

News

Black and Latino Families Displaced From Palm Springs Neighborhood Reach \$27M Tentative Settlement

By SOPHIE AUSTIN
Associated Press/Report for America

Black and Latino families who were pushed out of a Palm Springs neighborhood in the 1960s reached a \$27 million tentative settlement agreement with the city that will largely go toward increasing housing access.

The deal was announced Wednesday, and the city council will vote on it Thursday. The history of displacement that took place there had been largely forgotten until recent years, said Areva Martin, a lawyer representing more than 300 former residents and hundreds of descendants.

“The fact that we got this over the finish line is remarkable given the headwinds that we faced,” Martin said.

The deal is much smaller than the \$2.3 billion the families previously sought as restitution for their displacement.

It includes \$5.9 million in compensation for former residents and descendants, \$10 million for a first-time homebuyer assistance program, \$10 million for a community land trust and the creation of a monument to commemorate the history of the neighborhood known as Section 14.

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It has not been determined how much each family or individual would receive in direct compensation, Martin said. Money for housing assistance would go toward low-income Palm Springs residents, with priority given to former

Section 14 residents and descendants.

“The City Council is deeply gratified that that the former residents of Section 14 have agreed to accept what we believe is a fair and just settlement offer,” Mayor Jeffrey Bernstein said in a statement.

The city council voted in 2021 to issue a formal apology to former residents for the city’s role in displacing them in the 1960s from the neighborhood that many Black and Mexican American families called home.

The tentative deal comes as reparations efforts at the state level have yielded mixed results. Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a law in September to formally apologize for the state’s legacy of racism and discrimination against Black residents. But state lawmakers blocked a bill that would have created an agency to administer reparations programs, and Newsom vetoed a proposal that would have helped



Descendants of Palm Springs Section 14 residents, front row from left, Durran Jamison, Jarvis Crawford, Janell Hunt, and Taunya Harvey gather at the United Methodist Church in Palm Springs, Calif., Sunday, April 16, 2023.

Black families reclaim property that was seized unjustly by the government through eminent domain.

Section 14 was a square-mile neighborhood on a Native American reservation that many Black and Mexican American families once called home. Families recalled houses being burned and torn down in the area before residents were told to vacate their homes.

They filed a tort claim with the city in 2022 that

argued the tragedy was akin to the violence that decimated a vibrant community known as Black Wall Street more than a century ago in Tulsa, Oklahoma, leaving as many as 300 people dead. There were no reported deaths in connection with the displacement of families from Section 14.

Pearl Devers, a Palm-dale resident who lived in Section 14 with her family until age 12, said the agreement was a long-overdue acknowl-

edgement of how families’ lives were forever changed by the displacement.

“While no amount of money can fully restore what we lost, this agreement helps pave the way for us all to finally move forward,” she said in a statement.

Austin is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program.

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When you're ready, reach out. OPGR can help connect you with tools, information, and support to start and maintain a lifestyle shift. For many, visiting opgr.org is the first step to a healthier relationship with gambling.

For more information, visit [OPGR.org](https://opgr.org)

