



THE ROAD AHEAD PARTNERSHIP

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Rt. 66 Road Ahead Partnership Creates “Green Book Task Force”

“The Negro Motorist Green Book” was published for several decades beginning in 1936. It included lists and recommendations of cafes, gas stations, and other places where African Americans traveling across the U.S. would be welcomed and safely served. The Rt. 66 Road Ahead Partnership believes in telling the complete story of America’s Rt. 66. With this in mind, the Road Ahead recently established a Rt. 66 Green Book Task Force (GBTF).

The purpose of the Rt. 66 Green Book Task Force is to increase awareness of, and appreciation for, the story of African Americans and Rt. 66. The task force will collaborate with individuals, organizations, and governmental entities to research, promote, and preserve Green Book sites along Rt. 66

One of the first tasks undertaken by the GBTF was to identify pressing needs and challenges associated with the Green Book and Rt. 66. The following were identified:

Increased Awareness & Appreciation

All Americans should be able to find their story along Rt. 66, as it is an important piece of our national history. The story of the African American experience in regards to Rt. 66 is relatively unknown and under appreciated. The Green Book can be a frame of reference through which awareness and appreciation of this particular story are enhanced.

Research

Much historical research has been done regarding the Green Book, yet, more is needed to flesh out the full story. There is a great need for oral histories, focused research, and data collection designed to present as full a picture as possible regarding Green Book history, especially because so many physical Green Book sites have been demolished or have disappeared.

Preservation

National Park Service research reveals that the majority of identified Green Book sites along Rt. 66 are now gone. Preservation efforts to save the remaining Green Book sites is an important need, along with plans and fund raising efforts to carry out such preservation work.

Promotion and Education

More Green Book research - while vital and important - is not an end in and of itself. Expanded Green Book research needs to be actively used to promote and preserve Green Book sites along Rt. 66, and in the process, increase the awareness of, and appreciation for, these sites amongst the public.

In addition to these needs and challenges, the GBTF also identified a set of principles it felt were important to guide its work moving forward.

Involving African American individuals, organizations, and communities in the work of the GBTF is crucial to the success of the task force. The GBTF will work to directly engage African American stakeholders as active participants in the tasks it undertakes to achieve its purpose.

Engaging younger and more diverse audiences is one of the keys to ensuring the preservation and ongoing viability of Rt. 66. The GBTF will work to enhance the knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of Rt. 66 by younger and more diverse audiences, as it carries out the tasks it undertakes to achieve its purpose.

Initial members of the Rt. 66 Green Book Task Force include:

Morgan Vickers, Intern, The National Trust for Historic Preservation
Frank Norris, Historian, the National Park Service
Kaisa Barthuli, National Park Service
Bill Thomas, Chairman, Route 66 The Road Ahead Partnership
Candacy Taylor, Author, Photographer, Cultural Documentarian [Ex Officio Member]

In the days and weeks ahead, the Rt. 66 GBTF will identify specific goals designed to address the needs and challenges it has noted.

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