

## **PLACES IN PERIL NOMINATION FORM.**

### **PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Name of property: East Point City Hall, Auditorium, City Library and Victory Park.

Address: 2777 East Point Street, East Point, GA 30344

City/county: East Point, Fulton County

Construction Date: City Hall: 1931; Auditorium: 1931; City Library: 1939; Victory Park: first memorial, approximately 1920-1930; official dedication October 24, 1971.

Historic Designation: None.

### **NOMINATOR INFORMATION**

Name: Dee L. Claborn III

Address: 6552-A Hwy 85, Riverdale, GA

Phone: 404.669.0044 (before 4 pm); 770.996.7035 (after 5pm)

Email: [deeclaborn@hotmail.com](mailto:deeclaborn@hotmail.com)

Association with Property: Spokesperson for East Point Preservation Alliance (EPPA)

### **OWNER INFORMATION (if known)**

Name: City of East Point

Address: 2227 East Point Street, East Point, GA 30344

Phone: 404.270.7093

Email: (This is the Contact email on the city website) [mayor@eastpointcity.org](mailto:mayor@eastpointcity.org)

Are they aware of nomination? No.

### **OTHER GROUPS OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED**

Name: East Point Historical Society

Address: 1685 Norman Berry Drive, East Point GA 30344

Phone: 404.767.4656

Email: [ephistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:ephistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

There is another new group, Save East Point City Hall, represented by a FaceBook page, led by Stasio Rusek. Mr. Rusek and his group are meeting with the EPPA and all other interested citizens this Friday, June 7, at 7 pm at the East Point Historical Society to organize for the preservation of the buildings. As I get more information on Mr. Rusek's group I will forward it to you.

*1. Why is the property significant? Is it architecturally and/or historically significant? Does it contribute to a historic district? What makes it unique or different?*

(See attached photo files of City Hall, Auditorium, Library & Victory Park)

East Point's **City Hall** dates to 1931 and is among the City's most distinct structures, prominently featured on the city flag. With its white-columned porch and clock tower, City Hall reflects a mix of the antebellum and Federal Revival

styles popular at the time. It houses the old Council Chambers where countless public meetings were held, shaping the destiny of East Point.

Immediately behind City Hall is the **City Auditorium**, also built in 1931, witness to decades of City gatherings, musical performances, theatrical productions, high school graduations and other precious moments in the life of the City. The building's architectural style matches that of City Hall and features Palladian windows, decorative swags and medallions along the walls, and a large stage suitable for a variety of uses. Most of the damage the Auditorium has suffered has been the result of an unrepaired roof, which the City has failed to cover even with a tarp.

Just behind the Auditorium is the old **City Library**, built in 1939 and now closed for many years and used simply for storage. The Federal Revival-style structure bears a brass plaque attesting to its construction as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (FEAPW) in 1939. (FEAPW was renamed the Public Works Administration shortly after the Library's construction.) Almost all of the Library's original features remain intact, including the dark wood bookcases, shelving, and lovely Adam-style fireplace mantels. Other prominent features of the building are the numerous Art Deco-style lighting fixtures that grace the building's common rooms.

**Victory Park**, dedicated to East Point citizens who have given their lives in service to the country, is in front of the Library. The Park, anchored on each side by magnificent old magnolias, is home to a number of dedicated memorials, naming East Pointers who lost their lives in battle. Old armory is interspersed among the memorials, old trees, period lighting and park benches.

These four parcels are contiguous, forming an unbroken four blocks of historic structures that are the core of the city, and potentially the core of a downtown historic district. The parcels, forming the East Point Civic Block, feature beautiful magnolias that date back to the 30s. The adjacent neighborhood of Frog Hollow dates to the 1890s and contains the city's oldest homes. Frog Hollow also has the potential for Historic District designation.

*2. What is the history of the property? Please provide a brief historical summary.*

East Point's **City Hall** was built in 1931 and financed with public bonds, as were the Library and Auditorium.

The **Auditorium** was also built in 1931, and used continuously for events including City Council Meetings until 2008. A review of the City Council Minutes shows that the Auditorium hosted graduations and musicales, vaudeville acts, debates and more. Records show that the Ku Klux Klan once won approval to have their name on the Auditorium stage backdrop, and sponsored, among other events, a Minstrel Show.

The **City Library** was completed in 1939, under the New Deal as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (FEAPW). The Library hosted generations of East Point residents until the City closed the library in the mid-1990s and sold the books. Many current residents speak fondly of the hours spent in the Library.

**Victory Park's** first memorial was placed in the period 1920-1930, dedicated to those who perished in World War I. Several other plaques were placed over the years, following our nation's wars including Desert Storm. The Park was formally dedicated October 24, 1971.

*3. Describe the nature of the threat to the property (demolition, neglect, lack of maintenance, inappropriate development, insensitive public policy etc.). How imminent is the threat?*

In 2011, the City of East Point voted to build a new City Government Complex and issued an RFP that stipulated the demolition of all existing buildings, with an option to salvage the Auditorium. Faced with this challenge, the East Point Preservation Alliance (EPPA) was formed (now 166 members) with the goal of saving the buildings and Victory Park.

In October of 2011, EPPA requested permission to conduct tours of the buildings for citizens to witness first-hand the historic flavor and beauty of these structures as well as the extent of the damage they had suffered to date. However, upon receipt of this request for access, the City announced it was condemning the Auditorium and forbidding any public entry "due to various serious health and safety issues." Signage announcing the condemnation of the Auditorium was promptly posted on the building that week.

The EPPA was extremely disappointed by the City's actions regarding the Auditorium, citing the fact that the buildings were in use as recently as 2008 and public tours were conducted in 2009.

After the 2012 elections, the East Point City Council continued its pursuit of a new City Government Complex to replace its current rented quarters and a new RFP for such was issued in the first quarter of 2013. On May 20, City Council voted to accept the contract of East Point City Center Partners. The following is from the minutes of that meeting:

**26. Discussion on the Government Complex (Mayor Pittman)**

Regular Meeting Minutes May 20, 2013

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Presented by: City Council Mayor Earnestine Pittman

Council Member Reed motion to adopt option #3 City hall, customer care center, auditorium and Fire Station #1 are demolished and library is relocated or renovated and replace with a government center, conference center and parking deck for discussion with Council Member Martin providing the second.

*Council Member Rhodes made a substitute motion to go with Option #3 to move forward with a Government Center, Conference Center, Parking Deck and Performing Arts Center and to demolish City Hall, Customer Care Center, Auditorium and Fire Station #1 and for the city library to be relocated and to move forward with contract negotiations including bond financing options with Council Member Hubbard providing the second. The motion carried unanimously with Council Member Slaughter- Gibbons voting "No". Council Member Martin was not present.*

(Emphasis by this writer.)

Please note the amendment added specific action steps concerning contract negotiations and bond funding that shows the speed with which City Council intends to pursue this project. Also please note on the attached presentation (EP City Center Partners.pdf) by contract winners East Point City Center Partners, LLC, the accelerated build schedule for the new Complex.

*4. Has any recent or past preservation activity occurred on behalf of the property? Please identify any entities, organizations and/or agencies that have a goal to save the property. Are they willing to work towards the implementation of a preservation plan for the property?*

The East Point Preservation Alliance (EPPA) was formed by a group of East Point citizens "for the purpose of preserving the historical architecture and character of downtown East Point, GA, including the City Hall, Auditorium, Library and Victory Park." EPPA does not oppose the construction of additional office space for City staff and facilities but believes that any such new structure could easily be built adjacent to the existing buildings.

In late October 2011, EPPA successfully lobbied the City Council and Mayor to pass a Motion to instruct the City Manager to perform any outstanding maintenance to the City Hall, Auditorium, and Library structures.

In December 2011, the group submitted a petition to the City Council requesting an independent assessment of all three structures to determine their then-current state and what was needed to fully rehabilitate them.

Three firms offered their assessments of the properties and the winning bid is also attached to this document (city facilities.pdf). In sum, all are certainly salvageable and in the case of City Hall, can be occupied now. The cost for initial maintenance for all three buildings was \$1.3 million, an amount that has undoubtedly gone up since no maintenance or repairs have yet been done. The bid was never taken up.

The group Save East Point City Hall was formed in June 2013 to save all the buildings listed here, based on a groundswell of opposition to the recently passed motion to build a new City Complex that requires the demolition of City Hall, the Auditorium, and the renovation and moving of the Library, thereby destroying its initial integrity and historical value.

Both groups, along with the East Point Historical Society (EPHS) and a wide variety of East Point citizens are ready to undertake the steps needed to preserve and maintain these structures. The EPHS is a supporter of these preservation efforts; has offered open use of their materials for research toward historic designation; and opened their facility as a meeting place for preservation groups.

*5. Is there any potential opposition to including this site on the list? If yes or maybe, provide the names, titles and contact information of those opposing the nomination. Please indicate reasons for each person's opposition, if known.*

The East Point City Center Partners, LLC won the contract for the new City Complex. The principal developers would be in opposition to saving the buildings. They are:

**Jo Ann Chitty**, Selig Enterprises, Inc.;

**Jerome Russell**, H. J. Russell & Company;

**Michael Hightower**, The Collaborative Firm, LLC; (see attached Atlanta Business Chronicle editorial: [AtlBisChron\\_MHightower.pdf](#))

**Larry Dingle**, Carolina South Real Estate, LLC; and  
project manager **Bonnie Dean**, Selig Enterprises, Inc.

The presentation by the Partners is attached (EP City Center Partners.pdf). The second option that involves demolition of all buildings is the path chosen by the East Point City Council.

*6. What would you hope to accomplish if your project is placed on the Places in Peril list?*

By saving these buildings we preserve our past and enhance our future by creating a city core that will bring new and old residents back to our downtown. Downtown East Point will again be the economic and social engine of the city. By remembering and honoring our past, we recognize where we came from, accept its beauty and its ugliness, and give it integrity while sending a message that our past and our present can mesh into one truly diverse and vibrant community.

We believe that the charming, small-town character of East Point City must be preserved and celebrated. Rather than tearing down these symbols of our shared history, they should be cherished as valuable community assets and anchors for our City center. These structures will require money to restore and reopen, but they are well worth saving as they hold an intangible value that transcends cost issues. You can't easily put a price on a community's history—and that's what we are fighting to preserve.

NOMINATION CHECK LIST

- X Complete nomination form
- X 5 to 10 digital images – zipfile via email.
- X Additional support material

Release authorized by

(signature): \_\_\_\_\_

Type name and title here: Dee Claborn III, Spokesperson, East Point  
Preservation Alliance

Enter Date: June 7, 2013