



Staff Report

Case #207

COA25-0037

Ocala Historic Preservation Advisory Board: November 6, 2025

Property Owner: Austin International RLT, LLC
Petitioner: Paul Stentiford
Project Planner: Charlita Whitehead
Applicant Request: To install a new historic marker titled “*Elvis in Ocala, Tom Petty Inspired*” on the northeast corner of the intersection at East Silver Springs Boulevard and NE Osceola Avenue, commemorating the 1961 visit of Elvis Presley to film *Follow That Dream* and its influence on a 10-year-old Tom Petty.

Parcel Information

Acres: ±0.64 acres
Parcel(s) #: 2823-064-007
Location: 117 E Silver Springs Boulevard, Corner of E. Silver Springs Boulevard and NE Osceola Avenue
Future Land Use: High Intensity/Central Core
Zoning District: Form Based Code
Existing Use: Vacant Commercial Property

Background:

Local historic landmarks and markers play an essential role in preserving and interpreting the community’s heritage. They provide tangible, public reminders of the people, places, and events that shaped Ocala’s identity and contribute to civic pride and heritage tourism. Through the placement of signage, the City and its partners ensure that local stories are documented, accessible, and celebrated for future generations.

In July 1961, Elvis Presley arrived in Ocala to film scenes for the movie *Follow That Dream* at the Commercial Bank and Trust Company on East Silver Springs Boulevard. The production drew hundreds of spectators as the “King of Rock and Roll” briefly transformed downtown into a film set.

Among the onlookers was 10-year-old Tom Petty of Gainesville, whose uncle, Earl Jernigan, was involved with the film crew. Accompanied by his Aunt Evelyn and cousins Sadie and Norma, Tom met Elvis that day, an encounter Petty later described as “what kicked off my love of music.” He would go on to become one of America’s most influential rock musicians.

The Ocala Sunset Rotary, in coordination with the Florida Division of Historical Resources, applied for a state historic marker to commemorate this moment. Written authorization from the property owner has been provided, and the proposed installation location has been reviewed by City staff. Photos of the existing historic markers and the proposed placement are attached.

Applicant Request:

To install a new historic marker titled “*Elvis in Ocala, Tom Petty Inspired*” on the northeast corner of the

intersection at East Silver Springs Boulevard and NE Osceola Avenue, commemorating the 1961 visit of Elvis Presley to film *Follow That Dream* and its influence on then 10-year-old Tom Petty.

Staff Analysis

The site is associated with Elvis Presley and Tom Petty, both nationally recognized figures whose brief intersection in Ocala links local history to the broader story of American popular music. Consistent with the intent of Sec. 94-81(c), which identifies public education and appreciation of historic resources as core purposes of landmark designation. The marker advances public understanding of Ocala's role in Florida's mid-century cultural landscape and provides a tangible interpretive element for heritage tourism. It complements existing markers on the Downtown Square and near the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition. The proposed placement near the original filming site retains historical context and visual association with the event.

Pursuant to Sec. 94-81(c)(1)(b), the marker's installation supports the City's preservation goals by enhancing community understanding of historic personages important to national, state, or local history. Installation will occur on publicly accessible property and be maintained by the Ocala Sunset Rotary. The marker will be accessible 24 hours a day and adds to the City's public education and heritage assets. Staff finds that the event meets the criteria for recognition under Sec. 94-81(c)(1) as a location associated with persons who made significant contributions to history.

Nomination and designation of local landmarks. (Section 94-81(c)):

The following is the procedure for nomination of individual historic resources as a landmark. The nominated historic resource may or may not be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

(1) In addition to the structures already identified as within the historic district, the board shall consider for landmark designation any additional buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts within the city which merit landmark designation and protection, possessing integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship of association and being:

- a. Of particular historic significance by exemplifying the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community:

The proposed landmark exemplifies the cultural and social history of two nationally recognized individuals that met for the first time while visiting the City of Ocala.

- b. Associated with historic personages important in national, state, or local history:

- c. *Elvis Presley and Tom Petty are persons who have made significant contributions to American music and rock n' roll history.* The site of a historic event which had a significant effect on the development of the nation, state, or community:

The proposed landmark identifies a historic event in which Elvis Presley and Tom Petty met for the first time and had a brief exchange during the filming of "Follow that Dream".

- d. An embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of architecture or engineering.

the proposed landmark is not an embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of architecture or engineering. This landmark designation refers to an important cultural and social event.

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- e. Representative of the work of an important builder, designer, artist or architect whose individual ability has been recognized or who influenced his age.

The site is not directly associated with a specific recognized builder, designer, architect, or artist but represents the mid-20th century film production design and locations that helped shape the visual identity of American movies.

- f. Significant for containing elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation.

The proposed landmark is not significant for containing elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship representing a significant innovation. It is more so significant from a cultural and social historic aspect.

- g. Able or likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

This is cultural and social event between two prominent national music figures of the mid 1900's era.

Guidelines for recommendations (Section 94-81(d):

Locally designated historic districts and local landmarks may be designated by ordinance upon recommendation by the board, which shall use the following criteria as general guidelines for making such recommendations: districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling and association, and that:

- (1) Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the city's history.

The site is associated with events that contributed to the city's cultural history, in this case, the filming of "Follow That Dream" and its influence on Tom Petty's musical career.

- (2) Are associated with the lives of persons significant in the city's past.

The site is associated with the lives of Elvis Presley and Tom Petty who were visiting Ocala, which is significant in the city's cultural history.

- (3) Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

the site does not embody distinctive architectural or construction characteristics.

- (4) Have yielded or may yield information important in prehistory or history.

- (5) ***This is cultural and social event between two prominent national music figures of the mid 1900's era.***Constitute a unique density of architecture, scale, landscaping and planning.

The site does not exhibit a unique density of architecture, scale, landscaping, or planning; its importance is primarily cultural and social history of two prominent national musicians.

Staff Findings:

Based on Sec. 94-81 criteria, staff finds the nomination is consistent with the intent of the Code of Ordinances.