districts. Sites shall have updated Master Site Files completed.

The second portion of the survey project will be to survey areas for potential additions to the Florida Master Site File. Areas of unincorporated Nassau County should be included, in addition to possible sites in the incorporated cities of Callahan and Hilliard. This survey work should take into account current best practices in historic preservation. Sites for possible survey and inclusion are included but not limited to: underrepresented history sites, cultural landscapes, sites related to agriculture and transportation, and mid-century resources and sites related to early and mid-century tourism. In addition, sites particularly vulnerable to flooding and storm surge should also be researched and noted, including those sites already on the Master Site File. New sites shall have Florida Master Site File forms completed.

The last section of the survey should recommend preservation strategies for the County. These strategies will be utilized to inform planning efforts throughout Nassau County. The County does not have a historic preservation program. Individual comprehensive plan policies address historic and cultural resources, but there is not a historic preservation or cultural resource element. The current Land Development Code has a historic and archaeological resource section, but it is incomplete and does not formalize protections for historic and cultural resources. The County is not a Certified Local Government. A baseline survey updating our historic resource information will help in bringing the Plan and Code up to date and inform future steps in preservation planning. Other recommendations could include options for prioritizing historic resources for preservation and incentive options for historic preservation.

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Information from the survey will be shared with local historic societies and museums. Education and outreach programs around the survey information will be conducted to generate interest and support for preservation projects in Nassau County. The County is currently undertaking an initiative around planning for the western portion of the county, and the County Planning and Zoning Board has formed a subcommittee, the Western Nassau Heritage Preservation Committee. Information from this updated survey will be invaluable in those planning efforts in particular, but will also provide a way to engage the community, seek historic information from long-time residents and families, and incorporate place-based decision-making into community discussions in all of Nassau County.

Deliverables for the survey project include a narrative report, Master Site File forms, and maps. Hard copy and digital versions of all data shall be shared with the County, including data in its native format, such as GIS shapefiles.