

**December 10, 2024 | Lancaster County Redevelopment Authority & Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



***Lancaster County Redevelopment Authority provides grant funds to Mount Zion A.M.E. Church in Columbia Borough, Lancaster County to assist with the rehabilitation of the Stephen Smith Community Development and Multi-Cultural Center***

In collaboration with the Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, located in Columbia Borough, the Lancaster County Redevelopment Authority has awarded \$200,000 as part of the annual Public Improvements program supported by US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

Originally constructed in 1832 to serve as the worship space for the Mount Zion A.M.E. congregation, the structure, located on the 200 block of South Fifth Street, eventually became the first African American schoolhouse in Columbia Borough for a period of ten years. After closing for a short stretch, the building was reopened as the Harvey T. Makle Legion for African American soldiers returning home from the war, ultimately falling into disuse. In 2017 the structure was returned to the Mount Zion A.M.E. congregation, but due to years of deferred maintenance, it had deteriorated to the point that it was unusable in its present condition. The congregation has been planning for the past five years to restore this significant historical and cultural resource and revitalize the space to serve an important role in the community.

The financial backing afforded by the CDBG funding will support the first phase of rehabilitation for what will be known as the "Stephen Smith Community Development and Multi-Cultural Center." Work funded through the CDBG program will ensure the historic building's exterior remains structurally stable throughout the course of a larger revitalization project.

Mt Zion AME Church currently offers a safe space for youth college fairs, STEM labs, movie nights, and youth groups for boys and girls in their church building. The Stephen Smith Community Development and Multi-Cultural Center Expansion Project will enable Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church to increase the services offered and connect more of the community's youth with essential programming. The vision and purpose of The Stephen Smith Community Development and Multicultural Center is to offer programs for youth to develop their potential and expand their horizons, through programming focused on technological literacy, drama and music development, entrepreneurial training, and employment readiness.

Your donation will provide the financial support necessary for Mt. Zion A.M.E. CHURCH to fully revitalize the Stephen Smith Community Development and Multi-Cultural Center. This is a building with considerable historical and cultural significance, in dire need of essential structural and interior renovations. We know that change starts with people like you. Every act of kindness, every dollar, and every moment of your time brings us closer to achieving our mission of rebuilding, rehabilitating, and restoring the Center. Together, we can create a positive, safe, and compassionate environment for us all.

To support the restoration of this historic resource and to address community needs for youth in Columbia PA please visit our donation page at <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/the-stephen-smith-community-development-project>.

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