

City of Jacksonville, Florida

Donna Deegan, Mayor

City Hall at St. James
117 W. Duval St.
Jacksonville, FL 32202
(904) 630-CITY
www.coj.net

December 13, 2023

Peggy Sidman, Director, Council Secretary
The Honorable Michael Boylan, NCSPHS Chair
The Honorable Ju'Coby Pittman, TEU Chair
And Members of the City Council
117 West Duval Street
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

RE: Historic Preservation Commission Advisory Report / Ordinance No. 2023-793 / Proposed Naming of City-Owned Building at 6360 Commerce Street

Dear Director Sidman, Honorable Council Member and NCSPHS Chair Boylan, Honorable Council Member and TEU Chair Pittman, and Honorable Members of the City Council:

Pursuant to Sections 122.105(b) and (c), Ordinance Code, the Historic Preservation Section forwards the attached Report and the Historic Preservation Commission's Advisory Recommendation regarding Ordinance 2023-611, the proposed renaming of the city-owned building at 6360 Commerce Street to the "Rita F. Reagan Building."

JHPC Recommendation:	5-0 APPROVE
Jack C. Demetree, Chair	Aye
Andres Lopera, Vice-Chair	Aye
Ethan Gregory, Secretary	Aye
Julia Epstein	Aye
Maxmillian Globber	Absent
Michael Montoya	Aye
Olivia Frick	Absent

Based on the best evidence available, the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission recommends approval of the proposed naming of the city-owned building at 6360 Commerce Street to the "Rita F. Reagan Building."

Historic Preservation Commission Report

December 13, 2023

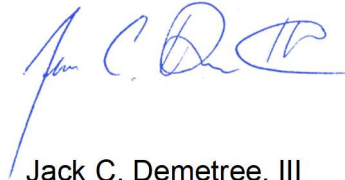
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If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Arimus T. Wells
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Planning and Development Department
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Jack C. Demetree, III
Chairman
Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission

ATW
Enclosures

**Report of the Historic Preservation Section and
Advisory Recommendation of the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission**

TO: Council Secretary, Jacksonville City Council

THROUGH: Chairperson and Members
Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Arimus Wells, City Planner Supervisor – Planning and Development

RE: **Proposed Naming of 6360 Commerce St – Ordinance No. 2023-793**

DATE: December 13, 2023

On November 14, 2023, Ordinance 2023-793 was introduced to propose naming the City-owned building located at 6360 Commerce Street as the “Rita F. Reagan Building.” Consistent with Chapter 122.105 of the Jacksonville Ordinance Code the naming and renaming of public buildings, public facilities and public parks, requires a Report from the Historic Preservation Section and an advisory recommendation on the renaming proposal from the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission. The Report is required to address the following criteria:

1. The origin of the existing public building, public facility, or public park name, if applicable;
2. Any historical significance of the existing public building, public facility or public park;
3. Whether there are any historical structures or landmarks on the subject property
4. Whether the existing building name, name of public facility, or public park name is part of a common theme of names throughout the community where such building, park or facility is located;
5. The age of the public building, public facility or public park name
6. Whether there are other public buildings, public facilities, or public parks with the same or similar name; and
7. Whether the person (or persons) to whom the public building, public facility or public park is proposed to be named or renamed has contributed to the development of, or is a reminder of the history and/or culture of the City, State, or Nation.

Location: 6360 Commerce Street, RE# 141476-0010

Reason for Change: At the request of City Council to honor the life and legacy of historic preservationist, Rita F. Reagan, by naming the City-owned building located at 6360 Commerce Street as the “Rita F. Reagan Building.”

Criteria:

1. The origin of the existing public building, public facility, or public park name, if applicable:

The subject property is associated with the Eagle Film City (Norman Film Studios) complex. This complex was originally composed of five (5) wood frame buildings and an outdoor pool that occupy all of Block 47, Arlington Heights. Reflecting their original uses as a film studio, all of the buildings are simple frame vernacular style. The buildings functioned as film developing and processing facilities, indoor sound stage and bungalows for production crews and cast members. Eagle Film City (Norman Studios) was known for producing more than 30 motion picture films in Jacksonville between 1908 and 1916. As such, the City became known as the “Winter Film Capital of the World.” In 1922, Richard E. Norman purchased the bankrupt Eagle City complex and continued production into the 1930s.

The subject property being considered for the naming request is identified as Building Five (5), as depicted on the attached site plan. Originally used as a set building, the building was used as a dance studio between the 1950s and 1970s. The structure was most recently used for Circle of Faith Ministries Church.

2. Any historical significance of the existing public building, public facility or public park:

According to archival records, the existing building was constructed circa 1916. This two-story wood frame building is characterized by its simple frame vernacular style with clapboard siding, composition hipped roof, and wooden sash windows.

3. Whether there are any historical structures or landmarks on the subject property:

The subject property consists of a declared landmark building, per Local Landmark Application, LM-93-11.

4. Whether the existing building name, name of public facility, or public park name is part of a common theme of names throughout the community where such building, park or facility is located:

The existing building is not part of a common theme of names throughout the community.

5. The age of the public building, public facility or public park name:

The existing building does not have a formally designated name. Originally constructed in 1916, the subject property was converted to a motion picture studio during Florida’s filmmaking heyday in the 1910s, originally as Eagle Film City and later

purchased by Richard Norman in 1922 and operated as Norman Studios until 1928. Mr. Norman produced a groundbreaking series of films starring African-American characters in positive roles (aviators, cowboys, etc.) aimed at the Black audience. The City purchased the property in the 1990s and leases the building as a church.

6. Whether there are other public buildings, public facilities, or public parks with the same or similar name:

There are no other public buildings, public facilities, or public parks with the same or similar name.

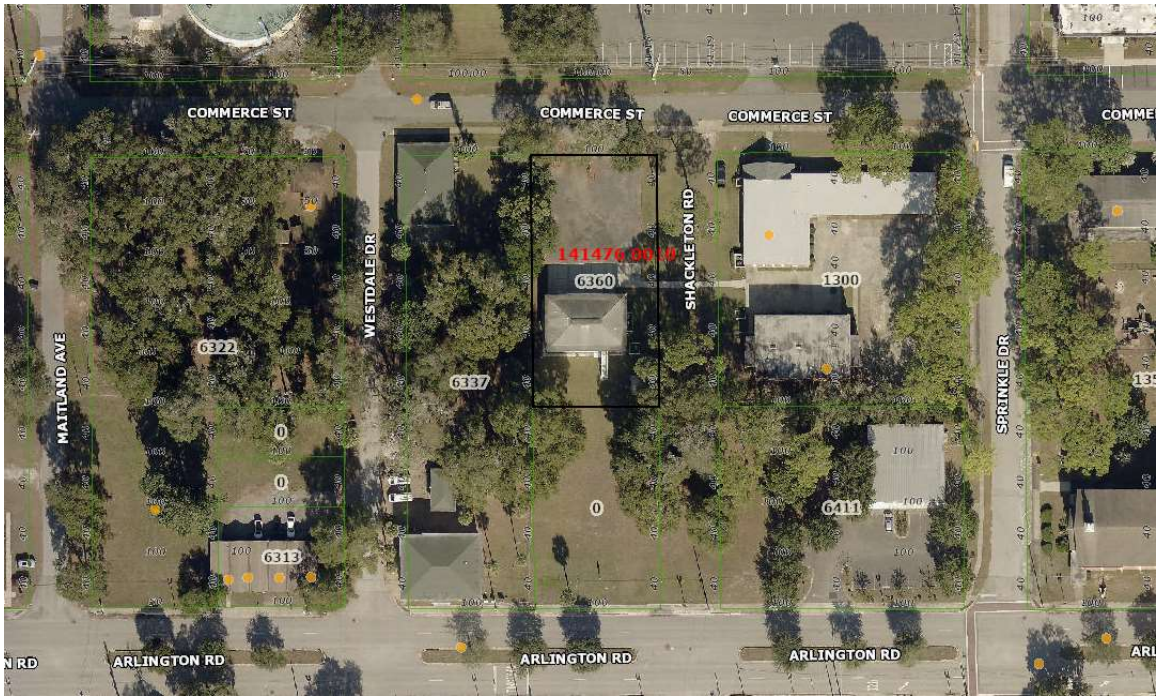
7. Whether the person (or persons) to whom the public building, public facility or public park is proposed to be named or renamed has contributed to the development of, or is a reminder of the history and/or culture of the City, State, or Nation:

Historic preservationist, community activist, and urban pioneer, Rita F. Reagan, was born in Cynthiana, Kentucky on July 24, 1940. Ms. Reagan earned her bachelor's degree in education from Eastern Kentucky University and her master's degree from the University of North Florida. She moved to Jacksonville in 1967 with her husband, Harry Reagan.

For nearly two decades, Mrs. Reagan was deeply involved in the preservation of Norman Studios. In fact, one of her many accomplishments includes successfully convincing the City to purchase the silent film complex in 2002. In addition to serving as President and Pro Bono Executive Director of the Norman Studios Silent Film Museum, the only surviving race film studio in America, Mrs. Reagan was instrumental in helping establish Springfield Preservation and Restoration's (SPAR's) historic museum, Springfield Heritage Center. She was also known in the Springfield community for her efforts in saving the Klutho Apartments building in Springfield, which reopened in 2004.

PDD Recommendation:

It is the opinion of the Planning and Development Department (PDD) that the proposed naming of the City-owned building located at 6360 Commerce Street as the "Rita F. Reagan Building" will be named after a person that has made significant contributions to the preservation of the Norman Studios complex as outlined in Ordinance 2023-793.



Aerial View of Subject Property



View of the Building's Main Entrance