



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
**FINANCE
& PURCHASING**

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, 3RD FLOOR
HARRISONBURG, VA 22801
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TO: Ande Banks, City Manager

FROM: Luke Morgan, Grants and Programs Analyst

SUBJECT: Summary of City Application for African American Civil Rights Grant Program

DATE: September 18, 2023

Summary:

Informational item for an application to fund physical preservation activities at the Lucy F. Simms Center to repair current rust damage on windows and lintels and to mitigate future damage through the installation of storm windows.

Background:

In 1882, the Effinger Street School opened in Harrisonburg as the primary school for African Americans in Rockingham County. More than fifty years later, the Effinger Street School was replaced by the Lucy F. Simms School as the only school for African Americans in the area due to the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision. The Supreme Court overturned Plessy v. Ferguson with Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, leading to school integration and the closure of the Simms School in 1965. The Simms School was added to the Virginia Landmarks Register in 2003 and the National Register of Historic Places in 2004.¹

As stated in the Lucy F. Simms School's 2004 National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, "Understanding the significance of the Lucy F. Simms School in the history of the African American community necessarily depends on knowledge of the roots of Black education in Harrisonburg."² From its beginning as a school in 1934 to its function as the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center today, the Simms Center has played a central role in the lives of the residents of Newtown and the Northeast neighborhood. To ensure that the Simms Center remains a valuable community asset, minor preservation work is needed to repair rust damage on window frames and to mitigate the potential for future damage.

The National Park Service's (NPS) African American Civil Rights Grant Program (AACR) awards competitive grants to preserve sites related to the struggle of African Americans to achieve

¹ <https://omeka.lib.jmu.edu/simms/timeline>

² <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/41681210>



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equal civil rights. AACR grants are funded by the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), administered by the NPS, and will fund a broad range of pre-preservation planning activities and physical preservation work for historic sites that are listed in or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Congress has appropriated \$24 million for the AACR Grant Program, and grant applications are due October 10, 2023, with award announcements expected in April 2024.

The Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Department is planning to submit an application to AACR for funding for physical preservation activities at the Lucy F. Simms Center. City staff will be requesting approximately \$165,000 from AACR to remove rust around the existing windows, apply a rust inhibitor, repaint the frames, and add storm windows to the building. The addition of storm windows will protect the Simms Center's original windows from extreme weather events and will provide energy efficiency benefits through energy loss reductions. The noticeability of the storm windows will be minimal as their frames will be painted to match the color of the original window frames.

If funding is awarded, the City will be required to place a ten-year preservation covenant or easement on the site. This project will not change the original structure or spirit of the Simms Center, and it will help to ensure that this valuable community site is preserved for future generations.

Key Issues:

N/A

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A.

Alternatives:

N/A.



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Community Engagement:

To be determined.

Recommendation:

N/A.

Attachments:

1. Presentation

Review: