



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, DC 20240

January 17, 2023

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chairman, Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I hereby transmit the enclosed Thurgood Marshall School (P.S. 103) Special Resource Study. The study was conducted pursuant to Public Law 116-9, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which authorized the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Public School 103 (P.S. 103), the elementary school of Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, located in West Baltimore, Maryland, and any other resources in the neighborhood surrounding P.S. 103 that relate to his early life, to evaluate their potential for inclusion within the National Park System. The study was conducted by the National Park Service (NPS).

Section 100507 of Title 54, United States Code, establishes the criteria to be considered in the study of an area for potential inclusion in the National Park System. To be recommended as a new unit, a study area must possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources and represent one of the most important examples of a particular resource type in the country; be suitable and feasible for addition to the system; and appropriate for direct NPS management.

P.S. 103, the segregated elementary school that Thurgood Marshall attended from 1914 to 1921 (first through eighth grade), located at 1315 Division Street, and the family's home at 1632 Division Street, where Justice Marshall lived while attending P.S. 103, are contributing resources to the Old West Baltimore historic district. Both P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street are nationally significant for their role in the education and upbringing of Thurgood Marshall during his early formative years. Justice Marshall is best known as the lead counsel for the landmark school desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) and as the first African American Supreme Court Justice. Justice Marshall's accomplishments in systematically dismantling the legal framework for Jim Crow segregation are the foundation upon which the success of the civil rights movement was built. The Secretary of the Interior previously identified Thurgood Marshall as a nationally significant person through the National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation of the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel, Frederick Douglass Memorial Hall, and the Founders Library at Howard University.

The NPS found that, as it exists currently, P.S. 103 possesses national significance for its association with Thurgood Marshall. However, a caveat of this finding is that the P.S. 103 owner's plans for rehabilitation and renovation could prevent the building from meeting the integrity requirement of the NHL criteria that are used for this study's national significance evaluation. In that instance, additional review would be needed to determine if the site continues to meet this criterion. Additionally, P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street, when considered together, are nationally significant as a noncontiguous district. Therefore, as a combined noncontiguous district, P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street meet the criterion for national significance for inclusion in the National Park System, but 1632 Division Street does not possess national significance for inclusion on its own.

In evaluating suitability, the NPS determined that the study area exemplifies an important aspect of American history not adequately represented and protected elsewhere. Currently, no direct representation of Justice Marshall's story or legacy exists in the National Park System. Addition of the study area to the National Park System would substantially add to the NPS ability to tell the story of Thurgood Marshall, African American history, and the history of integration in education. The noncontiguous district of P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street are suitable as an addition to the National Park System based on the character, quality, quantity, and rarity of the resource and for its educational and interpretive potential of Thurgood Marshall.

In evaluating feasibility, the NPS found that, due to existing plans for rehabilitating and renovating P.S. 103, the study area ultimately could not meet all of the factors considered for feasibility as a unit of the National Park System should the plan go forward as currently envisioned, though other options for collaboration with NPS exist. At the time of this study, the property owner of P.S. 103 was working to rehabilitate and renovate the property to reestablish it as a prominent community landmark and activate the civil rights legacy of the site, though no work on the building had yet begun. The plans shared with the NPS include a vision for honoring the legacy and national significance of Thurgood Marshall and the many other significant African Americans with ties to P.S. 103 and the community through numerous tenants who will offer exciting, high-quality educational and cultural programs not currently available in the Upton community. The intention is to transform the vacant school building into a positive force for the West Baltimore community through a wide variety of activities. While the owner's renovation plans provide a positive and exciting approach to honoring the legacy and significance of Thurgood Marshall, they would limit the NPS ability to provide resource protection, visitor enjoyment, and public interpretative programming about Justice Marshall's early life, which is the focus of the study per the authorizing legislation. For example, a wide mix of activities and tenant programs proposed for the building may limit the National Park Service's input and control over activities that occur in the building, and those activities and programs may be unrelated to the purpose of the NPS park unit. If the current owners of the properties alter their plans, the National Park Service would be happy to reconsider.

Taking these factors into consideration, the special resource study concludes that P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street, individually or combined as one park unit, are not feasible for inclusion in the National Park System. Given each property owner's plans for the adaptive reuse and stewardship of P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street and the negative finding for feasibility, the fourth SRS criterion, Need for Direct NPS Management, was not evaluated in detail.

While direct management by the NPS is not feasible under the current proposal at this time, the NPS will approach the owners of P.S. 103 and 1623 Division Street to discuss opportunities to recognize these nationally significant resources. Potential opportunities to discuss with the owners of P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street are outlined in the study, and include potential NPS affiliated area designation, increased collaboration with the Baltimore National Heritage Area, the African American Civil Rights Grants Program, the African American Civil Rights Network, and the NPS Underrepresented Community Grant Program.

The NPS applauds the past and present owners of both P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street for their stewardship in conserving these valuable resources associated with civil rights icon Thurgood Marshall's early life. There is strong public support and a potential opportunity for enhancing the interpretation and preservation of P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street and many of the related resources evaluated in this study.

Thank you for your interest in the National Park Service. A similar letter is being sent to the Honorable John Barrasso, Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate; the Honorable Bruce Westerman, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives; and the Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives. The affected members of the Maryland delegation will also receive a copy of the study report and this letter.

Sincerely,



Shannon Estenoz
Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
The Honorable Kweisi Mfume



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Washington, DC 20240

January 17, 2023

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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The NPS found that, as it exists currently, P.S. 103 possesses national significance for its association with Thurgood Marshall. However, a caveat of this finding is that the P.S. 103 owner's plans for rehabilitation and renovation could prevent the building from meeting the integrity requirement of the NHL criteria that are used for this study's national significance evaluation. In that instance, additional review would be needed to determine if the site continues to meet this criterion. Additionally, P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street, when considered together, are nationally significant as a noncontiguous district. Therefore, as a combined noncontiguous district, P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street meet the criterion for national significance for inclusion in the National Park System, but 1632 Division Street does not possess national significance for inclusion on its own.

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Taking these factors into consideration, the special resource study concludes that P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street, individually or combined as one park unit, are not feasible for inclusion in the National Park System. Given each property owner's plans for the adaptive reuse and stewardship of P.S. 103 and 1632 Division Street and the negative finding for feasibility, the fourth SRS criterion, Need for Direct NPS Management, was not evaluated in detail.

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Shannon Estenoz
Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
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Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
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Assistant Secretary
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Enclosure

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January 17, 2023

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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