

BLACK HERITAGE TRAIL MARKERS

Project Plan

Project Description:

A set of 8 to 10 carved signs mounted on wooden posts will provide information about each site. The design style will complement existing signs in cultural landscapes of Concord.

Purpose:

- Broaden public understanding of Concord's history by making visible the presence, diversity, and contributions of people of color that have not been fully reflected in existing historic and cultural resources.
- Build awareness for historical resources that are inadequately documented and recognized.
- Boost economic vitality by encouraging pedestrian movement within Concord and welcoming new visitors.
- Support Concord's Select Board goal: "Build a more welcoming community."

Approach:

Priority given to community education, public engagement and trust-building with the following goals:

- Build shared understanding of Concord's Black history and its physical presence in today's landscape.
- Normalize the use of interpretive markers as an educational and civic tool within Concord.
- Constructively address community input around the placement of historical markers, including concerns about precedent, permanence, and historic character.
- Establish a credible, transparent process that supports future approvals.
- Identify best practices for the placement of trail markers and historic educational signage within the context of Concord's regulatory structures and cultural landscape.
- Build upon recent local efforts and demonstrated interest in Black heritage including Patriots of Color, Black History walking tours, and increased visitation at Robbins House.

Black Heritage Trail Advisory Team

Serves as a guiding, advisory, and credibility-building body for the project. It does not replace formal regulatory authority or elected decision-making, but instead helps ensure that:

- Community engagement is meaningful and inclusive.
- Historical interpretation is accurate, nuanced, and culturally appropriate.
- Concerns are anticipated and addressed before they become barriers.
- The project reflects a broad cross-section of perspectives and expertise.

Role:

- **Advise on Public Outreach and Education**
 - Advise on outreach strategies and audiences.
 - Help frame messaging that explains *why* these markers matter and *how* they will be implemented.
 - Participate in or help convene community conversations, forums, and listening sessions.
- **Advise on Historical Interpretation**
 - Review draft interpretive themes and narratives (not wordsmithing every sign).
 - Ensure stories are seen as a part of Concord's broader history while centering Black experiences.
 - Flag sensitivities, gaps, or opportunities for clarity.
- **Serve as Ambassadors for the Project**
 - Help explain the intent, scale, and terms of installation of the markers.
 - Reinforce that participation is collaborative and markers are a community-sponsored effort.
 - Build broader understanding of historical markers as a public good.
- **Advise on Site Readiness**
 - Help assess which sites are best positioned for near-term installation.
 - Suggest ways in which proposed markers can fit within existing or future educational programming such as walking tours, digital resources, and print materials.

Proposed Members:

Name	Affiliation	Constituency
Joe Palumbo	Visitors Center, Robbins House, DEI Commission	Project Lead
Rob Munroe	Concord Academy, Concord 250, Historical Committee	Historical Committee
Osamagbe Osagie	Resident	Resident
Sam Williams	CPO Director	Community Relations
Ed Hurley Wales	DEI Commission, 30-year resident	Resident
Dr. Maria Madison,	Robbins House founder, Dean at Brandeis University	Resident
Dr. Michael Williams	Elected official (School Committee)	Schools, Resident
Andrew Nyamekye	DEIB Director, CPS	Schools
Joe Zellner	CCHS Black History teacher, Robbins House Interpreter	Schools
Gary Clayton	Concord 250	Coalition building
Beth Van Duzer	Historic Interpreter	Tour guide, local history
Kerri Greenidge, PhD	Tufts University, Professor of African American history	Historian
Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, PhD	Pennsylvania State University, Professor of American Studies, Concord abolitionist history	Historian
Rebecca Migdal	Thoreau Farm, Executive Director	Institutional Partner
Jen Turner	Robbins House, Executive Director	Institutional Partner
Brian Bradbury	Revolutionary Valley Regional Tourism Council	Institutional Partner
Mimi Graney Beth Williams Ann Clifford	Town Staff liaisons - Economic Vitality, Tourism, Historic	Town Staff

Outreach Overview:

Audience	Approach	Topics
General Public	Focus is on education on Black Heritage and tying to specific local sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What concerns do people have about the installation of historical markers? ● How do Black Heritage markers feel similar or different from existing signage in Concord? ● What conditions or assurances would help people feel comfortable with installation in public spaces?
Regulatory Groups: -Select Board -Historic District Commission -Public Works	Early and on-going iterative conversations with staff and public meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conditions and criteria for sites ● Design considerations ● Requested review and approval processes
Advisory Groups: -Historical Commission -Concord 250 -Robbins House -Concord Visitor Center -Minute Man National Historical Park -Museum of African American History	One-on-one Information Sessions with key staff/chairs Project presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Marker content and interpretive framing ● Integration with existing educational and interpretive efforts ● Feedback on proposed sites ● Process recommendations and development of best practices
Property Owners of proposed sign sites	One-on-one meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overview of the proposal ● Site considerations and potential impacts ● Review of marker content ● Terms and conditions for installation

Communication Tools

Core Assets

- **Interactive Map (Web-Based):** The interactive map serves as the primary public-facing resource, anchoring all outreach efforts. It will locate proposed and installed markers, provide historical context, and link to expanded content. Uses:
 - Self-guided exploration and walking tours
 - Reference tool during public meetings and one-on-one conversations
 - Integration with partner websites (e.g., Visitors Center, Robbins House)
- **Slideshow / Presentation Deck:** A modular slideshow will be developed as a shared interpretive and communication tool. Content can be tailored by audience while maintaining consistent messaging. Uses:
 - Public presentations and lectures
 - Briefings for boards, commissions, and staff
 - One-on-one meetings with property owners and stakeholders
 - Documentation of process, themes, and community input

Supporting Outreach Tools

- **Walking Tours (Guided and Self-Guided):** Walking tours translate the map and interpretive content into on-the-ground experience. Uses:
 - Guided tours led by project partners
 - Self-guided tours accessed through the interactive map
 - Special events tied to Concord 250 or related programming
- **Temporary Lawn Signs:** Temporary signs (2-14 days) act as low-impact prompts that connect physical sites to the broader interpretive framework. Uses:
 - Event-based wayfinding and site identification
 - Testing visibility and comfort prior to permanent installation
 - Encouraging feedback and conversation without permanence
- **Social Media Campaign:** Social media amplifies the foundational content rather than introducing new material. Uses:
 - Direct traffic to the interactive map and events
 - Highlight individual sites, stories, and partners
 - Promote tours, presentations, and public meetings
- **Concord Bridge Newspaper/Media:** Press coverage for high-visibility education on the project. Uses:
 - Increasing awareness beyond immediate project sites
 - Engage new partners and build community support

Addressing Reluctance Around Historical Markers

Community hesitation around the installation of new historical signage within Concord is anticipated and understood. Common themes include:

- Fear of precedent-setting.
- Concern about permanence or loss of control.
- Discomfort with change in the built environment.
- Concerns about aesthetics, visual clutter and clarity of marker's role within the context of existing signage.
- Discomfort with confronting difficult or unfamiliar history.

The outreach approach addresses these by:

- Emphasizing purpose-driven, modest, and reversible design.
- Clarifying ownership, maintenance, and removal authority.
- Framing markers as educational tools, not monuments.
- Demonstrating how similar approaches have succeeded elsewhere in Concord and beyond.

Schedule:

December 2025	Confirm project management structure and internal coordination Begin development of foundational communication assets Engage Advisory Team
January 2026	Launch monthly meetings of Advisory Team Engage sign fabricator. Engage Historic Districts Commission on design parameters Develop draft design concepts applicable across sites Begin building modular slideshow for regulatory and public presentations
February 2026	Draft sign design standards (materials, dimensions, mounting approach) Draft sign text and interpretive framework Launch project web page and interactive map Conduct preliminary discussions with property owners at proposed sites
March 2026	Continue discussions with property owners at proposed sites Hold community conversations and outreach to advisory groups Use slideshow and interactive map to support listening sessions Begin social media and communications rollout to build awareness
April 2026	Complete review of sign text for historical accuracy and cultural appropriateness Incorporate feedback from advisory groups and community input Refine interactive map content and walking tour routes Execute temporary signage and public-facing engagement activities
May 2026	Secure final approvals from Historic Districts Commission, participating property owners, and MOTT grant funder Finalize communications across all tools (map, presentations, web content) Prepare Select Board materials and public presentation
June 2026	Select Board final approval Confirm fabrication schedule and installation logistics Finalize plans for community launch and public programming
July 2026	Fabrication of trail markers Final testing of interactive map and self-guided tour content
August – September 2026	Install set of 8–10 trail markers Community launch event, potentially including walking tours and site activation Continued outreach through social media and partner organizations