

## *Aretha Franklin Birthplace Restoration Project*



**South Memphis Music**    **Vera House & Family**



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April 24, 2018 Update:

The project is poised to move forward as projected with the partnerships originally engaged and new partnership:

### **New Partnerships:**

**Local Bank Partner** – During April LOCCDC met with a local bank (as this is a public document the name is being withheld) the bank partner has committed \$25,000 to the project, this will be awarded in June 2018. This will be a community partnership grant.

**National Partnership** - In March 2018 SMRCDC submitted a grant application to the Fannie Mae Innovation Fund (<http://www.fanniemae.com/thechallenge/>) for the relocation of the house and revitalization of the area surrounding the new location on Mississippi Blvd. The request was \$500,000 which will be leverage with other funding to revitalize the area around LeMoyné-Owen College and the area surrounding the relocated birthplace. We should have a final decision on June 2018. (Proposal available upon request)

### **Partnership Updates**

**Ching Wings** – renewed their commitment to the project and will participate in the form of financial assistance specifically for the foundation work and renovation of the house, the previous commitment was \$14,000.

**Soulsville Inc.** – the foundation, in discussions in March 2018 has committed to assisting with the exterior layout of the site at the new location and assist in the designing of the exterior and curation of the house, as they have extensive experience with museum preservation and presentation.

**Tillman & Sons Construction and Environmental Technical Services** – two minority owned business has agreed to continue with their commitment to assist with the renovation of the house once construction renovation starts, laying the foundation and repositioning the house, they also have consulted with our architect partners Self-Tucker Architects regarding engineering need for the project, both are general contractors and have worked with SMRCDC since the beginning of this project.

**LeMoyne-Owen College Division of Sociology** – has agreed to involving students in the project to do research as needed in the collection and authenticity of the restoration.

**SoulsvilleUSA Neighborhood Association** – will continue its partnership with the project and recently created, along with LOCCDC, a brochure that highlights the tourism locations in the community, included was the birthplace home of Aretha Franklin. They have agreed to work with SMRCDC to showcase the house in its cultural tourism business it is establishing in the South Memphis area.

**MLGW** – We have once again checked with MLGW about outstanding issues involved in the transportation of the house. The preferred route ( North on Lucy; North on Wellington; East on McLemore; then North on Mississippi to its new location); lifting of overhead utility lines along the route and related concerns..

### **Outstanding Issues**

1. SMRCDC has, through a third party reached out to Ms. Franklin about a written approval about the house and usage of her name on the project. We have heard back from that person and they continue to try to reach her and her preventatives. SMRCDC still stands by our original conversation with her via telephone in June, 2016 about allowing SMRCDC to renovate the house and her agreeing to participate; allowing us to move forward with the preservation. Also there are a series of emails with her attorney that can be made available.
2. Mrs. House's dispute with her debtor reading a second mortgage that needs to be resolved. SMRCDC is working with a local Memphis philanthropist to assist in resolving this matter to everyone's satisfaction.

## Next Steps

1. Complete the bank request and have it ready for June 2018;
2. Get engineering to layout relocation site to match house dimensions;
3. Continue to work with Attorney Jeri Moskovitz of the legal issues;
4. Continue to reach out to Franklin Family;
5. Continue the engagement of project partners in the process;
6. Continue engagement with Mrs. Vera House;
7. More discussion with MLGW;
8. Outreach to house movers and the DIY network.

Respectively Submitted

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Higgs".

Jeffrey Higgs, Conservator  
South Memphis Renewal CDC

CC:

Judge Dandridge, Environmental Court  
Kenya Hooks, City Attorney  
Jeri Moskovit, Mayor Strickland Project Advisor  
Dr. Michael O. Minor Board Chairman SMRCDC