

**TOWN OF LAKE PARK  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD**

Meeting Date: October 2, 2023

Agenda Item # 23-002

**DESCRIPTION: QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING ON A PETITION TO RESCIND THE LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION, GRANTED IN 1998, FOR THE ARNOLD BUILDING LOCATED AT 918 PARK AVENUE, LAKE PARK, FLORIDA, 33403 (8PB9607), AND TO REMOVE IT FROM THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION SURVEY AND FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE.**

**A. SUMMARY OF REQUEST**

**Request: Petition to rescind the local historic designation in accordance with section 66-9 (d) (7) of the Town Code of Ordinances, of the designation granted in 1998, for the Arnold building located at 918 Park Avenue (8pb9607), and to remove it from the Town's historic designation survey and Florida master site file.**

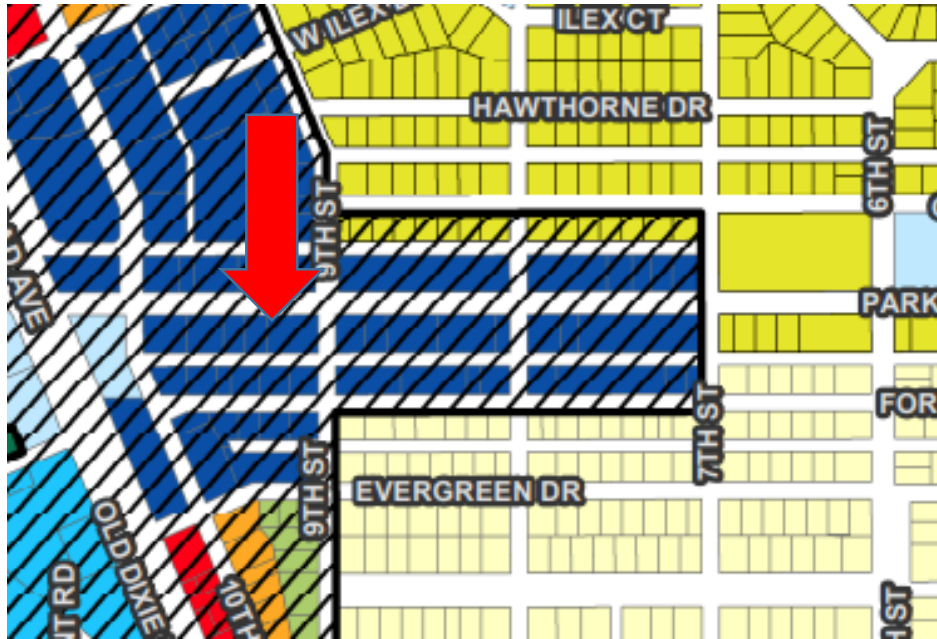
<u>Owner/applicant:</u>	The Adler at Lake Park LLC
<u>Property Address:</u>	918 Park Ave.
<u>Current Zoning:</u>	Park Avenue Downtown District (PADD)
<u>Future Land Use:</u>	Downtown
<u>Existing use:</u>	Vacant
<u>Historic Property:</u>	Mediterranean Revival
<u>Type of structure:</u>	Two story stucco.

The applicant's stated grounds for the petition to rescind the designation are based on the following:

- "1. The property has ceased to meet the criteria for listing as a designated historic landmark because the qualities which caused it to be originally listed have been lost or destroyed, or such qualities were lost subsequent to nomination.
2. Additional information shows that the property does not meet the historic landmark designation criteria for evaluation. "

Removal of the designation is requested so the building may then be demolished. The present owner has packaged together lots on Park and Foresteria, including the subject building for the purposes of redevelopment and construction of a high-rise mixed-use project. Once the designation is removed, the owner intends to demolish the building to make way for the project.

Location



Current Photo



## B. ROLE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD (HPB)

The HPB will be conducting a quasi-judicial Public Hearing. **The issue before the Board is to determine whether sufficient evidence has been presented by the applicant to justify removal of the local historic designation adopted by the Town in 1998.**

The Board shall consider the report submitted by REG Architects on behalf of the applicant and the Report submitted by the Town's consultant, RJ Heisenbottle Architects (RJHA). RJHA was tasked with analyzing the information presented by REG and to determine whether the stated grounds for the de-designation are valid.

The role of the HPB to review both reports, any other submitted pertinent materials, and staff recommendation to determine whether the applicant's petition should be granted.

(Note: In the reports the terms "rescind the designation" and "de-designate" have the same meaning and have been used interchangeably.)

Section 66-9 (d) (7) of Chapter 26-Historic Preservation in the Town Code states that the same criteria and process used for local historic designation shall also be followed to rescind the designation. This process, shown below, requires basically the same justification as if the applicant had applied for a special certificate of appropriateness to demolish the structure, as both focus on the historic character, significance and nature of the building itself, and should the building be de-designated it will be demolished by the applicant. (The applicant's consultant REG Architects has actually formatted their report as if it was an application for a special certificate of appropriateness) Therefore, as it relates to the historic character, significance and nature of the building, the Board will determine, based on both reports, whether the applicant has demonstrated that the criteria below no longer apply to the building, hence warranting de-designation. **The Board members do not need to conduct their own independent review, but rather analyze the two conclusions of the architectural firms.** The Town Code also provides for the following:

### Sec. 66-9. Designation process and procedure.

(a) **Criteria.** Consistent with the criteria established by the National Register of Historic Places, the historic preservation board shall have the authority to designate areas, places, buildings, structures, landscape features, archeological sites and other improvements or physical features, as individual sites, districts or archeological zones that are significant in town's history, architecture, archeology or culture and possess an integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or association, or:

- (1) Are associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric and architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, the county, South Florida, the state or the nation;
- (2) Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;

- (3) Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style or method of construction or work of a master, or that possess high artistic value; or that represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- (4) Have yielded, or are likely to yield information in history or prehistory; or
- (5) Are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

\*\*the full chapter 66 can be found in **attachment 5** of the staff report

**The only decision before the Board is whether the applicant has adequately demonstrated that the historic designation should be removed.**

The applicant has also submitted an engineer's report on the condition of the building. This report reviews structural issues necessary to bring it up to code. The Board may review the material, but only take into consideration what relates specifically to the historic designation, not the structural condition.

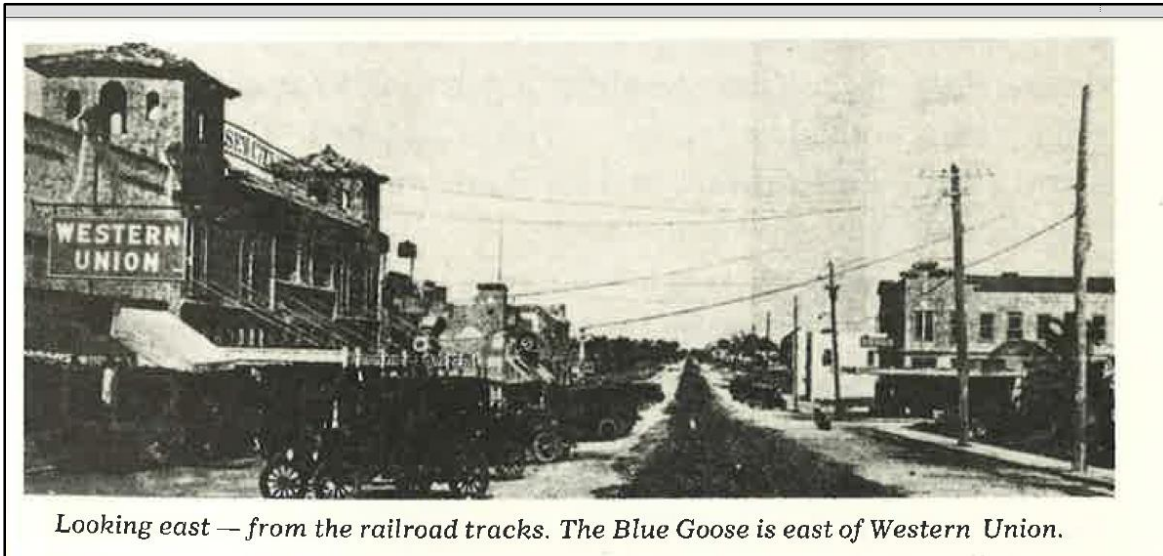
At the Hearing, the Board will hear the presentation from the applicant and REG Architects and Heisenbottle Architects. The Board will have the opportunity to question them, and of course take any public comment.

**At the conclusion, based upon the evidence submitted, the Board has the following options:**

- a) grant the applicant's request to rescind the designation, or**
- b) deny the request and provide a reasoning.**

Should the Board approve rescinding the designation, the applicant may then proceed to pull a permit for demolition of the building.

Should the Board deny the request, the applicant may appeal the decision to the Town Commission per section 66-14 Appeals.



Early downtown on Park Avenue, viewed east from the railroad.

### **C. BACKGROUND ON THE 918 BUILDING**

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The 918 Building is easy to spot on Park Avenue. Abutting the street without a sea of parking in front, it speaks to a time before the auto dominated the landscape.

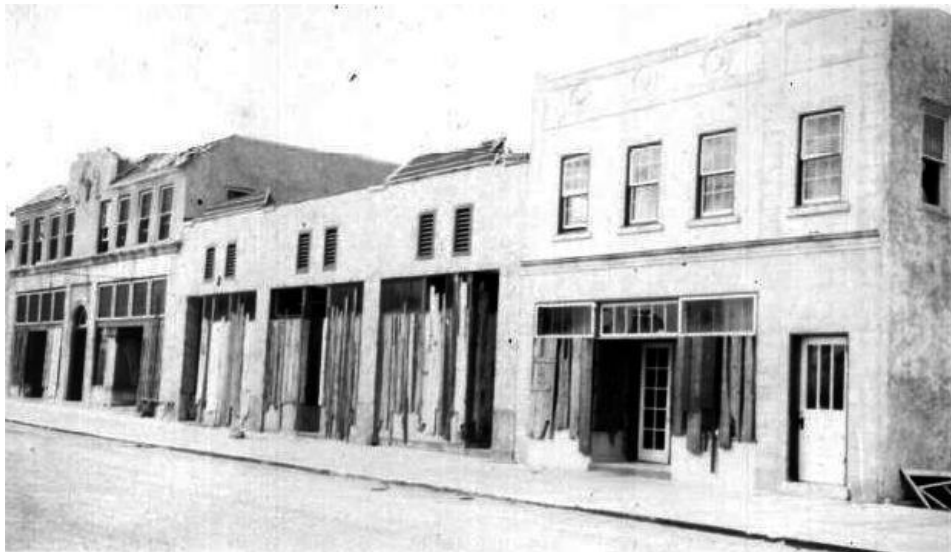
#### Early history:

The building was originally constructed in 1925 in the Mediterranean Revival Architecture style popular at the time, as part of thriving downtown. The building was initially built by the Arnold Construction Company to be their headquarters and was one of many buildings in the downtown constructed in the Land-boom era. The Arnold Company built numerous homes in the Town.

The building suffered damage during the hurricane of 1928. Whether immediately following the hurricane or sometime after in the 30's or 40's the façade was modified. It still retained the Mediterranean Revival architectural style, similar to Town Hall.

A detailed history and architectural review is contained in the "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form", attached as **Attachment 1.**





918 Dixie Way (Park Ave.) is the far left building. This is just after the 28 hurricane. This building housed Arnold grocery, Dr Pearson, and rental rooms. 1928/29 show the Easterly part of building as Atlantic Lumber and Supply. In reality, it was probably the ground floor that was Atlantic Lumber and the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor as Mrs Woodbury.

Over time the building was also used for various businesses including a grocery store and a US Post Office.

#### Recent history:

A review of Town business records indicates the last commercial business licenses were in 2005. The property has been vacant for a number of years, with various owners.

In 2017 the then-owner received approval for a site plan and a certificate of appropriateness to renovate the building for commercial purposes. At that time the Town's consultant (REG) determined the building had moderate historic value and reviewed the request for conformance to Mediterranean Revival architecture. The plans were never carried out, and the building has continued to suffer from neglect. In 2021 new owners purchased with the intention of pursuing those plans, however they recently sold the building to the present owner The Adler at Lake Park LLC.

#### Historic Designation - 1998

The building was locally historically designated by the Town's Historic Preservation Board on Sept 9, 1998, at the request of the then owner Charles Watkins. This designation was based on the findings by Janus Research who was engaged by the Town to survey all possible historic structures, as well as information the contained in the National Register application. (Attachment 1)

It also appears the owner intended to file for consideration to be listed on the National Historic Register but did not complete the process.

The staff report and Historical Structure Form Florida Master Site File are attached as **Attachment 2**

From the Master Site File:

This is the last remaining commercial building from the Boom Times- era. It retains most of its historic physical integrity and modifications are limited to the replacement of some original windows. Based on architectural significance and associations with the early history of Kelsey City, this resource is considered to be potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Place as part of the Kelsey City Multiple Property Listing.

In addition to the recognition of the building's importance related to the early history of Kelsey City, it appears the architectural significance was based on the building's general appearance in 1998, as characteristic of Mediterranean Revival.

**Attachment 3** contains the Resolution assigning the local historic designation and **Attachment 5** contains the minutes of the 1998 HPB Meeting.

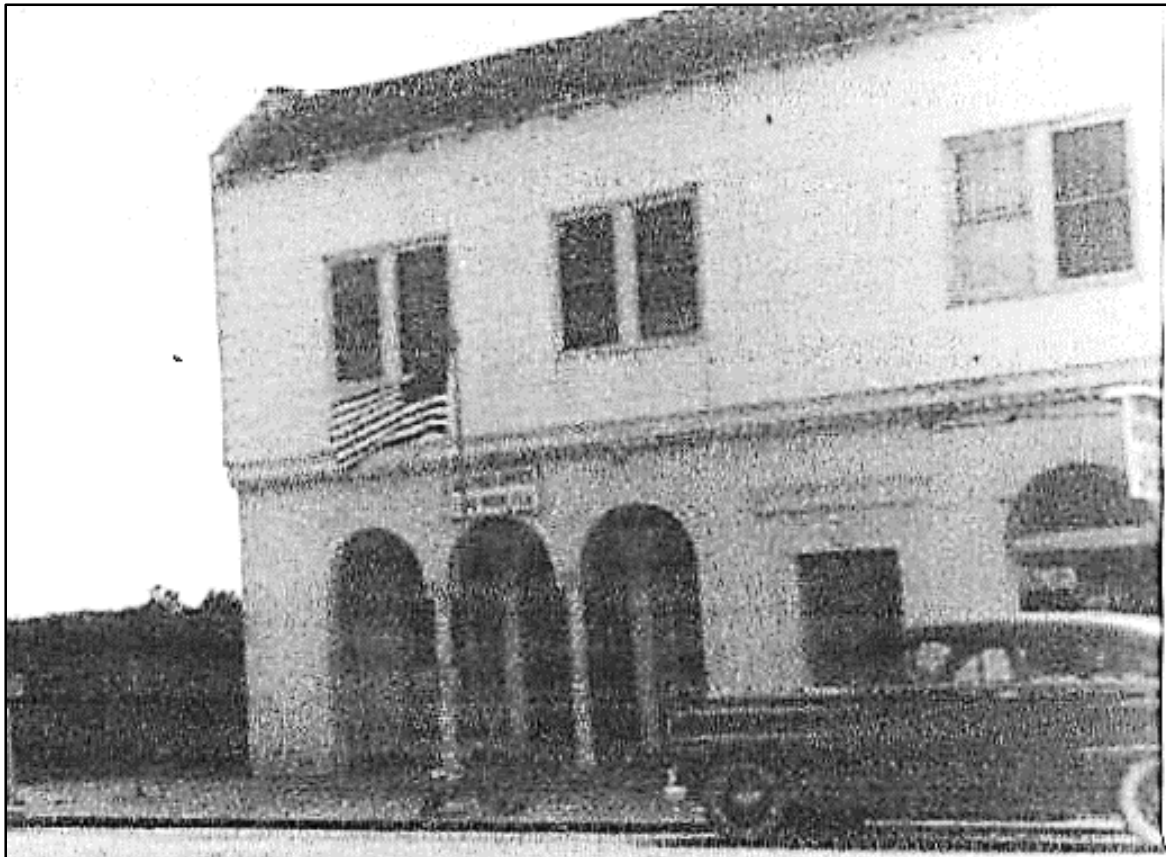
#### Comparison through time

The following four photos provide a comparison over time of changes to the façade, referenced in this staff report and the architects' reports.

## 918 PARK - COMPARATIVE FACADES OVER TIME



circa 1925



Circa 1950





**Circa 2001-2005 (probably how building looked when the local historic designation was considered)**



**Present day**

## **D. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT REPORTS**

The two architectural firms come to **differing conclusions** regarding the historical significance of the building. Staff has briefly summarized their conclusions as well as the apparent reason for the differing opinions.

### **REG Report**

**The general premise of the REG report is that there have been many significant changes since the building was constructed in 1925, and the property no longer meets the criteria for a local historic designation.**

These changes include window and storefront changes, changes to the roof, inappropriate rear alterations, among others. Please refer to the **REG Report**, where **figures (photos) 7, 8, and 9** provide a visual comparison of the building in 1925 and today and identify numerous changes to the façade.



The REG report (pages 2-3) states that

"Many significant changes have occurred to the exterior. Items such as window/storefront replacements, stucco repair and re-coat, enclosure/ infill of rear sleeping and eating porches, inappropriate and insensitive rear (South) alterations, infills and additions.

Therefore, the Property has ceased to meet the criteria for being listed as a historic landmark in the downtown retail district of the Town of Lake Park. This is due to alterations and additions which have destroyed the historic integrity and significance.

This report found the property does not meet or possess historic significance and does not retain a high degree of integrity. Thus, the existing building does not retain any degree of historic integrity of location, setting, materials, design, proportion, massing, feeling, and association with the existing context."

However, in 2017 when REG was hired by the Town to review a development application for the property, they concluded:

“Several minor changes have occurred to the exterior. Items such as window replacement, stucco repair and recoat, storefront alteration, enclosure/ infill of rear sleeping and eating porches, inappropriate and insensitive rear (South) alterations, infills and additions. Overall, the existing building retains a moderate degree of historic integrity of location, setting, materials, design, proportion, massing, feeling, and association. Per the landmark’s Florida Maser Site File it is the last remaining Commercial building from the Boom Times era.”

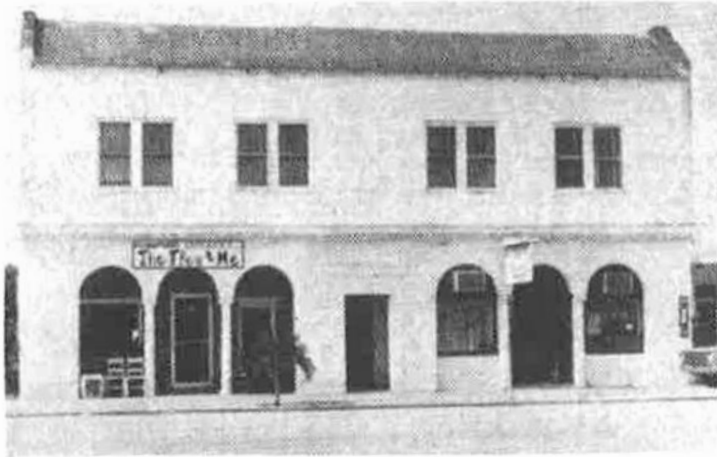
The Board may wish to have REG explain the apparent inconsistencies between their 2017 and 2023 reports.

### **RJ Heisenbottle (RJHA) Report**

The RJHA report concludes that in 1998 the Town’s Historic Preservation Board (HPB) based its finding of historical significance on a version of the building much like we see today, not on the 1925 building. The building façade was likely modified in the 30’s or 40’s, as the newer version was in place by 1950. Thus for at least the last 75 years the building has generally retained the same elements. **Heisenbottle contends that the building has actually changed little since it’s designation in 1998**, and therefore does not find that the justification for de-designation is valid.

The report also stresses the building’s ties to the history of Lake Park- its early residents and downtown, as the last remaining historically designated commercial building of the Kelsey City/Boom time era in Lake Park.





*The old post office, the oldest building now standing in Lake Park.*

Their report stated, **“While RJHA can appreciate the completed comparative analysis, it is essential to reiterate that the building retains the historical integrity for which it was nominated and continues to meet the criteria for designation.”**

#### **E. CONCLUSION AND STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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The 918 building is the last commercial building in the Town from the “Boom time Era”. Information on the National Register Application documents its historical significance related to the Town’s history and associated occupants of the building.

The issues of “what time period is appropriate period that the architectural significance should be applied to, and to what extent has the building has lost its architectural integrity” are viewed differently by the two architectural firms. The Board should carefully review the reports to conclude whether there is adequate justification for de-designating the building.

**Based on the information provided by our architectural consultant RJ Heisenbottle, staff cannot support the de-designation.**

RJHA has made a compelling argument that the building was originally designated in 1998 for the Mediterranean Revival architectural that the building still has today, and which reflects an architectural period in the history of Florida and the Town. Additionally, 918 Park represents the last commercial building in Town from the “Boom time era”, and has played a role in the Town’s early development.

## **F. Board Action**

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To reiterate the Historic Preservations Board's options are:

- a) Grant the applicant's request to rescind the designation, or
- b) Deny the request and provide a reasoning.

**The Board should specifically state the reason for their decision such that a "Findings of Fact" can be prepared to reflect the Board Decision.**

Should the Board approve rescinding the designation, the applicant may then proceed to pull a permit for demolition of the building.

Should the Board deny the request, the applicant may appeal the decision to the Town Commission per section 66-14 Appeals.

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*(The REG Report is structured in the format not of a request for de-designation, but as a request for an amendment to the existing COA, to allow for the demolition of the building as it no longer has local significance. While this is a different process in the code, the criteria are the same. The outcomes would also be the same. Therefore this report is considered consistent with the actual Request for De-designation)*

### **Attachments to staff report**

Attachment 1: Florida Master Site File, staff report from 1998

Attachment 2: National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Attachment 3: Resolution of Designation, 1998

Attachment 4: Chapter 66 Historic Preservation

Attachment 5: Minutes of the August 31 HPB Meeting

### **Separate documents**

- Application for De-designation and Report from REG Architects
- Report from RJ Heisenbottle Architects
- Report from Accord Engineering