



# Historic Montopolis Negro School

Supplemental handout for Open House, November 6, 2021

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## Site and Building History

- Original 1890s school at nearby location destroyed by flood in 1930s
- New building established on site in mid-1930s on land donated to Travis County by St. Edward's Baptist Church
- Travis County transferred ownership to AISD in 1952
- Until 1954, Brown v Board of Education, public education was racially segregated by law
- School closed in 1962 when AISD formally began integration of schools
- Building served as Montopolis Church of Christ from mid 1960s until 1980s
- Portion of Montopolis Church of Christ tract purchased and adjacent tract condemned through eminent domain for Grove Blvd Extension in 1986-87

## Community Advocacy that led to acquisition by the City of Austin

- 2015-2017: 500 Montopolis Dr. purchased by real estate development firm. Property owner files demolition permit. The community spent countless hours over many years advocating strongly for the building and site's preservation.
- 2017: Ultimately, due to the community's efforts, council determined that 500 Montopolis Dr deserved to not just be preserved, but placed into the public realm and transformed into a museum
- 2018-20: After city was unable to agree with owner on purchase price for property, the City moved forward to successfully acquire the property through eminent domain. City has possession, but litigation is ongoing over purchase price
- 2019-20: PARD initiates and completes protective measures for building, stores all sensitive material off site in climate-controlled space, provides on-site storage for non-fixed furniture, completes pest and vermin exclusion, and completes hazardous material abatement.



**RESOLUTION NO. 20170928-056**

**WHEREAS**, the Montopolis Negro School is located at 500 Montopolis Drive and is owned by KEEP Investment Group, LLC; and

**WHEREAS**, the Montopolis Negro School is the last remaining of 42 "Negro Schools" in Travis County, a vestige of segregated education in the Austin community; and

**WHEREAS**, the Historic Landmark Commission and Planning Commission both expressed a desire to preserve the property; and

**WHEREAS**, the property's owner has expressed a willingness to sell the property to the City of Austin; and

**WHEREAS**, the Montopolis . Negro School is of undeniable historic significance and should be preserved by any means possible; and

**WHEREAS**, the Austin City Council passed Resolution 20170831-060 with a unanimous vote, calling for a significant increase in the allocation of Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue for FYI 8, a portion of which may be available for purchase of historic properties for preservation; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

The City Manager is directed to negotiate acquisition of the property and return to Council with a status of the negotiation or a request for authority, by January 31, 2018, to acquire the property upon which the Montopolis Negro School sits if an agreement can be reached.

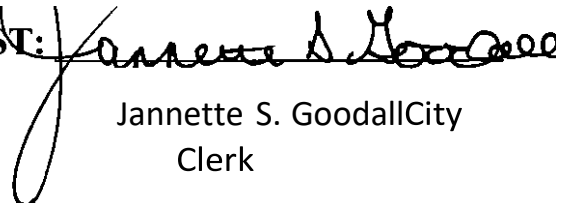
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager is directed to use Chapter 351 Hotel Occupancy Tax funds, or other lawfully available funds, to complete this purchase, if it can be completed.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager is directed to prepare a plan for restoration, management, operation, and funding of the property as a historic asset and museum that would attract tourists and convention delegates. Included in that plan should be an option for the City partnering with a nonprofit or community entity that would operate and/or maintain the property to attract tourists and convention delegates. A stakeholder process involving historic preservation professionals should occur to ensure the proper and correct preservation of the property and its grounds for all future generations of Austinites.

**ADOPTED:** September 28, 2017

**ATTIST:**   
Jannette S. Goodall City  
Clerk

## Email from Kimberly McNeeley on September 27, 2001

Good Morning-

Thank you for inviting me to meet with you and the community. I appreciate the opportunity to connect and serve. I am writing to recap what I believe I heard on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> and propose a stakeholder centric path forward for developing the vision planning scope of work.

Below is a summary of what I heard from the meeting stakeholders:

- The community deserves an opportunity to be involved in
  - the decision making processes
  - generating ideas
  - suggesting the path forward
  - **writing the scope of work for the planning efforts**
- The community would like to have a voice and leadership role in the preservation of the Historic Montopolis Negro School
- Any engagement facilitation must be representative of the community- a facilitator must bring to the table some perspective of the African American/Black community
- Non-community members cannot be overlooked and must also be included because many individuals with interest in the Historic School have moved away or do not live in Montopolis now- but that does not diminish their interest and commitment to the preservation
- The Montopolis Community is very willing and eager to participate and provide direction as it relates to preservation and planning
- There needs to be multiple meetings utilizing both in person and virtual meeting techniques to ensure comprehensive participation (to accommodate everyone's schedules)

Based upon the above feedback, I propose the following for consideration:

October 27<sup>th</sup> from 4 to 6 pm- a virtual introductory meeting (similar to the September 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting)

where community members who were unable to attend Thursday can be informed of the work completed to date, ask questions and provide feedback. An example of the information to be shared is as follows:

### *Council Action History*

- Direction provided by Council Resolution
- Acquire the property
- Prepare a plan for restoration, management, operation and funding of the property as a historical asset and museum
- Include in the plan an option for partnering with a non-profit or community entity for operations and maintenance of the property
- Conduct a stakeholder process to include historic preservation professionals

### *Actions to Date*

- Received \$50,000 to
  - Inspected space and secured the space including fencing to ensure protection of property
  - Covered openings



- Removed Trees
- Conducted hazardous materials mitigation
- Secured Mobile mini storage of some property
- Collected and secured artifacts in a climate controlled space
- Established a City website about the project
- Create Signage
- Secured \$150,000 in funding to prepare a community driven plan for restoration, management, operations and funding of the property.
  - Staff has done some preliminary scoping to determine procurement process and schedule however, the meetings suggested below will determine the scope to released

#### *Question and Answer Opportunity/Information Sharing*

*Collect feedback regarding future meeting related to Scope of Work development for a plan inclusive of restoration, management, operations and funding of the property (including but not limited to locations, dates, times, structure, etc.)*

November 6<sup>th</sup>- Open House/tour of the Historic Montopolis Negro School from 10 am to 12 pm

Staff will be on site to facilitate discussion, answer questions, listen to feedback

November/December, based upon community feedback schedule multiple meetings to gather feedback in the development of a plan inclusive of restoration, management, operations and funding of the property

To date the basic feedback I heard about the meetings is as follows

- Weekday evening meeting option
- Weekend meeting
- Virtual meeting option
- Consider survey
- Meetings to have smaller focus group component to talk about specific areas of the Scope of Work
- Include an opportunity for individuals to rotate through subject areas

Prior to issuing the scope of work- create an opportunity for the community to see outcome.

Please advise if I have captured the feedback. Once your feedback is received, the PARD team can communicate with both the meeting stakeholders and the broader community as it relates to scheduling the meetings.

Lastly, please know I am actively working with the Transportation Department as it relates to the road extension item. I hope to provide you and the other community members an update in mid-October. It may be sooner.

As always, thank you for your advocacy.

Best Regards-

Kimberly McNeeley, CPRP, Director, Austin Parks and Recreation