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## Community to Gather, Provide Feedback to Shape Future of DeKalb's First Black Public School on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, 1-4pm *Effort to Activate Landmark of Area's Black Educational History Continues*



*Above: Participants in the November 2021 community engagement session discuss the history and importance of the Bruce Street School. The community engagement session on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> will take place at the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance office (3350 Klondike Road) and focus on future community uses for the site.*

**LITHONIA, Ga. – On Sunday, Feb. 27, from 1-4pm**, community members will gather to shape the future of the remnants of DeKalb County's first Black public school, the [Bruce Street School](#) ruins. The event will take place at the offices of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, **3350 Klondike Road, Stonecrest, GA 30038**. Free parking is available onsite and at the easily accessible trailhead next door (3366 Klondike Road). This event is the third in a series designed to gather community feedback and direct the reactivation of the school site. The event will be led by Martin Rickles Studio, an Atlanta-based interdisciplinary design studio; staff members from the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance; and volunteers.

Also known as the Lithonia Negro School and the Lithonia Colored School, the Bruce Street School was built and run by Lithonia's Black community prior to integration. The school's first graduating high school class (around 1943) included three pupils. By 1968, when the Bruce Street School was closed, there were over a dozen elementary and eight high school classrooms – several outbuildings, now lost, had to be constructed in order to support the growing student body. The school building contains a rich history, and now people have an opportunity to determine how this space can become an active part of the community

once again. Outreach events for this phase of the project will continue throughout spring of 2022 and culminate in June.

The focus of this session is to begin the process of mapping out what community members would like to do at the Bruce Street School site in the future – once planners understand the community’s needs and expectations, they will adjust their recommendations for renovating, preserving and otherwise activating the site accordingly. Planning is underway to include a virtual component for people who cannot attend in person; more information about the virtual component will be forthcoming.

This project is a collaboration between the City of Lithonia, DeKalb County, and the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance. Funding has been provided by DeKalb County District 5 Commissioner Mereda Davis Johnson.

Anyone with artifacts related to the Bruce Street School – including photos, records, yearbooks and stories to use in potential exhibits – is especially encouraged to join the community engagement sessions.

For more information about the project, please visit [arabiaalliance.org/brucestreet](http://arabiaalliance.org/brucestreet).

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#### **About the Arabia Alliance**

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance is dedicated to protecting, connecting and sharing the powerful history, rich culture and engaging landscapes of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area (AMNHA) for the benefit and enjoyment of all. The staff and volunteer board of the Arabia Alliance work with partners across the AMNHA to ensure that everyone can benefit from the cultural and natural resources of the National Heritage Area. For more information, visit [www.arabiaalliance.org](http://www.arabiaalliance.org).