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## Melrose School to be 'reimagined and repurposed'

By Linda A. Moore, Daily Memphian

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**An artist's rendering shows the exterior of the Historic Melrose School.** (Courtesy Self+Tucker)

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More than 100 people logged on Thursday, March 4, for a virtual community meeting to see preliminary plans and ask questions about the renovation and revitalization of the historic Melrose School.

In January, Mayor Jim Strickland announced his \$200 million Accelerate Memphis program, which earmarks \$10 million for Melrose School at 843 Dallas St., which operated from 1914 to 1979.

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### [Plans for old Melrose School excite neighbors](#)

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The plan for the revitalized school puts a library, an African American-focused genealogy center and multi-generational programming on the first floor, with senior housing on the upper floors.



**The Historic Melrose renovation will include a genealogy center.** (Courtesy Self+Tucker)

It is a building that will be “reimagined and repurposed for future generations,” Strickland said Thursday.

“It is also impossible to talk about the school without also mentioning its meaning in and to the community and really Memphis as a whole,” he said.

*Click on the magnifying glass icon below, then use the scroll bar on the right to view historic images as well as renderings:*



## REDEVELOPMENT of HISTORIC MELROSE HIGH SCHOOL 843 DALLAS STREET



Orange Mound was established in 1890 and is the first community in the United States developed for Black homeowners.

Since its closing, the school came close to being demolished.

“Generations of Melrose alumni and Orange Mound descendants” are grateful, said Mary Mitchell, a community icon, for saving the building she calls a “shrine.”

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### Strickland proposes \$200 million plan for capital projects

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“So, we certainly appreciate you all being on this jubilation journey,” Mitchell said.

There are a lot going on in the community, said City Councilwoman Jamita Swearengen.

“But none of this could be done without the faith, the diligence, the assertiveness, the willingness and the passion of the constituents of Orange Mound. They’re like no other,” Swearengen said.





**Renderings show a second-floor deck on renovated Historic Melrose in Orange Mound.** (Courtesy Self+Tucker)

The genealogy center will provide a rich resource for the community, said Keenon McCloy, director of Memphis Public Libraries.

And it is exciting that seniors will be living in the same building, McCloy said.

“The students will have unique access to living, primary sources of information who can teach them a lot about the past and also can help create their future,” she said.

Meeting attendees saw images of what is planned for the building in a presentation from Jimmie Tucker, a principal with Self+Tucker Architects.

The slides show an abundant use of glass for the library space, a small café and wide corridors that can be used as a “fitness walk.”

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### Shuttered for 40 years, old Melrose High School to open for weekend Orange Mound celebration

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Residents will have private units, but the design encourages interaction, Tucker said.

“Some of the aspects that have been very important to us, obviously the historic preservation of the project is very important. But also, sustainability, making sure that it’s energy efficient,” he said.



**An artist's rendering illustrates a future library in the restored Historic Melrose.** (Courtesy Self+Tucker)

The project's timeline calls for 8-12 months for design with a groundbreaking in 2022 and an opening in 2023, said Paul Young, director of Housing and Community Development.

Young answered questions that were submitted by attendees, assuring them that Orange Mound residents would be given priority for housing. Rental rates have not been set, but will be affordable, he said.

Also, while a contractor has not been selected, there will be opportunities for Orange Mound businesses to be included in contracts for the project, Young said.

“We will encourage contractors to identify Orange Mound residents to participate in the project. Obviously, we can’t mandate it, but certainly we want to encourage it,” he said.

#### TOPICS

MEMPHIS   MAYOR JIM STRICKLAND   MELROSE SCHOOL   MARY MITCHELL  
PAUL YOUNG   KEENON MCCLOY   SELF + TUCKER ARCHITECTS   JIMMIE TUCKER  
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#### **Linda A. Moore**

Linda A. Moore covers education, South Memphis and Whitehaven. A native of South Memphis, Linda has covered news in Memphis and Shelby County for more than 20 years and was formerly a reporter with The Commercial Appeal.