



The
JACKSONVILLE
History Center
One City, Many Stories

IMPACT REPORT

2025-2026





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The mission of the Jacksonville History Center is to connect communities and strengthen citizenship through history education.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

Jacksonville's history lives in the places we experience every day, the stories families carry forward, the records preserved in our archives, and the questions we continue to ask about how this city became what it is. History helps us understand our place in the present and our responsibility for the future. That is why the Jacksonville History Center exists.

This past year was defining for our organization. With the support of donors, members, volunteers, partners, and civic leaders, the Jacksonville History Center continued its transformation into the public history institution this city needs and deserves. We advanced plans for a new history museum, expanded access to our collections, welcomed people to our developing downtown campus, and shared Jacksonville's stories through programs, tours, and community gatherings.

Our strategic planning process clarified how we serve Jacksonville. That work affirmed four essential roles for the Jacksonville History Center: Preserver, Educator, Advocate, and Convener. These roles now guide our work and provide the framework for this report.

As a Preserver, we safeguard the historical record. As an Educator and Storyteller, we bring Jacksonville's past to life. As an Advocate, we speak for historic places and for the value of history in civic life. As a Convener and Collaborator, we bring people together around the stories and legacies that continue to shape our neighborhoods and our great city.

The pages that follow show the impact of that work in 2025–2026. They also reflect an organization entering a new chapter. With your support, we are creating a place where Jacksonville's history will be preserved, explored, and shared for generations to come.

Thank you for believing that Jacksonville's history matters and for helping us preserve it, share it, and use it to strengthen the city's future.



Alan J. Bliss, Ph.D.
CEO



Kristanna B. Barnes
Board Chair

PRESERVER



9,000 historic negatives
digitized

15 oral histories
recorded and transcribed

32 collections
accessioned

EDUCATOR AND STORYTELLER



12,000 people
reached through programs, tours,
and events

7 museum galleries
designed

9 public programs
presented

FOUR ROLES. ONE MISSION.

In 2025–2026, donor support helped the Jacksonville History Center preserve Jacksonville's historical record, deliver history education to the public, advocate for the places and stories that define our city, and bring people together around the city we share.

ADVOCATE



29 structures
named to our annual Endangered
Historic Properties list

9 letters
in support of historic preservation
grants

CONVENER AND COLLABORATOR



240 community
members
commemorated the 125th
anniversary of the Great Fire

40 organizations
brought together to connect with over
200 visitors at the Volunteer Expo

PRESERVING JACKSONVILLE'S STORIES

Preservation is at the heart of our work. JHC safeguards historic buildings and collections—from photographs and documents to oral histories and everyday objects—that help future generations understand Jacksonville. This year, work across our campus and collections strengthened the foundation for the future museum, research archive, and public programs.



Recently digitized Florida Times-Union photograph of Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 visit to Jacksonville.

PRESERVATION IN ACTION

THE NEXT CHAPTER FOR OLD ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL

Exterior renovations at Old St. Luke's Hospital marked the next step in the ongoing transformation of the Jacksonville History Center campus. Work included new exterior paint, decks and railings, brick steps at both entrances, and a new ADA-accessible ramp.

These improvements protect the historic building and make it safer and more accessible while laying the groundwork for the next phase of Old St. Luke's renewal.

A NEW HOME FOR THE COLLECTIONS

The relocation of collections from Old St. Luke's Hospital to state-of-the-art archival space in the newly renovated History Center building marked an important step forward in their long-term care and organization.

The new space has supported work to digitize the Florida Times-Union photographic negatives and enabled staff to draw more fully on the archives while planning the future museum.

HISTORY EDUCATION ACROSS JACKSONVILLE

The Jacksonville History Center provides history education by connecting people with the stories, places, and primary sources that explain how Jacksonville became the city it is today. Through programs, talks, tours, and community conversations, we make local history accessible and meaningful across the city.



An actor portraying Jacksonville mayor John T. Alsop Jr. brings local history to life during an Evergreen Cemetery Tour.



Guests explore the Great Fire exhibit during the May 1 Great Fire Gathering.

HISTORY EDUCATION IN ACTION

SPEAKER SERIES

Six Jacksonville stories explored

This year's series explored topics such as Jacksonville's film history; the sinking of the El Faro; Northeast Florida's Indigenous people; America's 250th birthday; Jacksonville's avant-garde architecture; and the rebirth of Cecil Field.

EVERGREEN CEMETERY TOURS

Our spring and fall tours highlighted **28** gravesites and welcomed **178** visitors.

LOCAL HISTORY ARTICLES

Dr. Alan J. Bliss and other Jacksonville History Center staff members published **30** articles on our blog and shared them through our e-newsletter.

MERRILL HOUSE TOURS

Thirty docent-led Merrill House tours welcomed **264** visitors.

JACKSONVILLE HISTORY PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Alan J. Bliss delivered **two dozen** presentations to local groups, including delivering remarks at the Cow Ford Site Historical Marker unveiling at Corkscrew Park in June 2026.

CREATING JACKSONVILLE'S HISTORY MUSEUM



Preliminary rendering of Geography is Destiny, one of seven galleries planned for the new museum.

The first floor of the three-story Jacksonville History Center is being developed as a **4,000-square-foot history museum**. This year, JHC completed the Vision Book and Schematic Design for the permanent exhibits. Working with Luci Creative, historians, staff, and community voices, we shaped seven galleries that explore the people, places, and events that have defined Jacksonville. The museum will bring our collections to life through historic objects, immersive experiences, media, and public programs, giving visitors new ways to understand the city we share.

NEXT STEP

We are entering final design; exhibit fabrication and production are expected in 2027.



Proposed gallery plan for the first-floor museum, June 2026.

THE CASE FOR HISTORY

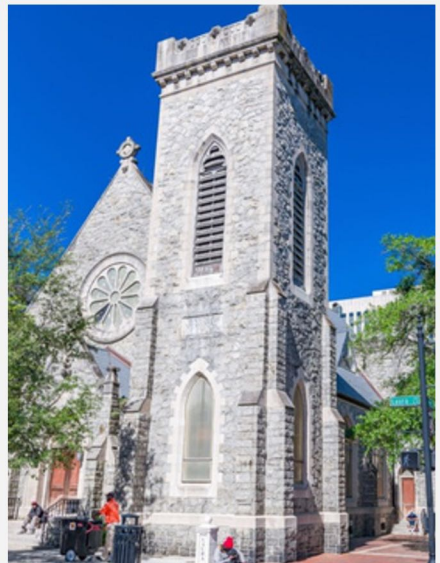


Old St. Andrew's Church, a successful restoration that demonstrates the lasting value of historic preservation.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

One important example of this work is Jacksonville's Endangered Historic Properties list, which calls attention to threatened buildings and sites across the city. By documenting their significance and sharing their stories, we give residents, property owners, preservation partners, and civic leaders a starting point for action. The list helps build public support and encourages solutions that can keep these places part of Jacksonville's future.

At the Jacksonville History Center, we believe Jacksonville's history matters. This year, JHC used its voice to advocate for the value of history and for the historic places that give Jacksonville character, memory, and identity. Through research, partnerships, and public engagement, we helped make the case that preservation is not an obstacle to progress but a way to strengthen neighborhoods, support authentic redevelopment, and help the city grow without losing what makes it distinctive. This advocacy reflects a broader belief at the heart of our mission: that history education helps communities understand where they have been, what they value, and how to make thoughtful decisions about the future.



Snyder Memorial Methodist Church, currently on Jacksonville's Endangered Historic Properties list.



Alan Bliss, Alex Sifakis, Veronica Frazier, and Courtney Gumbinger at the inaugural Great Fire Gathering.

A PLACE TO GATHER

The Jacksonville History Center is becoming a place where people come together to remember, learn, celebrate, and imagine what comes next. More than 240 supporters, civic leaders, neighbors, and friends joined us for this year’s inaugural Great Fire Gathering, which grossed \$135,000 in support of the History Center. The evening connected the city’s resilience and renewal after the Great Fire of 1901 with Jacksonville today—a city once again “on fire” with energy, growth, and possibility. We also welcomed community voices into the museum planning process through a public charrette, while more organizations began using JHC’s historic spaces for their own meetings, programs, and events. Together, these gatherings show the growing role of the History Center as a civic and cultural home for the city we share.

SAVE THE DATE

Great Fire Gathering • Friday, April 30, 2027

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Based on audited financials for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2025

REVENUE

Community Support Public Funding Other Revenue
Total Operating Support & Revenue: \$1,145,312



EXPENSES

Programs Management & General Fundraising
Total Expenses: \$941,980



OUR SUPPORTERS

We are grateful to our donors whose support this year made our progress possible. Donors listed on these pages made gifts, pledges, and donor-advised fund recommendations between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026.

\$1,000,000+

Joan and Preston Haskell†
Terry Family Foundation†

\$250,000–\$999,999

John D. Baker II†
Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund‡◆

\$100,000–\$249,999

Anonymous◆
The Henry & Lucy Gooding Endowment◆

\$25,000–\$99,999

Anonymous‡
Lane Family Endowment
Pajcic & Pajcic, P.A.

\$10,000–\$24,999

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The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida
Delores Barr Weaver Forever Event Fund
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The Evergreen Cemetery Association
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\$1,000–\$4,999 continued

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\$250–\$999

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Mark and Kelly Anderson
Norman and Ann Anderson
Anonymous
Ascension Southside - St. Luke's
Hospital
Assumption Catholic School
Azar & Co.◇

†Multi-year campaign commitment, ‡Campaign gift, ◆Multi-year non-campaign commitment, ◇In-kind contribution

\$250–\$999 *continued*

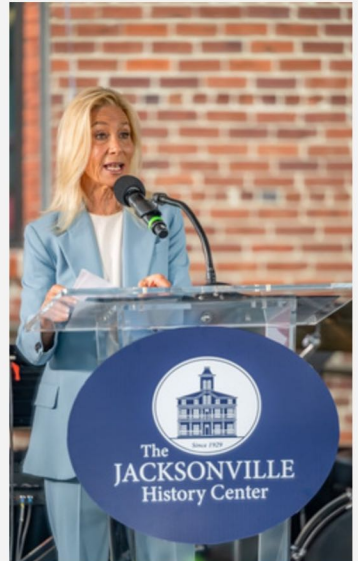
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Robert E. Zieger

Special Thanks
to our public funding partners

Cultural Council of Greater
 Jacksonville
City of Jacksonville
State of Florida



Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan delivers remarks at the inaugural Great Fire Gathering.



Jacksonville celebrated the nation's bicentennial in 1976 with parades and patriotic displays. Jacksonville History Center, Florida Times-Union Photograph Collection.



The
JACKSONVILLE
History Center
One City, Many Stories

Jacksonville history matters.

Help us preserve it, share it, and bring it to life.

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