

## **#ReclaimDunbar: A Community Needs Assessment for the Dunbar Arts, Cultural, and Innovation District**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The historic African American Dunbar Community, which was once marked as a “thriving community” has been shattered by segregation, outmigration, business closures, demolished buildings, and the onslaught of gentrification. For over a century, this community has faced numerous barriers to preserving its own history, arts and culture, and overall economic prosperity. Since 1978, the Dunbar Heritage Association has toiled, with minimal external support, to preserve African American culture through promotion of festivals, performing arts, parades, and pageantry. The Calaboose African American History Museum was formed in 1997 to preserve African Americans’ history in San Marcos and Hays County. Moreover, historically African American churches in the Dunbar neighborhood have served as “the cradle of the Negroes economic, cultural, and spiritual life” in San Marcos. While the Calaboose has been included in recent planning discussions to form a Central Cultural Arts District, other cultural assets (e.g., historic churches) and cultural leaders (e.g., Dunbar pastors and congregations) may have been excluded from these conversations.

During this one-year participatory research project, an interdisciplinary team of researchers, student-researchers, community partners, and faith leaders will engage as co-researchers in the historic African American Dunbar community to develop a comprehensive, community-driven action plan that includes and incorporates feedback and the perspectives from local residents, congregants, cultural leaders, and business owners. The results of this research will directly support the community-driven Historic First Baptist Church Restoration Project, which is spearheaded by the Calaboose African American History Museum, and the formation of a Dunbar Arts, Cultural, and Innovation District. *The research team has submitted a grant proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service in support of this project.*

**Current Needs: researchers, student-researchers (individuals, class projects, student organizations), and community partners to conduct participatory research activities.**

### **For More Information:**

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