



Planning and Development Department

Ed Ball Building
214 North Hogan Street, Suite 300
Jacksonville, FL 32202

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members
Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Arimus Wells, City Planner Supervisor
Community Planning Division – Historic Preservation Section

RE: West Church Street to Ray Charles Place - Road Renaming

DATE: September 27, 2023

Consistent with Chapter 745 of the Jacksonville Ordinance Code on addressing and street naming regulations, requests to rename streets require a review and recommendation from the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission. In making a report and recommendation, the Commission shall address the following criteria:

1. The origin of the street name
2. Any historical significance of the existing street name
3. Whether there are any historical structures or landmarks on the subject street
4. Whether the existing name is part of a common theme of street names throughout the community where such street is located
5. The age of the street name
6. Whether the street name is a duplicate street name

Current Street Name: West Church Street

Proposed Street Name: Ray Charles Place

Reason for Change:

The request for the name change is to pay homage to famous musician and former LaVilla resident, Ray Charles Robinson. The change would only rename a portion of West Church Street.

Analysis:

While the origin of Church Street could not be confirmed by Staff, it is widely speculated that it was named after the abundance of churches within the city. Nonetheless, this portion of Church Street appears to have been part of the LaVilla Plat. The street can be verifiably dated to at least 1897, based on the attached Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

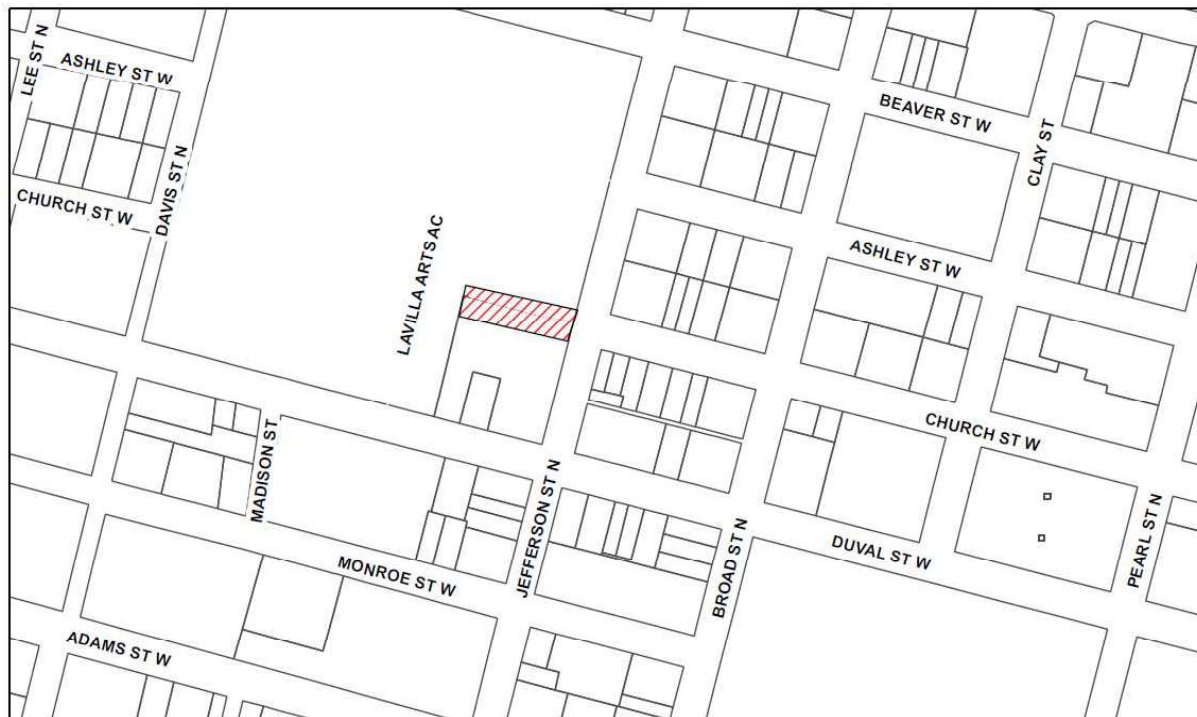
The request for the name change only applies to the portion of West Church Street, between LaVilla School of the Arts and North Jefferson Street, as depicted in the location map below. The remaining portions of West Church Street will not be renamed.

No historic structures or landmarks currently exist along this portion of the subject street, and the existing road name is not part of a common theme of street names in the area, nor is it a duplicate street name.

Recommendation:

Based on the best evidence available, the Planning and Development Department has no objection to the proposed street name change from West Church Street to Ray Charles Place as depicted in the location map.

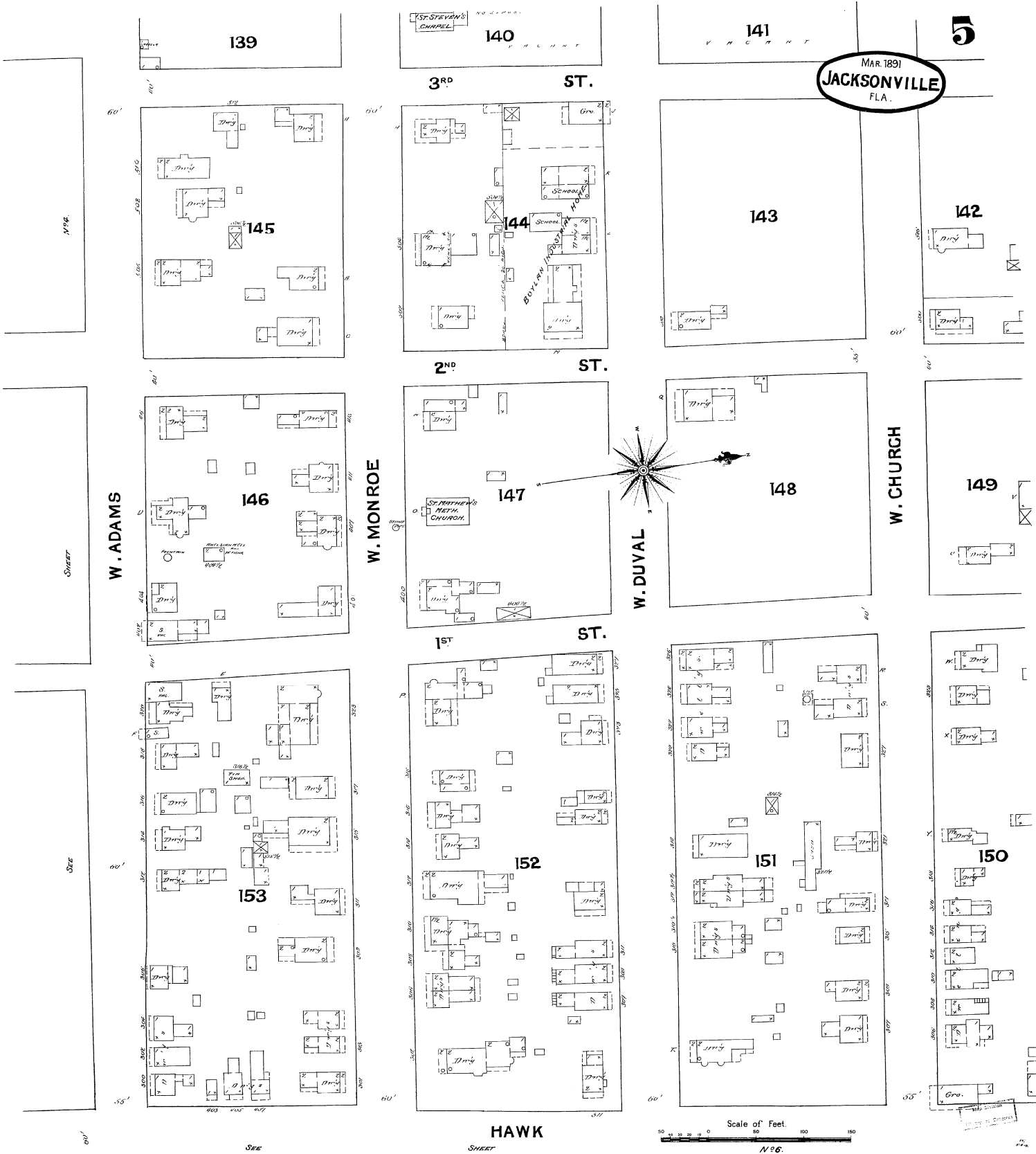
Location Map



Proposed Street Name Change for Ray Charles Place

 Location of Street Renaming Designation



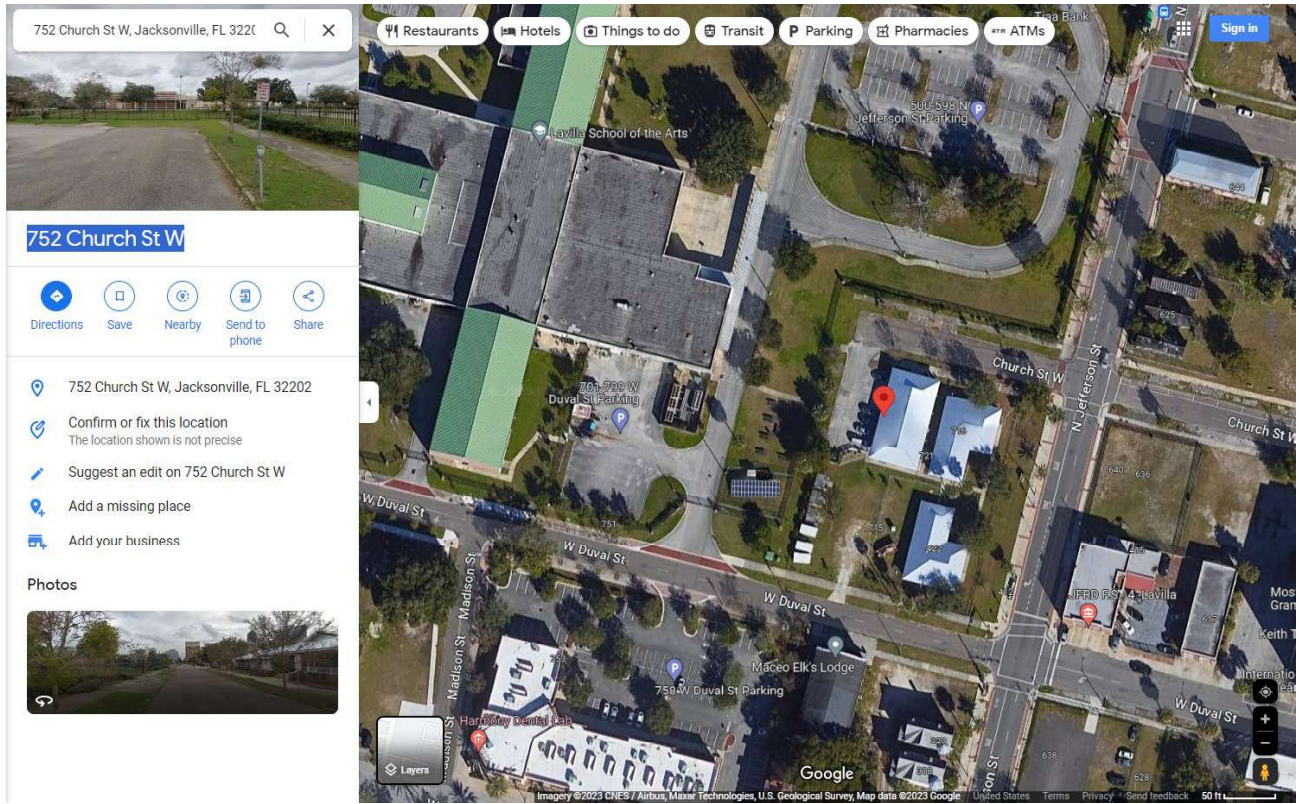


Ray Charles lived in Jacksonville 1945 & 1946 at 752 West Church St., 32202. Below is a screenshot from an autobiography book titled BROTHER RAY: RAY CHARLES OWN STORY

The screenshot shows a digital book interface. On the left, there is a sidebar with a 'BUY EBOOK - \$11.99' button, a 'Get this book in print' link, a book cover for 'BROTHER RAY' with 0 reviews, and a search bar containing 'church street'. The main content area features the chapter title 'Scuffling in Jacksonville' in a large, bold font, followed by several horizontal lines. The text of the chapter begins with 'There were lots of sounds around Jacksonville in 1945 and 1946, and I heard 'em all. It was the first big city I ever lived in. I was pretty close to the center of things, staying with Fred and Lena Mae Thompson at 752 West Church Street, right near downtown.' The text continues to describe the author's early life in Jacksonville, mentioning his family, the Thompsons, and his experiences in the city.

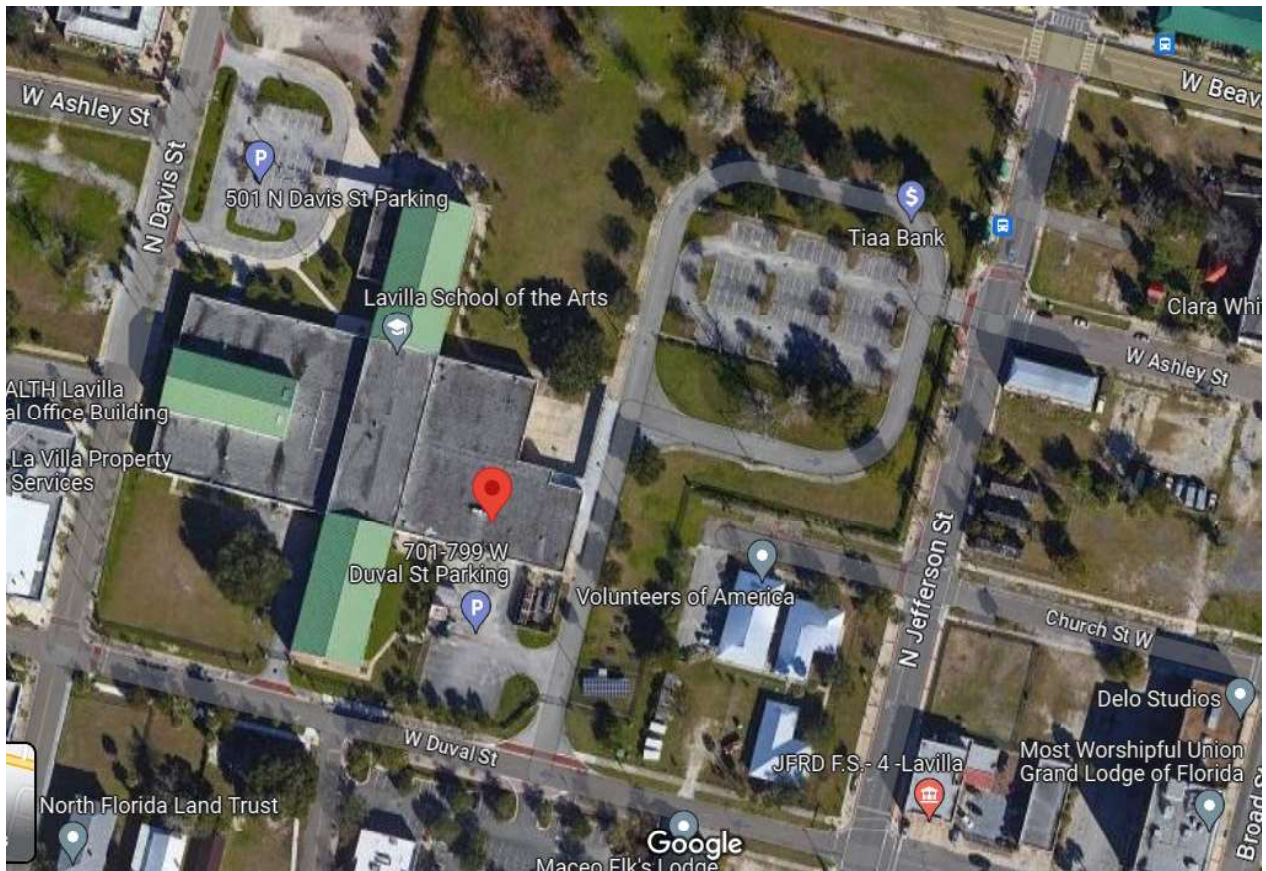
752 West Church St.

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/752+Church+St+W,+Jacksonville,+FL+32202/@30.33171,-81.6664499,187m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x88e5b73e3ac616f1:0xfa82d52bcd8c1fb8!8m2!3d30.3317589!4d-81.666008?entry=ttu>



Below is Google map & link of Lavilla School of the Arts, 701 – 799 W. Duval St.

https://www.google.com/maps/place/501+N+Davis+St,+Jacksonville,+FL+32202/@30.3319953,-81.667813,353m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m14!1m7!3m6!1s0x88e5b73fc0b275ad:0x862d008267378fcb!2sLavilla+School+of+the+Arts!8m2!3d30.3324837!4d-81.6670748!16s%2Fm%2F076br4!3m5!1s0x88e5b73fc5bfd71:0xf32733c46ed3239!8m2!3d30.3320252!4d-81.6667703!16s%2Fg%2F11bw42_gnw?entry=ttu



Scuffling in Jacksonville

There were lots of sounds around Jacksonville in 1945 and 1946, and I heard 'em all. It was the first big city I ever lived in. I was pretty close to the center of things, staying with Fred and Lena Mae Thompson at 752 West Church Street, right near downtown.

Lena Mae's sister, Louise—we called her Big Sister—was Mary Jane's close friend, and that was how I was introduced to the family. They were kind, considerate people who took me into their home like I was one of their own.

Something inside me wanted to call Fred "Mr. Thompson" and Lena Mae "Miss Lena Mae." I was still used to saying "yes, ma'am" and "yes, sir." But they wouldn't hear of it. They knew I was a country boy who minded his manners, but they also wanted me to start thinking of myself as a little man.

Whatever the Thompsons had, they shared with me. I even slept in my own small room off the kitchen. It was an upstairs apartment, nice and comfortable, and there were two radios in the house—Lena Mae had one and Big Sister had another.

They also made sure I had something to eat, and they even would have bought me clothes if I had let them. I

78

tried my best to stay independent. Whenever I made some money, I stopped by the grocery store, got some goodies, and left them on the kitchen table. That was the only way they accepted anything from me.

They were the type folk who wouldn't take payment of any kind. Thinking back, I can see how they helped to make my change of life—from the country to the city, from school to the real world—easier than it might have been.

They treated me like a son, and I had to come home at a certain hour each night—either that or tell them where I was. They were firm with me, making sure I didn't go hog wild with my new freedom.

In spite of some rebelliousness in me, I still had respect for my elders. You learned that in the country. It was something Mama had drummed into my brain. Besides, as a kid I found that most older people were good to me. Maybe that's 'cause I played piano and sang for them, or maybe 'cause I was blind and they thought, Good God, the child can do all that and he can't even see! Don't know, but to this day I have a good feeling about older people—people like the Thompsons—and I try to treat 'em right.

Funny, but there were also times in my life when I felt like older folk were being too good to me.

For example, just before I left Greenville for Jacksonville, a group of white people wanted to buy me a Seeing Eye dog. I said no without blinking an eye. It was nice of them, I appreciated the kind thought, but there was no way I was gonna have some animal lead me around.

As I've said, that was one of the three big NOs—no dog, no cane, no guitar. I'd rather stumble a little and maybe bang my knee once or twice—just the way sighted people do—than be dependent on a four-legged canine. Besides, it wasn't something I needed. Contrary to what most folk would say, it wasn't essential.

I was lucky in Jacksonville 'cause we lived close to the musicians' union. Fred took me there once or twice and, in my usual manner, I memorized the route. I paid attention to little things like drainage pipes, sewers, or cracks in

79

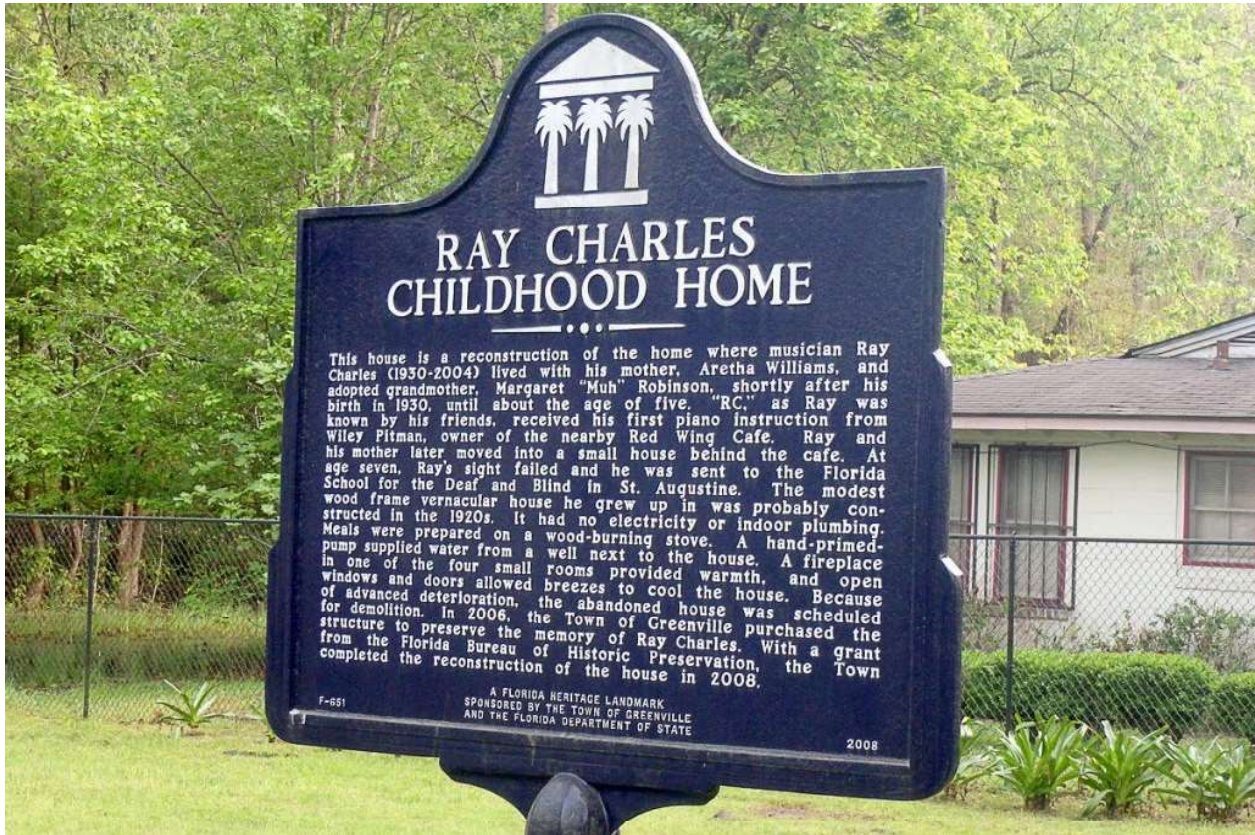
A statue of Ray at a keyboard, life-size, has been installed in a small concrete circle, at the end of which is a plaque explaining that Ray grew up in Greenville, FL from about 2 months old until he was sent to St. Augustine around age 7 to a school for deaf and blind kids.

Monument in Greenville, Florida

<https://www.t1dwanderer.com/travelogues/charles-road-trip-in-florida-and-georgia-plus-a-speeding-ticket/>







This house is a reconstruction of the home where musician Ray Charles (1930-2004) lived with his mother, Aretha Williams, and adopted grandmother, Margaret "Muh" Robinson, shortly after his birth in 1930, until about the age of five. "RC," as Ray was known by his friends, received his first piano instruction from Wiley Pittman, owner of the nearby Red Wing Cafe. Ray and his mother later moved into a small house behind the cafe. At age seven, Ray's sight failed and he was sent to the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine. The modest wood frame vernacular house he grew up in was probably constructed in the 1920s. It had no electricity or indoor plumbing. Meals were prepared on a wood-burning stove. A hand-primed-pump supplied water from a well next to the house. A fireplace in one of the four small rooms provided warmth, and open windows and doors allowed breezes to cool the house. Because of advanced deterioration, the abandoned house was scheduled for demolition. In 2006, the Town of Greenville purchased the structure to preserve the memory of Ray Charles. With a grant from the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation, the Town completed the reconstruction of the house in 2008.

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CITY OF JACKSONVILLE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
COMMISSION

Proceedings held on Wednesday, September 27,
2023, commencing at 3:05 p.m., at Jacksonville City
Hall, Lynwood Roberts Room, 117 West Duval Street,
Jacksonville, Florida, before Diane M. Tropa, FPR, a
Notary Public in and for the State of Florida at Large.

PRESENT:

JACK C. DEMETREE, III, Chairman.
ANDRES LOPERA, Vice Chair.
JULIA EPSTEIN, Secretary.
OLIVIA FRICK, Commission Member.
MAX GLOBER, Commission Member.
ETHAN GREGORY, Commission Member.

ALSO PRESENT:

ARIMUS WELLS, Planning and Development Dept.
ADRIENNE CHAMBERS, Planning and Development.
JERMAINE ANDERSON, Planning and Development.
BRITTANY FIGUEROA, Planning and Development.
CARLA LOPERA, Office of General Counsel.

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1 COMMISSIONER GLOBER: Max Globber,
2 commissioner.
3 COMMISSIONER FRICK: Olivia Frick,
4 commissioner.
5 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. We're going to
6 take a break every two hours as needed.
7 If you have your cell phones on, please
8 silence them. Any conversations, please be had
9 in the hallway.
10 And we will jump right in. I'll take a
11 motion to approve the August 23rd minutes.
12 COMMISSIONER LOPERA: Motion to approve
13 the August 23rd, 2023, minutes.
14 COMMISSIONER EPSTEIN: Second.
15 THE CHAIRMAN: All those in favor?
16 COMMISSION MEMBERS: Aye.
17 THE CHAIRMAN: Those opposed?
18 COMMISSION MEMBERS: (No response.)
19 THE CHAIRMAN: Hearing none, you've
20 approved those minutes.
21 We'll jump right into Section D, deferred
22 items. There's a misprint on this agenda.
23 Number 4, COA-23-29734, has not been deferred.
24 It's actually living in Section G.
25 So with that, we've got three deferred
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1 PROCEEDINGS
September 27, 2023 3:05 p.m.

- - -

3 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. We're going to
4 go ahead and kick off the September 27th
5 meeting of the Jacksonville Historic
6 Preservation Commission.

7 If we could start with some introductions
8 down there.

9 MS. CHAMBERS: Adrienne Chambers, Historic
10 Preservation.

11 MR. ANDERSON: Jermaine Anderson, Historic
12 Preservation.

13 MS. FIGUEROA: Brittany Figueora, Historic
14 Preservation.

15 MR. WELLS: Arimus Wells, Historic
16 Preservation.

17 MS. LOPERA: Carla Lopera, Office of
18 General Counsel.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: J.C. Demetree, chairman.

20 COMMISSIONER LOPERA: Andres Lopera,
21 chairman -- commissioner.

22 COMMISSIONER GREGORY: Ethan Gregory,
23 commissioner.

24 COMMISSIONER EPSTEIN: Julia Epstein,
25 commissioner.

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1 items on the agenda: COA-23-27451, 2768
2 Riverside Avenue; COA-23-29186, 2799 Selma
3 Street; and COA-23-28972, 2990 Remington
4 Street.

5 And with that, we will jump into the
6 consent. Let's see. Number 4 on the consent,
7 COA-23-29552, 247 East 4th Street, is coming
8 off of consent.

9 So with that, the consent today is
10 COA-23-29220, 1481 West 6th Street;
11 COA-23-29635, 1526 Avondale Avenue;
12 COA-23-29321, 51 East 3rd Street; COA-23-29561,
13 2111 Ernest Street; and COA-23-29617, 2843 Oak
14 Street.

15 Do any commissioners have any ex parte on
16 anything on consent?

17 COMMISSION MEMBERS: (No response.)

18 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. With that,
19 we'll open the public hearing. Is anyone here
20 to speak on anything on consent?

21 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: (No response.)

22 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Seeing none,
23 we'll close the public hearing, and I'll
24 entertain a motion.

25 COMMISSIONER LOPERA: Motion to approve
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1 the revised consent agenda.
 2 COMMISSIONER EPSTEIN: Second.
 3 THE CHAIRMAN: Any conversation?
 4 COMMISSION MEMBERS: (No response.)
 5 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. All those in
 6 favor?
 7 COMMISSION MEMBERS: Aye.
 8 THE CHAIRMAN: Those opposed?
 9 COMMISSION MEMBERS: (No response.)
 10 THE CHAIRMAN: Hearing none, the consent
 11 agenda has been approved.
 12 We're going to jump around a little bit
 13 today. We're going straight to New Business,
 14 Section L, a couple of renamings that we want
 15 to knock out real quick. Let's see. Do we
 16 want to do the road renamings first?
 17 MR. WELLS: Number 2 and 3.
 18 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So we're going to go
 19 to Number 2, Section L, it's a building rename.
 20 We're going to hear that first.
 21 MR. WELLS: Okay. So in accordance with
 22 Chapter 745 of the Ordinance -- in accordance
 23 with Chapter 745 of the Ordinance Code on
 24 addressing and street naming regulations,
 25 requests to rename streets require a review and
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1 recommendation from the Commission.
 2 So in making the recommendation, the
 3 Commission shall address the following
 4 criteria. So there's six different criteria
 5 that you have to address. And so based on our
 6 findings and whatnot -- this is a request to
 7 rename the current street, which is West Church
 8 Street, to Ray Charles Place. So just renaming
 9 a portion of West Church Street. This is to
 10 pay homage to famous musician and former
 11 LaVilla resident Ray Charles Robinson. And,
 12 again, this would only rename a portion of West
 13 Church Street.
 14 So while we could not confirm the origin
 15 of Church Street, it is widely speculated that
 16 it was named after the abundance of churches
 17 within the city, successfully within the
 18 downtown area. This portion of Church Street
 19 appears to have been part of the LaVilla plat.
 20 The street can be verifiably dated to at least
 21 1897, based on the attached Sanborn fire
 22 insurance maps.
 23 No historic structures or landmarks
 24 currently exist along the portion of the
 25 street, and the existing road name is not part
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7

1 of a common theme of street names in the area.
 2 And based on the best available -- I'm sorry,
 3 best evidence available, the Department
 4 recommends approval of the street name change
 5 from West Church Street to Ray Charles Place.
 6 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. So we're going
 7 to go ahead and do -- this is now Number 1
 8 under New Business. We're going to go ahead
 9 and knock that out before we go to Number 2.
 10 You just heard Church Street to Ray Charles
 11 Place.
 12 Is the applicant here?
 13 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: (No response.)
 14 THE CHAIRMAN: Not looking like it.
 15 Do we need the applicant here?
 16 MS. LOPERA: No, you don't.
 17 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is anybody -- I'll
 18 go ahead and open the public hearing.
 19 Is anyone here to speak on this road
 20 renaming?
 21 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: (No response.)
 22 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. With that,
 23 we'll close the public hearing, and I'll
 24 entertain a motion.
 25 COMMISSIONER LOPERA: Motion to approve
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1 road renaming of Church Street to Ray Charles
 2 Place.
 3 COMMISSIONER GREGORY: Second.
 4 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Comments,
 5 concerns?
 6 COMMISSIONER LOPERA: So when driving down
 7 what's going to be now Ray Charles Place, will
 8 Google maps, instead, play a rendition of "Hit
 9 the Road Jack" while we're driving down this
 10 road?
 11 THE CHAIRMAN: We can only hope.
 12 COMMISSIONER LOPERA: Do we know? I guess
 13 I'll wait to find out. Lots of changes.
 14 That's all.
 15 THE CHAIRMAN: Any other comments,
 16 concerns?
 17 COMMISSION MEMBERS: (No response.)
 18 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. All those in
 19 favor?
 20 COMMISSION MEMBERS: Aye.
 21 THE CHAIRMAN: Those opposed?
 22 COMMISSION MEMBERS: (No response.)
 23 THE CHAIRMAN: Hearing none, you have
 24 approved the road renaming.
 25 Let's go ahead and go to Weaver Street
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 (904) 821-0300



*Planning and Development
Department*

Ed Ball Building
214 North Hogan Street, Suite 300
Jacksonville, FL 32202

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members
911 Emergency Addressing Advisory Committee

FROM: Arimus Wells, City Planner Supervisor
Community Planning Division – Historic Preservation Section

RE: West Church Street to Ray Charles Place - Road Renaming

DATE: September 27, 2023

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Current Street Name: West Church Street

Proposed Street Name: Ray Charles Place

Reason for Change:

The request for the name change is to pay homage to famous musician and former LaVilla resident, Ray Charles Robinson. The change would only rename a portion of West Church Street.

Analysis:

While the origin of Church Street could not be confirmed by Staff, it is widely speculated that it was named after the abundance of churches within the city. Nonetheless, this portion of Church Street appears to have been part of the LaVilla Plat. The street can be verifiably dated to at least 1897, based on the attached Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

The request for the name change only applies to the portion of West Church Street, between LaVilla School of the Arts and North Jefferson Street, as depicted in the location map below. The remaining portions of West Church Street will not be renamed.

No historic structures or landmarks currently exist along this portion of the subject street, and the existing road name is not part of a common theme of street names in the area, nor is it a duplicate street name.

Recommendation:

At the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission (JHPC) on September 27, 2023, the Planning and Development Department had no objections to the proposed street name change from West Church Street to Ray Charles Place, based on the best evidence available. **JHPC voted 6-0 to approve the name change.**

Location Map



Proposed Street Name Change for Ray Charles Place

 Location of Street Renaming Designation

