



Historic Preservation Board Regular Meeting Minutes

September 10, 2025 at 9:00 AM

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue

Present

John Skolfield, Kelsey Wolfe, Lee Rambeau, Kim Burst Wood, Margie Bridges, Rhett Delaney

Absent

None

Staff Present

Director of Planning and Zoning Allison McGillis, Planner I Corinna Lundgren,
Administrative Coordinator Mary Bush

1. Call to Order

Chairman Skolfield called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

- a. Approve the minutes of the August 13, 2025 regular meeting.

No one from the public wished to speak. The public hearing was closed.

Motion made by Rhett Delaney, seconded by Kelsey Wolfe, to approve the August 13, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

The motion carried unanimously by a 6-0 vote. (Fay Pappas resigned from the Board.)

3. Public Comments (for items not on the agenda): Three minutes allowed for each speaker

No one from the public wished to speak. The public hearing was closed.

4. Public Hearings (Public participation and comment on these matters must be in person.)

- a. COR 25-07. Request by El Cortez, Ltd. to demolish the buildings located at 210 E Morse Boulevard, zoned R-4, which are listed as 'contributing' structures in the Interlachen Avenue National Register District.

Mrs. McGillis provided a summary of the request. She noted that there are three

existing apartment buildings located on the site. She reviewed some historical and current images of the buildings and discussed the history of the apartments. She noted that they were built in the 1922-1923 timeframe and have remained in different ownerships as different popular residences for professionals and seasonal visitors. She added that a lot of Rollins College faculty and local civic leaders lived there over the years. She explained that staff believed that, due to its location and who lived there, is why it was included in the State's designation of the historic district, versus the materials and the architectural style of the way it was built. She then went over the different criteria that are required to be met for demolitions like this in a historic district. She indicated that the buildings were being demolished to be redeveloped into townhomes in the front of the lot on Morse Boulevard and a synagogue in the rear. She also indicated that, based on the size and scale of what the applicant was proposing to be built there, it will require a citywide notice for the request to go to the Planning and Zoning Board and the City Commission for final approval. She then noted that staff was recommending as a condition of approval that the applicant include on the property a historical marker sign to commemorate the history of the apartments that will be demolished. She added that another condition staff was recommending is that, prior to demolition, there must be an approved building permit for redevelopment on the property, which means that the Planning and Zoning Board and the City Commission must approve the plans for it.

Staff recommendation was for approval with the following conditions:

- That the applicant shall install a historic marker on-site to commemorate the historical significance of the property, which shall be completed prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for any new construction on the site.
- That prior to demolition, the applicant must obtain an approved building permit from the City of Winter Park for the property.

Brief discussion ensued with the Board regarding how many people currently live in the existing apartments, whether relocation assistance would be provided to the tenants, the average price of rent, the number of proposed townhomes, and the square footage of the proposed townhomes and synagogue.

The applicant's attorney, Rebecca Wilson of 215 North Eola Drive, Orlando, FL 32801 addressed the Board. Attorney Wilson noted that, after extensive research, she could not find any documentation that evaluated the El Cortez Apartments as a contributing structure based on criteria like vernacular, craftsmanship, or the architect's identity, unlike other structures in the district. She also indicated that the building's Florida vernacular style is not only "replicable" but that the city recently adopted new architectural standards for Morse Boulevard that prohibit the Florida vernacular style from being rebuilt there. She also indicated that the owner had agreed that they will only demolish the existing structure if they receive a building permit from the city.

Attorney Wilson also noted that the owner had already begun letting current tenants know that once their current leases expire, they will switch to a month-to-month tenancy.

Discussion ensued regarding the El Cortez Apartments' designation as a contributing structure in the State's National Register of Historic Districts, particularly questioning the basis for this status. A point was made to check for original cypress siding underneath the non-original aluminum siding, suggesting it might be worthwhile to salvage. A key point of the discussion was whether the historic district's local zoning overlay supersedes general zoning and the criteria for the contributing designation. Also, the policy issue was raised of whether the Board, in approving demolition, would be eliminating "the only affordable housing on Park Avenue" and reducing 34 units by a large percentage, questioning if this social factor was within their scope of decision-making.

The Board heard public comment from the following residents:

Did not confirm favor or opposition to the request:

Lauren Zimmerman at 125 E. Webster Avenue, Winter Park, FL 32789; Patricia Masciantoni at 311 E. Morse Boulevard, Winter Park, FL 32789; and Paige Vietor at 325 Vitoria Avenue, Winter Park, FL 32789.

In favor:

Rabbi Dovid Dubov at 1790 Alabama Drive, Winter Park, FL 32789; Dr. Barry Render at 2630 Via Tuscany, Winter Park, FL 32789; Jeffrey Berger at 1616 Spruce Avenue, Winter Park, FL 32789.

Opposed:

Anthony Rota at 140 E. Morse Boulevard, Winter Park, FL 32789; and Ian Murph at 210 E. Morse Boulevard, Winter Park, FL 32789.

No one else from the public wished to speak. The public hearing was closed.

In depth discussion ensued between the Board, staff, Attorney Wilson and the applicant. Attorney Wilson and the applicant maintained that the apartments lack architectural significance, citing a lack of documentation for their historic designation, and that the applicant's plan was motivated by the community value of building the city's only synagogue. Several Board members strongly opposed demolition, citing the apartments' historic contribution to the community's social fabric (as affordable housing) and their Florida vernacular style. Attorney Wilson noted the financial difficulty of restoring the aging wood-frame buildings to modern code, which would eliminate their affordability. Ultimately, the Board voted to table the demolition request to the next meeting (October 8th) to allow the applicant to return with compromise proposals

for the townhome architecture, aiming for a Florida vernacular design that would be acceptable to the Board.

Motion was made by John Skolfield, seconded by Kelsey Wolfe, to table the item to the October 8, 2025 regular meeting, to provide the applicant with the ability to present various architectural options for the project that reflect the Florida vernacular and possibly relate to the existing design.

The motion carried unanimously by a 6-0 vote. (Fay Pappas resigned from the Board.)

- b. COR 25-09. Request by Ron Scarpa to rehabilitate and partially demolish portions of the existing residence, construct a secondary structure in the rear, inclusive of side and rear setback variances, at 786 Antonette Avenue, zoned R-1AA, within the College Quarter Historic District.

Mrs. McGillis provided a summary of the request. She noted that the proposal had evolved since its preliminary design review with the Board. She indicated the applicant's plan was now to reduce the existing 1,300 sq. ft. front home to just over 700 sq. ft., retaining the front porch and the front walls, which would be repurposed as the accessory structure. The main residence would be a new, two-story structure in the rear of the deep 50x150 foot lot. The new structure would be set back approximately 80 feet from the front property line and is proposed at a reduced height of 25 feet (10 feet less than the maximum 35 feet) to minimize its mass and visibility from the street, ensuring it preserves the front view. The new rear addition would mimic the architectural style of the front home by carrying the same three arches at the front porch. The applicant's new plan also included repurposing some windows from the existing structure into the new rear home. Mrs. McGillis indicated that the proposal requires several setback variances: a significant variance for a rear-attached garage at 5 feet instead of the typical 25 feet, a second-story rear setback of 26.8 feet instead of 35 feet, and slight reductions for the side setbacks. She also indicated that staff recommended approval of the request because the design preserves the front elevation of the historic home and is compatible with the existing street view. She added that the applicant had the ability to explore demolition, indicating that the rehabilitation plan would be a positive outcome of the Board's engagement.

Discussion ensued with the Board regarding the request for a significant setback variance for the rear attached garage, concerns about the precedent of having a larger structure in the back and a smaller accessory structure in the front, and the ability of the project, if approved, to encourage other property owners to designate their homes as historic.

Staff recommendation was for approval.

No one from the public wished to speak. The public hearing was closed.

Motion made by Margie Bridges, seconded by Rhett Delaney, to approve the request to rehabilitate and partially demolish portions of the existing residence, construct a secondary structure in the rear, inclusive of side and rear setback variances, at 786 Antonette Avenue, zoned R-1AA, within the College Quarter Historic District.

The motion carried unanimously by a 5-0 vote. (Lee Rambeau was not present for the motion. Fay Pappas resigned from the Board.)

5. Action Items

6. Non-Action Items

- a. Preliminary review item of exterior alterations to 772 Maryland Avenue.

Mrs. McGillis and the Board conducted a very preliminary review of a proposal for exterior changes to the home at 772 Maryland Avenue in the College Corridor. The main proposed change is to expand the existing front porch by extending the roofline and increasing its size to create a more functional, open front porch, with the addition of a pergola connecting to the detached rear structure. Mrs. McGillis noted that the applicant confirmed he intends to keep the distinctive corner window banks. She expressed that it would be a positive alternative, noting the house had previously been scheduled for demolition. The Board was generally supportive of the concept, believing that a larger front porch would significantly improve the look from the street and enhance community interaction, aligning with historic district values. It was specifically suggested that the applicant keep the corner windows as drawn in the preliminary sketch and that the porch depth is limited to 7 feet into the front setback without requiring a variance.

Mrs. McGillis indicated that she would report back to the applicant that the Board was in favor of the proposal.

7. Staff Updates

8. Board Comments

Brief discussion ensued regarding the demolition request for the El Cortez Apartments, focusing on potential compromise options to present to the applicant. A suggestion was made to explore the feasibility of restoring and retaining one of the three existing apartment buildings—specifically the one farthest from the proposed synagogue on Morse Boulevard—and then building the synagogue and the rest of the townhomes around it. Concerns were immediately raised about the lack of physical space to retain

one building while accommodating the necessary width, setbacks, and underground parking access required for the large synagogue structure. Despite the challenges, the consensus was to formally suggest that the applicant explore and include a design option that restores one of the existing buildings when they return for the next meeting. This was viewed as a way for the Board to maintain influence over the final outcome, rather than denying the request outright and having the decision appealed directly to the City Commission with no design oversight.

9. Upcoming Agenda Items

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:19 p.m.

Minutes approved by the Board on October 8, 2025.

ATTEST:

/s/ Mary Bush, Recording Secretary