

Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Feasibility Study

Chapter 5: Management Alternatives

Draft

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This section evaluates three management alternatives for the proposed heritage area. Each alternative explores the potential to protect the heritage resources, to secure funding, build partnerships, and bring groups together to tell the story of the Black Metropolis. The three alternatives include a no action scenario, a government-run heritage area, and designation as a NHA.

Alternative 1: What if no federal action is taken?

If, at the end of this feasibility study process, federal designation is not granted, the story and landscape of the Black Metropolis will endure. Failure to receive national designation would not be the first barrier the Commission has encountered. Local organizations will continue their independent efforts to preserve the heritage, stories, and physical landscape of the Black Metropolis. **This alternative assumes that business as usual will continue in the community; local community-based organizations will continue to preserve local heritage, although they will operate without high-level coordination.**

Community-based organizations

A number of community-based organizations in Bronzeville have developed local events and programming activities focused on historic themes that are cited as goals of the heritage area. These events and activities occur throughout the year within the study area and include historic tours, lectures, and educational programming. Looking forward, the Partnership will continue its mission of promoting heritage and cultural tourism, educating visitors on the legacy of the Great Migration. The Bronzeville Visitor Information Center will continue to be a central information portal for Bronzeville community events and activities, and other community-based organizations will continue to work in the neighborhood on a variety of issues including community development, economic development, education, housing, and more.

Institutions

Chicago is home to many major institutions that house historic artifacts that document the story of African-Americans in Chicago; some of these institutions include: the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago History Museum, DuSable Museum of African-American History, and the Museum of Science and Industry. In addition to museums, there are a number of higher education institutions whose faculty and former students are well-known African-Americans. From special collections, to curriculum, and renowned historians and professors, educational institutions like the University of Chicago, Illinois Institute of Technology, and Roosevelt University are closely tied to the story of Black Metropolis-Bronzeville.

Over the years, these institutions have developed a number of exhibits and educational resources, attracting students, tourists, and historians from across the country and around the



world. One of the benefits of having a wealth of arts and educational institutions is that many have the capacity to develop scholarly research and programming in-house as part of their missions. From time-to-time, there have been coordinated efforts to connect institutional exhibits to local history. This presents an opportunity to drive local economic development and tourism. A recent example is the Art Institute's exhibit "They Seek a City: Chicago and the Art of Migration, 1910 – 1950." This exhibit highlighted works of art birthed in the Black Metropolis – drawing thousands of visitors – yet lacked the direct tie back to the physical location of the Great Migration, which is located less than five miles from the Art Institute. The coordination of opportunities like this requires more staff capacity than local organizations have today.

Government

The three most involved government entities in the area to date are the State of Illinois (through the Illinois Bureau of Tourism and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources), City of Chicago, and local Alderman.

State of Illinois

In 2000, the Illinois Bureau of Tourism (IBOT), Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and the Illinois Tourism Alliance teamed up to attract African-American tourists to Illinois. The result of this partnership has been a multi-year statewide tourism campaign called "African-American Heritage & History in Illinois." This effort included the publication of an African-American travel guide, *The Soul of Illinois*, and an accompanying website.¹ Bronzeville events, institutions, and activities are actively promoted on this site.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is tasked with overseeing costal management, conservation, and urban and community forestry, among other environmental responsibilities for the State. In relation to the study area, IDNR manages the Illinois Costal Zone Boundary, which focuses strictly on the physical and environmental landscape included in this area. There are a number of opportunities, including small native garden planting, continued restoration of Burnham Wildlife Corridor, and citizen scientist programs, that the community could get involved with in partnership with IDNR.

City of Chicago

The City of Chicago, through its many divisions and departments, including the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) and DHED, can advance heritage assets in the Black Metropolis-Bronzeville area through preservation, event programming, and land use and economic development planning for specific corridors. The Commission on Chicago Landmarks has designated a number of sites and districts in the study area as landmarks and continues to assist in preservation efforts. DCASE coordinates the Gospel Music Festival, the Blues Music Festival, and other festivals that celebrate the rich music and cultural heritage of the area. DHED continues to assist local planning efforts as the

¹See <http://www.illinoistourism.org/soul/>.



planning department of the City, and also assists with implementation activities on past planning efforts referenced in Chapter 1.

Alderman

There are six Chicago wards located within the study area (wards 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, and 20). Aldermen are tasked with representing the interests of ward residents, and serve on City Council. Aldermanic support for this project has varied, and is directly correlated with percentage of each ward encapsulated within the study area boundary. The majority of the study area falls within three wards: Ward 3, Alderman Pat Dowell; Ward 4, Alderman William Burns; and Ward 20, Alderman Willie Cochran. Aldermen would continue to provide support for local events and activities in each of their respective wards. In the past, this has included verbal and written support, meeting space, and in some cases liaising between the wards and the City of Chicago on events planning.

Assessment

The history of the Black Metropolis and Bronzeville is peppered with a legacy of community strength and determination. From early social service agencies to the locally-generated economy, Bronzeville residents have overcome many obstacles. Even as urban renewal tore at the seams of the community, community activists came together to preserve Bronzeville's historic buildings with the understanding that the community's place in history was important to preserve. Since then, the number of community-based organizations with missions related to the preservation and interpretation of Black Metropolis-Bronzeville has grown exponentially. It is anticipated that without federal designation, this multitude of local champions will continue to beat the drum, letting Chicagoans know the history of African-Americans in Bronzeville.

The strength of the community, as it relates to the proposed heritage area, is truly the partnerships forged around the numerous heritage area themes. Organizations and institutions located in and around Bronzeville have developed partnerships around educational tours and programming to share the story of Chicago's role in African-American history. Today, this programming is, for the most part, local in nature – attended in large part by Chicago residents. There are, however, a few state-wide initiatives that highlight the Black Metropolis' role in the Great Migration. In addition to the State's African-American tourism promotion, the next state-wide initiative will be the Great Migration Centennial celebration in 2016.

Currently, there are numerous local organizations competing for limited grant-funds for a variety of projects. Without a coordinating entity, community-based organizations seeking funding for such a broad range of projects presents a challenge to strategically implement heritage area goals and activities. While many community-based organizations share a number of cultural values, each organization has a unique mission and limited capacity to take on broader goals of the heritage area. Without a coordinated voice from the Bronzeville



community, opportunities to tie major institutional programming into local events and activities will most likely continue to go on, albeit separately.

It is anticipated that without a strong coordinating entity, whose mission dedicated to broad-based engagement, the heritage area will not be able to reach its fullest potential. Therefore, the ‘no federal action’ alternative will see the continuation of preservation of heritage area resources, with limited ability to secure funding, build partnerships and bring groups together to tell the story of the Black Metropolis and the Great Migration. Many organizations have spent years attempting to engage the broader Chicago community in a dialogue on their history with small wins but overall limited success. Without federal designation as a heritage area, a coordinated organization with broad community-based support, seems unlikely. The ability of community-based organizations to engage the nation in the story of the legacy of the Black Metropolis will be limited.

Alternative 2: Could a local government operate a heritage area in Bronzeville?

The PAC also explored what might happen if the Black Metropolis heritage area was preserved and promoted through a local unit of government – city, county, or state. **Under this alternative it is assumed the unit of government responsible for oversight would manage the heritage area by designating a department or agency to lead the implementation of proposed heritage area activities.**

Community-based organizations

In the City of Chicago there are a number of organizations – called delegate organizations – which receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding distributions from the City’s federal CDBG allocation. These organizations receive this funding because their “objectives include small business development, site development or area-wide marketing, maintenance and management within a specified commercial business district.”²

There are seven delegate organizations that are located within or share a boundary with the proposed heritage area. Each delegate organization represents a variety of local interests – from business support to land use planning. Delegate organizations in or near the study area have limited staff (averaging four employees), and each has a board of directors providing oversight of the organization’s work. A number of the delegate organizations have been major participants in past planning efforts in the community; in fact, many are actively working in the neighborhood to implement recommendations of these plans. Delegate agencies, like chambers, are particularly successful at building partnerships and economic support for local businesses and could utilize this skill set to support a government coordinated heritage area. Delegate organizations that have overlapping boundaries with the study area are:

² See http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/delegate_agencieconomicdevelopment.html.



- 51st Street Business Association
- Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce
- Near South Planning Board
- Quad Communities Development Corporation
- The Renaissance Collaborative, Inc.
- South East Chicago Commission
- South Loop Chamber of Commerce

Institutions

Major arts and educational institutions could support a government coordinated heritage area through programing partnerships and providing tangible resources like space for events and activities or shared marketing. The largest institution in the study area is IIT, a private research university. IIT has been a partner on this project since its inception providing committee meeting rooms and public meeting space. IIT has a particularly strong architecture program and therefore would be best suited to participate in historic preservation or arts and culture themes of the heritage area.

Government

The three likely government entities considered to coordinate heritage area activities are the State of Illinois, City of Chicago, and local Alderman.

State of Illinois

If the State were to become the coordinating entity of the heritage area, it is likely that a department of the State would be assigned the responsibility. The two departments that would be the most likely candidates are the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

DCEO presently oversees the Illinois Office of Tourism, which is responsible for the State's tourism website,³ providing Illinois travel guides, along with a calendar of festivals, and events across the state. DCEO also oversees the campaign for African-American Heritage and History in Illinois.⁴ This campaign already promotes many of Bronzeville's partners, such as the Bronzeville Visitor Information Center, DuSable Museum, and Willie Dixon's Blues Heaven Foundation (former Chess Records Studio).

IDNR's relationship to the heritage area is primarily focused on environmental preservation and education. The study area falls within the Calumet Core Initiative of the Millennium Reserve project. The Millennium Reserve: Calumet Core is a 220-square mile project with a goal

³ See www.enjoyillinois.org.

⁴ See www.illinoistourism.org/soul.



to catalyze partnerships, honor the area's industrial past, restore the natural ecosystem, and create sustainable economic growth.⁵ The proposed Black Metropolis-Bronzeville heritage area is located at the northern most point of this initiative's boundary and could stand as the gateway from the City into the Millennium Reserve.

City of Chicago

City departments most likely to coordinate heritage area activities would be DCASE, which focuses on arts and educational events across the city, and DHED, which houses the City's economic development, historic preservation, land use, and sustainability planning.

Ward Alderman

As mentioned in the first alternative, there are six Chicago wards located within the study area. The three Aldermen who represent the majority of the study area (Dowell, Burns, and Cochran) are in support of local-heritage-area activities, but lack the resources to focus full-time energy on building partnerships and seeking financial support for the heritage area. However, local Aldermen need to be partners on this project because they can help pave the way for increased preservation and local events and activities.

Assessment

If a government organization were to take the lead on coordinating and implementing heritage area initiatives, it would be imperative that the government entity partner with a local organization to reach residents, organizations, and other stakeholders. While it is within the City's means to task delegate agencies with various activities, the primary focus of local delegate agencies is economic development; therefore, coordinating heritage area activities without an increase in funding would be difficult. Another downside to tapping a delegate organization to coordinate the heritage area is that there is no one delegate that is presently responsible for the entirety of the proposed heritage area.

A City- or State-operated heritage area could be a valuable partnership and could still be pursued for the Black Metropolis-Bronzeville area, regardless of whether or not the area is granted a federal NHA designation. While planning for it would require a separate process, this feasibility study could serve as an initial step and a valuable reference as it contains information that is potentially relevant to both designations. A State- or City-operated heritage area is likely to have some of the same potential benefits as a federally designated NHA. Benefits could include improved visitor information (maps, wayfinding signs and kiosks, brochures, etc.) and wide-reaching dissemination of information about the area's historical, natural and recreational assets. The enhancement of tourism activities in the proposed heritage area would be a likely outcome and has economic potential; however, a State- or City-operated heritage area would have limited resources because the heritage area would not be eligible for the seed money that

⁵ See <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/millennium-reserve/Pages/default.aspx>.



is usually granted with the federal designation of an NHA. Additionally, there are very limited State or City funds to support its planning or the implementation of a heritage area.

Upon further exploration of the City-operated heritage area, the primary challenge for the City is that it must weigh local investments evenly across Chicago's 50 wards -- making it particularly challenging for the City to be able to invest the necessary time and resources to effectively manage and promote the heritage area. As it stands today, the City has concentrated efforts in tourism and cultural event programming. It is anticipated that DCASE will continue to coordinate major arts and cultural events in the study area. HPres and the Landmarks Commission will also continue to play a role in local preservation efforts; however, preserving local heritage assets still must come from community residents and business owners.

Presently, local governments have a number of departments and agencies that could fulfill discrete goals of the heritage area, but have limited capacity and financial resources available to manage, implement, and coordinate the proposed diversity of preservation and heritage area activities. This management alternative is very unlikely. To develop this feasibility study, the PAC has been in close contact with many of the likely candidates discussed in this alternative, none of which have expressed interest in operating the proposed heritage area. DHED and HPres, both of which are represented on the PAC, have stated that the City would not be able to fulfill the responsibilities and obligations that come with operating a heritage area. In addition, both the City and State are experiencing serious budget shortfalls which would limit the amount of resources available to sustain operation of the heritage area.

Alternative 3: What if Bronzeville receives NHA designation?

If NHA status were granted, a local coordinating entity would be created to organize local efforts related to the Black Metropolis NHA. **With the creation of a local coordinating entity, the heritage area would benefit from broad partnerships and could focus exclusively on the stated goals of the heritage area – to foster economic development and cultural heritage tourism.**

Community-based organizations

The benefit of NHA designation is having a coordinating entity that will be able to lend capacity to ongoing efforts. As mentioned in the first alternative, there is a need to bring together the vast number of local players to better coordinate the activities and events that already occur in the heritage area. The coordinating entity would be set up with minimal staff but with a distinct committee structure representing the host of players from the community, City, and State. This management structure would help to ensure that this new entity takes into consideration the breadth of the work that is presently under way in the community. Once the coordinating entity



is created, its focus should be to leverage financial resources and new partnerships to lend broad-based support to community organizations.

Institutions

It is anticipated that the coordinating entity would explore local, regional, and national partnerships. A key goal would be to tie major exhibitions at cultural and educational institutions back to the community. Through its committee structure, the coordinating entity could also tap committee members to lend expertise and partnerships to large-scale exhibitions. The coordinating entity should also build relationships with other designated African-American NHAs to support programming that makes the physical connection of Great Migration stories.

Government

Congressman Bobby Rush, State Senators Mattie Hunter and Kwame Raul, IDNR, Cook County, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD), the Chicago Park District, and City of Chicago divisions and departments including DHED, Department of Transportation, and HPres have all met with the Commission and expressed interest in supporting (and in some cases participating on) a national heritage area coordinating entity body. DCASE and the Illinois Office of Tourism have recognized that a heritage area can improve the image of Bronzeville and develop new attractions. A designated coordinating entity would mean that government partners would have a single organization with which they can partner.

Assessment

In the last decade, the City of Chicago has invested over a billion dollars in infrastructure improvements within the Black Metropolis-Bronzeville study area. These improvements have been intended to stimulate economic development, improve quality of life for residents, upgrade the visitor experience, and draw visitors to the community. Much of this work recognizes that the study area has a historic past worthy of recognition, and is acknowledged through signage, public art, and programming. The NHA designation would complement and expand these efforts bringing even greater awareness and appreciation to the community.

Defining actual commitments, rather than general support for heritage area designation, will be the focus of the PAC and the Commission now that the feasibility study is complete. Key to the heritage area's success will be the connections the coordinating entity makes to existing attractions and amenities, and the strength of the partnerships with City, State, and local organizations. The PAC and the Commission have been laying the groundwork for this to eventually happen.

The strength of this alternative is that it will validate the work of so many in the community. The feasibility study and hope of receiving the designation has been a rallying cry for the community, bringing numerous organizations together. Based on discussions with the organizations at the table, the preferred coordinating entity for the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area is a not-for-profit organization that represents local government, alongside a



wide range of community-based organizations, educational and cultural institutions, and community residents. The Commission has been operating for a number of years without NHA designation with the hope that one day this vision will become a reality. Their pre-designation planning efforts serve as the foundation for this feasibility study, which will inform many aspects of the work plan for the proposed coordinating entity.

A recent study completed by the Alliance of National Heritage Areas states that the typical NHA leverages \$5.50 to every \$1 of federal investment.⁶ Not only that, but NHAs create jobs, are models for public engagement, and many have proven track records of success. This formal recognition of the Bronzeville community's role in African-American history has the potential to leverage funding from many civic, cultural, and humanities-based organizations (see Appendix 3: for potential funding opportunities). **Federal designation would provide an opportunity to increase economic development through heritage-based tourism programs and ultimately meet the specific goals of the heritage area.**

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⁶ Alliance of National Heritage Areas, 2010 Annual Report.

