


HUD Secretary Gives Tampa's ENCORE District Thumbs Up

HUD Secretary Ben Carson commemorated Juneteenth on Friday by touring the revitalized African American ENCORE! community.

[D'Ann Lawrence White, Patch Staff](#)  Posted Sat, Jun 20, 2020 at 8:16 pm ET Updated Wed, Jun 24, 2020 at 7:27 pm ET



St. James Church will be home to Tampa's African American History Museum. (City of Tampa)



HUD Secretary Ben Carson tours ENCORE! (City of Tampa)

The neighborhood was a mecca for African American musicians include Ray Charles. (City of Tampa)

A must-see on the tour was the bronze statue of longtime Tampa civil rights leader Perry Harvey Sr. (City of Tampa)

TAMPA, FL — U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson commemorated Juneteenth on Friday by touring the ongoing community revitalization efforts in Tampa's first Black neighborhood, called the ENCORE!

"Juneteenth marks a celebrated date of progress in our nation's history," said Carson."Today, it is a privilege to visit the future site of Tampa's African American History Museum – a tribute to this progress in a formerly

segregated neighborhood. Through Opportunity Zone fund investments and partnerships, I am pleased to see this area thriving once again, without losing sight of its rich African American history and roots."

Funded with HUD support, [the ENCORE!](#) is a mixed-use revitalization effort in the once-thriving African American Central Avenue neighborhood just north of downtown.

Construction began in 2009 on the 12-block downtown neighborhood that now features 662 mixed-income housing units with ground-floor retail and amenity spaces, a state-of-the-art district chilled water plant, district storm water vault, solar arrays, parks and the restored St. James Church, which will become Tampa's African American History Museum.

In 2018, the ENCORE! neighborhood received a financial boost when it was designated an Opportunity Zone by former Florida Gov. Rick Scott. Created by President Donald Trump, Opportunity Zones encourage private-sector investment in forgotten communities.

These zones are of special interest to Carson, who is the chairman of the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council, established in 2018.

Among the sites Carson visited in ENCORE! was the Perry Harvey Sr. Park, named in honor of the Tampa civil rights leader. The revitalized park features whimsical sculptures by artist James Simon and a bronze statue by artist Joel Randell that pays tribute to Harvey Sr.

On [#Juneteenth](#) we recognize the sacrifices, the impact, and the contribution of black Americans to our great country. Freedom for all was always our goal and today while there is still much work to be done, we recognize how far we have come. pic.twitter.com/a4Ay8Rc6Ci
— Ben Carson (@SecretaryCarson) [June 20, 2020](#)

Harvey Sr. was a founding member of Longshoreman's Union Local #1402,

and served as its president from 1937 until just prior to his death in 1972, bringing better wages and improved working conditions to Tampa's predominantly black dockworkers.

Harvey also helped create the Central Park business district that included the first Black-owned apartment building and plaza with a bank, supermarket, restaurant and other businesses.

Originally known as The Scrub, the area was first settled by freed slaves after the Civil War. During its heyday, the neighborhood became a cultural mecca for African American musicians, including Cab Calloway, Ray Charles and Ella Fitzgerald. It's also where band leader Hank Ballard discovered a popular dance and subsequently recorded, "The Twist."

The area was booming until the shooting of a local African American youth, which resulted in three days of rioting. In 1974, the last of the buildings along Central Avenue, Henry Joyner's Cotton Club, was closed and demolished.

The 40-acre, \$425-million master-planned mixed-use community includes multifamily, retail, 180,000 square feet of office space, a hotel, grocery store, urban farm, solar park, wellness center, community center, early childhood center, middle school, a town square and the African American History Museum.