

# LaVilla Heritage Trail & Gateway Committee

## AGENDA

### Hybrid Virtual In-Person Meeting Friday, August 5, 2022, at 2:00 PM

#### MEMBERS:

Ennis Davis, Chair

Carol Alexander

Shawana Brooks

Ayesha Covington

Mamie Davis

Dr. Tim Gilmore

Allen Marshal/George Greenhill

Mitch Hemann

Rodney Hurst

Rahman Johnson

Marsha Phelts

Suzanne Pickett

Adrian Swanigan

Adonnica Toler

Thomas Waters

Genaro Urso

Lloyd Washington

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**II. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**III. MINUTES – JULY 1, 2022**

**IV. LAVILLA HERITAGE TRAIL – *Chair Davis***

- a. Review Revised Heritage Trail Map
- b. Committee Discussion and Vote

**V. LAVILLA GATEWAYS – *Chair Davis***

- a. Presentation by Chair Davis
- b. Committee Discussion

**VI. LAVILLA LOGO CALL TO ARTIST UPDATE – *Chair Davis***

**VII. OTHER MATTERS TO BE ADDED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR**

**TAB III**

**JULY 1, 2022**

**LAVILLA HERITAGE TRAIL & GATEWAY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**



**LaVilla Heritage Trail & Gateways Committee Hybrid Meeting**  
*Friday, July 1, 2022 – 2:00 p.m.*

**LaVilla Heritage Trail & Gateways Committee Hybrid Meeting**  
**Draft - MEETING MINUTES**

**Committee Members (CMs) in Attendance:** Ennis Davis, Chair; Shawana Brooks; Ayesha Covington; Rahman Johnson (late arrival); Tim Gilmore; Thomas Waters; Lloyd Washington; Mitch Hemann; Adonnica Toler; Mamie Davis; Genaro Urso; Larry Gwyn; and Marsha Phelts

**Committee Members Excused:** Carol Alexander; Suzanne Picket; Rodney Hurst; and Adrian Swanigan

**DIA Staff Present:** Lori Boyer, Chief Executive Officer; Steve Kelley, Director of Downtown Real Estate and Development; Ina Mezini, Marketing and Communications Specialist; Xzavier Chisholm, Administrative Assistant; and Antonio Posey, Project Manager

**Office of General Counsel:**

**Also in attendance:** Nick Howland, Council Member; Ju’Coby Pittman, Clara White Mission; Sondra Fetner, Esq., Urban Vision Consulting

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The LaVilla Heritage Trail & Gateways Committee meeting of July 1st, 2022, was called to order at 2:03 p.m. by Chairman Ennis.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

*The following persons made in-person public comments, made public comments virtually through Zoom, or provided comments that were read into the record by DIA Staff. Note: the subject matter of the comment(s) indicated to the right of each person:*

Yvonne Hicks                      Asked what is guiding the committee and what does the committee hope to accomplish.

CEO Boyer responded that the committee was created to advise staff on the implementation of the DIA-funded Heritage Trail and Gateway Entrances in the LaVilla district. Furthermore, the committee must operate under Sunshine Laws and stay within the scope laid out in the memo provided to committee members.

Dylan Ford                         On behalf of Groundwork Jax, proposed placing a fitness court – conceptualized by the National Fitness Campaign – along the Emerald

Trail or Heritage Trail and featuring prominent artwork by artists such as the late Jean-Michel Basquiat.

CM Waters asked that Mr. Ford submit the information to the committee via email so that they can take it into consideration.

Gloria McNair                      On behalf of Groundwork Jax, provided further details regarding the organization's efforts to incorporate art and culture that resonates with the community in these types of projects.

CM Waters asked what the rationale was behind choosing the boundaries for the DIA's LaVilla district as it relates to the original LaVilla community which was bifurcated by I-95. Chairman Ennis responded that the map illustrating the original boundaries as well as the current LaVilla district is for informational purposes. CEO Boyer added that the DIA boundaries are a Northbank Community Redevelopment Area tax increment district that were created in the 1980s and all DIA resources must stay within the boundaries of the tax increment district. Members are free to engage in initiatives that enhance the areas of LaVilla that fall outside of the DIA boundary, but those initiatives will not receive DIA funding or resources.

**III. JUNE 3, 2022 LAVILLA HISTORIC ENHANCEMENT AND CULTURAL DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Having called for corrections or other edits by his fellow committee members and after receiving none, Chairman Ennis asked for a motion and second on the item.

**Motion:**            CM Waters moved to approve the minutes as presented

**Seconded:**        CM Hemann seconded the motion

**Vote: Aye: 12                      Nay: 0                      Abstain: 0**

**THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY 12-0-0.**

**IV. SUNSHINE LAW COMMITTEE AND RULES – DIA STAFF**

Chairman Ennis stated that this agenda item was already addressed.

**V. LAVILLA LOGO OPTIONS AND POLL – DIA STAFF**

Chairman Ennis read the poll results regarding the logo options.

- Option A – 1 vote
- Option B – 0 votes
- Option C – 0 votes
- Option D – 1 vote
- Option E – 1 vote
- Option F (start the process over) – 2 votes

Chairman Ennis stated that the fonts cause him concern, adding that they have a Latino flavor.

CM Waters proposed involving the community, such as local schools, artists, and community organizations, to the logo development process.

Responding to a question from CM Waters regarding the origin of the fonts, CEO Boyer stated that they were custom created by graphic artists from two different firms who were attempting to interpret LaVilla's history and musical heritage.

**Motion:** CM Waters moved that the committee select Option F and incorporate a community effort or call to artists in the development of new fonts and designs

**Seconded:** CM Washington seconded the motion

**Vote: Aye: 12                      Nay: 0                      Abstain: 0**

**THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY 12-0-0.**

**VI. HERITAGE TRAIL INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION – DIA STAFF & CHAIR DAVIS**

Chairman Davis gave a presentation on the Heritage Trail as it relates to the efforts of similar communities who have attempted to preserve their culture and history.

CM Waters asked what the appropriate method would be for committee members to send information regarding historical sites to be included in the heritage trail. CEO Boyer responded that committee members should submit any information to DIA staff.

Responding to a member of the public, Chairman Ennis and CEO Boyer described how the historic markers will incorporate an educational or informational component to the area. CM Johnson added that there is a significant collection of historical information that has already been collected and now lives in the Jacksonville Public Library system, and the committee's charge will be decide to how it is presented.

CM Urso proposed that each gateway have a different theme that corresponds to an aspect of LaVilla's history and culture (e.g., medical, music and arts, business).

CEO Boyer asked that committee members submit to staff any historic sites they would like to see added. Additionally, DIA staff will retrieve the historical information from the public library and provide an array of physical examples for the committee to narrow down what the markers will look like.

Councilman Nick Howland spoke in support of the committee's efforts and expressed his excitement to see the implementation of the various projects as well as the revitalization of the LaVilla community as a whole.

CM Waters suggested seeking outside funding, specifically from the State, to help further the revitalization and historic preservation efforts. Chairman Ennis responded that any committee member or entity can do that at any time without DIA staff.

Responding to a question from CM Brooks, CEO Boyer confirmed that most of the markers or various elements will be in the public right-of-way but there may also be opportunities within city-owned parcels.

Responding to a member of the public, Chairman Ennis stated that preservation of buildings is outside the scope of the committee, but there are committee members who are working outside of the committee to preserve historical sites and buildings.

**VII. OTHER MATTERS TO BE ADDED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR**

None.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Ennis stated that the next meeting will be on Friday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, and that the location is to be determined.

Seeing no further matters for discussion, Chairman Ennis provided closing remarks and adjourned the meeting at 3:28 p.m.

*The written minutes for this meeting are only an overview of what was discussed. For verbatim comments of this meeting, a recording is available upon request. Please contact Xzavier Chisholm at [xchisholm@coj.net](mailto:xchisholm@coj.net) to acquire a recording of the meeting.*

**TAB IV.**  
**LAVILLA HERITAGE TRAIL**





## **LaVilla Heritage Trail Proposed Sites**

*Unless otherwise identified as a Civil Rights Task Force description, all other site summaries were provided by committee members.*

1. **Ritz Theatre** *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*
2. **Start of the Great Fire of 1901:** After the Great Fire of 1901, the Duval County School Board hires Richard Lewis Brown, the city's first Black architect, as its chief builder and repairman, and in the next decade, he constructs several new schools for which no architect is recorded. One such school was Public School No. 8, later named J. Allen Axson, near East 17th and Franklin Streets. Brown is likely the school's architect. He later works with white architects on Centennial Hall at Edward Waters College and designs Mt. Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church on Franklin Street. *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*
3. **Birthplace of Johnson Brothers:** Noted educator, lawyer, journalist, writer, and civil rights leader, James Weldon Johnson, is born in LaVilla. His brother John Rosamond Johnson, songwriter and composer, is born in 1873. *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*
4. **Boylan Industrial Training School for Girls:** Sponsored by the Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, Harriet Emerson founds Boylan Industrial Training School for Girls in LaVilla. After relocating in 1910 to a new facility in the Oakland section of East Jacksonville, the Boylan Industrial Home and School merges with the Haven Home School in Savannah, Georgia to become Boylan-Haven School in 1932. In 1959, the school moves to Camden, South Carolina after merging with the Mather. (1886) *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*
5. **Brewster Hospital:** Brewster Hospital opens its doors to Black patients and incorporates Black nursing training for the nearby Boylan Industrial Training School for Girls. (1901) *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*
6. **Faith United Church of the Living God** *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*
7. **Genovars Hall/Lenape Bar/Wynn Hotel:** "a venue frequented by music legends like Louis Armstrong, Ray Charles, and James Brown." See <https://www.jacksonville.com/story/lifestyle/magazine/2018/06/17/here-is-plan-to-revive-lavilla/11952459007/>. *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*
8. **Clara White Mission/Globe Theatre:** The Clara White Mission, founded by humanitarian and civil rights pioneer Eartha White, has an extensive history related to her trailblazing work. See <http://theclarawhitemission.org/explore/about/history/>. Additionally, since 1932 it has been located on the site of the former Ashley's Globe Theater, "where Ma Rainey, the 'mother of blues,' received three or four encores every night for her performances in 1911." See <https://www.jacksonville.com/story/lifestyle/magazine/2018/06/17/here-is-plan-to-revive-lavilla/11952459007/>. *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*

9. **Central Hotel:** “Jacksonville Urban League originated in 1935 as the Jacksonville Negro Welfare League in one of the Central Hotel’s storefronts.”

The Jacksonville Urban League forms from a merger between the Jacksonville Negro Welfare League and a new Jacksonville branch of the National Urban League. (1947) *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*

10. **Lawton Pratt Funeral Home:** Lawton Pratt forms what’s now the oldest funeral home in Florida, initially the Lawton Pratt, then Hillman-Pratt, and now Hillman-Pratt and Walton Funeral Home on West Beaver Street in LaVilla. (1900) *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*

11. **Broad and Ashley:** LaVilla was known as a “Mecca for African American culture and heritage” and the “Harlem of the South.” *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*

12. **Old Stanton School:** Stanton Normal School, named for Edward McMasters Stanton, second Secretary of War under Lincoln, opens its doors. It’s the first public school for Black children in Florida (1869). *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*

In response to Duval County School Board’s plan to eliminate Stanton School and replace it with smaller schools in different locations, the Stanton Board of Trustees files an injunction and the parties settle out-of-court. In September, the school board agrees to construct a new Stanton High School on the site of the earlier three school buildings. The second Stanton School was destroyed in the Great Fire and the inferior construction of its replacement reflected the low priority for Black education during Jim Crow. The Board’s injunction is considered an early civil rights case victory. The new building opens its doors in 1917. (1915) *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*

Old Stanton High School, where James Weldon Johnson and his brother John Rosamond Johnson graduated from and taught, and where their famous composition, the African-American national anthem “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing”, was first performed.

13. **Richmond Hotel:** Constructed in 1909, the Richmond was considered Jacksonville’s finest hotel for black citizens prior to desegregation. Its guests over the years included Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday.” *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*

Porcher Taylor established Florida’s 1st Black newspaper. 1935 \* The Jacksonville Negro Welfare League, among whose leaders are Eartha White and Richard P. Daniel, first occupies space in the Richmond Hotel building at 420 Broad Street. Its goal is to “provide advice and help in meeting the needs of African-Americans educationally, economically, socially, and politically. *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*

14. **Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge (Masonic Temple):** The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge completes the five-story brick Masonic Temple building, which headquarters many Black business owners and professionals, including Anderson, Tucker & Co. Bank, Pedro Mendez Tailoring Shop and the law offices of Daniel W. Perkins. (1916) *(Civil Rights Taskforce)*

A five-story Prairie-Style structure that was the location of Jacksonville's first black-owned bank in 1916.

Charles H. Anderson founds Anderson and Company banking institution for Black people. (*Civil Rights Taskforce*)

15. **Jacksonville Belt Railroad (1274 W State Street):** Now the S-Line Urban Greenway, railroad constructed in 1886 and abandoned in the 1980s was a major LaVilla industrial development and employment catalyst.
16. **USNR Warehouses (1220 W State Street):** Massive industrial complex and neighborhood employer that dates back to 1914.
17. **Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company (601 Myrtle Avenue):** A rare industrial example of a H.J. Klutho building.
18. **A.L. Lewis Elementary School site (600 Eaverson Street)**
19. **Florida C. Dwight Memorial Playground (LaVilla Park) (1199 W Church Street):** Established in 1904 as LaVilla Park. Became Black Jacksonville's second public park in 1929. Park is a local historic landmark.
20. **Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church (1118 Beaver Street)**
21. **Anointed Church of God (1198 Church Street W):** Historic Black church built by James Edwards Hutchins.
22. **Brick Church Cemetery (400 Myrtle Avenue):** 19th century cemetery and civil war Battle of Brick Church in 1862.
23. **Duval Market & Association (Foot of West Adams Street or 1316 Adams):** Public market with 40 vendors. Closed after the 1938 opening of the Jacksonville Farmers Market.
24. **Railway Express Agency (100 Myrtle Avenue):** Third major railroad depot in LaVilla. Largest REA (like UPS today) packaging facility in the country. Demolished in the 1970s. Site of JTA maintenance yard today.
25. **Second Missionary Baptist Church (954 Kings Road)**
26. **LaVilla Grammar Public School (block bounded by Church, Johnson, Duval and I-95)**
27. **Patrick Chappelle' Residence (1054 West Church Street):** Pat Chappelle was born in Jacksonville in 1869. A musician and businessman, Chappelle formed a number of important business

ventures that had a significant impact on music and Black culture. In 1902, he launched The Rabbit's Foot Company, a troupe of Black performers that travelled the country in private rail cars performing vaudeville, comedy and musical numbers. Celebrated blues singer Ma Rainey got her start with A Rabbit's Foot and went on to become the Mother of the Blues. The Chappelle family home became the unofficial offices and off-season storage for the group and it is also where Pat Chappelle died in 1911. It's now a parking lot, but very near the Emerald Trail where a marker could be placed.

28. **Davis Street** (intersection of Adams and Davis Streets): Anchored by Hotel Flagler and the Ritz Theater, Davis Street was a major neighborhood business district.
29. **The Line (intersection of Lee and Houston Streets)**: Red Light District on Houston Street between Lee and Broad Streets. Associated with women's, ragtime and blues history.
30. **Jacksonville Terminal**
31. **Railroad Row (early Greek immigrant community) (intersection of Lee and Bay Streets)**: Early Greek immigrant district along West Bay Street between convention center and Broad Street.
32. **Atlantic & East Coast Terminal Company Freight Depot (801 W Bay Street)**: one of three major railroad depots in LaVilla. Demolished in the 1970s.
33. **West Adams Street (early Chinese immigrant community)** (intersection of Adams and Madison Streets): [Jacksonville's early 20th century Chinese community \(thejaxsonmag.com\)](http://thejaxsonmag.com)
34. **Blodget Homes Public Housing Complex** site
35. **Whetstonian (Stardust Club)**: While the use Walter Whetstone made of it may be too recent for historic status itself, it's a historic structure and adding it may be a way of inching toward preserving Walter's artistic legacy. In the past, I've met with several people, including Wayne Wood, Caitlín Doherty of MOCA, Hope McMath and others about the possibility of funding its salvation and am sad that it hasn't happened. Here are two stories I wrote about the Whetstonian at JaxPsychoGeo:  
[LaVilla: Whetstonian | \(jaxpsychogeo.com\)](http://jaxpsychogeo.com)  
[LaVilla: Whetstonian's Last Days? / The Mural of Walter Whetstone's Life | \(jaxpsychogeo.com\)](http://jaxpsychogeo.com)
36. **Jenkins Quality Barbecue**
37. **Odd Fellows Lodge (330 West State Street)**: Odd Fellows was a fraternal organization similar to the Masonic Temple on Broad Street. This Odd Fellows building was where A. Philip Randolph did his high school valedictorian speech. It also played host to Booker T. Washington when he visited Jacksonville in 1912. It's also a Zora Neale Hurston and Negro Greenbook location.

38. **St. Philip's Episcopal Church:** St. Philip's Episcopal Church has been located on the northeast corner of Union and Pearl since 1882 at 321 West Union Street. The present structure is the second structure. A larger church was being constructed at the time of the Great Fire, May 3, 1901.
39. **Site of Strand Theater (701 Ashley Street):** Theme could highlight demolished Ashley Street venues like the Strand, Pythias Hall, Frolic, Roosevelt on LaVilla School of Arts site.
40. **James "Charlie Edd" Craddock /Charlie Edd Hotel (NE corner of Ashley and Jefferson):** Influential Black businessman who played a significant role in LaVilla being the southern headquarters of the Chitlin Circuit.
41. **Colored Man's Railroad (Intersection of Broad and Beaver):** Initially Black owned streetcar system. Tracks ran in the middle of Broad Street, so it could be a sign on its own or combined with something else anywhere along the Broad Street corridor.
42. **Hotel de Dream:** historically important to note where Stephen Crane wrote one of the most famous short stories in American literature, "The Open Boat" at the Hotel de Dream, a brothel owned by his common-law wife, Cora Crane.
43. **Haynes Luncheonette**
44. **Manuel's Tap Room (626 W Ashley Street):** Manuel's was described in the January 1942 issue of The Crisis, the magazine of the NAACP, as "the finest of its kind in the South."
45. **Colored Airdome/Hollywood Music Store (613 W Ashley):** The location of the first published account of blues singing on a public stage on April 16, 1910. Site now a part of the Clara White Mission campus.
46. **Ray Charles (752 W Church Street or intersection of Church and Jefferson Streets):** Ray Charles residence in 1945.
47. **Young Men's Hebrew Association (Maceo Elks Lodge):** Built in 1914 as the Young Men's Hebrew Association, it may be the only reminder of LaVilla's forgotten era as an Orthodox Jewish community between 1880 and the 1920s.
48. **Pedro Mendez House**
49. **316-318 & 320-322 Jefferson St. Residences (early Jewish immigrant community)**
50. **324 N. Broad (built by Edward D. Mixson – Gullah developer):** early black architect, contractor, and developer. Site is at a building Mixson built and operated his office out of.

51. **Excelsior Hall (first Black-owned theater) (NE corner of Broad and Houston Street):** One of Pat Chappelle's earlier business ventures was opening what is believed to be the first Black-owned theater in Jacksonville. Excelsior Hall was a saloon and pool hall that also happened to be a theater that sat several hundred people. It only lasted a few years and, after a scuffle with his landlord (who happened to be Mayor JET Bowden), he abandoned the property and moved on. The building is no longer there and it's now a parking garage near the courthouse.

Also located within "The Line", a four block long red light district on Houston Street, running from Lee to Broad Street.

52. **El Modelo Cigar Factory (early Cuban immigrant community)**

### Additional Comments

- **Ashley Street** - I don't know how the current Broad and Ashley marker will be interpreted, but I feel that Ashley Street is deserving of its own designation as a major cultural hub and entertainment district. There are so many well-known artists who have walked and played this street, it might make sense to list a few heavy hitters and encapsulate the overall history of this strip in the narrative of one particular marker. **(Mitch Hemann)**
- **Charlie "Hoss" Singleton** - Singleton grew up in Jacksonville, graduated from Stanton, and became a world-renowned songwriter. In his lifetime, he wrote over 1,000 songs, including Strangers in The Night and Spanish Eyes. His son Warner Singleton once told me they used to call him the King of Ashley Street.

Regarding the Singleton marker, I'd have to ponder what would be most appropriate. My gut says Ashley Street, because he spent so much time there in his formative years. I know his granddaughter and I can ask her. Lloyd Washington might also have some thoughts. There's a wonderful photo of Singleton standing on the corner of Broad and Ashley with Stanton in the background. I always think of that spot as his. **(Mitch Hemann)**

- **Blind Blake:** While I don't have a specific location in mind, I'd love to see designation pertaining to Blind Blake. I know where he lived in Brooklyn, but am not sure if he ever stayed in LaVilla. Sharon Weightman Hoffman, however, has researched Blind Blake extensively and would know. **(Tim Gilmore)**
- I'd also like to offer my other stories about LaVilla from JaxPsychoGeo for information, if they can be useful, though the locations might already be on the map. **(Tim Gilmore)**
  - [LaVilla: Black Masonic Temple | \(jaxpsychogeo.com\)](http://jaxpsychogeo.com)
  - <https://jaxpsychogeo.com/the-center-of-the-city/lavilla-clara-white-mission-the-moral-and-ethical-heart-of-jacksonville/>
  - <http://jaxpsychogeo.com/the-center-of-the-city/lavilla-earthas-whites-bedroom-clara-white-mission/>

- <http://jaxpsychogeo.com/the-center-of-the-city/lavilla-the-oldest-funeral-home-in-florida-hillman-pratt-walton/>
- <https://jaxpsychogeo.com/the-center-of-the-city/lavilla-lawton-pratt-funeral-home/>
- <https://jaxpsychogeo.com/the-center-of-the-city/lavilla-old-brewster-hospital/>
- <https://jaxpsychogeo.com/the-center-of-the-city/lavilla-pedro-and-padrica-mendez-house/>
- <http://jaxpsychogeo.com/the-center-of-the-city/lavilla-richmond-hotel/>
- <https://jaxpsychogeo.com/the-center-of-the-city/lavilla-terminal-hotel/>

DRAFT

**TAB V.**

**LAVILLA GATEWAYS**

**PRESENTATION TO BE PROVIDED BY CHAIR DAVIS**