

# About Africatown Heritage House

## What is Africatown Heritage House?

Africatown Heritage House is a community building that will house “*Clotilda: The Exhibition*,” to share the long-untold story of the nation’s last known slave ship, the *Clotilda*, and the community that was created by the vessel’s survivors and their descendants.

## Where is Africatown Heritage House?

The building is located at 2465 Winbush\* Street, in the northern part of Mobile, Alabama. It is situated in the heart of historic Africatown, a community that dates to the 1880s, and is adjacent to Mobile County Training School, one of the country’s Rosenwald Schools.\*\*

## Who built Africatown Heritage House?

The facility was built by Mobile County Commission through an effort spearheaded by District 1 Commissioner Merceria Ludgood, but it is a collaborative project that involves several entities working in partnership with the community. These include but are not limited to:

- The History Museum of Mobile, which curated, constructed and funded “*Clotilda: The Exhibition*” with generous support from other organizations. (See related document for more details.) The museum will operate Africatown Heritage House when it opens.
- The Alabama Historical Commission, which is leading the scientific efforts surrounding the search for, authentication and protection of the ship *Clotilda* and related artifacts.
- The City of Mobile, which financially contributed to the construction of the facility and provided other in-kind support. These efforts were led by now-deceased City Councilman Levon Manzie.
- The Mobile County Public School System, which made the land available for the structure through a long-term lease with Mobile County Commission.
- The Mobile Area Lodging Corporation (the Tourism Improvement District governing entity), which paid for plants in the memorial garden and furniture within the building.



Rendering of the exterior of Africatown Heritage House.  
Credit: Mobile County Commission

### What is Africatown Heritage House like?

The building is approximately 5,000 square feet and consists of an entry porch, lobby, exhibit hall, conference room, offices and restrooms.

The exterior is lap siding painted a shade of blue that is Mobile County Training School's school color. The color was specifically selected to honor the enslaved occupants of the *Clotilda* and to symbolize the strength and perseverance of their descendants.

The site is also home to a memorial garden that offers a place for quiet reflection. The garden features a sculpture entitled "The Memory Keeper," which is the result of a collaboration between ceramics artist Charles Smith and metal sculptor Frank Ledbetter. (See related document for more details.)



Local artists Frank Ledbetter and Charles Smith collaborated on a sculpture that provides an additional and moving way for visitors to learn the stories of Africatown and the descendants.

Credit: Mobile County Commission

### What's next for Africatown?

*Clotilda*: The Exhibition is the inaugural installation for Africatown Heritage House. As new ways of telling the story of the 110 survivors and their descendants are developed in coming years, the facility will eventually fulfill the goal of being a space used by community groups to host events and varied cultural offerings, which may include alternate exhibits. Multiple facilities are in the works within the community, including the Africatown Welcome Center and Africatown Hall. These facilities, as well as others that may emerge at later dates, will help ensure that the community has the infrastructure through which to share its story with the world.

\*Please note that maps and GPS systems may have this spelling as "Wimbush" rather than "Winbush."

\*\*In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, nearly 5,000 such schools resulted from a partnership between Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald, the president and part-owner of Sears, Roebuck & Company. It is estimated that in that era, at least a third of all African American students attended a Rosenwald School. For more information, here is a [link](#) to details from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.