

October 22, 2020

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Finance and Housing Committee  
**From:** Lish Whitson, Analyst  
**Subject:** Council Bill 119905: Lease of old Fire Station 6 for the William Grose Center

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On Monday, October 26, the City Council will receive a briefing on [Council Bill \(CB\) 119905](#), which would authorize the Department of Finance and Administrative Services to lease the former Fire Station 6, located at 722 18th Avenue to [Africatown Community Land Trust](#) for a term of 99 years. Africatown would convert the property into the “William Grose Center for Cultural Innovation” (WGC). WGC will provide:

- Small business technical assistance, marketing assistance and training;
- Employment, technical skills and entrepreneurship training for individuals; and
- Celebration and enrichment of Black/African American culture and heritage.

The WGC is a longstanding goal of the City and Central District community, recognized through its inclusion as one of the initial projects under the [Equitable Development Initiative](#) (EDI). This lease is required to move the project forward and fulfill a commitment to the African American community and the Central District.

This memorandum provides background information on Fire Station 6, the WGC and describes the lease agreement that would be approved by CB 119005.

### Old Fire Station 6

Fire Station 6 is a one-story, 4,800 square foot building with a basement on 20,400 of land. It was built in 1931 at the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South and E Yesler Way in the Central District to replace an older fire station that had housed horses and a horse-drawn fire engine. The fire station was built in the Art Deco and Moderne style. Its distinctive style, prominent location, and architect – George Stewart - led to its [designation](#) as a City landmark in 2007. In 2008, with the existing fire station requiring significant upgrades, the City acquired property at Martin Luther King Jr. Way S and S Jackson Street, a few blocks away, for a new station. Old Fire Station 6 has been vacant since the new Fire Station 6 [opened](#) in 2013.

### William Grose<sup>1</sup> Center (WGC)

The planned [William Grose Center for Civic Innovation](#) (WGC) is a project of Africatown. WGC will support entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic development in Seattle's historically Black community that has been and continues to face high risk of displacement. The WGC will

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<sup>1</sup> [William Grose](#) was an early African American businessman in Seattle. Grose ran a hotel and restaurant and was the first African American to own property in the Central District.

create dedicated spaces for innovation and civic tech events that can draw people in from the street and serve as a tech epicenter near existing cultural and community assets such as the Douglas Truth Library and Garfield High School.

Creating the WGC in old Fire Station 6 was one of the original Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) projects, and the City has included the project in the EDI since 2016.

### **Council Bill 119905**

CB 119905 would lease old Fire Station 6 as is to Africatown for 99 years under a Mutually-Offsetting Benefits<sup>2</sup> [lease](#). In exchange for control of the station, Africatown would:

- provide community space and public services in the Central District;
- complete improvements to allow the entire property to be used as a community center;
- maintain and insure the property; and
- indemnify and defend the City against claims.

The City would have the option to terminate the lease if Africatown either fails to make improvements to ensure that the property is occupiable or if they fail to provide community space and public services as required under the lease.

Any additional development on the site would be required to include units of affordable housing at or below 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI) with more than half of units affordable at or below 60 percent AMI.

### **Next Steps**

A vote on CB 119905 is currently scheduled for Monday, November 2. The bill would authorize the Director of the Department of Finance and Administrative Services to sign the attached lease with Africatown, potentially granting possession of the property to Africatown before the end of the year.

cc: Dan Eder, Interim Director  
Aly Pennucci, Supervising Analyst

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<sup>2</sup> Mutual and Offsetting Benefit (MOB) leases allow tenants to pay the City rent, in whole or in part, through the public services they provide.