



OBERLIN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD CENTER

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

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OBERLIN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD CENTER IMPLEMENTATION TEAM:

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CITY MOVING FORWARD WITH PHASE II

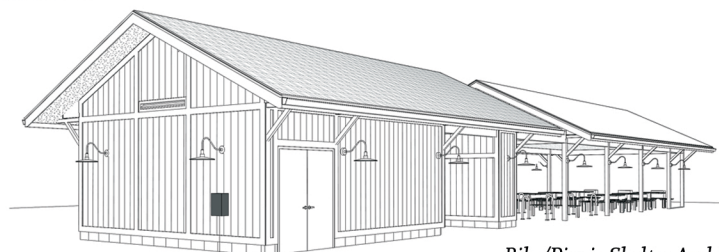
The City expects to break ground on the next phase of the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center this spring! After completing the stabilization and restoration of the Gasholder Building (**Phase I**), the City can now concentrate on the surrounding site (**Phase II**). **Phase II** has been broken into two consecutive parts (referred to as **Phase II A** and **Phase II B**) in order to utilize two major funding sources to the fullest extent.

Phase II A is set to begin this spring and will be completed using funding from the State of Ohio Capital Budget. This phase will involve the installation of the underground utilities, preparation of the grounds surrounding the Gasholder Building, installation of the sidewalks and the construction of the parking lot. When completed, the parking lot will include bus parking and charging stations for electric automobiles in addition to standard parking spaces. Once this portion of the project is complete, **Phase II B** can begin.

Phase II B will utilize grant funding from the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), which includes a 20% match raised by the City and the OURC Implementation Team. This portion of **Phase II** will include the construction of the bike/picnic shelter along the North Coast Inland Bike Trail and the installation of the sidewalks surrounding the shelter. The western portion of the shelter will contain a utility room and public restrooms, which will be accessible from spring through autumn each year. The center section of the shelter will hold refuse and recycling containers, benches, bike racks and drinking fountains that include a water bottle refilling station. The eastern portion of the shelter will contain built-in picnic tables and a grilling area that will be open to the public.

Phase II may also include a possible water feature and fountain court on the site, thanks to the Oberlin Rotary Club, which committed to raise funds to sponsor the feature. This area will be an important point of reflection on the site and the City and OURC Implementation Team are very grateful for the support of the Oberlin Rotary Club in making it possible.

The City expects **Phase II** in its entirety to be complete by summer 2017, but please stay tuned for information about the groundbreaking ceremony in the next coming month!



Bike/Picnic Shelter Architectural Rendering

OURC LOGO SPEAKS TO HISTORY THROUGH SYMBOLISM



The Oberlin Underground Railroad Center has a long history of utilizing the talent and skills in our community to help the project move forward. For example, did you know that the OURC logo was designed by Oberlin College alumna Stacy Harrison? Stacy was commissioned by the City to work with members of the OURC Implementation Team in designing a logo to represent the Center. The Team Members offered insight into the OURC project and Oberlin's connection to the Underground Railroad, and Stacy was able to design a meaningful logo for the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center.

Stacy designed the logo to depict railroad ties in reference to the Underground Railroad system that went through Oberlin, Ohio. The tracks are leading toward the "Big Dipper" constellation and the North Star, which were used by escaped slaves to follow a path to freedom in the North. The North Star included in the logo was also appropriated from the North Star utilized in the City of Oberlin logo, thus visually connecting the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center to the City of Oberlin.

The OURC Implementation Team believes Stacy Harrison is a wonderful graphic designer and is very proud of the work she has done for the OURC. You may check out more of Stacy's work on her website: www.stacythedesigner.com!

A PIECE OF HISTORY: LEE HOWARD DOBBINS

The story of Lee Howard Dobbins is one that speaks to the tragedy of slavery and to the collaborative spirit of a familiar college town in Ohio. In 1853, Miriam, an escaped slave traveled to Oberlin, Ohio from Kentucky on her journey north to freedom in Canada. She came with her children, grandchildren and a young foster child named Lee Howard Dobbins. Miriam and her family were the only slaves her master owned, but she had learned that her daughters were going to be sold so she made her desperate escape to save her family, knowing that her master would surely pursue them.

Lee was only four years old at the time, but when the family arrived in Oberlin, he was deathly ill. Since Miriam knew her master would be after her family, they could not wait for Lee to recuperate for fear of being returned or worse. As such, Miriam and her family continued on their journey to Canada, leaving Lee with an Oberlin family who promised to care for the child.

Sadly, Lee Howard Dobbins passed away just nine days after his arrival in Oberlin, having suffered from tuberculosis. All of Oberlin's residents mourned the child's death and there is said to have been a thousand people in attendance

at his funeral at First Church. At his funeral, residents took up a collection to purchase a grave marker which reads:

Let Slavery perish!
LEE HOWARD DOBBINS
a fugitive Slave orphan.
brought here by an
adopted mother in her
fight for liberty
MAR. 17, 1853
left here wasted with
consumption, found
a refuge in death
MAR 26, 1853.
Aged 4 Years.

Lee Howard Dobbins's grave marker was removed from Westwood Cemetery for preservation purposes and is currently housed in the Oberlin College Archives until it can be put on display at the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center upon its completion. Lee's is just one of the many stories in Oberlin's rich history in the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movement. Stay tuned for more!