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Orange Street School is a historic school building located at 600 Orange St. It was built about 1915 and was the original home of E. E. Smith High School from 1927 to 1929 and 1931 to 1940. ANDREW CRAFT, THE FAYETTEVILLE OBSERVER

The history of Orange Street School revitalization efforts

Rachael Riley
Fayetteville Observer
USA TODAY NETWORK

Renovations on the historically Black Orange Street School are about 85% complete, a Fayetteville spokesman said last week.

The city and county have invested in the school since it closed in the 1950s, while nonprofits have raised funds also for its renovation.

The school at 600 Orange St. was one of the first publicly funded schools for African-American children in Fayetteville and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2021, the Fayetteville City Council voted to use \$100,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to renovate the Orange Street School as a public facility project. The vote came after the city's Economic and Community Development Department was asked in August 2020 about its plans to "reinvigorate the school as an African American History Museum," according to city records.

The records stated that the building

functioned as a museum for decades, but had "fallen into disrepair."

City and state funds have since gone toward renovation of the building, including a roof replacement in 2023 and the installation of a fence around its perimeter.

In December, the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners approved spending \$350,000 to purchase furniture, recording studio equipment and technology for the school.

City spokesman Loren Bymer said that as of Oct. 2, structural repairs, roof replacement, painting, picnic shelter replacement, exterior fencing repairs and replacement and first-floor upgrades were complete.

Upgrades to the second floor are still underway and are expected to be complete in early December, Bymer said.

History

Built in 1915 by local Black contractor James Waddell, the school's first principal was educator Edward Evans, according to the Orange Street School Historical Association.

In 1927, a high school that eventually became known as E.E. Smith High School opened on the second floor before relocating to Campbell Avenue in 1929, Washington Avenue in 1941, and its current location at 1800 Seabrook Ave. in 1954.

The Orange Street School closed in 1953 and was deeded to the Historical Association three decades later.

According to the National Register of Historic Places, the school "is believed to be the oldest public education structure" remaining in Fayetteville.

Efforts to preserve historic building

Fayetteville resident Bishop McNeill grew up with the history of the Orange Street School instilled in him.

His father, the late Dr. Ernest McNeill, was a founding member of the nonprofit Orange Street School Restoration Historical Association.

McNeill said his father was an educator and professor of education at Fay-

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Milton leaves ample damage

Tampa spared from massive storm surge

John Bacon, Trevor Hughes and Thao Nguyen

USA TODAY

TAMPA, Fla. — Hurricane Milton howled across the Florida Peninsula on Thursday, tearing a path of destruction from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic as it knocked out power to millions, flooded neighborhoods, destroyed homes, tore the roof off a major sports venue and toppled a massive crane into an office building.

At least two deaths were reported — at a retirement community following a suspected tornado in Fort Pierce on the state's east coast, St. Lucie County Sheriff Keith Pearson told local TV stations. More than 3.3 million homes and businesses were dark by early Thursday, according to USA TODAY power outage data.

"The storm was significant, but thankfully this was not the worst case scenario," Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a briefing Thursday. "The storm did weaken before landfall and the storm surge as initially reported has not been as significant overall as what was observed for Hurricane Helene.

"Our state is a peninsula in the middle of a tropical environment. I mean, we are just built to be able to respond to hurricanes," DeSantis said. "We'll survey the damage and get people on their feet. We'll get through this."

Meteorologist Tyler Fleming confirmed to USA TODAY that Tampa Bay apparently was spared a massive storm surge. Instead, a reverse storm surge took place that drove water away from the shoreline. But state Division of Emergency Management, in a post on social media, warned residents not to walk out into receding water because "the water WILL return through storm surge and poses a life-threatening risk."

"One of the blessings for us is that we did not see that predicted storm surge. That saved a lot," Tampa Mayor

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Inflation in US hit fresh 3-year low in September

Paul Davidson
USA TODAY

Inflation hit a fresh three-year low in September as another drop in gasoline prices offset a rise in used car and auto insurance costs. But price gains slowed less than expected and a gauge of underlying price increases picked up.

Overall consumer prices increased 2.4% from a year ago, down from 2.5% in August, according to the Labor Department's consumer price index, a wide-ranging gauge of goods and services costs. That's the smallest increase since February 2021 and the sixth straight pullback, leaving inflation modestly above the Fed's 2% goal.

On a monthly basis, costs edged up 0.2%, in line with the previous month.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy items and is watched more closely by the Fed, increased 0.3%, similar to August. That nudged up yearly core inflation to 3.3%

from 3.2% the prior month.

Looking at individual categories, gasoline prices fell 4.1% in September and have declined or held steady for four of the past five months amid slowing global growth and record U.S. oil production that dampened crude oil prices. Regular unleaded averaged \$3.20 per gallon Wednesday, down from \$3.27 in September and \$3.70 a year ago.

Rent increased 0.3% in September after rising 0.4% the previous month. That pushed down the annual increase from 5% to 4.8%, the lowest since April 2022. Lower rents for new leases are finally starting to filter through to rates for existing tenants.

That's good news because housing costs broadly have been the biggest factor driving inflation and accounted for 36% of the rise in prices last month.

Some other services costs also climbed higher and contributed to the

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