

January 24, 2017

Holy Rosary Receives \$450,000 for Rehab Funding

Last week Lafayette's Holy Rosary Redevelopment Board was notified it will be awarded \$450,000 from the National Park Service (NPS) for intense rehabilitation of the historic Holy Rosary Institute's main building. Lafayette Consolidated Government's (LCG) Community Development Department played an integral technical support role in the competitive grant application process.

The announcement was made by NPS as part of \$7.75 million in funding for 39 projects across 22 states aimed at preserving and highlighting the sites and stories associated with the Civil Rights Movement and the African American experience during the 20th Century.

Lafayette Mayor-President Joel Robideaux said, "Holy Rosary is a landmark institution that provided Lafayette with many of its leaders. The character of that historical building is also a symbolic reminder of its role in shaping the character of the young women and men who attended the school. I am thrilled that Holy Rosary was able to secure this much needed seed money and I look forward to all future efforts that ensure its legacy."

HRI opened in 1913 in Lafayette as an industrial school for African American women and began accepting male students in 1947. Its doors were shuttered in 1993 due to declining finances and other socio-economic factors. Throughout its 80 year history, HRI was primarily run by the Sisters of the Holy Family, the second oldest order of African American nuns in the U.S., and the Divine Word Missionaries, one of the earliest groups to accept African Americans into the priesthood. The school was of significant importance to African American youth during an era of segregation, offering vocational and technical opportunities that would not have otherwise been available. During its time, HRI was considered to be an outstanding secondary school, training students as doctors and nurses, attorneys and educators.

Dr. Shaneá Nelson, director of LCG Community Development Department said "This award serves as a catalyst for a partnership between the Holy Rosary Redevelopment Board and LCG to leverage the grant funding in order to acquire additional resources for the full restoration of the school. LCG is excited to engage other local and state elected officials to see this effort through to fruition." Nelson said LCG is committed to providing future technical assistance as the HRI redevelopment board works to fulfill the community's vision of restoring the historic institution.

Louisiana State Representative and HRI graduate Vincent Pierre said, "The redevelopment of Holy Rosary has been a hard fought battle, but this victory is the first step toward breathing life into the revitalization of this historic building. We will continue to do all that we can to ensure this project is success from start to finish."

"I am thrilled at the news of this wonderful grant. The cultural and historical significance of this initiative cannot be overstated. This a great start and we will continue to seek out resources that will help to restore Holy Rosary to its glory," said Louisiana State Representative Terry Landry whose district encompasses the grounds of HRI.

HRI's redevelopment board president Dustin Cravins expressed his excitement and appreciation saying "We are extremely grateful to Dr. Nelson and Mayor- President Robideaux for their vital role in securing this funding. Our board has always believed that working together with our parish government, local legislators and other stakeholders in the community would be essential to success. This is a testament to many people's hard work, as we can finally begin to turn this dream into a reality."

In 2016, Congress appropriated funding for the NPS's new African American Civil Rights Grant Program through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). The HPF uses revenue from federal oil leases on the Outer Continental Shelf to provide assistance for a broad range of preservation projects without expending tax dollars. According to NPS Acting Director Michael T. Reynolds, "Through the African American Civil Rights Grant Program, we're helping our public and private partners tell unique and powerful stories of the African American struggle for equality in the 20th Century." Other projects receiving grants include those that will educate about and preserve resources, such as HRI.

For more information on the NPS's African American Civil Rights Grant Program, including other winning projects, visit <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/01-12-2017-civil-rights-grants.htm> .

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