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Historic Bruce Street School Conceptual Design Unveiling Now Planned for September

Juneteenth Project Update to Take Place Virtually on Friday, June 17



Photo: Participants stand on a viewing platform at the historic Bruce Street School at a November 2021 community engagement event.

LITHONIA, Ga. –The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance and Martin Rickles Studio will offer a virtual project update on the ongoing creation of a conceptual design for the reactivated Bruce Street School, the first Black public school building in DeKalb County. The event will take place from noon until 1:00pm on Friday, June 17. The final conceptual design unveiling will take place on-site in September. [Zoom signup for the June 17 event can be found here.](#)

Since fall of 2021, a coalition of partners – including DeKalb County Government, the City of Lithonia, the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance and design team Martin Rickles Studio – has worked to gather community feedback and to determine the future of the historic Bruce Street School building. That process has included five in-person community engagement sessions, multiple digital engagement opportunities and other outreach, all designed to gather a clear understanding of the Lithonia community’s wishes and needs as they relate to this important historic structure. The final conceptual design, to be fully unveiled in

September, will feature changes designed to make the school accessible as both a historic site and gathering place for everyone.

The event on Friday, June 17 will offer participants a chance to hear updates on the status of the conceptual design project from Lithonia Mayor Shameka Reynolds and other members of the reactivation initiative. Staff will also provide updates about a series of oral histories recorded about the Bruce Street School. This event will take place virtually, via Zoom; registration required. [Click here to register](#). An in-person option is also available, taking place at the offices of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance (3350 Klondike Road, Stonecrest, GA 30058). Both virtual and in-person event options will last from noon until 1:00pm.

Also known as the Lithonia Negro School and the Lithonia Colored School, the Bruce Street School was built and run by Lithonia's Black community prior to integration. The school's first graduating high school class (around 1943) included three pupils. By 1968, when the Bruce Street School was closed, there were over a dozen elementary and eight high school classrooms. Several outbuildings, now lost, had to be constructed in order to support the growing student body. Following integration, the Bruce Street School was largely abandoned until the recent efforts to reactivate the school building began.



Historic photo of Bruce Street School students and faculty, year unknown.

This project is a collaboration between the City of Lithonia, DeKalb County, and the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance. Funding has been provided by DeKalb County District 5 Commissioner Mereda Davis Johnson and the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance.

For more information about the project, please visit arabiaalliance.org/brucestreet.

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About the Arabia Alliance

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance is dedicated to protecting, connecting and sharing the powerful history, rich culture and engaging landscapes of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area (AMNHA) for the benefit and enjoyment of all. The staff and volunteer board of the Arabia Alliance work with partners across the AMNHA to ensure that everyone can benefit from the cultural and natural resources of the National Heritage Area. For more information, visit www.arabiaalliance.org.