



CITY OF HOUSTON - CITY COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 9/24/2025

District C

Item Creation Date: 8/27/2025

HPL_3400 – FY26 HPL – Freedmen’s Town Conservancy Visitor Center

Agenda Item#: 9.

Summary:

AN ORDINANCE APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING A CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENT WITH FREEDMEN’S TOWN CONSERVANCY FOR THE OPERATION OF THE THREE GREGORY CAMPUS ROW HOUSES AT THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER THAT SERVE AS THE FREEDMEN’S TOWN VISITOR CENTER FOR THE HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY DEPARTMENT; CONTAINING PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE SUBJECT; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Background:

The Director of Houston Public Library Department is requesting an ordinance be approved by City of Houston Council members authorizing a contribution agreement with Freedmen’s Town Conservancy, for the operation of the three Gregory Campus Row Houses at the African American History Research Center that serve as the Freedmen’s Town Visitor Center. The City of Houston is providing operations budget contribution to Freedmen’s Town Conservancy, totaling \$250,000 for the Conservancy’s operations budget which will include staffing, public programs, and marketing/promotions.

During 2024 and since the opening of the Freedmen’s Town Visitor Center on May 30, 2024, the Conservancy has provided 64 tours and welcomed 764 tourists. In addition, the Visitor Center has welcomed 736 visitors to the Visitor Center and hosted 28 dynamic programs and events, transforming the space into a vibrant hub for cultural education, community engagement, and legacy-driven storytelling. In 2024, the Visitor Center held two dynamic exhibitions that included THIS WAY: A Houston Group Show featuring a host of Houston Artist and Bennett Road featuring the artwork of both Michael and Marty Bennett, native Houstonians, and former NFL Players. From January 2025 through August 2025, the Conservancy has provided 19 tours and welcomed 416 tourists along with 2,647 visitors to the VC through 48 programs, events, and activations with 2 exhibitions that included SPACE FOR US, produced by Aris K Brown and 160 Years of Resilience curated by the UH Graphic Design Class. The Visitor Center is one of the premiere hubs for all Conservancy focused events, programming, and tours. This facility, in close partnership with HPL’s African American History Research Center at the Gregory School, will work with the various neighborhood coalitions, committees, and house museums. The Visitor’s Center is also a demonstration project, similar to Project Row Houses. This site will demonstrate the economic and cultural value of Adaptive Reuse as an accessible and affordable form of Historic Preservation. By continuing this project, it will serve as a blueprint of public-private partnerships protecting, preserving, and restoring historic properties for the preservation driven economic revitalization of communities. The Visitor Center offers hyper-flexible and responsive marketing and community engagement as a pseudo satellite office for the TIRZ, HPL, COH, incoming developers, etc. With this contribution, Freedmen’s Town Conservancy intends to continue serving more than 750 visitors, providing as many as 36 tours, monthly events, and multiple educational and public outreach programs each year.

The Conservancy will be utilizing \$250,000 for operations budget which will include staffing, public programs and marketing/promotions as follows.

Annual Operations Budget	FY24
1 Full-Time VC Manager	\$145,000.00
1 Full-Time Program & Engagement Manager	
2 Part-Time VC Customer Service Staff	\$55,000.00
Public Programs	\$25,000.00
Marketing & Promotions	\$25,000.00
Total	\$250,000.00

Fiscal Notes:

Funding for this item is not included in the FY2026 Adopted Budget. Therefore, a Fiscal Note is required as stated in the Financial Policies.

Signed by:

Sandy Gaw

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Director, Houston Public Library

Estimated Fiscal Operating Impact			
Recurring or One-Time	One-time		
Department Name	FY2026	Out Year	Total
Houston Public Library	250,000.00	-	250,000.00
Total	250,000.00	-	250,000.00

Prior Council Action:

Ordinance No. 2023-1157, passed on December 20, 2023

Amount and Source of Funding:

\$250,000.00
 General Fund
 FUND 1000

Contact Information:

Rummeka Allen, Administrative Coordinator – Council Liaison 832.393.1348

John Middleton, Assistant Director - Library Spaces 832.393.1681

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Type
Signed Cover Sheet - Freedmen's Town Conservancy	Signed Cover sheet
ORDINANCE 2023-1157	Ordinance/Resolution/Motion
Approved PBJ	Financial Information
Certification of Funds	Financial Information
Funding Information	Financial Information
2024 EOY Visitor Center Report	Backup Material
Ordinance	Signed Cover sheet
Coversheet_9.15.25	Signed Cover sheet
Purchase Order	Signed Cover sheet
Contract	Signed Cover sheet
Form A - HPL	Financial Information