




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Sara L. Hensley, CRRP, Interim Assistant City Manager

**FROM:** Kimberly A. McNeeley, CPRP, Acting Director,  
Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) 

**DATE:** July 23, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Cost Projections for 500 Montopolis Drive

---

This memo provides cost projections for the property located at 500 Montopolis Drive, which may become City-owned following eminent domain proceedings. The following is a preliminary assessment by PARC of the immediate-terms costs associated with maintaining an undeveloped property, as well as projections for master planning, construction and ongoing programming.

### **Background**

500 Montopolis Drive is the site of the Montopolis Negro School, which served as a school for the African American community from 1935-1967, at which point it housed the congregation of the Montopolis Church of Christ. The school is historically significant as one of the last surviving rural schools for African Americans in Travis County in an era that was characterized by the segregation of public and private facilities and the disenfranchisement and discrimination of people of color. The Montopolis School was an important center of community life for the Montopolis community, and the City of Austin intends to preserve the structure as a museum. The details of the development and management of the site have yet to be determined. The school is approximately 2,550 square feet and sits on nearly an acre of land.

### **Immediate-term Mothballing and Maintenance of Historic Building**

While funds are not currently available to put a deteriorating structure into a useable condition, it is necessary to close the building temporarily to protect it from the weather, as well as to secure it from vandalism. This process, known as mothballing, is necessary to protect a building while planning the property's future, or raising money for a preservation, rehabilitation or restoration project. PARC recommends adherence to the National Park Service Preservation Brief #31: Mothballing Historic Buildings. Additionally, the building will require routine inspections and security patrols. The site currently hosts seasonal wildflowers, but will require periodic mowing.

### **Master Planning, Design and Development**

Absent a completed master plan process, it is difficult to estimate the exact cost of redevelopment of 500 Montopolis Drive. However, staff have completed a preliminary cost estimate that calculates master planning cost and an anticipated square foot cost for rehabilitation. Additionally, the estimate includes

expenditures related to development, including, but not limited to: survey; environmental assessment; hazardous materials testing; abatement and monitoring; permits and development fees; construction materials testing; project management sponsor department management; sustainability certification and commissioning; furniture, fixtures and equipment; and data/communications and security. It should be noted that a future development might include accessory buildings to enhance the programming capabilities of the site.

**Museum Operations**

Absent a completed master plan, staff have provided an assessment of annual museum operational costs based on PARD’s small museum model. The estimated expenditures for years 1-3 include start-up costs related to: exhibit development; outreach and marketing; programming; and staffing.

**Summary**

PARD recommends decisive action with respect to the future development of the Montopolis Negro School Museum. The cost for planning and development will continue to increase as the building continues to deteriorate over time. PARD understands that there is interest in harnessing the nonprofit sector and potential partnerships to generate the funding needed to develop and operate a museum. PARD’s experience is that non-profit fundraising for historic building rehabilitation is a challenging endeavor. PARD and the City of Austin are currently working with nonprofit partners on similar endeavors to restore historic buildings, including the Norwood House, Charles and Angelina Umlauf House and Studio, and the Mexic-Arte Museum. Similarly, PARD has mothballed the Matthew Brown House, a City of Austin Historic Landmark along the Slaughter Creek Greenbelt, until funds are available for development of the property. It is challenging to maintain the integrity of a historic property when it is not in use due to threats of vandalism, arson and general deterioration.

The following are cost estimates for the short-term maintenance expenditures, as well as the future planning, development and operational expenditures:

	<b>Initial cost</b>	<b>Annual cost to maintain in present condition</b>	<b>Planning and development</b>
Mothballing historic building	\$25,000		
6’ chain link fence w/ access gate	\$9,000		
Mowing and general grounds maintenance	\$350	\$3,850	
Routine inspections		\$2,500	
Security patrols		\$3,000	
Master Plan			\$200,000
Comprehensive Design			\$450,000
Site and Building Construction			\$3,750,000
20% Contingency			\$750,000
Associated development costs			\$635,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$34,350</b>	<b>\$9,350</b>	<b>\$5,785,000</b>

Operational expenses for ongoing programming (projections):

	<b>Operational Budget for Museum</b>
Year one operations including one time start-up expenditures	\$256,489
Year two expenditures	\$193,195
Year three expenditures	\$193,195

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6722.

cc: Liana Kallivoka, PhD, PE, Assistant Director, PARD  
Ricardo Soliz, Acting Assistant Director, PARD  
Kim McKnight, AICP, CNU-A, Acting Division Manager, Park Planning, PARD  
Laura Esparza, Division Manager, Museums and Cultural Programs, PARD

