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News - Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System, Wallace Branch Library

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*People, Libraries
and Agencies* **IN THE NEWS**

Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System Wallace Branch Library

Augusta Golden Blocks Project Makes its Way to the Wallace Branch Library

If you have ever found yourself venturing into the Laney-Walker District in Augusta, Georgia, you will notice an array of history spread out across the neighborhood. Historical landmarks include the Tabernacle Baptist Church, Lucy Craft Laney Museum, and the Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System's very own Wallace Branch Library.

The Wallace Branch Library's sole purpose was to serve the black community in the South Augusta area during the 1950s. If you take a trip down to the library today, you will run across a new piece of history called Map of the Golden Blocks. The tile installation piece, created by ceramic artist Ashley Gray, can be found on the sidewall of the Wallace Branch Library (Harrison Lane). Gray's vision depicts the people and places that created the Laney-Walker district.

"I thought it would be great to have a map of the neighborhood, maps can be really beautiful," Gray said. "Some of these old buildings are here, some of these old buildings aren't. If you wanted to know what or where

they are, you would be able to find them right here on the map."

Map of the Golden Blocks shows historic landmarks such as schools, homes, businesses, and churches of significance located in the Laney-Walker District. It also acknowledges black members of the community who dedicated their lives to providing opportunities for blacks living in Augusta during the Jim Crow Era.



The area known as the Golden Blocks was the core of Augusta's black business community. Redlining policies prevented citizens from obtaining bank mortgages within certain areas of Augusta that were predominantly black. In the Laney-Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods, black-owned banks, insurance companies, theaters,

and other businesses worked to counterbalance this discrimination. These neighborhoods ultimately thrived, and citizens represented in the installation made a difference during this trying time in Augusta's history.

"This is history on the wall," said Gray. "It brings history out into the neighborhood; it catches people's eye; it helps them remember." Now when you walk by the Wallace Branch, not only will it remind you of the library's past, but it will incorporate the vivid history of the area surrounding the Laney-Walker community. The Golden Blocks Project is sponsored by the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History and

the Greater Augusta Arts Council. The project aims to create new public art that connects people with the historical and cultural significance of these areas.

This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Greater Augusta Arts Council, as well as funding from the City of Augusta Housing & Community Development. The digital walking tour is supported in part by the Georgia Humanities Council and the Emory Center for Digital Scholarship.

For more information see:

<https://opentour.emory.edu/georgia-humanities/augusta-s-golden-blocks>

<https://lucycraftlaneymuseum.com/>

<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/32.813/-83.658&city=macon-ga&text=intro>