



MEMORANDUM

To: Historic Preservation Commission

From: John Liebertz, Cultural Resource Planner III, Countywide Planning and Policy Division, Montgomery Planning

Date: October 12, 2022

Re: Edward U. Taylor Elementary School, 19501 White Ground Road, Designation in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*

Staff Recommendation:

That the HPC recommends that the Planning Board lists the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School in the *Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites* and recommends that the County Council designates the property on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*

Background:

The *MARC Rail Communities Sector Plan* (2019) directed the Historic Preservation Office to study the former Edward U. Taylor Elementary School to determine if it met criteria for designation as a Master Plan Historic Site. Planning staff collaborated with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) who provided access to archival records. Rebecca Ballo, Historic Preservation Supervisor, briefed the Board of Education on the historic significance of the school on April 21, 2021. The Board and Superintendent Jack R. Smith supported the designation and recommended that the Historic Preservation staff proceed with the designation.

Designation Criteria:

As noted in Section I of the Designation Report, staff finds that the subject property satisfies three designation criteria (1.A, 1.D, and 2.E) listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code.

2.A Architectural and design significance. The historic resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

The Edward U. Taylor School is associated with 1) the closure and consolidation of one-room and two-room Black elementary schools in the mid-twentieth century prior to desegregation; 2) sustained advocacy for modern school facilities and pressure applied from state and national litigation against the “separate but equal” doctrine; 3) the desegregation of the school system; and 4) the burden placed on the Black community to achieve the desegregation policies set forth by the county.

The Taylor School provides a unique opportunity to protect a cultural landscape that documents the progression of school design for Black residents over a 100-year span through the small collection of 3 vernacular buildings and sites in Boyds. This section of White Ground

Road reflects the transition of segregated school design from collocation with churches, to the acquisition and construction of one-room schoolhouses for nearby communities, and the building of consolidated elementary schools for the regional area before integration. St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church, presently located at 19620 White Ground Road, housed the first school for Black children ca. 1878 in Boyds. The Board of Education purchased and constructed the nearby one-room, School No. 2, Election District 11, located across from the Taylor School at 19510 White Ground Road, in 1896. This one-room school remained open until 1937, but other similar one-room and two-room school buildings housed Black elementary school students until the construction of the four consolidated elementary schools (including the Taylor School) in the mid-twentieth century. Taken as a collective, these 3 sites highlight the architecture of racial segregation and integration over a 100-year span from the post-bellum to the mid-20th century.

2.A Historic and cultural significance. Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the county and its communities.

The Edward U. Taylor Elementary School serves as a reminder of segregated life in the twentieth century and desegregation of public education in Montgomery County. Local Black teachers, parents, and advocates fought against injustice to improve educational environments for Black school children during segregation. The segregated Black schools received fewer funds and were in poorer condition than their counterpart white schools. Coinciding with national and local litigation to demand equal facilities in public education, the community succeeded in the closure of most of the obsolete one-room and two-room up-county school buildings in the late 1940s. The construction of the four consolidated modern brick schools (including the Edward U. Taylor School) were major achievements for Black residents in the county.

Following the *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka* (I and II) rulings by the Supreme Court, Montgomery County desegregated public-school facilities between 1955 and 1961. The Edward U. Taylor School was one of the last schools to be desegregated by the county and the only elementary school to remain open as an integrated elementary school. The Board of Education changed the use of the three other segregated Black elementary schools to integrated special education facilities due to a perceived need to retain a 3:1 ratio of white to Black students at any given school. As a result, the burden of desegregation primarily fell to Black residents. While Montgomery County completed their desegregation plan by 1961, many schools retained an all-white student body.

2.E Architectural and design significance. The historic resource represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

The Edward U. Taylor School is the last major building constructed on White Ground Road in Boyds. The community recognized its significance within the built environment in the *MARC Rail Communities Sector Plan* (2019). The Sector Plan recommended retaining and supporting existing Boyd institutions including the Taylor School in recognition of its role as an “historical and physical landmark.” The school serves as a tangible link between the residents and their past, providing a sense of continuity,

orientation, and place as a former center of educational and social activities. In addition, segregated public schools present the opportunity to interpret difficult and challenging aspects of American history, and remind individuals that racism continues to persist in the social environment. None of the other consolidated segregated Black elementary schools are listed in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

Conclusion:

The subject property satisfies the designation criteria listed in §24A-3 of the County Code and the HPC should recommend that the Planning Board lists the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School in the *Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites* and recommends that the County Council designates the property in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.