



Mitigation Case Study: Walter B. Hill Industrial School

Just southeast of Newnan is the town of Turin, a small Georgia community with a population of 165 residents. In Turin, the mayor has a hands-on approach to town operations: learning to fix potholes, process water bills, and respond to citizens on a first-name basis. Amy Starr, the town's mayor, first became active in Turin politics when she applied for a vacancy on the planning and zoning commission.

In 1999, a contractor submitted a request for a 250-foot cellular communications tower to the planning and zoning commission. The commission, led by Amy Starr, at first recommended denial of the request to the town council. This action led to extensive negotiations between the cell tower company and the town. The cell tower company proposed Turin because the town was in the middle of a dead spot, and there was no cellular tower coverage in the area. Turin was the only location the company could use for its communications tower, but the tower would damage the "view shed" of this historic community.

Since a communications tower company's license is granted through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the FCC licensee is required to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Because the undertaking involves a federal agency, the cellular communications company, on behalf of the FCC, initiated a review process to determine the impact of the project on historic properties. The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) reviewed the proposed project, working with all parties to assess the potential for "adverse effects" on local historic resources. During this process, the role of HPD was consultative, providing technical assistance in the identification of historic properties, assessment of National Register eligibility and potential impact on visual effects in the historic setting of Turin.

One historic resource in question was Turin's Walter B. Hill Industrial School, a Rosenwald school. The Walter B. Hill Industrial School opened in 1927. The school was a three teacher, wooden building. The Rosenwald Fund provided a grant that required matching contributions. African Americans contributed 32% of the construction costs and the Rosenwald Fund contributed 30%. The remaining contributions were from whites (19%) and public funds (19%).

Three teachers taught 80-90 students at Walter B. Hill. Their monthly salaries were \$12. The Walter B. Hill Industrial School was the first of six Rosenwald schools built in Coweta County, and was the only one to offer industrial classes. In fact, the school was the only vocational school for African Americans in Coweta County until it was consolidated in 1953. When the school closed, the building became town property, and it was used for storage of the town's fire department equipment.

The Walter B. Hill Industrial School was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, as this rare African American resource is one of the few remaining Rosenwald schools in Georgia. The Section 106 review process determined an "adverse effect" on this historic resource. When an "adverse effect" occurs, consulting parties negotiate a Memorandum of Agreement, the legally binding document that delineates responsibility and actions required to mitigate adverse effects. For years, Turin wanted to rehabilitate the building for use as a town hall and local history center. In this case, the cell tower company agreed to provide the town with \$10,000 for the project.

An additional \$100,000 was provided for the project through public referendum in Special Local Option Sales Tax funds. The town hired the Chattahoochee-Flint Regional Development Center (RDC) to provide technical assistance in the first round of building rehabilitation. Lynne Miller, historic preservation planner for the Chattahoochee-Flint RDC, is excited about the project. "This phase will focus on replacing the building's metal roof and strengthening the structure. As funding allows, the town will then rehabilitate the balance of the building exterior, and the shed will be removed."