



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

ATTENDANCE

Present: Beth Johnson – City of Chicago, (HPres), Leroy Kennedy – Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), Yvette LeGrand –BMNHAC , Christopher Reed –Landmark Commission/ BMNHAC steering committee member, *Christopher Vaughn – WTTW (Window to the World) Television*

Absent: Paula Robinson – BMNHAC/PAC

Observing: Jodi Houlihan – Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT)

CMAP Staff: Samantha Robinson, Pete Saunders, James Meerdink and Sef Okoth

MEETING NOTES

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began at 10:20 am; chaired by Pete Saunders from CMAP

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

1. Meeting Notes

- CMAP gave a brief overview of the NHA mission, vision, goals, themes, and statement of significance. PAC members were asked to provide feedback/ comments and reaffirm the statements so that they can be sent to the National Park Service (NPS) and stakeholders for review.

- The committee 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.
 - 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. CMAP 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 would not make sense to try to merge the two efforts now but later, when the community engagement process for the feasibility study begins, we will definitely want to meet with the BRI group to seek their support.

- The committee pointed out that 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.
 - The focus right now needs to be on history, and how it informs the feasibility study. Development linkages can come at a later point.
 - 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.

- The committee 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, De LaSalle (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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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. (i.e. Jewish community, ethnic and class distinctions and restrictive covenants)

- 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.

2. Comments regarding the History outline:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

3. Outreach & Partners

- Black Chicago History Forum is a good one.
- Churches that have been in the area for a long time may be good resources. 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.
- To help with outreach, the committee recommended exhibits on the NHA project be placed at several local libraries. (Chicago Bee, Woodson, and Hall libraries were mentioned)
- 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.)

4. Coordinating Entity

- The next meeting should be focused on the “coordinating entity,” which is how NPS is now referring to the management entity.
- 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.
- 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.

NEXT MEETING- Tuesday, January 29th, 10 am to noon, the location is TBD.

THERE WILL BE NO MEETING IN DECEMBER.