



Freedom Rider Resiliency Center Assistance Request - May 2024

Anniston's History of Resilience



Anniston, Alabama, a city still struggling in 2024, is a model of resilience. Known for its significant role in the US Civil Rights Movement, the city has faced numerous challenges, including economic shifts, the closure of Fort McClellan, and severe environmental contamination.

Despite these adversities, Anniston has embodied resilience, overcoming crises like area-wide historical levels of contamination from nerve agents GB and VX, Trichloroethylene (TCE), Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB), and unexploded ordnance (UXO), all through complex and comprehensive remediation efforts.

Even the city's CSX and Southern railway closures led to the establishment of the Chief Ladiga Trail for pedestrian recreation, further exemplifying its innovative spirit.

Anniston now seeks to leverage its Civil Rights history to promote justice through education, partnerships, and technology, creating the Freedom Rider Resiliency Center (FRRC).

The Freedom Rides



The 1961 Freedom Rides, pivotal in US Civil Rights history, saw non-violent protesters facing violent opposition in Anniston. The city responded by establishing one of the nation's first biracial councils for equal justice and integrating its library. In 2009, Anniston's efforts led to the Greyhound Bus Depot and bus burning site being designated as the Freedom Riders National Monument, a unit of the National Park Service (NPS).

Freedom Riders Training Institute (FRTI)

Proposed by original Freedom Rider Charles Person, the FRTI educates individuals on legal, non-violent protest and constitutional rights. Initiated in response to the George Floyd protests and tested in Hoover, Alabama, the FRTI has successfully reformed judicial responses to protest violations, emphasizing judicial reform as a key element of resilience. The primary location for FRTI activity is proposed to be the Freedom Rider Resiliency Center.

Freedom Rider Resiliency Center (AFRC)



The FRRC, located in three historically significant buildings on Gurnee Avenue, is designed to serve as a center for community resilience. It will feature educational and exhibit spaces, gathering areas, food services, classrooms, offices, and amenities. The center will support park interpretation, community events, law enforcement training, and emergency sheltering, including serving as a cooling station during extreme heat events.

Support and Partnerships



Supported by the State of Alabama with a recent \$100,000 appropriation, the FRRC will partner with the NPS's Freedom Riders National Monument (FRRI) and the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) to foster resilience education and planning. Since 2021, over a thousand FEMA CDP students have visited the Freedom Riders National Monument, gaining valuable insights into Anniston's history and resilience.

Organizational Structure & Background

The Community Foundation of NE Alabama (CFNEA) serves as the fiscal sponsor of the Freedom Riders Park Board (50-1-c3), which is an organization dedicated to preserving the Civil Rights legacy of the Freedom Rides and promoting community resilience. The effort has been assisted by Jacksonville State University since its inception.

Current AFRC Funding Request

To restore and repurpose the historic Gurnee Avenue buildings, we seek \$7,000,000 in funding to the CFNEA for:

- Fire suppression: \$300,000
- HVAC installation: \$300,000
- ADA compatibility: \$300,000
- Elevators (2): \$700,000
- Disaster protection: \$300,000
- Structural reinforcements: \$500,000
- Community shelter preparation: \$100,000
- Window replacement: \$250,000
- Utility standardization: \$400,000
- Interior construction: \$2,000,000
- Furnishings and technology: \$750,000
- Preliminary administrative support: \$500,000
- Contingencies: \$500,000

Emphasized Needs that the AFRC could accomplish if funded

- Serve as a Center for Community Resilience: The FRRC will be a hub for resilience, education, and community support.
- Connect to CDP's Mission: Aligns with the Center for Domestic Preparedness' goals of fostering training preparedness and resilience for our underserved community and the Nations undeserved communities at large.
- DHS Legacy: Establishing the FRRC will be a lasting part of the Department of Homeland Security's legacy.
- Resiliency Rallying Point: The FRRC will be a key location for community resilience efforts.

- Cooling Station & Shelter Provisions: The FRRC will offer essential services, including a cooling station and emergency shelter.
- Anniston's Experiences: The city's history and transformation underscore the importance of resilience and community strength.
- FRTI Peaceful Protest Efforts: Highlighting judicial reform through non-violent protest education Nationally.

Contact Information

For further details and support, please contact:

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