



HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION  
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January 28, 2013

Ms. Jane Oates  
Assistant Secretary for  
Employment and Training  
U. S. Department of Labor  
Washington, DC 20210

RE: Gulfport, Mississippi, Jobs Corps Center Consultation

Dear Ms. Oates:

Thank you for your letter of November 2, 2012, informing us that the Department of Labor (DoL) is re-initiating the 36 CFR 800.3(c) consultation process for the Gulfport Jobs Corps Center. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) is looking forward to participating in the discussions. Our office has already been contacted by several of the parties that were involved in the earlier consultation process concerning their interest in participating, as well as their anxiousness to get the consultation underway.

Pursuant to those contacts, our office and the local organizations have the following questions:

- 1) Has a target date or schedule been established to convene the consultation meetings?
- 2) What plans are proposed by DoL to prevent further deterioration of the historic school buildings while the new consultation process is underway and resolved?

Both MDAH and local citizens are concerned that nothing has been done to stabilize deterioration of the buildings since the earlier consultation process was initiated during the summer of 2011. Obviously, we understand that prior to the beginning of that consultation, DoL was unaware of the historical significance of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue School and planned to demolish the complex. However, now that the significance has been established and that DoL, MDAH, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation have agreed that the 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the goal of the renewed consultation should be to examine options leading to preservation of some or all of the historic buildings.

Under that circumstance, allowing the school buildings to deteriorate while the consultation is underway has been described by some citizens as "demolition by neglect." Knowing that DoL does not wish that to be the case, MDAH encourages DoL to secure the leaking roofs and windows as quickly as possible to prevent further deterioration of the buildings.

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Enclosed, please find a copy of a brief "Statement of Historical Significance" for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue School. This was prepared by MDAH in consultation with local historians. While there are many additional things that could be said about historical events and personages associated with the school, we felt that this statement distilled the essence of the school's significance to the Civil Rights Movement and African-American education in Mississippi.

Last week I participated in a ceremony to re-dedicate the old Randolph School in Pass Christian, Mississippi. Like 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue School, Randolph represents a milestone of progress in the history of obtaining quality educational facilities for Mississippi's African-American children. Although Randolph School was more seriously damaged by Hurricane Katrina than 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue School, the building's restoration has been a wonderful symbol of the community's healing from the physical damage inflicted by the storm and from the emotional injury inflicted by decades of racial segregation. I have hopes that 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue School's rehabilitation can play a similar role in Gulfport.

Again, MDAH appreciates the Department of Labor's re-initiation of the consultation process and is very supportive of your efforts to expand the Gulfport Jobs Corps Center. We look forward to participating in the consultation and to seeking a win-win solution that will accomplish your goals of providing better job training facilities and local citizens' interests in preserving their history.

Sincerely,



Kenneth H. P'Pool  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

c: Ms. Myrtis Franke  
Ms. Edna Primrose  
Ms. Charlene Vaughn  
The Honorable George Schloegel  
The Honorable Kenneth L. Casey, Sr.  
Dr. John Kelly  
Mr. Jimmie Woullard  
Ms. Sandra Wyche  
Attorney Gayle Tart  
Mr. Hank Holmes  
Mr. Jim Woodrick  
Ms. Jennifer Baughn  
Mr. Greg Williamson

Enclosure

## 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue School, Gulfport, Mississippi

### Statement of Historical Significance

Gulfport's high school for black students opened at the corner of 33rd Avenue and 20th Street in 1921 but dealt with inadequate and/or sub-standard facilities for most of its first three decades. However, in 1954 the school dramatically expanded with new modern structures that included the new two-story high school building, the gymnasium, cafeteria, and vocational shop building, the first three of which are still extant on the campus. The new school complex opened to much fanfare and functioned as the heart of north Gulfport's African-American community, providing educational opportunities that produced civic and business leaders for the next generation.

Funding for these new buildings was provided by the State of Mississippi's "Equalization Program." While the state's goal in creating the Equalization program was to avoid desegregating public schools, the modern facilities constructed by the program nonetheless represent a major victory in the struggle of African-Americans to win equal treatment under the law.

The 1950s buildings were designed in the newly popular *International Style*, with its emphasis on volume, sleek horizontal orientation, large expanses of window-walls, and simple geometric shapes. Because the *International Style* was modern, it symbolically and consciously represented a break with the past. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue School is also illustrative of a masterwork by one of Gulfport's own Modernist architects, Milton B.E. Hill.

The U. S. Department of Labor, the national Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History have concurred that the 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the nation's official list of buildings, sites and districts that have significance in American history and, therefore, merit preservation.

