



Castle Street Collective
Wilmington, NC 28401
A registered 501(c)(3) organization
Tax ID: 93-4317054
P.O. Box 386, Wilmington, NC

**Enterprise on Castle: Black Business Heritage on Castle Street Project
Community Outreach & Participation Session**

Meeting Type: Community Input Session #2A	Date: June 8, 2026
Location: Glimmers Recreational Therapy (Moved to Luna Cafe)	Time: 5:00 pm
Meeting Format: In-person (informal, drop-in)	Facilitator: Castle Street Collective
Minutes Prepared By: Castle Street Collective	Recording Method: Video/audio recording for transcription purposes

Narrative Summary

This community outreach session for the Enterprise on Castle project focused on gathering resident perspectives about Castle Street, its history, and its changing identity. The discussion moved between personal reflection, neighborhood memory, and project planning. Participants described Castle Street as a place once defined by close community ties, walkability, familiar local businesses, and a strong Black cultural presence. Several participants contrasted those memories with present-day changes, including gentrification, reduced cultural visibility, and a sense that the neighborhood’s earlier identity has become less visible.

The group also reviewed the project’s purpose: to document and share the stories of Black business owners, residents, and families connected to Castle Street, especially those affected by displacement after the 1898 coup. Participants discussed the importance of tracing land ownership, gathering oral histories, identifying family connections, and developing both digital and physical ways to tell those stories. A recurring theme was the need to tell the truth carefully and responsibly—balancing celebration, grief, history, and community meaning without reducing the story to any one emotion or interpretation.

The conversation generated several useful ideas for next steps. Participants highlighted local historians, Black history tours, libraries, family knowledge, and longtime residents as important sources for the project. They also discussed future community meetings, oral history collection, possible grant writing, and the eventual need for historian review to confirm research findings. Overall, the session reinforced the importance of community-informed storytelling and showed that Castle Street means different things to different people depending on their relationship to the neighborhood, their history there, and what they hope its future will be.

Section 1 – Attendees

Note: Full names and roles were not always captured during the session.

- Shannon – Participant in discussion; shared personal interest in community work and youth-centered neighborhood projects



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- Kim – Participant in discussion; contributed reflections on neighborhood change, cultural identity, and community connection
- Rosemary – Longtime resident with personal memories of the neighborhood across several decades
- Bobby – Project representative / facilitator

Section 2 – Purpose of Meeting

This community outreach session was part of the ongoing Enterprise on Castle project. The session was designed to:

- Gather community perspectives about what Castle Street means to different residents and stakeholders
- Share the project’s purpose and current phase of work
- Invite participants to reflect on neighborhood history, identity, and change over time
- Identify possible research leads, oral history sources, and storytelling priorities
- Build understanding around how the project might represent Black history and community memory on Castle Street

Section 3 – Project Overview

As presented during the session.

3.1 Project Background

- The project seeks to document and tell the story of Black business owners and residents connected to Castle Street, especially those displaced after the 1898 coup.
- The current phase of work focuses on listening sessions, community input, and preliminary research.
- Project organizers described an interest in tracing land ownership, identifying family lineages, and gathering oral histories to better understand who lived and worked in the neighborhood.
- The project aims to develop both a digital presence and a physical presence on Castle Street that can share these stories with the public.
- Organizers emphasized that the final form of interpretation has not yet been determined and will depend on community input, research findings, and future project phases.

3.2 Current Phase and Research Approach

- Organizers stated that the project is in an early engagement phase focused on meeting with residents and learning how people feel about the history and future of Castle Street.
- Preliminary work includes identifying people whose stories may be connected to the area and using online tools, libraries, and archival materials to begin research.
- Participants discussed the possibility of later applying for grant funding to bring in a paid historian who can verify stories, family connections, and land history.
- Organizers noted that while many stories may eventually be gathered, physical interpretation on the street may need to focus on a smaller number of people or themes, with broader material shared digitally.



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3.3 Historical Context Shared During Discussion

- Participants described Castle Street as a historically Black neighborhood with strong community bonds, local businesses, and social familiarity.
- Longtime residents recalled living in the neighborhood during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and described a time when people knew one another well and many daily needs could be met nearby.
- The discussion referenced segregation, changing property ownership, and the long-term impact of the 1898 coup on Black families, businesses, and land.
- Participants also discussed the difficulty of recovering complete records and the importance of oral history in filling gaps left by official documentation.
- Community memory included references to now-closed businesses, neighborhood traditions, transit patterns, and events such as the Martin Luther King parade on Castle Street.

Section 4 – Key Discussion Topics

4.1 Community Connection and Personal Investment

- Participants spoke about wanting to remain involved in the neighborhood because they care deeply about the community and want to contribute in meaningful ways.
- One participant shared a desire to focus on youth, especially children under 16, and to create spaces and projects that would give them a stronger sense of belonging and support.
- The discussion reflected a broader desire not just to preserve history, but to create present-day value and connection for current residents.

4.2 What Castle Street Means to Different People

- Organizers asked participants what Castle Street means to them, noting that the answer may vary depending on whether someone has lived there for decades or arrived more recently.
- Longtime residents described Castle Street as a place of connection, memory, and community life.
- Newer residents described being drawn to the neighborhood's energy, character, and sense of possibility, while also recognizing they are entering a place with a much longer history than their own experience.
- The discussion showed that Castle Street is understood both as a physical street and as a symbol of neighborhood identity, change, and memory.

4.3 Neighborhood Change and Cultural Loss

- Participants discussed major changes in the neighborhood over time, including shifts in homeownership, business activity, and demographic makeup.
- Several participants described the current version of Castle Street as less visibly Black than it once was and raised concerns about gentrification and cultural erasure.
- The group also discussed how neighborhood transformation can affect community health, belonging, and the visibility of long-standing cultural ties.



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- There was strong interest in making sure future public storytelling does not ignore or flatten these changes.

4.4 Storytelling, Interpretation, and Tone

- Organizers explained that the project may focus more on telling the stories of people rather than only highlighting buildings.
- Participants discussed the challenge of deciding how these stories should feel in public presentation.
- Questions were raised about whether the final interpretation should feel empowering, memorial, celebratory, cautionary, or some combination of those approaches.
- The group emphasized that the project should honor truth and history while remaining engaging and meaningful to present-day audiences.

4.5 Research Leads and Historical Sources

- Participants referenced local Black history tours, oral history, libraries, family memory, and neighborhood-based knowledge as important sources.
- There was discussion of using online tools and archival research to identify residents, occupations, and family connections tied to specific addresses.
- Organizers noted that this early “digging” phase could help determine which stories are promising enough to later verify through a professional historian.
- Participants also named community members and local knowledge holders who may be useful contacts as the research continues.

4.6 Community Events and Public Activation

- Participants reflected positively on events that once created a stronger sense of community on Castle Street, including public parades and street activity.
- Some noted that future community-centered events, block gatherings, or cultural programming could help bring people together again if planned thoughtfully.
- The discussion suggested that future public history work could be connected not only to permanent interpretation but also to programming that brings neighborhood history into everyday community life.

4.7 Accessibility and Participation

- Organizers noted that multiple meetings are being held and that virtual participation options are being added to make the process more accessible.
- Participants responded positively to having both in-person and virtual options.
- The conversation also reflected the value of informal discussion spaces where people can share memories more naturally rather than only through formal meeting formats.

4.8 Future Direction

- Organizers stated that after the current listening and input phase, they expect to reconvene and determine next steps for oral histories, interviews, research priorities, and physical interpretation.
- Participants agreed that the process should remain community-informed and flexible as more information is gathered.



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- The session closed with a shared understanding that Castle Street’s history is layered, emotionally significant, and still very present in the lives of the people connected to it.