

Proclamation Ceremony Honors Mr. JE Adams, The Last Of Four Pioneering Auburn Hills Developers

By Rick Pulliam
The Grand Rapids Times

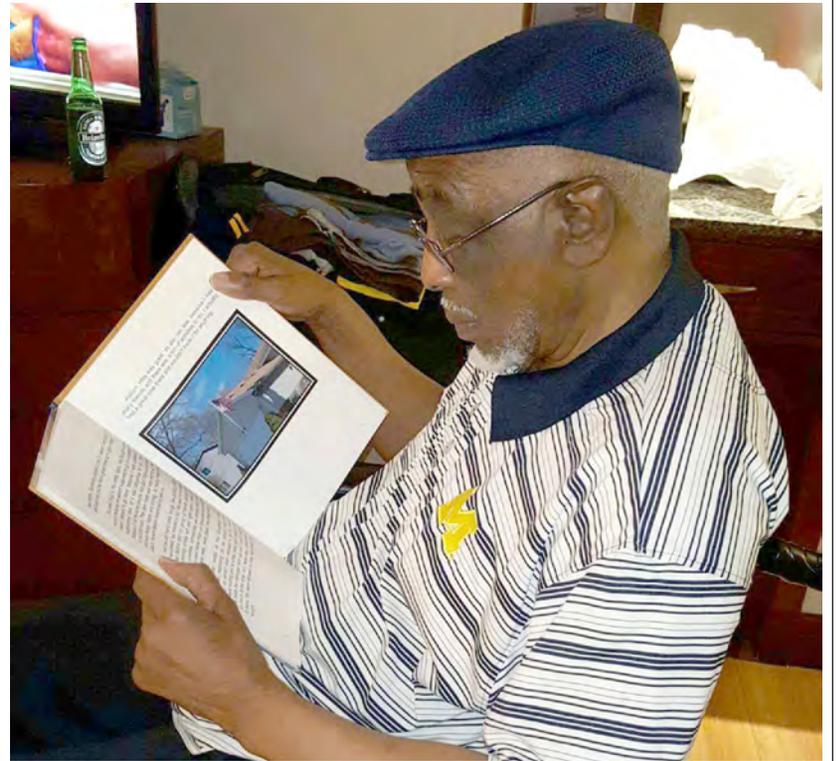
Grand Rapids—Pioneer land developers Mr. Sam Triplett, Mr. Joseph Lee, Dr. Julius Franks and Mr. J. E. Adams accomplished something short of a miracle when the four African American men formed the Auburn Hills Land Developing Company in the 1960's.

Mr. Adams, 85, is the remaining of the four developers of the Auburn Hills neighborhood in Northeast Grand Rapids.

Last weekend, The Grand Rapids Public Museum admitted close to 200 people to attend a special Proclamation Ceremony declaring May 28, 2016 as J.E. Adams Day.

Auburn Hills resident Ms Katrina Springer envisioned the event after discovering that her home was featured in an Auburn Hills Exhibit at the Grand Rapids Public Museum.

"I was excited to see that my neighborhood was a part of Grand Rapids history and I worked with the museum to put together a proclamation ceremony and a prayer vigil



honoring our founding fathers that would feature the last living founder J.E. Adams. I contacted his son Jay who agreed to have his Dad here

for the ceremony." The Auburn Hills neighborhood is the result of four African American men who lived in Grand Rapids sharing their

vision and collaborating to create a neighborhood where more Blacks could also achieve the American dream of home ownership.

The men decided to pull their resources together and build their own houses in an area on the Northeast side of Grand Rapids known as Auburn Hills, despite the objection of many White residents who did their best to stop the Black visionaries from purchasing the property by the Black visionaries.

The four men did whatever it took, including going to court to get clearance from the city to build a neighborhood on land that was originally designated for a city park.

Three of the four pioneers built homes in the Auburn Hills area and reared their children there. They set the example that others would follow.

One of the three, Mr. J.E. Adams, later moved out of state after retiring as an administrator in the Grand Rapids Public School District.

The ceremony program featured a welcome from Paula Triplett, the daughter of founder Samuel Triplett; a presentation of the history of Auburn Hills by Cheryl Franks, daughter of founder Dr. Julius Franks and special thanks by Ellen James, Auburn Hills resident who represented Joseph Lee, grandson of founder Joseph W. Lee.

Forest Hills Middle School students and Art Teacher Diane Hartig presented a book of the history of Auburn Hills, the student's project that will also be admitted in this year's

Art Prize.

During his remarks, Mr. J.E. Adams' son, Jay, said, "The fact that the other three investors are no longer living made me wish that this proclamation could have been presented to all of them while they were alive."

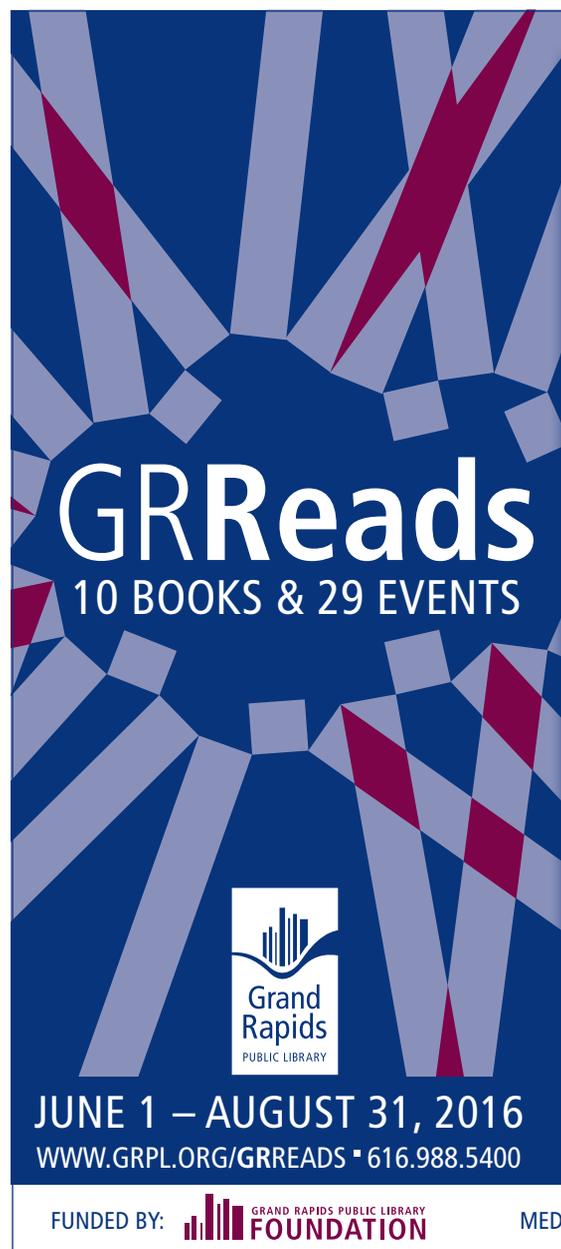
Had they been alive at the time of the ceremony, those three developers would have witnessed the lasting results of their efforts — others following their lead, building and purchasing homes in Auburn Hills, a neighborhood still in good standing.

They might have also lived to see that despite their trailblazing, the attitudes that set barriers for them still stand as well.

"I understood that one of the students who was a part of the class presenting my father with the project on the Auburn Hills development parents didn't want him to participate, but the fact that the student was willing to stand up above and beyond what his parents' visions were and see everyone as individuals I thought was outstanding," Jay Adams said at the ceremony.

Mr. J.E. Adams was without a doubt overwhelmed by the love of those who came to witness the ceremony and at one point was found quietly reading the book that had been presented to him by students.

In closing remarks, the honoree said, "My mother told me to be nice and to look out for other people, and that was my motivation for being a part of the Auburn Hills development."



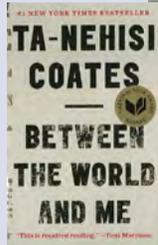
GRReads

10 BOOKS & 29 EVENTS

Protest Literature: Writing of the Struggle of the Oppressed
 Wednesday, June 8, 7:00 pm
 Main Library – 111 Library Street NE

To protest is to publicly demonstrate strong objection to a policy or course of action adopted by those in authority. The written word is a worthy format to protest one's condition and has been used for centuries by Blacks living with the Dream of America. From Absalom Jones to Amiri Baraka, protest literature is a part of America and a tradition that is alive today. Dr. Sherry Johnson, Associate Professor of English at GVSU, will share the connection between Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* and *The Fire Next Time* written by his literary forefather James Baldwin.

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