



December 10, 2012

Black Metropolis National Heritage Area (BMNHA) Feasibility Study

Project Advisory Committee Meeting

Tuesday, November 27th, 2012

IIT Tower, 9th Floor

10 W. 35th Street

10:00 am- 12:00 pm

I. ATTENDANCE

Committee Members

Beth Johnson – City of Chicago, Department of Historical Preservation (HPres)

Leroy Kennedy – Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT)

Yvette LeGrand – City Rep/ BMNHAC steering committee member

Christopher Reed – City Rep/Landmark Commission/ BMNHAC steering committee member

Pete Saunders – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)

Christopher Vaughn – WTTW (Window to the World) Television, Outreach

Observing

Jodi Haulihan – Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT)

CMAP Staff working on project

Samantha Robinson, Pete Saunders, James Meerdink and Sef Okoth

Absent with Apology

Paula Robinson – BMNHAC/PAC

Kendra Smith - CMAP

II. MEETING NOTES

The meeting began at 10:20 am with introductions.

The meeting was chaired Pete Saunders from CMAP.

Pete Saunders (CMAP): Outlined the goals of the meeting, as follows:

- review the NHA mission, vision, goals, themes and statement of significance
- review an outline of the History section of the Feasibility Study, and suggest additions and edits
- discuss future project partners
- discuss the management plan, the “coordinating entity” and its structure

Sef Okoth (CMAP): Gave a brief overview of the NHA mission, vision, goals, themes and statement of significance, which had been sent in advance to the Project Advisory Committee

(PAC) members. He then asked the PAC members to provide feedback/ comments and reaffirm the statements so that they can be sent to the National Park Service (NPS) for review and also to other stakeholders.

He pointed out that all the materials that have been created and shared with the committee to that point had been DRAFT copies. As such, nothing has been shared with the NPS. The committee agreed that the document could be shared with the NPS.

Leroy Kennedy (IIT): Leroy asked how CMAP is coordinating the BMNHA process with the Bronzeville Retail Initiative (BRI). NHA has an economic development component, so bringing in conclusions drawn from the BRI into the NHA makes sense.

Sef Okoth (CMAP): CMAP is aware of the overlap between aspects of the two projects; however, at this time there is a separation between the projects as the PAC should focus on the creation of the Feasibility Report. Discussions that regard overlap between the two projects can be undertaken by committee members. Also, future community engagement activities will certainly involve meeting with other interest groups including the BRI retail partners and organizations that have participated in the BRI. He pointed out that the Retail Development Planning project has advanced and is in the final stages. The final plan document is currently being drafted now while the feasibility study is just getting off the ground. It wouldn't make sense to try to merge the two efforts now but at a later date, when the community engagement process for the feasibility study begins, we will definitely want to meet with the BRI group to seek their support.

He pointed out that ideally, we would like to meet all entities that have an interest in the NHA project.

Yvette LeGrand (BMNHAC): The narrative (Statement of Significance) includes a mention of businesses that left the area. Maybe it should also contain a mention of businesses that stayed and became successful, for example those located on 47th Street. This would provide a tie in between history and current development.

Pete Saunders (CMAP): The focus right now needs to be on history, and how it informs the feasibility study. Development linkages can come at a later point.

Sef Okoth (CMAP): Committee can drive discussion of retail development with retail partners in Bronzeville (entities participating in the BRI). Most of the connections that we are going to make with the community groups are going to be through the committee members since you already know the folks in the community.

Leroy Kennedy (IIT): Pointed out that there are major educational institutions in Bronzeville with significance to the African American community and the Metropolis story. They should be included under the education theme. He mentioned institutions like IIT that produced the first African American Chemical Engineer, Northeastern Illinois University's Center for Inner City Studies, DeLaSalle (where approximately one-third of the student population consisted of African-Americans), the Abraham Lincoln Center, and the University of Chicago's first location at 35th Street near Lake Shore Drive.

Yvette LeGrand (BMNHAC): Under journalism, John Johnson, of Jet and Ebony fame, should be mentioned. His connection to Mr. Pace and Mr. Dickerson should be noted. The Negro Digest should be highlighted.

Pete Saunders (CMAP): Samantha would like to outline the research and writing that has been undertaken with regards to the History section of the Feasibility Study.

Samantha Robinson (CMAP): Samantha introduced the outline of the History, as well as the list of references that was generated in preparing the outline. She first raised the question of how the history section should be approached. Specifically, how are populations other than African Americans to be included in the Great Migration and Black Metropolis story?

Yvette LeGrand (BMNHAC): Many of the buildings, neighborhoods, and institutions were “hand me downs” from previous settlers, i.e. European ethnic groups. So certainly, they should be mentioned.

Christopher Reed (BMNHAC): Discuss the background of the 50,000 or so African-Americans who were already settled in Chicago. The history section should highlight the blending that took place between the people who were already in Chicago and those who migrated to the area. Also, many of the churches are converted synagogues, so the Jewish community was there. Also, the ethnic and class distinctions that existed in the area can be seen in the housing that was eventually inhabited by Black migrants. In fact, many whites violated the restrictive covenants and sold houses to African Americans. It was the unfriendly judicial/court system that kept the restrictive covenants alive. When people talk of the restrictive covenants, they have to think of elasticity of the boundaries because the boundaries kept changing.

Beth Johnson (City of Chicago HPres): It is important to look at the history of the community in totality so that we can give a complete picture.

Pete Saunders (CMAP): For this project, the African American community should be the “funnel” through which we view the history in the area. The Great Migration and the Black Metropolis, then, link all that touches Chicago’s Black community to national themes and significance.

Samantha Robinson (CMAP): Samantha asked for comments on the outline from the committee. (Several general comments are listed below, while specific additions will be incorporated into the revised outline itself.)

[Leroy Kennedy (IIT) left the meeting. Jodi Haulihan (IIT) remained in the meeting in his place.]

Comments regarding the History outline:

Yvette LeGrand (BMNHAC): The section on restrictive housing covenants should acknowledge bombing/violence, overcrowding, redlining and blockbusting. The list of jazz clubs is not complete. Also, some distinction should be made regarding which were or were not black-owned. The Regal theater needs to be mentioned.

Beth Johnson (Chicago HPres): Moseley School should not be the first school discussed in the education section as it is not the most significant Bronzeville School. It was actually a school for juvenile delinquents, so discussion of its place in Bronzeville history may be difficult.

Christopher Reed (BMNHAC): The importance of the 1st Congressional District, and its Second Ward, as the “banner district” for Black Republicanism should be mentioned. Congressman Edward Herbert Wright is of specific interest and underrepresented in the literature. The 1st Congressional District was also instrumental in the political careers of Carol Moseley Braun (the first and only female U.S. Senator from Illinois) and President Barack Obama. To complete the history section, we might want to consider forming a history sub-committee. I would be willing to discuss this possibility.

Yvette LeGrand (BMNHAC): Several additions to the sports theme: Jesse Owens and the Savoy Five, which became the Harlem Globetrotters. The Savoy Ballroom should also be mentioned. In religion, the influence of African Americans in Chicago’s Catholic churches, especially Fr. Tolton at St. Monica, should be explored as well as St. Thomas Episcopal and the Eighth Church of Christ Scientist. The social justice and civil rights section should mention Ada S. McKinley Community Services.

Christopher Reed (BMNHAC): The arts and culture birthed out of the Black Metropolis is related to the Harlem Renaissance. The idea that 1940s and 1950s Chicago revived Black culture that had dissipated in Harlem is an important theme, and one that is worthy of exploration in the History section. The history section should highlight how Chicago’s Black Metropolis produced Harold Washington, Chicago’s first African-American Mayor, and President Barack Obama. Our President used Mayor Washington’s political and community strategies throughout his campaigning.

Sef Okoth (CMAP): Let’s move to the discussion of potential partners. Paula Robinson has some ideas on this, although she is not here today. Are there other groups you’d like to have involved? The Committee is largely responsible for forming these relationships.

Christopher Reed (BMNHAC): Black Chicago History Forum is a good one. Mr. Reed has names and will share with Sef.

Yvette LeGrand (BMNHAC): Churches that have been in the area for a long time may be good resources. I will check with a few. The idea is that they may have long-time members who grew up in the area and can share stories or help with community engagement.

Yvette LeGrand (BMNHAC): To help with outreach, Ms. LeGrand recommended exhibits on the NHA project be placed at several local libraries. (Chicago Bee, Woodson, and Hall libraries were mentioned in subsequent discussions.)

Sef Okoth (CMAP): Illinois Department of Natural Resources is interested in being part of the process. (Note: IDNR manages historical preservation initiatives, in addition to wildlife and natural resources.) We don’t have to make a decision on their inclusion today as we are missing several committee members, but we should start thinking of how we can get them involved and what role they can play.

Sef Okoth (CMAP) : The next meeting should be focused on the “coordinating entity,” which is how NPS is now referring to the management entity.

Pete Saunders (CMAP): To add to what Sef has suggested, NPS has indicated that the coordinating entity and the plan are key in determining whether investment is warranted in the Black Metropolis area. The goal for this committee is to show that the coordinating entity is not wholly dependent on government funding.

Sef Okoth (CMAP): The committee needs to feel confident in the coordinating entity, whether it is the current BMNHAC, or a modified version of that entity, or an entirely new group. It needs to be inclusive and broad enough in representation.

Pete Saunders (CMAP): As we don’t have many of the committee members here today, we will not go into further discussion of the management plan or coordinating entity today.
[Agreement from all present.]

III. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will focus on Public Engagement (outreach, community meetings and media promotion) where we will start looking at planning a few community meetings in early 2013. There will also be a little pre-discussion regarding ways to approach management & financial feasibility for the NHA

Tuesday, January 29th, 10 AM to noon is the time agreed upon for the next meeting.

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER.

The location is TBD.