

## STAFF REPORT

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**Date:** February 28, 2024

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**Through:** Doug Thornley, City Manager

**Subject:** Staff Report (For Possible Action): Acceptance of a National Park Service Underrepresented Communities Grant for activities relating to a Northeast Reno African American Historic Resource Survey and National Register Nomination in the amount of \$55,000.

**From:** Megan Berner, Arts and Culture Manager

**Department:** City Manager's Office – Arts and Culture

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**Summary:**

On February 8, 2024, the City of Reno was awarded funding in the amount of \$55,000 from the National Parks Service Underrepresented Communities Grants program. The purpose of this award is to complete a historic context and reconnaissance survey of northeast Reno. The project will generate data that will be used to complete a National Register of Historic Places nomination associated with the city's African American community.

Consent Review	Yes	No
1. Is this item an annual or standard item that comes before Council for regular approval?		X
2. Is this item an agreement required based on an item previously approved by Council?		X
3. Is this item included in the current budget approved and adopted by Council?		X
<b>Other Considerations</b>		
What percent of the total City budget does this item represent?	0%	

**Alignment with Strategic Plan:**

Arts, Parks, and Historical Resources

**Previous Council Action:**

There is no recent Council action relevant to this item.

**Background:**

In June of 2023, staff submitted an application to the National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund for their Underrepresented Communities Grant Program (URC). The National Park Service's URC Grant Program works towards diversifying the nominations submitted to the National Register of Historic Places. All funded projects must result in the submission of a new or amended nomination to the National Register of Historic Places to include underrepresented communities.

In an effort to include some of the underrepresented history in Reno, the purpose of this award is to complete a historic context and reconnaissance survey of northeast Reno. The project will generate data that will be used to complete a National Register nomination associated with the city's African American community. The project will include contracted services for a historic context of the African American experience in Reno circa 1900 to 1979, a survey of the northeast Reno area, identification of significant properties eligible to be listed in the National Register, and drafting of a National Register nomination associated with Black history. The contractor will seek public participation throughout the project including during the research and identification phases. Final products will be available to the public as a resource. The project overall will support the inclusion of new aspects of Reno's history that will benefit the preservation efforts of multiple stakeholder groups including city planners, developers, historical groups, and the public.

**Discussion:**

The history of Black people in Reno is underrepresented. There is no in-depth historical context of this community in Reno, Washoe County, or Nevada though the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (NVSHPO) did commission a statewide African American Civil Rights context that informs the current proposal. Of the 80 designated historic resources in the city, just 5% are located in the Northeast quadrant of the city which was historically a diverse area with the largest concentration of African Americans. Only one designated resource in the entire city is associated with this community and the civil rights movement (Bethel AME Church). The boarding houses that catered to African American divorce seekers, such as the Needham Boarding House at 501 Elko Avenue, and other Black-owned businesses are an underacknowledged aspect of the migrant divorce trade. The sites of protest and gathering places of civil rights activists of the mid-nineteenth century are largely missing from Reno's documented history. This grant project is needed to identify, evaluate, and aid in the preparation of new national register nominations for significant sites that remain unacknowledged today and may also uncover opportunities to amend existing nominations for a more inclusive and full history.

The grant project will support multiple goals of the Reimagine Reno Master Plan, adopted in 2017 and updated in 2021, including the following goals: 7.5B to "identify, recognize, and

increase historic resources by encouraging and incentivizing the addition of properties to the City, state, and national register," 7.5F to "minimize impacts as part of future development to maintain integrity of historical context," 6.6 to "foster a culture of inclusivity- embracing and respecting the diversity of Reno's residents," and 6.6C "engage with the community to identify, preserve, and celebrate places, artworks, and landscapes of cultural significance to the city's diverse population." This grant project will add a new historical context that documents the history of African Americans in Reno and will result in the addition of a historic property associated with this history to the National Register. The grant project will also aid in the identification of additional historic structures or opportunities for additional research to aid in the protection of sites significant to the African American historical context in Reno.

### **Timeline**

February to March 2024 – City of Reno staff will obtain Council approval and proper signatures for grant acceptance. Staff will create and advertise Request for Proposals (RFPs) for distribution to consulting firms.

April 2024 – The City of Reno Historical Resources Commission to review proposals and select a consultant at the April 11, 2024, commission meeting. City staff will ensure the contract is executed with the consultant by the end of the month.

May to July 2024 – City of Reno staff will facilitate 2 to 3 public engagement sessions with community members of Northeast Reno in partnership with nonprofits and churches that are predominantly African American. Staff will share materials about the grant project, City of Reno Historic Preservation, and an overview of the survey and National Register programs. Sessions will be held in Northeast Reno neighborhood locations and also conducted via electronic survey. City staff will identify community leaders to serve in a Northeast Reno Advisory Group.

August 2024 – Hold one meeting of Northeast Reno Advisory Group to meet the consultant, Historical Resources Commission, and City of Reno staff, to discuss the grant project and their roles as advisors. Consultant to give a detailed presentation about the survey and National Register program and process.

May to September 2024 – Consultant researches the historic context of the Northeast Reno area and identifies final boundaries and period(s) of significance for the survey, incorporating information already documented in the state historic context, African American Civil Rights Experience in Nevada, 1900 to 1979, and from the public engagement activities. Consultant records the identified properties on NVSHPO's Architectural Resource Assessment (ARA) forms (page 1 only). Potentially significant historic properties will have additional historical research, and descriptive, locational, ownership, and photographic documentation for completing the full NVSHPO ARA form. Consultant will select one significant historic property, that is

likely to have owner consent, to conduct intensive research and prepare a first draft for a National Register nomination. The consultant will work with City of Reno staff and the Northeast Reno Advisory Group to identify owners who are interested in national historic designation.

October to December 2024 – Consultant prepares final draft of historic context and surveyed property inventory. Consultant prepares an initial draft of National Register Nomination to share with Northeast Reno Advisory Group, property owner(s), City staff, and Historical Resources Commission.

January 2025 – The Historical Resources Commission will review the National Register Nomination at the January meeting and forward it to NVSHPO. NVSHPO has 60 days to review.

April 2025 – Consultant will complete any revisions for the National Register nomination after receiving feedback from NVSHPO, the Advisory Group, and the Historical Resources Commission.

July 2025 – The National Register nomination will be submitted to the National Park Service. The anticipated acceptance of the nomination is September 2025.

May to July 2025 – The historical context and survey will be finalized.

**Financial Implications:**

There is no cash match required for this grant.

**Legal Implications:**

Legal review completed for compliance with City procedures and Nevada law.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends Council approve and accept the grant funding in the amount of \$55,000.

**Proposed Motion:**

I move to approve staff recommendation.

**Attachments:**

NPS Award Terms and Conditions

NPS URC Press Release