

St. Johns County Cultural Resources Review Board
Board Member Report - Dr. Leslee Keys **April 14, 2025**

The following is a summary of activities in recent months that pertain to historic preservation or similar professional fields. A written report seemed appropriate to provide for the public record.

St. Johns County Jail/Annex/Detention Center - County communication from Administrator Andrews and corresponding news stories about possible demolition of this 1951 building. On March 4, I requested and toured the building with Dan Whitcraft, Director, Facilities Management Department, and two deputies. The most recent communication is that the demolition is not a consideration at this time; a proposal for rehabilitation of the building for staff offices is under consideration; and I provided information about the Special Category grant cycle that just opened. The building is structurally sound and stable, but in need of interior rehabilitation.

Florida Black History Museum (FBHM) - The Board of County Commissioners, through the Tourist Development Council, retained my services and those of Alesia Wilbekin, Executive Director of the FBHM Foundation, to evaluate four black history museums for relevance to the Florida project and provide detailed reports: International African American Museum (IAAM), Charleston; National Center for Civil and Human Rights (NCCHR), Atlanta; MLK, Jr. National Historic Site, Atlanta; and the Legacy Museum, Montgomery.

Related: Florida Senator Tom Leek Files Bill to Support St. Johns County's Proposed Florida Black History Museum
<https://www.sicfl.us/senator-leek-files-bill-supporting-sjc-black-history-museum/#:~:text=Johns%20County's%20Proposed%20Florida%20Black%20History%20Museum,-4%20February%202025&text=On%20February%203%2C%202025%2C%20Florida,Florida%20Museum%20of%20Black%20History>

SAHS and Flagler College: Dr. Martin Dubrow presentation on Civil Rights in St. Augustine, April 7, Markland House

Women's History Month - City of St. Augustine Proclamation

America 250 - As part of the national events in honor of the United States' upcoming 250th anniversary, that began in Boston in 2023 for the 250th of the Boston Tea Party, local officials began a series of events in 2025 in St. Johns County. A "Liberty Tree" was designated at the St. Augustine Historical Society's (SAHS) Oldest House garden.

On March 18, I made a presentation, "Celebrations and Commemorations: Engaging the Public in History" for the SAHS at the School Board Building Auditorium.

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC) - In February, as part of a team of three, I participated in a training session for the Petersburg, VA historic preservation commission and related municipal office staff.

Florida Trust for Historic Preservation (FTHP) - I serve as a Trustee Emerita and an active member on the NE FL Regional Council and the statewide Hurricane Committee. We made plans for actions related to the 2025 hurricane season.

Resilient First Coast Collaborative - I am the sole historic preservation professional who participates. I serve on the Economic Resilience Committee, too. We are in the midst of creating a resilience plan. Part of the research was a "listening session" with members of the shrimping industry to learn of impacts from sea level rise and water disasters. Climate Central - US Coastal Risk Map and Analysis <https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/new-us-coastal-risk-map-and-analysis>

Traditional Building Conference Series: St. Augustine - I participated in the conference that brought about 100 people from throughout the US, including materials vendors, to the community to learn about the historic construction techniques and materials, historic properties, archaeological sites, and current threats to those resources.

St. Benedict the Moor Schoolhouse/St. Joseph Neighborhood Center - This remarkable restoration project was completed by the Sisters of St. Joseph over a 3-year period, including securing more than \$5M for the effort. I volunteered to prepare their statewide preservation award nomination. A decision is forthcoming. The project will be receiving the Herschel Shepard Historic Preservation Award from the SAHS on May 25 as part of Preservation Month.

St. Augustine Lighthouse 150th Anniversary - I will be making a presentation Gilded Age tourism on April 24 at Memorial Presbyterian Church as part of the speaker series: "History In the Shadow of the Tower: The Rise of Florida Tourism" supported by the Florida Humanities Council, Florida Arts Council and other sponsors.

Beaches Museum, Beaches Area Historical Society - In honor of Jean Ribault's anniversary on May 1 of reaching the body of water he named the "River of May" - the St. Johns: "Preserving Florida's Heritage in an Era of Rising Seas"

Florida Planning and Zoning Association - This conference will be at the Casa Monica Hotel from Jun 4-6. I will be presenting and providing tours.