

Cultural Corridor

Prior to 1963, a vast majority of the African American population lived in segregated Southeast Knoxville from Jackson Avenue to the Tennessee River and East Knoxville was predominantly a white community. Urban renewal broke apart the cohesive African American community and pushed the population further east and throughout other parts of the city. Churches, businesses, schools, and houses were lost, and community connectivity was destroyed. In 1975, the Beck Cultural Exchange Center was established as a result of the impact of urban renewal. Absent of the establishment of Beck, these places and the people may never have existed. For nearly 50 years Beck has been a state designated repository of Black history and culture in East Tennessee. Keeping with its purpose, the Beck Cultural Exchange Center has created a Cultural Corridor so that access to the history goes beyond its four walls. Beck’s mission is Black history and culture.

To that end, we are partnering with Beck to develop intentionality around inclusivity and belonging to build an asset-based framework for Knoxville, recognizing and celebrating the African American history that was lost. As part of Reconnecting Knoxville, we will work alongside the Beck Cultural Exchange Center to extend their Cultural Corridor concept that rediscovers and honors the historical narrative that no longer exists. The Beck Cultural Corridor is an interactive excursion where people will journey to learn, discover and experience the rich legacy of African Americans along a vibrant path. The proposed multi-modal pathway will include markers, maps, and digital assets to illustrate the African American history that once stood along or near the pathway. We will partner with the Beck Cultural Exchange Center, with support from the University of Tennessee to develop the Corridor and the digital assets. Students in the UT Project Excellence Program and graduates of Austin-East High School, located within the project boundary, will be given preference to participate in the digital asset creation.

The Cultural Corridor will include stopping points with benches, gardens, and markers that will allow users to sit, experience being in that spot, and reflect. There will be intentionality in mirroring what once was and to experience what had been. The markers, paired with digital assets such as virtual images, voices, and sound, will allow visitors to ‘Take a walk around the Bottom’ or experience the former E. Vine Street, bustling with patrons frequenting dozens of African American businesses. The buildings have been lost, but the experiences and the history can be reclaimed for future generations.

Potential Locations

We propose the inclusion of 10 sites to launch the Beck Cultural Corridor in Knoxville along the multi-modal pathway funded through DOT Reconnecting Communities Funds.

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>Current Monument</i> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <i>Delaney Museum at Beck</i> | 1935 Dandridge Avenue | Only remaining ancestral home of Beauford and Joseph Delaney |
| <i>Beck Cultural Exchange Center</i> | 1927 Dandridge Avenue | Site of the only African American repository for Black history & culture in East Tennessee. |

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| <i>Home of Maurice Mays</i> | Corner of Humes Street and Jackson Ave. Area of stadium | No |
| <i>Site of Knoxville Race Riot & Gem Theater</i> | Corner of Vine and Central Central/ Summit Hill | No |
| <i>Carnegie Library</i> | Patton/ Vine Street Hall of Fame/ Summit Hill | No |
| <i>Black Business District</i> | Vine Street now Summit Hill | No |
| <i>Heiskell School</i> | 903 Campbell Street “The Bottom” Area of the Stadium | No |
| <i>Knoxville Giants - Negro Baseball League Payne Avenue (Mountain View) “Uncle Dick Payne,” Dr. H.M. Greene & Little League Baseball</i> | Stadium - North Corner | Planned |
| <i>First African American Church</i> | Near 1027 Fuller Avenue, Knoxville TN 37915 | Tennessee Historical Commission. (Marker Number 1E 122.) |

Plaza Example

We have budgeted \$75,000 per plaza for the creation of a physical space to visit, sit, and reflect. Below is a sample design of a plaza location, this one designed for the corner of Summit Hill and Nelson.





Digital Companion

Situated storytelling through the use of story narrative in place creates the cognitive and affective conditions that enhance learning. Using QR codes linked to webpages and emerging technology that work on mobile devices (i.e., responsive web forward pages), travelers on Reconnecting Knoxville multi-modal pathway that journey through the Beck Cultural Corridor will encounter 10 unique Knoxville spaces and the situating stories of the citizens from the past that inhabited that world. Each station will be a standalone experience that, together with the other stations, brings to life Knoxville's African American and marginalized communities in the places they once thrived. Referencing the current landscape, each station will provide a unique introduction to a specific part of the city using primary source historical documents, pictures, videos, and oral/written histories to tell the stories, much of which is part of the Beck collection that consists of 50,000 objects documenting more than 200 years of Black history and culture. Among the collection is approximately 5,000 unique materials related to Knoxville's urban renewal programs, all of which help tell the story of the ramifications of urban renewal on the largely African American population affected. Currently, Beck has a

permanent exhibit dubbed, “Urban Renewal/ Urban Removal (1959-1974),” which provides a glimpse of life in pre-urban renewal Knoxville along with a short film that documents the history. The Reconnecting Knoxville multi-model pathway will utilize invaluable information from Beck Cultural Exchange Center Archives, University of Tennessee Archives, and other archives in Knoxville and throughout the country.

While traveling the Cultural Corridor and visiting key locations, the user will experience a narrative presentation and online exploration of primary sources that builds an understanding and perspective of the unique African American community that is no longer visible. To bring Beck’s curated experience alive, the University of Tennessee will create a team with experience designing interactive educational tools that convey the lived experience in African American history, including faculty, doctoral students and undergraduate researchers, to work with Beck Cultural Exchange Center historians and archivists.

Beck currently has an online archival system, Collective Access, with funds utilized from IMLS to digitize its urban renewal collection along with recently received grant funds to archive its complete educational collection over the next three years from CLIR under its Amplify Unheard Voices grant. Building on its current digital collection system, the University of Tennessee will assist Beck in design and content collection for a user-directed deep learning experience that conveys a holistic situated storyline and visual exploration of the history upon which the story was built.

Beck will approve the final curated content for the kiosks and its online archives with support from the University of Tennessee team who will build the responsive web forward presentations. Robert Booker, former executive director and current Beck docent, will serve as a historical curation consultant of and perspective on Knoxville’s history. The selected historical content introduces the user to each new space, and will provide the context and connections between citizens, the economy, the politics and the lived experience of the day. In addition to the landing page with key content designed to engage the visitor, the page will also include an indexed database accessible to the user that allows searches and access to the Beck digital archival system.

Overview of Proposed Timeline of Work:

- *Year One (May 2023-April 2024):*

Collaborate with the Beck Cultural Exchange Center team to shape the data (media; oral and written histories or interviews, music, newspapers, and other sources) into an overarching storyline while also designing the 10-part interactive stories that can stand alone.

- *Year Two (May 2024-April 2025):*

Collaborate with the Beck Cultural Exchange Center team to complete the data collection/analysis/interpretation of selected historical resources, finalize the written text for the storyline online and at the “kiosk”. The team will also complete the design of a user interface that best delivers the story as a 10-part interactive historical educational resource housed in responsive web-forward pages that could include various representations of the

data. For example, the design of this could include a “time-based map” that demonstrates for the user “what was” within “what is” at each location.

- *Year 3 (May 2025-April 2026):*

Complete the design and prototype of the user experience within the responsive web-forward pages and test prototype over the Summer and produce the responsive web-forward pages that deliver the story for each of the sites and the exploratory access to historical resources that will fulfill the scope of the project, and development of unique files including artwork and illustrations and graphical interface) for the “kiosks” on each of the 10-sites which will house the QR code site.