

COMMEMORATING OVER 450 YEARS OF BLACK HISTORY

**SUMMARY OF ST AUGUSTINE/
ST JOHNS' APPLICATION THAT
LED TO BEING SELECTED AS THE
SITE OF THE FLORIDA MUSEUM OF
BLACK HISTORY – JUNE 28, 2024**



Over 450 Years of Black History

St. Johns County, with strong support from Northeast Florida, will host the Florida Black History Museum. We are excited to present the rich tapestry of our collective history for tourists, students, and Floridians as we commemorate over 450 years of Black history in St. Augustine and St. Johns County.

With participation from our colleagues throughout the state, we will engage visitors to experience this exceptional journey. We are grateful and humbled by the recognition that St. Johns County possesses the historical significance, the demographic composition, and the appropriate location for this Museum as highlighted in this publication. Our dozens of regional partners ensure that the strength of our economy, our multi-faceted transportation network, our educational resources, and our financial capacity will sustain this effort and strengthen support for Black history museums throughout the state of Florida.



Here is a sample of the communities that will be represented in the Florida Black History Museum. Northeast Florida's Nassau County brings the Gullah-Geechee heritage and American Beach. Sarasota-Tampa Bay's Angola story adds breadth. Florida's chapter on slavery spreads to all of pre-Civil War Florida. The Civil Rights chapter began then as well and continued for more than another century. Those stories are told in the Panhandle region with Panama City and Jackson County, in Central Florida with Eatonville and Seminole County, and in South Florida with Opa-Lacka and Miami-Dade County. With these places, and more, we have a shared history to present to the world.

We are proud of the partnerships that have been cultivated and re-affirmed as we pursued selection as the site of the Black History Museum. Foremost is our partnership with Florida Memorial Museum (FMU) an HBCU which was located in West Augustine from 1906 until 1968 before moving to its current location in Miami Gardens. FMU is leasing the land for the Black Museum Campus to St Johns County from their original site. Other Partners are listed on the following page and we are grateful to each of them for their current and future support.

Join us on our journey as we share this next chapter in Florida's story through the lens of the new Florida Museum of Black History.

Enthusiastically,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joy Andrews".

Joy Andrews
St. Johns County Administrator



Community Support Letters Received



Historically Black College or University (HBCU)

- Edward Waters University
- Florida A&M University
- Florida Memorial University

Educational Institutions and Affiliated Organizations Support

- Clay County School District
- Duval County School District
- Flagler College
- Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind
- Nassau County School District
- Pi Eta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
- St. Johns County School District
- University of North Florida

Historical, Cultural and Tourism Organizations

- Colonial Research Associates
- First Coast NPHC (National Pan-Hellenic Council)
- Fort Mose Historical Society
- Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission
- Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center
- Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Makers Project
- Sea Islands Heritage Society
- St. Johns County Cultural Council
- SJC Cultural Events, Inc (operators of the St. Augustine Amphitheatre)

- St. Johns County Visitors and Convention Bureau
- The Anniversary to Commemorate the Civil Rights Demonstrations, Inc. (ACCORD)
- The Stetson Kennedy Foundation
- Visit Jacksonville

Business Community

- Advent Health
- Bailey Group
- Florida Blue
- Historic Tours of America
- Jacksonville Jaguars
- JAXUSA Partnership
- Leo C. Chase and Associates, Inc.
- Northrup Grumman
- Old Town Trolley Tours
- PGA Tour
- Palm Coast - Flagler Chamber of Commerce
- State Farm Agent Tony Pearson
- St Johns Chamber of Commerce
- The Collage Companies
- TouchPoint Innovative Solutions

Regional Public/Government

- City of Jacksonville
- City of Palm Coast
- City of St. Augustine
- City of St. Augustine Beach
- Jacksonville Aviation Authority
- JaxPort
- JaxUSA Partnership
- Nassau County
- Northeast Florida Regional

Council

- St. Johns County
- St. Johns Library Services
- United States District Court – Middle District of Florida

Regional Support Organizations

- American Legion
- Flagler County Branch NAACP
- Jacksonville Jaguars
- Jessie Ball duPont Fund
- Habitat for Humanity of St. Augustine/St. Johns County
- Jacksonville Urban League
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- Operation New Hope
- PGA TOUR
- The Community Foundation Northeast Florida
- United Way
- YMCA of Florida's First Coast

Community Religious Organizations

- Antioch Missionary Baptist Church
- Diocese of St. Augustine
- New Mt. Moriah Christian Church
- Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church
- St. Augustine Friends Worship Group
- Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
- The United Church

CRITERIA 1

Historical Significance of St. Augustine, St. Johns County, and Northeast Florida

- Black History is American history as evidenced by the exploration of La Florida in 1513, to settlement of St. Augustine in 1565, and the birth of the first Black child Estebana in 1595.

- In 1738, Fort Mose became North America’s first free Black settlement. This National Historic Landmark, part of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, is a designated UNESCO Site of Memory for the Routes of Enslaved Peoples Project.



An artist's interpretation of how Fort Mose looked.
<https://news.wjct.org/first-coast/2022-03-03/fort-mose-and-other-african-american-sites-approved-for-historigrants>

NOTE:

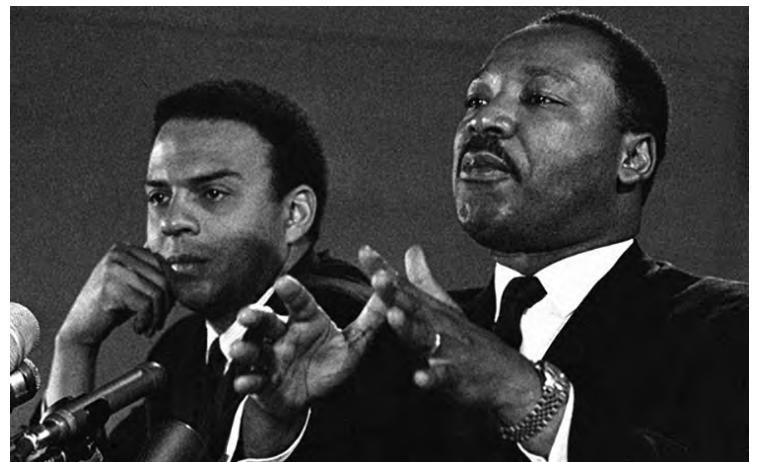
May 12, 2024 Washington Post article
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2024/05/12/fort-mose-reconstruction-black-settlement/>



On Saturday, June 11, 2011, Andrew Young stepped onto a sidewalk monument commemorating the historic June 9, 1964 march for Civil Rights in St. Augustine, during its dedication ceremony at the Plaza de la Constitucion.

- Florida Memorial University’s early campus was in St. Johns County, part of which will become the Florida Black History Museum. FMU teachers included author Zora Neale Hurston whose house is nearby on West King Street.

- St. Johns County played a pivotal role in passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with M. L. King, Jr. and others being arrested in St. Augustine. This era is marked on the Plaza with the Foot Soldiers Monument and the Andrew Young Crossing.



Andrew Young and Martin Luther King Jr.

CRITERIA 2

Appropriateness of Proposed Location

- St. Johns County forged a partnership with Florida Memorial University (FMU), an HBCU, to host the Florida Black History Museum on the site of FMU’s campus for 50 years. The acreage will host an expansive museum campus with gardens, a vibrant research facility, performing arts center complex, and ample parking.
- The development of a performing arts center includes a 500-seat main theater, 200-seat black box venue, educational studios and classrooms, and shared space for arts organizations and administration.
- With St. Augustine Historic District area’s extensive transportation system, a museum on the FMU property will be accessed within minutes by trolley, shuttle, pedicab, and segway by millions of visitors who come annually to explore the history and culture of the area.

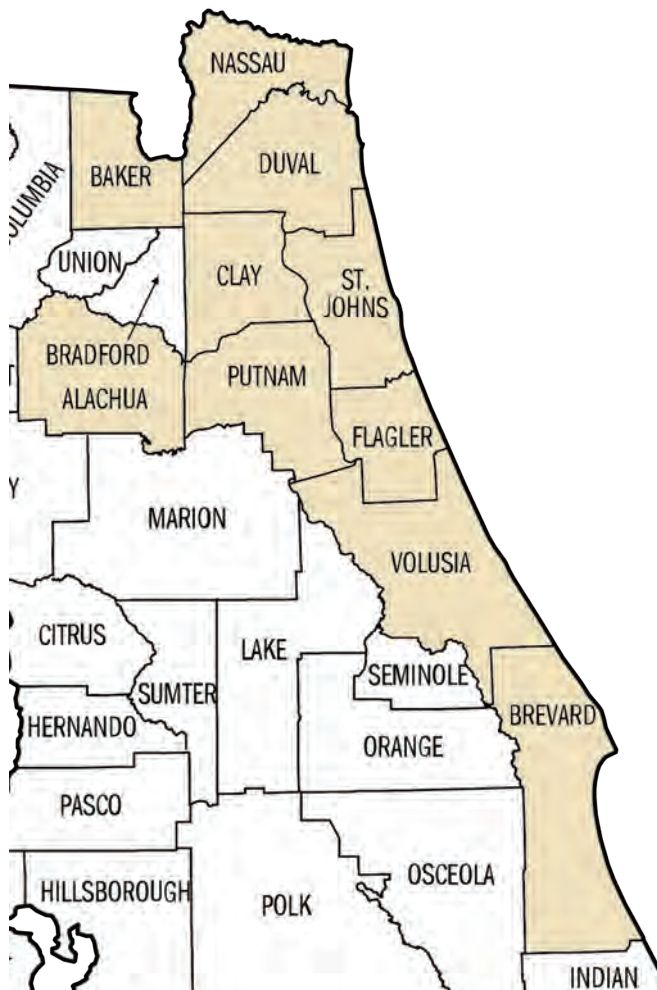


Artist rendering of one of the buildings that will be on the expansive 17 acre campus

CRITERIA 3

Regional Economy

- St. Johns is the 4th fastest growing county in the US and part of the Jacksonville regional economy that includes healthcare, finance, transportation, education, recreation, and hospitality, with an unemployment rate of 2.6%. The County has \$503 million in infrastructure projects.
- Four Fortune 500 companies, two naval bases, the Jacksonville Jaguars, and THE PLAYERS® Championship are headquartered in the region. The latter’s foundation provided the Boys and Girls Club of Northeast Florida on West King Street near the proposed museum.
- 2023 Tourist Development Tax collections amounted to more than \$23M. The largest tourism origin market is the Atlanta metro area, home to the Georgia State University NPS World Heritage Initiative for the US Civil Rights Movement Sites. Northeast Florida hosts seven of 16 Florida sites.



CRITERIA 4

Demographics

- The Northeast Florida region has a population of 1.5 million and includes St. Johns, the 4th fastest growing county in the US, with a population of 320,010 in 2023. The median age is 42.6 years, with the region at just under 40 years of age.
- The median age in the region is 39. Duval County has the lowest reported median age, 37 and Nassau has the highest at 48. Median household income is \$79,089, well above the Florida median income of \$69,303. The highest percentage of individuals living below the poverty level (13.9%) is in Duval County. The four-county region average is 11.2%.
- Northeast Florida constitutes a land mass of 4,428 square miles, with urban areas, business and industrial uses, institutional and educational uses, museums, cultural, and historic attractions, and a strong agricultural component.



Emancipation Freedom bell commemorating one of the readings of the Emancipation Proclamation in St. Augustine in 1863.



Founded in 1866 by former slaves, the Lincolnville Historic District is St. Augustine's most prominent historically black neighborhood.

CRITERIA 5

Transportation Infrastructure

- Just as St. Johns County's beaches are a short 2.5 miles east of the center of downtown St. Augustine, the Florida Black History Museum will be a short 2.5 miles west from the center of the city.
- St. Johns County's Safe Street Program includes improvements along King Street between Historic Downtown St. Augustine and the Museum, including pedestrian and bicycling modes. The City's free STAR Circulator will bring visitors from downtown to the museum. Trolleys and tour trains serve the community, too.
- The region's easy access to regional and international systems, includes I-95, I-10, and I-4, and Jacksonville International Airport. Local and regional partners include Jacksonville International Airport, and JAXPort.

CRITERIA 6

Funding Commitments and Support

- Documented support for Florida Black History Museum’s location in St. Johns County has come from dozens of organizations, including HBCUs, governments, corporations, colleges and universities, school systems, non-profit organizations, institutions, traditionally Black churches and businesses, and fraternal organizations.

- A variety of charitable organizations provide directed funds to benefit St. Johns County. These include the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida that oversees the Dr. JoAnn Crisp-Ellert Fund. Also, the Lastinger Family Foundation focuses on historic preservation and children’s issues.

- Current efforts to help further the mission of the Florida Black History Museum have secured \$6 million.



The St. Augustine Foot Soldiers Monument in downtown St. Augustine, unveiled May 14, 2011, pays tribute to those who participated in demonstrations that helped lead to passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

CRITERIA 7

Educational Resources

- The St. Johns County School District has been ranked as one of Florida’s top systems for 30+ years, with a graduation rate of 94% (Florida’s average is 88%).

- The county features five higher education institutions, with five more within a 40-mile radius, including two of Florida’s four HBCUs. Academic partnerships with the University of Florida bring undergraduate and graduate students to the area to experience our heritage and gain valuable experience through academic internships.



St. Johns County School District ranks among Florida’s best, with a 94% graduation rate and rich educational programs that draw students to its unique historic sites.

- Florida History is taught to the state’s 4th grade students. Approximately 25% of those students (60,000), come to St. Johns County’s historic places living laboratory for engaging learning. Exceptional educational opportunities are provided through special programs, including Road Scholar, Florida Humanities Council Gatherings, and Study Away opportunities for college students.



Welcome to a Landmark Moment in Florida's History

St. Augustine is incredibly honored to have been selected as the location for Florida's first Black History Museum, right here in the heart of St. Johns County.

This historic event marks a significant step in celebrating and preserving over 450 years of St. Augustine's Black History while also sharing the powerful narratives of Black History across the state of Florida.

Join us as we honor the rich heritage and invaluable contributions of Black Floridians. This museum will be much more than just a collection of artifacts; it will be a vibrant tapestry of stories that have shaped our state and nation.

**Be a Part of
History in the Making**
Discover the legacy.
Embrace the history.
Share the stories.



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**ST. JOHNS
CULTURAL COUNCIL**
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