

SECTION I. PURPOSE OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why have design guidelines?

The city of Delray Beach has a rich and colorful history that takes physical form in its historic architecture. These historic properties define the period of the city's growth, and are expressions of another age. They give character and a sense of permanence to the city that, in turn, helps to stabilize property values, promote interest in local history and foster civic pride.

The historic preservation program in Delray Beach began in 1987 with the enactment of an ordinance by the City Commission. The ordinance establishes formal procedures and standards that are used to judge the merit of historic properties and identifies measures that will protect those properties. One of these protective measures is to review significant changes, such as alterations or additions, to historic properties, in order to preserve their character while responding to the needs of the present.

The Delray Beach Design Guidelines were produced to assist owners with recommended approaches to additions, alterations and design for new construction for both historic districts and individual sites. Because they are *guidelines*, there is always an allowance for interpretation; and because they involve a design process, there may be more than one successful solution. Design guidelines also are used by city staff, the Historic Preservation Board and city officials in their decision making process when considering the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The goal of the historic preservation program in Delray Beach is to develop a vibrant and unique historical setting that co-exists with and compliments evolving new development. An important step in achieving this goal is to identify the unique character of the city's architecture so that future changes to important historic properties are consistent with accepted preservation principles.

Who may use these guidelines?

Design guidelines are intended as a useful tool for design professionals, homeowners, government officials and other interested parties. Because the guidelines address the character of historic property types in general, anyone who rehabilitates an older building can find relevant information in this guide. **While the guidelines are especially directed to owners of properties that are listed in the Delray Beach Register of Historic Places, who are required to undergo a review process when changes to a historic building are made, they are equally useful to anyone who is involved in the rehabilitation of a vintage property.**

How are the design guidelines administered?

The City of Delray Beach's Historic Preservation Ordinance established a citizen review board composed of both laypersons and professionals who are empowered to judge the appropriateness of an alteration or addition in consultation with the Board liaison. The city's Historic Preservation Planner is a staff member of the Planning and Zoning Department, and should be consulted for any questions, or to receive any additional information.

The Delray Beach Preservation Planner may be reached at the Planning and Zoning Department, City Hall, First Floor, 100 Northwest First Avenue, Delray Beach (561) 243-7040, or e-mail at pzmail@MyDelrayBeach.com.

THE CITY OF DELRAY BEACH: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



Orange Grove House of Refuge, built in 1876

The development of the city of Delray Beach began in 1876 when the Orange Grove House of Refuge No. 3 was constructed by the United States Life Saving Corps on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean in what is now Delray Beach. Several years later, Michigan native William S. Linton platted the town he named for himself, and encouraged others to join him.

The next stage of growth for the new town occurred with the propitious arrival of Henry Morrison Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) in 1896. Flagler's Model Land Company, along with Mr. Linton, surveyed the land, platted subdivisions and officially recorded the new settlement as the Town of Linton. African-American families from northern Florida also began to arrive; they established a settlement just west of Linton's land, known as "The Sands" because of its sandy soil, which today encompasses the West Settler's Historic District. Following the initial settling of the area, many of the pioneer black families encouraged their relatives and friends to join them in southeast Florida.

However, the end of the nineteenth century would test the mettle of these new pioneers. After a freeze that destroyed crops and a hurricane that devastated property, many of those early settlers were financially ruined. Even William Linton was affected and most of his land holdings went into foreclosure.

Because the name "Linton" became associated with these unfortunate events, the remaining citizens decided to change the name of the town. They agreed upon "Delray," the name of the Michigan town where some of them were raised.

Around 1900, Flagler's Model Land Company brought in a number of Japanese immigrants who settled just south of Delray. Along with their founder, Jo Sakai, they formed a colony called "Yamato." Flagler encouraged them to establish farming communities, and pineapples became their principle cash crop. Sakai recruited young men from his

village in Miyazu, and from other surrounding towns, to emigrate to Florida. Settlers in the Yamato Colony frequented the town of Delray, often participating in social events, educational activities and trade with both the white and African-American citizens of the town. The settlement never exceeded more than 100 people, and because of a downturn in the pineapple market and competition from pineapple growers in Cuba, by the 1920s the colony had all but vanished. Many of those Japanese pioneers returned to their own country. The Morikami Gardens in Delray Beach founded by George Sukeji Morikami, an early settler in the Yamato Colony, preserves and interprets that Japanese life in Florida.



Photograph of George S. Morikami, taken in 1910

Bahamians also made their way to Delray Beach, having established a thriving community in both Key West and the Miami area in the late nineteenth century. They settled in a community located in southwest Delray, which earned the name "Frog Alley" because of the constant flooding which brought droves of the amphibians to the water-soaked streets.

As residential development was on the increase, agriculture remained Delray's main industry and pineapple was one of the main crops grown. An article in the *Tropical Sun* from Nov. 6, 1913 proclaimed that Delray had the "largest canning factory south of Baltimore," which primarily canned pineapples. Tomatoes also were considered a major cash crop in the area.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, largely because of regular freight and passenger train service, the town began to experience a transition from an isolated farming community to a vacation destination. By this time the town of Delray had a post office, two schools, a general store and a commissary.

Between 1910 and 1920, the town prospered and on October 9, 1911, the town of Delray was incorporated. John Shaw Sundy was elected the first mayor. That same year, Palm Beach County was established. It formerly had been a part of Dade County, which then extended all the way north to Juno.



Circa-1910 photograph of the original bridge over the East Coast Canal (Intracoastal Waterway)

As the central part of Delray was developing in the 1910s, an early subdivision known as Osceola Park was established south of town between the FEC Railway tracks and the Florida East Coast Canal. As one of Delray's first planned neighborhoods, Osceola Park was very successful and lots were quickly sold.

By 1914, thirty houses already were located in the subdivision and many more were proposed for construction.

The Florida Land Boom and Bust

Following WW I, the United States entered a period of prosperity that was, as yet, unequalled. With the Model T automobile now affordable and a federal highway system built that allowed access to previously isolated areas, America was on the move. The state of Florida was to experience a real estate phenomenon, commonly referred to as "The Boom," that would increase its population and development exponentially. Known as the "Ocean City," Delray, with its prime location on the waterfront and wealth of available land, was to experience a transformation.

Land auctions were held every day in a tent on Atlantic Avenue. In order to accommodate the influx of winter visitors and new residents, commercial and residential buildings sprang up throughout the town. The small-town atmosphere of Delray and its main street of Atlantic Avenue quickly changed into a more exciting and cosmopolitan resort environment. Buildings such as the Arcade Building, built in 1923; the Altrep (now the Colony) Hotel, built in 1926; the Seaboard Air Line Railway Station, built in 1927; the Casa Del Ray Hotel, built in 1925; and the high school and gymnasium (now Old School Square), built in 1926, contributed to the new look of the town.

Numerous new subdivisions also were being developed throughout the town, including Del-Ida Park, Lake Ida Gardens, Crest Lake Park, and Homewood. In January 1922, the Floridixi Farms Company recorded a plat for the Dell Park subdivision. Located north of the city's central



Postcard of yacht traveling on the East Coast Canal

core, between Swinton Avenue and the FEC Railway, the 50-foot-wide lots were affordable to middle-income families, who paid between \$5,000 and \$6,000 for a home of their own.

In 1923, the area between the East Coast Canal and the Atlantic Ocean incorporated to form the town of Delray Beach. Construction in this new town was also booming and buildings such as the Seacrest Hotel (1925) were built. In 1927, the towns of Delray and Delray Beach were united and incorporated into the city of Delray Beach.

Though the city was thriving, its success would not last. By the end of 1925, many real estate investors began to cancel all their transactions as they became panicked by news of bogus Florida real estate ventures. The prices and demand for Florida real estate had been so exaggerated that there was little basis for the inflated market. In August 1925, the FEC Railway refused to ship anything but perishable goods, eliminating the transport of all building materials, which were necessary if building were to continue. Further, two devastating hurricanes swept through Palm Beach County in 1926 and 1928, further exacerbating the impending economic depression. The hurricane of September 16, 1928 directly impacted Delray Beach, destroying more than 227 houses. By the time the stock market crashed in October 1929, signaling economic disaster for the nation, Florida's real estate was virtually worthless.



The Colony Hotel (originally known as the Hotel Altrep) was constructed in 1926 in the Mediterranean Revival style.

The Great Depression through World War II

Despite the hardships of the Depression, Delray Beach maintained its status

as a resort community during the 1930s. By 1940, the population of the city had reached a reported 3,661 residents. Subdivisions such as Ocean Breeze Estates and Seabreeze Park were platted and developed at this time.

In 1939, world events leading to U.S. involvement in WW II would greatly change the face of Florida. The state became one of the nation's major training grounds for the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Until that time, tourism had been the state's major industry, but that was brought to an abrupt end as hotels were converted for use as military facilities. The influx of thousands of servicemen and their families increased industrial and agricultural production in Florida, and also introduced them to the warm weather and tropical beauty of Florida.

Within close proximity to wartime facilities, such as Morrison Field in West Palm Beach, Camp Murphy in Hobe Sound, and the nearby Boca Raton Army Air Field, Delray Beach was at the center of southeast Florida's military involvement. Many local men signed up for the armed services while Delray's female population ran their husbands' businesses and participated in war-related volunteer activities. In the evenings, blackouts were required for the oceanfront homes, since German submarines were patrolling off Florida's east coast.

Because Boca Raton Army Air Field was not far from Delray Beach, many military personnel and families resided in the city during the war. Having enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and pleasant climate, following the conclusion of World War II in 1945, hundreds of servicemen remained in the Delray Beach/Boca Raton area.

The Aftermath of World War II to the Present

The physical development of most communities in Florida had dramatically slowed during the war years from 1939 to 1945. In the late 1940s, as life began to return to normal, growth throughout the state, including Delray Beach, quickly resumed. When relocated veterans faced a housing shortage, pre-fabricated homes were quickly and efficiently constructed using the latest in building technology. In addition to the year-round population, the tourist population also increased, once again reaching pre-war levels.

In the 1960s and 1970s, another wave of residents flooded Palm Beach County when several corporations, including IBM and Motorola, built their headquarters and manufacturing facilities in the area. Growth exploded in the suburbs and

new shopping centers drew people away from the city's core. Unfortunately, this westward growth negatively affected the older portions of the city; along Atlantic Avenue, commercial buildings became empty and the streets and sidewalks suffered from neglect.



Historic postcard of Atlantic Avenue business section as it appeared in earlier decades (left), and a more recent photograph of a revitalized Atlantic Avenue

By the late 1980s, Delray Beach took steps to reclaim its historic resources, and efforts were soon underway to revitalize the historic heart of the city. Various civic, private, and governmental agencies worked together to improve conditions. The city passed a \$21 million bond that facilitated streetscape improvements on Atlantic Avenue and in the surrounding residential areas. Several historic resources, including the Seaboard Air Line Railway Station, were listed in the *National Register of Historic Places* and the historic school buildings that comprise Old School Square were rehabilitated.

In 1987, Delray Beach enacted a preservation ordinance that created the Delray Beach Local Register of Historic Places and established a process to evaluate the significance of historic resources. The ordinance also provides protective provisions for historic properties, which include design review for alterations and additions and a provision for a demolition moratorium.

Today, Delray Beach is a thriving and growing community. Newer immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean have influenced the city's cultural landscape. The city's small town charm, cultural diversity, and historic buildings, as well as its close proximity to the beach, make it a popular destination for both tourists and residents. Delray Beach is continuously progressive in its development and sensible growth strategies, while remembering the path and the people who established the community that thrives today.