

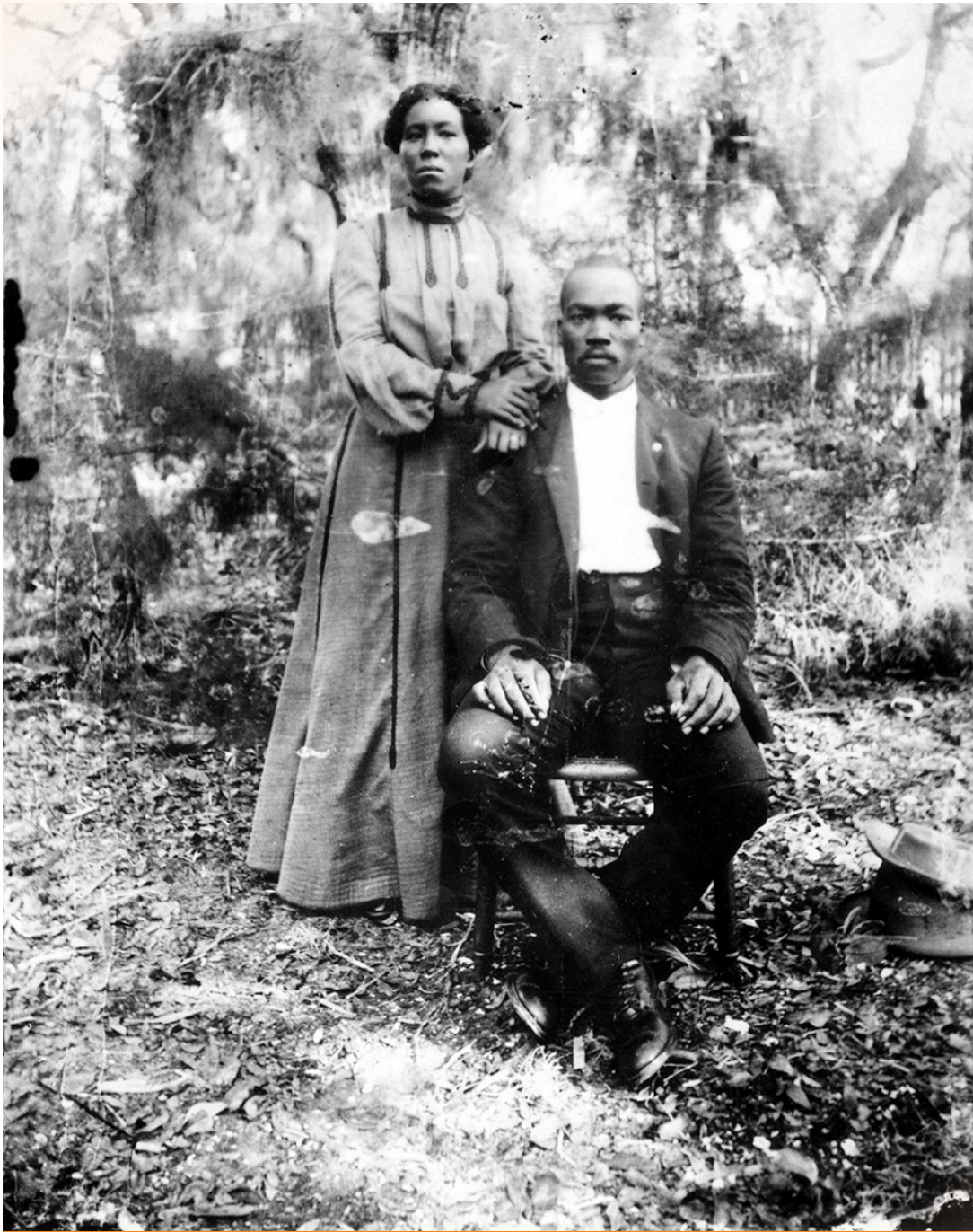
COLSON HOTEL

PRESERVATION PLAN



This report was created by the Sarasota Alliance for Historic Preservation, Inc. in collaboration with the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition for the City of Sarasota and JDMax Developments, LLC, the current owner of the Colson Hotel property.





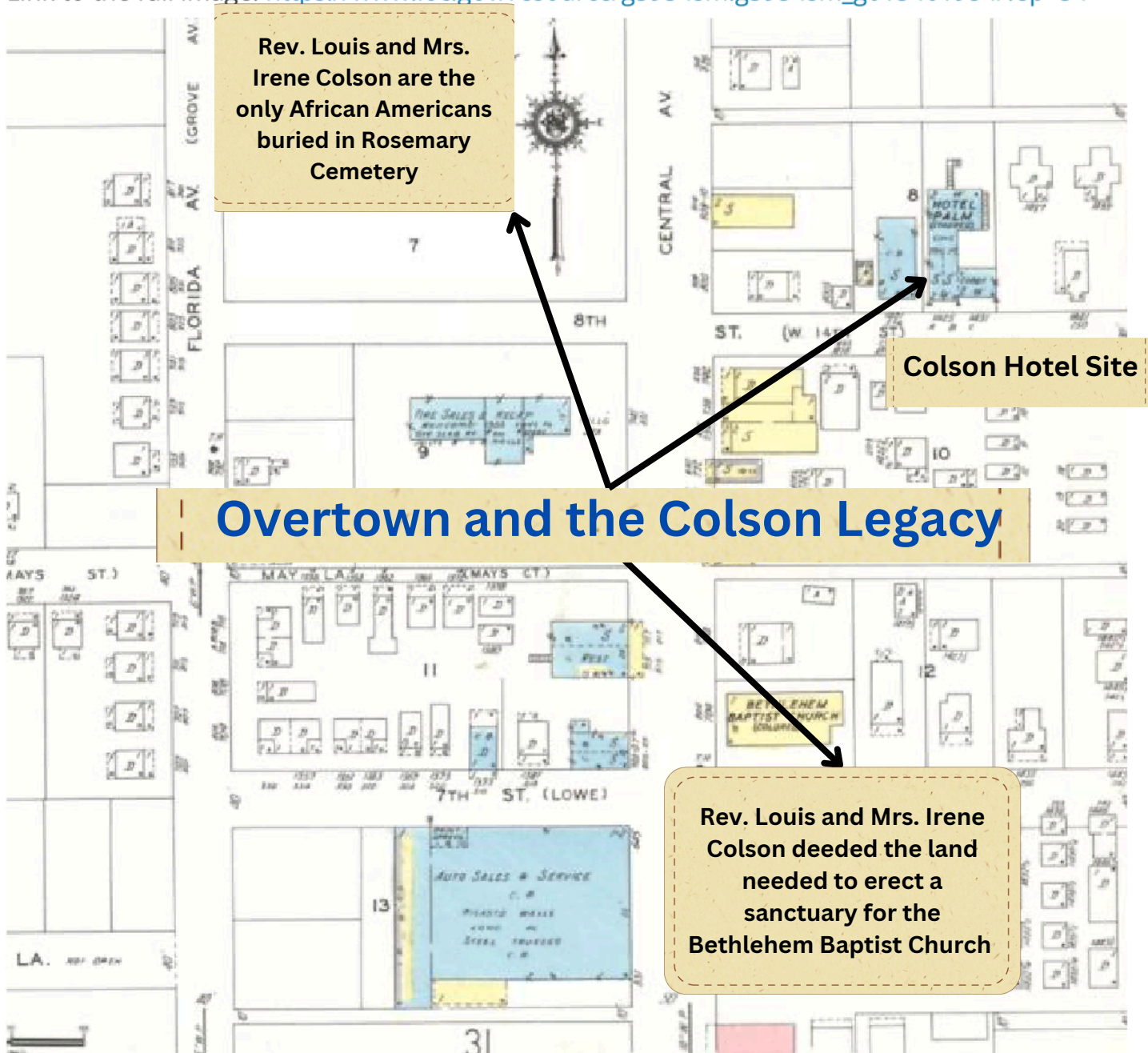
Above: Rev. Louis Colson and his wife Irene. Mr. Colson was the first known African American settler in Sarasota (1884). Courtesy of Sarasota County Historical Resources

MAP

Image 34 of Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Sarasota, Sarasota County, Florida.

Image provided by: **Library of Congress, Washington, DC**

Link to the full image: https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3934sm.g3934sm_g013461954/?sp=34





The 1925 Colson Hotel for Negroes is located at 1425 8th Street in the City of Sarasota. One of the few remaining contributing structures to the Overtown National Historic District, also known as Black Bottom.

This Phase 1 Preservation Plan was created to guide stakeholders in critical decisions about the future of the Colson Hotel. **Its significance as intentional space making for the African American community reaches back to the very roots of Sarasota's foundation. In 1925 Owen Burns built the Colson Hotel for Negroes. We cannot now say that this land is too valuable to hold their heritage.** It is recommended that a Phase 2 Plan be developed that details the goals and objectives for the structure's future use, based on the results of a community outreach study, a restoration plan for the property, and the vision for preservation of the building's historic context.

The Colson Hotel stands as a visual reminder of the African American experience in Sarasota during the time of Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation. As such, it poses an unparalleled opportunity to understand this period of time in our history.



The History

The Sarasota Alliance for Historic Preservation, in conjunction with the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition, Fredd Atkins Community Engagement Services, Newtown Nation, Greater Newtown Alliance, Newtown Alive and other local preservation organizations, are deeply committed to the preservation of the historic Colson Hotel.

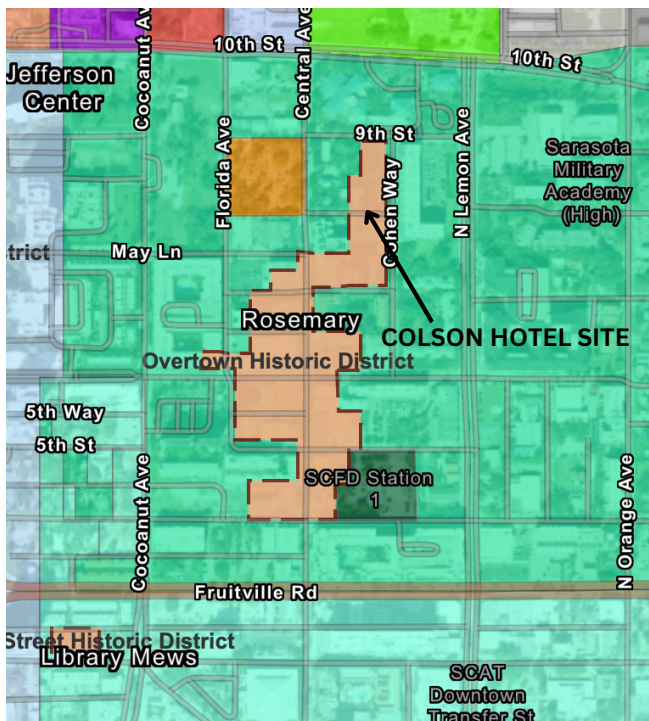
The Colson Hotel was privately owned and used as a rooming house for many years prior to the private acquisition in 2023 by the current owner and developer, JD Max Developments, LLC, as part of an assemblage of parcels for redevelopment.

Local organizations had been corresponding with the previous owner to establish a path for preservation of the property, and have engaged with the current owner on multiple occasions to provide resources and recommendations to ensure a future for this incredibly significant piece of African American History.

“These historic sites bring forward a diverse and inclusive national narrative that plays a crucial role in redefining our collective history and, meaningfully, expanding the preservation movement in equitable ways. This innovation in practice helps us all make amends and walk toward a new era of justice.”National Trust for Historic Preservation, A.G. Gaston Motel,
www.savingplaces.org/places/a-g-gaston-motel

**Necessary
Now**

All paths forward depend on the Sarasota City Commission’s denial of a permit to demolish the Colson Hotel. What was fought for and built for the African American community in Sarasota in 1925 cannot be destroyed 100 years later to make way for luxury profits. In 1925, community leaders acknowledged the importance of giving African American residents and visitors a place in our City. **We cannot now say that this land has become too valuable to tell their stories.**



What follows is a road map, outlining multiple paths for the survival of the Colson Hotel as an essential piece of the City of Sarasota’s story. There are many ways to get there. The only direction we cannot go is backward.

Overtown Historic District
 Source: City of Sarasota

Markers can't replace the fabric of the Community

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“Overtown, also known as Black Bottom, dates back to 1885 but never appeared on any maps. It took 100 years for the city to acknowledge the hamlet with a historical marker.”

As reported in the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* May 19, 2019



Re-dedication of the Overtown Historical Marker, 2019

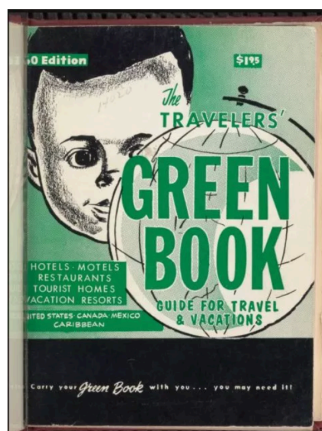
At the ceremony, Yvonne Carnegie Brown said “...*We didn't need to go out to get anything...We had businesses, we had our homes, we had our schools and churches. Whatever was happening outside of this, it didn't bother us. We were happy.*”

“That spirit of the community that was alive in Overtown, we want to revive that same spirit in this Rosemary District,” said Vickie Oldham, director of Newtown Alive. “We don't want it to be that African-Americans won't come here because they feel like this community isn't theirs anymore. It has few remnants that show Black presence was here. We want to unite the community.” said Vickie Oldham, director of Newtown Alive.

As reported in the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* May 19, 2019

Green Book Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

While the Green Book did not include any destinations on Florida's west coast south of St. Petersburg, the Colson was eligible to be included, and may have appeared in other similar guidebooks.



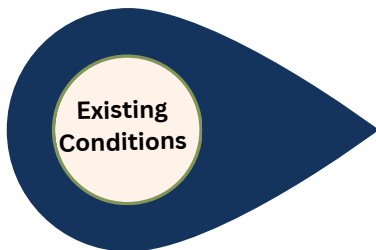
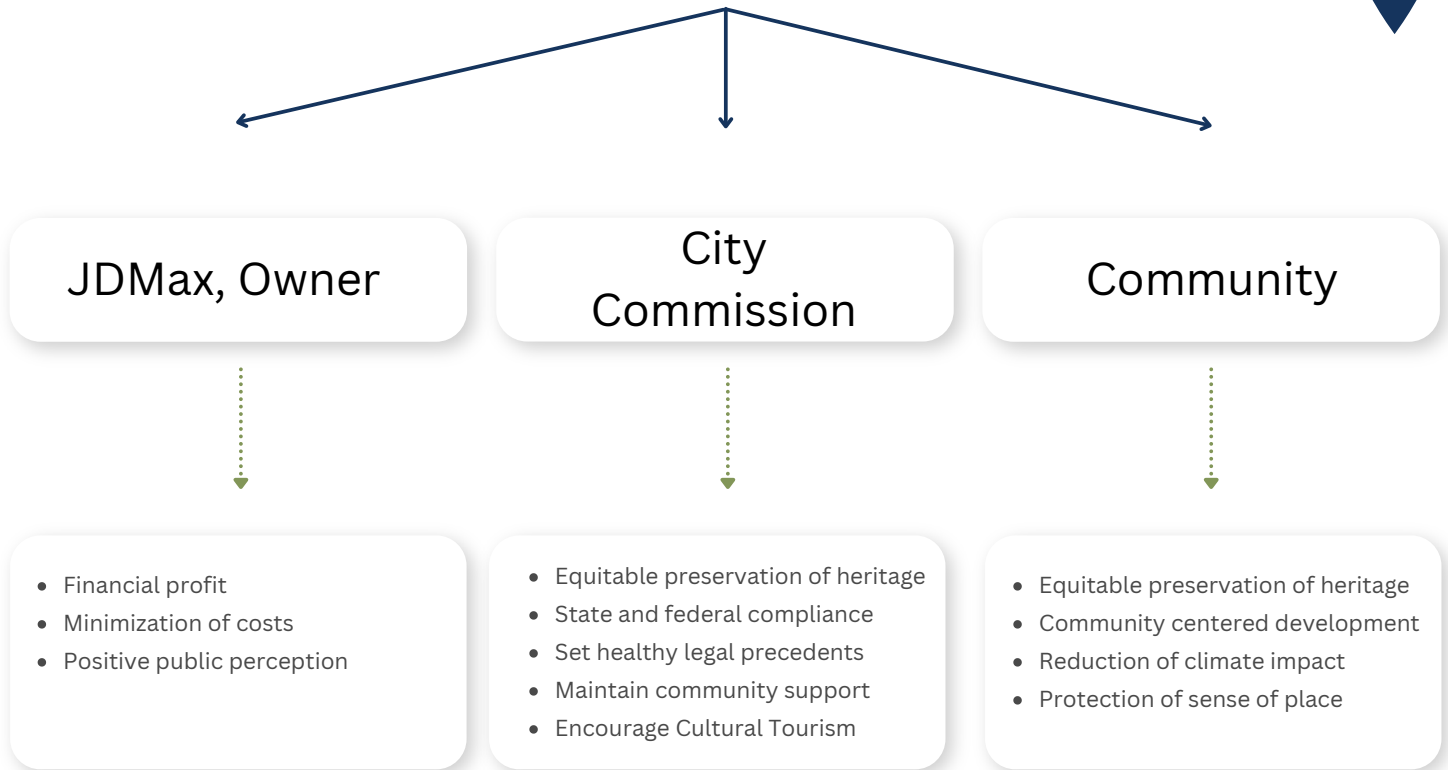
Today, according to Architectural Historian Jennifer Reut, an expert participant with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, *it is estimated that less than 20 percent of the sites listed in The Green Book are still extant.* Communities and advocates across the country are working together to identify and collect the stories of the events and people that sustained the Green Book sites.



National Park Service

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, "The Travelers' Green Book: 1960" New York Public Library Digital Collections. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org>

Stakeholder Objectives



The City’s Historic Preservation Board unanimously denied the application for demolition of the Colson Hotel.

DEMOLITION MEETS ONLY 2/3RDS OF THE OWNER’S OBJECTIVES. IT DOES NOT MEET ANY OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CITY OR THE COMMUNITY.

The building is contributing resources to the National Register Overtown Historic District. # 0200078

	National Register		Local		Contributing		Year Surveyed
Eligibility	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	2024

Staff Comment:

The Colson Hotel is listed in the FMSF as eligible for Local Designation, eligible for National Designation, and is a contributing structure to the National Overtown Historic District. The building is eligible Nationally and Locally under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Community Planning and Development due to its status as the first Black hotel constructed in Sarasota and its association with the Overtown Historic District.

Bliss & Nyitray, Inc. (BNI) was approached by JDMAX Developments LLC to conduct a structural condition assessment of the building at 1425 8th Street in Sarasota, FL...”Based on our findings and experience, the structure has degraded excessively and is beyond the possibility of repair”

Engineers said the same thing about the Payne Chapel in the Rosemary...

Rehabbed by Churchwalls, Inc. and Pat Ball, using Federal Tax Credits ...



JD Max hired JM Datum Construction to review the engineering reports....

“...We concur that transforming this building into a multi-family residence represents the most beneficial use of the space, addressing the pressing need for more housing in downtown Sarasota to accommodate its growth. However, given the building's current dilapidated state, this renovation will require substantial work...”

J.M. Datum Observations:

- Renovated Colson: Six Unit Rental Apartment Bldg.
- Construction Cost: \$2,258,000.
- Deemed uneconomic - would not generate an adequate return on investment..

These analyses failed to consider the the numerous financial benefits and incentives available for the restoration of historic structures embedded in African American Heritage.



Sarasota Needs More Affordable Housing

The Rosemary District has gentrified, and the influx of more affluent households has exacerbated the housing affordability problem. The majority of the population is retirement age, and average rents are burdensome at 45% of median household income.

Rosemary District: Key Demographics:

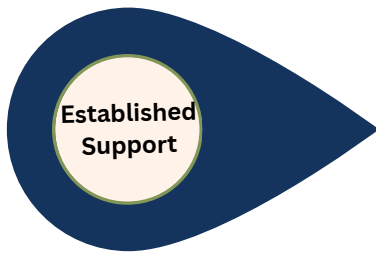
- Total Population: 12,523
- Median Age: 66.1 years/
- Non-Family Households: 4,148 (58%).
- Median HH Income: \$87,679.
- Households with No Children: 6,719 (95%).

- Average Rent: \$3,295 (July 2022).
- Average Rent/Median HH Income: 45%.

Source: Rent Cafe, July 2024.

Per J.D. Max “...our project is deliberately designed to be *more affordable* than adjacent condominium projects and comparable townhome developments, offering highly sought-after living spaces that accommodate a wide range of resident needs while ensuring maximum affordability relative to other available units. Our targeted price range is set between \$750,000 and \$900,000, with a firm cap at the \$1 million threshold.”

Their plan falls short of ‘maximum affordability’. The sales price cap of \$1 million is over **11 times the average household income in the Rosemary.**



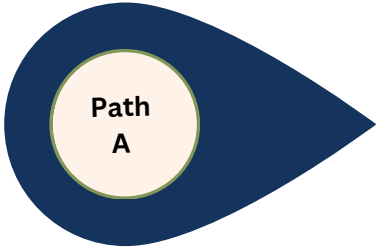
NATIONAL

National Trust for Historic Preservation

LOCAL:

City demonstrated support with the preservation of the Leonard Reid House
 The nonprofit organizations involved with the creation of this preservation plan are committed to supporting the Colson Hotel.

STATE African American Heritage Preservation Network
 FL DOS, Black Heritage Trail report inclusion
 FL Trust for Historic Preservation



Developer retains the structure in place on the property and participates in its preservation with use to be determined.

STEP 1 The City Commission upholds the decision of its Historic Preservation Board to deny demolition of the Colson Hotel.

STEP 2 The City Commission requests Staff to draw up an **Agreement** upon which the owners’ signatures will be required prior to approval of their development plans detailing the following stipulations:

- Obtain local historic designation of the structure to utilize the Ad Valorem Tax credit and ensure flexibility within the building code;
- Utilize the Federal Historic Tax Credit program to ensure the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards are followed. (This involves hiring a consultant to guide the Federal Tax Credit Program participation in historic restoration funds.)
- Partner with a local organization to conduct a study to obtain meaningful community input (from such groups as Rosemary District Neighborhood Association, Newtown Alive, Newtown Nation) about the future use, and celebration of the history embodied in the building, and compatibility with the planned surrounding development.
- Partner with a local organization to conduct full HABS documentation of the structure.

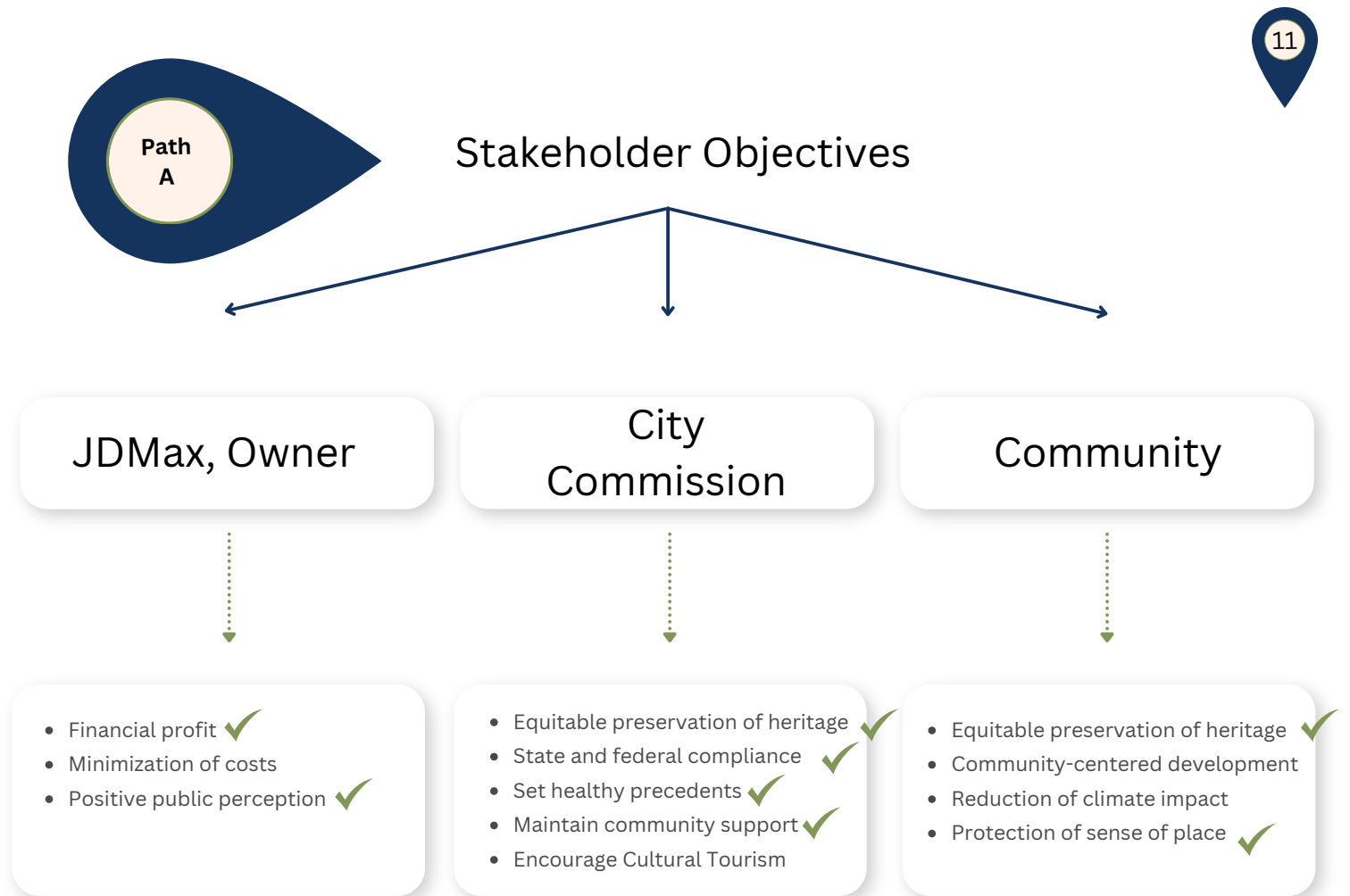
OPTIONS:

- Utilize the existing Rosemary District Transfer of Development Rights program to capture the unrealized development potential of the historic site for additional buildable area.
- Shift to an affordable housing project to utilize **Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs)**. These credits can be sold to investors to raise substantial capital to offset construction costs.

Example of LIHTC calculation:

Credits are sold to investors based on the discounted present value of the 10 years of tax credits. At the current estimated Federal 9+ year AFR of 5%, the sale would raise ~ \$1,400,000 for the developer to offset construction costs.

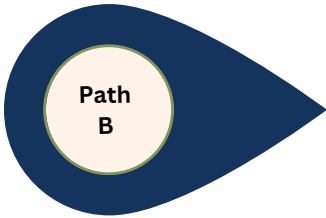
Qualified Basis	\$ 2,000,000
<u>x Tax Credit Percentage</u>	<u>x 9%</u>
Annual LIHTCs	\$ 180,000
<u>x Ten Years</u>	<u>x 10</u>
Total LIHTCs	\$ 1,800,000



Path A enables the developer to retain control over the Colson Hotel, while also ensuring that some of the objectives of the community and the City are met. The challenge of finding a meaningful use that bridges the new luxury townhomes with the significant African American heritage of the historic building remains. However, by requiring the engagement of a local organization to study this, the City increases the likelihood of a favorable outcome.

Challenges that this model fails to address:

- Historic preservation is a technical and specialized field; it is recommended that the developers partner with qualified preservation architects and contractors to ensure the work complies with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Structures, and also to ensure a reasonable economy of practice. Unqualified professionals are often intimidated by an unfamiliar process and charge unnecessarily high premiums to provide protective margins.



PURCHASE OF FULL PARCEL Public / Private Partnership to Acquire and Rehabilitate the Colson Hotel

Overview: The City purchases the full assembled parcel utilizing CRA funds for Affordable Housing, and establishes the Colson Hotel structure as the community amenity for a new affordable housing development constructed on the surrounding land which could utilize the density bonuses available by code.

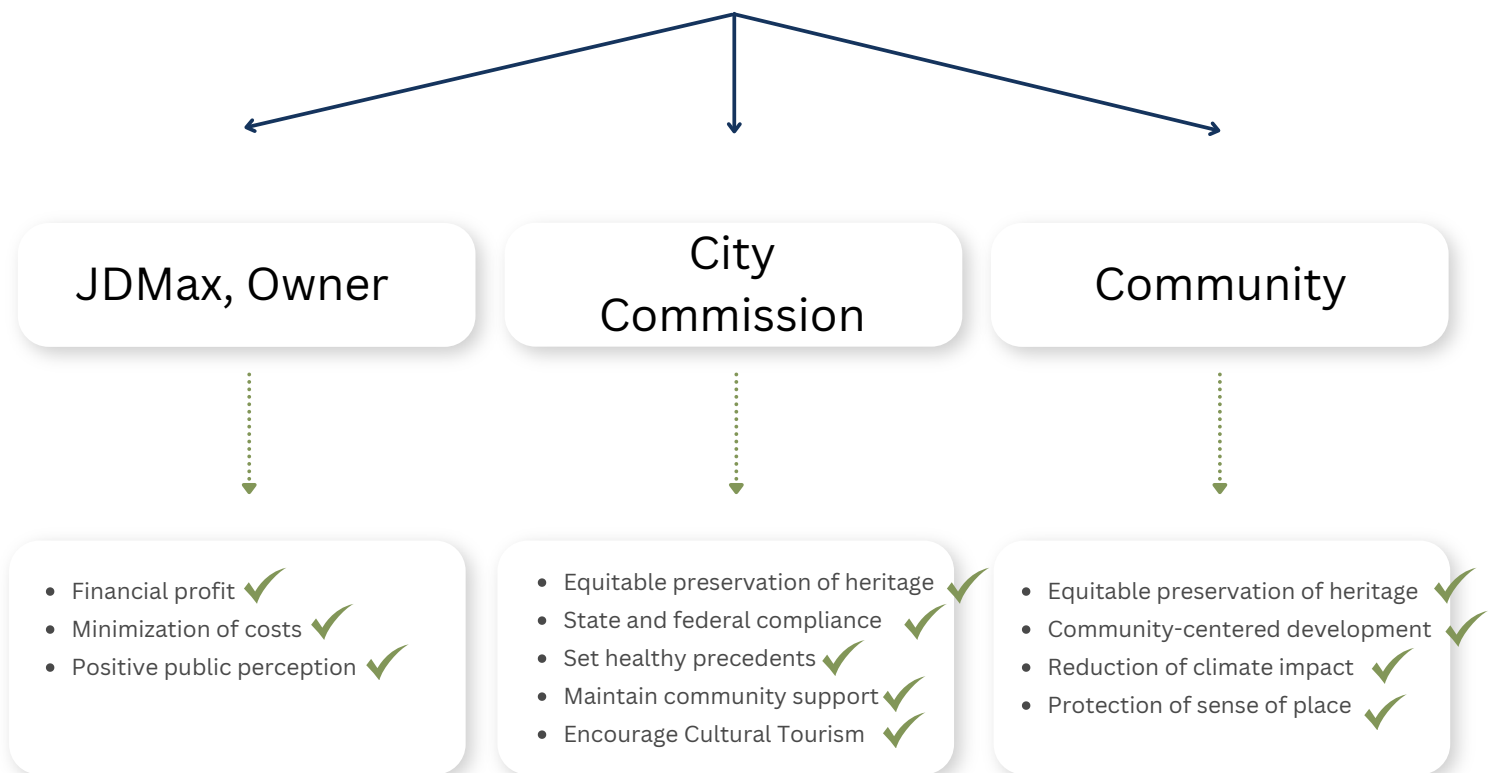
Critical steps:

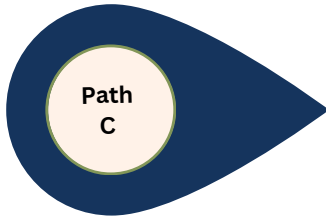
- Partner with a local organization to conduct a community survey to determine a meaningful way for the Colson Hotel to continue to meet the needs of the community and share its stories.
- Obtain local historic designation for the structure and conduct full digital documentation
- Partner with an affordable housing nonprofit group to design and build the new affordable units, working to create artful structures that embrace the history, scale, and massing of the neighborhood while minimizing the carbon footprint.

Funding Sources for the restoration of the Historic Colson Hotel:

- DOS Special Categories Grants
- Utilize Federal Historic Tax Credit program (20% project costs)
- National Trust African American Action Fund Grant (up to \$150,000)

Stakeholder Objectives





PURCHASE OF DIVIDED PARCEL Public / Private Acquisition of the Colson Hotel

Overview: In this scenario, the current owner would separate the lot with the Colson Hotel from the remainder of the assemblage, allowing the developer to proceed with its townhome project, while also ensuring the survival of the Colson Hotel.

- STEP 1** The City Commission upholds the decision of its Historic Preservation Board to deny demolition of the Colson Hotel.
- STEP 2** The City Commission requests Staff to draw up an Agreement upon which the owners' signatures will be required prior to approval of their revised development plans subject to the stipulation:
- A site plan showing the division of the lots in an equitable and functional manner which allows sufficient set backs and site flexibility for a functional reuse of the Colson Hotel Building.
- STEP 3** The new site plan will then be included in a full marketing package that SAHP, SAACC, and other local organizations can share to ensure the Colson Hotel property has the best opportunity of finding its new steward.

Potential Future Uses of the Colson Hotel

Cultural Heritage Tourism involves traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. This type of tourism focuses on the cultural, historical, and natural aspects of a destination and aims to preserve these elements while educating visitors.

Key components of heritage tourism include:

1. **Historic Sites and Landmarks:** Visiting locations with significant historical importance, such as ancient ruins, battlefields, historic homes, and architectural landmarks.
2. **Cultural Experiences:** Engaging with local traditions, festivals, music, dance, and cuisine that reflect the heritage of a community or region.

Placing the Colson Hotel back into use as a hotel is one possibility (of many) with multiple successful case studies. Other ideas that have been discussed include adaptive reuse as affordable housing with support services on site; a jazz club with rooms for visiting artists and entrepreneurs.

It is recommended that a community study be completed to identify and develop the most meaningful future life of the building.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL HERITAGE HOTELS:

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“America is divided. We need gathering spaces for healing.”

Kristin Kitchen, Founder and CEO,
Sojourn Heritage Accommodations



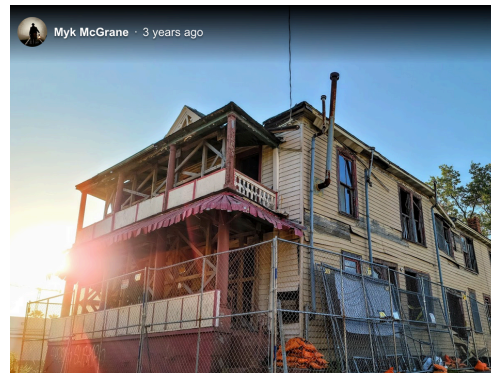
DUNNS JOSEPHINE Hotel, Miami, FL.per the website ...“is an amazing boutique hotel, located in the blossoming, cultural garden and entertainment mecca known as Historic Overtown. The DUNNS JOSEPHINE HOTEL is an ode to both the Miami and Harlem Renaissance periods of glitz and old world glamour from days gone by.”

Sojourn Heritage Accommodations has expressed interest in adding the Colson to its portfolio. Sojourn Heritage Accommodations has demonstrated that there is a viable market for cultural heritage hotels.

Other examples include the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa (Riverside, California), Brown Palace Hotel and Spa (Denver, Colorado), Peabody Memphis (Memphis, Tennessee), Fairmont Copley Plaza (Boston, Massachusetts) The Omni Homestead Resort (Hot Springs, Virginia), the Biltmore Hotel (Coral Gables, Florida), Hotel Del Coronado (Coronado, California)

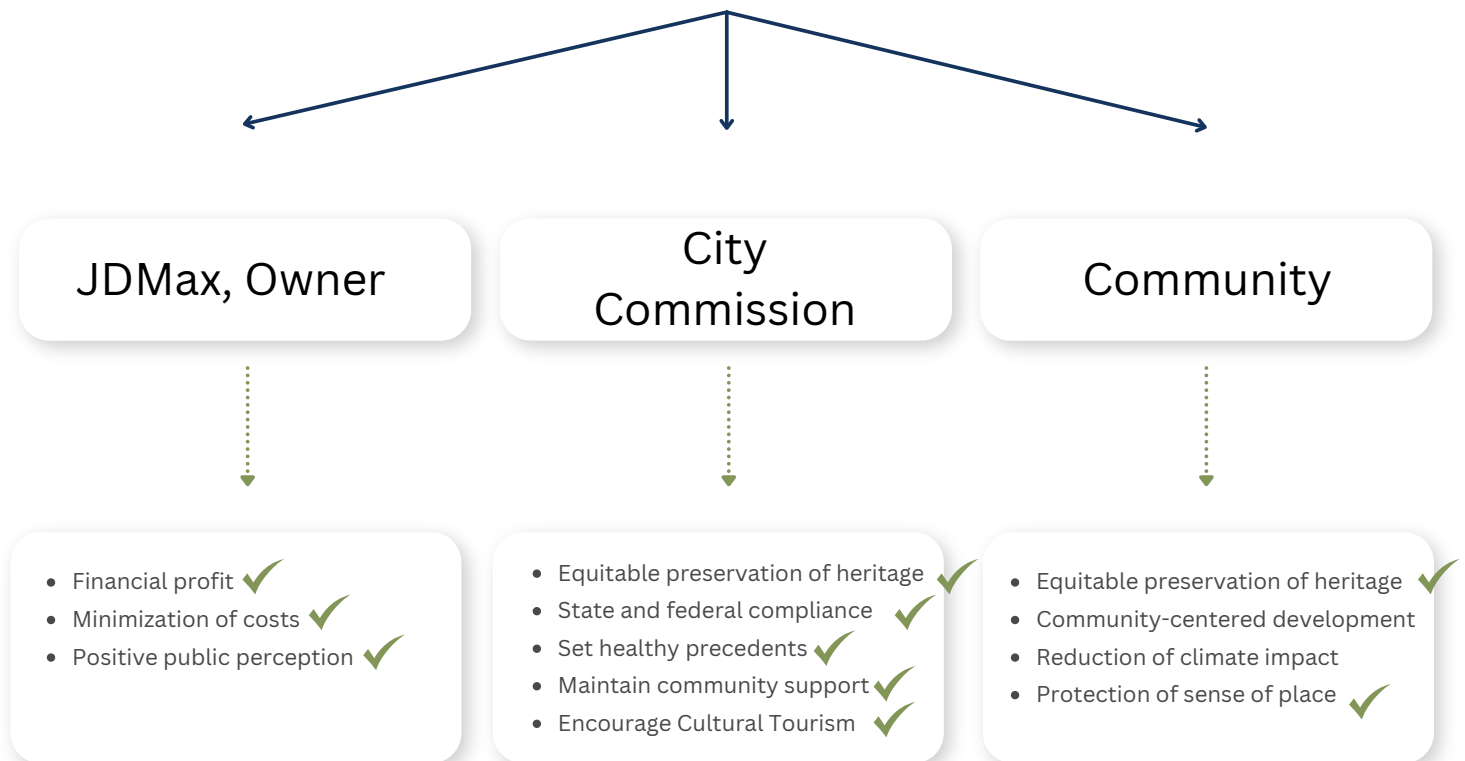
An Example to Emulate: A Work in Progress

Jackson House
Foundation,
Jackson House, Tampa Fl.



The JACKSON HOUSE, a two-story home consisting of 24 rooms demonstrates the resources that can be marshaled by a public/private partnership with the will to preserve an important cultural landmark. It was built in 1903 and used as a boarding house. The property is located in an area that is one of the oldest black neighborhoods in Tampa known as the "Scrub". Jackson House Foundation has received over \$4 million through grants and private donations. Hillsborough County provided \$500,000, the state of Florida provided \$1.5 million, and the City of Tampa allocated \$1 million of CRA funds. Restoration work has yet to begin.

Stakeholder Objectives

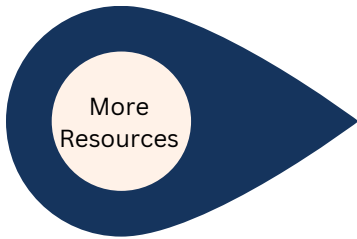


Federal Tax Credits

City governments as well as non profits can utilize tax credits if they create a for-profit entity that will syndicate or “sell” the Federal Tax Credits to a tax investor who will invest equity into the historic building. Most recipients of historic tax credits (usually a developer or non profit organization) choose to syndicate them—to transfer the tax credits to an investor. These can be used for both commercial and residential use. Federal Low Income Tax Credits (LIHTCs) are available (10 year investor credits) if used for affordable housing.

Tax credit syndication requires the building owner and an investor to form a legal entity like a limited partnership or limited liability company. This arrangement allows the building owner to receive capital sooner, while the investor claims the tax credits over a period of five years after construction is completed for historic tax credits, and over ten years for LIHTCs.

There are many companies (J.P. Morgan Chase, National Trust Community Investment Corporation) who want to invest in a Historic Preservation project, and they actually pay the non-profit owner for nearly the whole projected 5 years of tax credits right up front. This results in more cash for the non-profit owner at the beginning of rehabilitation and allows the private investor to write off their investment over 5 years through syndication once the project is completed.



Grant Funding Sources – FOR PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

- Florida DOS - Special Categories Grant: Up to \$500K with 1:1 Match.
- FL DOS Cultural Facilities Grant: Up to \$100k
- National Trust African American Action Fund Grant: up to \$150K
- National Trust Preservation Funds: \$2500-\$5,000 Seed Capital
- 1772 Foundation African American History Preservation Grants: \$25K-\$1M matching funds
- African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund: \$50K -\$150K
- NAACP Powershift Entrepreneurs Grant up to \$25K.
- Mellon Fund Humanities in Place Program: arts and cultural programming up to \$500K
- NEA: Our Town Placemaking Grant \$25k-\$150k with 1:1 match
- Save Americas Treasures (SAT):\$125K - \$750K
- Local Foundations: Up to \$250K.

“Some men achieve greatness in writing. Others through inventions and other lines of endeavor in which they have proven unusual skill. But Edwin O. Burns, builder, of Sarasota, has a just claim to greatness, because, he has just opened the Colson Hotel, to the negroes of the city.” Sarasota Herald Tribune Archives, December 15, 1926.

Organizations and Resources for collaboration:

SAHP
Newtown Alive
Newtown Nation
SAACC
Rosemary Neighborhood HOA
FAAHPN - supported by the FL DOS
FL A& M university, a HBCU
African American Heritage Preservation Foundation
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Florida Trust for Historic Preservation
Black in Historic Preservation, K Kennedy Whilters, AIA

In 1925, the City leaders had the resolution, the humanity, and the courage to hold space for Sarasota’s Black community. Their successors, 100 years later, must now demonstrate the same.