



OFFICE OF MAYOR ANDY SCHOR

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Mayor Schor Announces “Paving the Way” Research and Documentation Project

National Parks Service awards the City of Lansing \$39,400 to tell the story of the impact of the construction of I-496 on Lansing’s vibrant African American community in the ‘60’s

(LANSING) – Mayor Andy Schor today announced that the City of Lansing has been awarded a \$39,400 grant from the National Parks Service to tell the story of the impact of the construction of I-496 on Lansing’s vibrant African American community. The community was centered on Main Street (now Malcolm X Street) and St. Joseph Street between Washington Avenue and Clare Street, prior to being displaced due the project.

“We are delighted to have received this grant from the National Parks Service to tell an important part of Lansing’s history directly from those impacted,” said Mayor Schor. “We are looking forward to the documenting of this project while working with our friends at the Historical Society of Greater Lansing and members of our African American community.”

More than 840 homes and businesses in the heart of the African American community were demolished to make way for the expressway. The impact study of the dislocation will explore what is thought to be a chain of events that included an acceleration of white flight to the suburbs, redlining, bussing, construction of public housing and ultimately the integration of Lansing neighborhoods.

Bill Castanier, president of the Historical Society, said the project has been a goal of the organization for a number of years and the Parks Service grant, which is designed to preserve African American Civil Rights History, will bring it to fruition.

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“Tens of thousands of vehicles use I-496 each day and the drivers, generally, don’t think about the hundreds of families who gave up their homes, community and social connections,” Castanier said.

The Historical Society will work with the African American community to collect oral histories from those affected by the dislocation. The Historical Society will also recreate a virtual community showing the homes and businesses destroyed using archived photographs from the Stebbins Real Estate Collection and the Belon Real Estate Collection at the Capitol Area District Library Local History Room.

Users will be able to click on locations along I-496 to view photographs and detailed information of the homes before they were demolished, as well as gather information about who lived there and where they moved to as result of the dislocation. The grant also details lost grocery stores, dry cleaners, cafes and other businesses frequented by African Americans.

The Historical Society and Capital Area District Library (CADL) will host several events at CADL’s downtown branch and area African American Churches to collect stories, scan family photographs and collect artifacts that can be used in an exhibit that will be mounted at the Library of Michigan in 2019. A video detailing the project and its participants will be produced by the Lansing Public Media Center.

An advisory council has been created to help develop the project as it moves forward. Members of the council include: Derrick Quinney, Desiree Quinney, Marilyn Coulter, John Aerni Floessner, Barbara Roberts Mason, Willard Walker, Randy Riley, David Siwik, Adolph Burton, Kenney Turner, Greg Eaton, Joel Ferguson, Helen Mickens, Scott Duimstra, Joe Darden, Eugene Cain, Maxine Cain, Lisa Fine, Jessica Benavides, Lisa Fine, Dulles (Dale) Copedge, Prince Spann, Joe Graves and Michael Rodriguez.

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