

## Director's Report

# Transfer of Fire Station 6 to Africatown Community Land Trust

August 21, 2020

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## PROPOSAL SUMMARY

The proposal is a legislative action Authorizing the Director of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) to negotiate and execute a real property lease with Africatown Community Land Trust (ACLT), for the development of the William Grose Center for Cultural Innovation (WGC) at Fire Station 6 (FS6) located at 101 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave, Seattle, WA 98122; and authorizing related agreements and actions to support Africa-American community.

The purpose of the legislation is to support the repurposing of former Fire Station 6 as the WGC supporting small businesses, creative entrepreneurs and creating pathways to the knowledge-based economy, consistent with the goals of the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) to advance economic opportunity and preventing displacement.

## BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

### *Equitable Development Initiative Implementation Plan*

The Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) was established in 2015 as a multi-departmental effort coordinated by the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) to meet the needs of marginalized populations and to reduce disparities and to create opportunities such as quality education, living wage employment, healthy environment, and affordable housing. City Council adopted the [Equitable Development Implementation Plan in 2016](#), which outlined the strategies and framework to advance the goals of the EDI. Part of the Implementation Plan included a framework for stewardship of the initiative stating, among other things, that "...in order to successfully eliminate institutional racism and achieve racial equity, it is imperative to incorporate the expertise of those communities who have borne the burden of racial inequalities." (page 51-54)

### *Africatown Community Land Trust*

Africatown Community Land Trust (ACLT) was formed to acquire, steward and develop land assets that are necessary for the Black/African diaspora community to grow and thrive in place in the Central District as well as support other individuals and organizations in retention and development of land. ACLT was formed in June 2016 following a historic inclusive development agreement reached between Central Area community members and private owners/developers of the Midtown Center. The agreement culminated from the work of the Union Street Business Association and Africatown stakeholders to acquire and facilitate inclusive, heritage rich

development at the Midtown Center that includes community and small business spaces, and affordable housing. ACLT and partners also successfully collaborated on the redevelopment of the Liberty Bank Building site – a historically Black financial institution in the heart of the central area – into a hub for community and affordable homes. Based on its prior experience and ongoing partnership with the City, ACLT was identified to hold ownership and oversight responsibilities for the proposed transfer of Fire Station 6 for community supportive uses focused on the African American community.

### ***William Grose Center***

Africatown has received a \$1.15 million EDI grant to create the WGC, a catalyst to support the Black community's rich history of innovation and entrepreneurship that has been negatively impacted by local, state, and federal government policies and private-sector practices. William Grose was an early pioneer in Seattle and a successful African American entrepreneur. After helping slaves escape and establish a Canadian settlement in the early 19th century, Grose arrived as one of the first few hundred people in what is now the city of Seattle. He went on to start a successful restaurant and hotel, and helped to establish the Central District, or Africatown. The WGC's activities will provide a means to help repair some of the harm that past policies/practices and current growth has created and to advance community self-determination. Services and activities that are expected to be provided at the WGC include:

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

### ***Former Fire Station 6 Reuse***

The City owns real property located in Seattle's Central District that includes a historic building formerly known as Fire Station 6, which is currently not in use. The existing building contains approximately 8,000 sq. ft. of floor area and neither the building or site is currently serving a role for the Seattle Fire Department and therefore the site is surplus to the city's needs. A new updated Fire Station 6 was constructed at 405 Martin Luther King Jr. Way South in 2012, which serves the fire and emergency response needs of the immediate area. The former Fire Station 6 structure is a designated City of Seattle Landmark. The nomination of Fire Station 6 was one of eight local landmark nominations submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Board for existing fire stations built by the City of Seattle in the 1920s and 1930s. The building was designated as a City Landmark as per Ordinance No. 122462. The exterior of the building is largely unaltered from its original condition and it features a distinctive Art Deco style façade. No physical alteration to the exterior of the structure or new development is proposed as a part of this action.

City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Historic Preservation staff have reviewed the proposed lease and property reuse and concur with the assessment that the proposal would

not alter the exterior of the historic structure or the grounds. If a future development proposal or addition would alter those features, the City's Landmarks Preservation Board would review at that time. During the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review, the City received one comment from the State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), requesting additional information about the proposal for State and National historic register purposes. OPCD and Africatown are coordinating with the State DAHP officer to ensure all necessary and detailed information is provided to DAHP.

### ***Consistency of the Proposal with Adopted Plans and Policies***

The proposed lease and reuse as the WGC would implement and support the City's adopted plans and policies. There are numerous goals and policies in the City's Comprehensive Plan, and the Central Area Neighborhood Plan element that would be directly supported by the proposed lease. Additionally, the area is within the Central Area Arts and Cultural District, and this proposal would carry out the vision for the district. The Central Area Arts and Cultural District was established in 2015, under a program that came from the [Cultural Overlay District Advisory Committee's June 2009](#) and [City Council Resolution 31155](#). While not all relevant goals or policies from plans can be summarized in this Director's Report, the following particularly relevant policies are cited:

#### City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan

GS 1.6 Plan for development in urban centers and urban villages in ways that will provide all Seattle households, particularly marginalized populations, with better access to services, transit, and educational and employment opportunities.

GS 2.4 Work toward a distribution of growth that eliminates racial and social disparities by growing great neighborhoods throughout the city, with equitable access for all and with community stability that reduces the potential for displacement.

#### Central Area Neighborhood Plan

CA-P1 Strengthen a unique identity for the Central Area that celebrates its culture, heritage, and diversity; enhance the sense of community; and increase the feeling of pride among Central Area residents, business owners, employees, and visitors through excellent physical and social environments.

CA-P2 Recognize the historical importance and significance of the Central Area's existing housing stock, institutional buildings (old schools, etc.), and commercial structures as community resources. Incorporate their elements into building design and possible designation of historic and cultural resources.

CA-P8 Support existing and new Central Area community programs and expand on existing partnerships so these programs prioritize services to those who consider the Central Area to be

central to their identity, such as the African American community

CA-P35 Support efforts to encourage existing and new minority and locally owned businesses in the Central Area to grow and expand.

CA-P36 Support implementation of coordinated long-term strategies to improve commercial districts including support for existing or expanding small businesses and ethnically based businesses in order to maintain the multicultural character.

CA-P49 Provide all Central Area youth with required skills and experience needed for future careers. Maximize the capability of local institutions and program providers such as Seattle Vocational Institute to serve such needs.

Central Area Arts District “Foundational Pillars”:

- Preserving an African and African-American legacy in the Central Area
- Sustaining and strengthening the physical identity and sense of place for cultural relevancy
- Establishing continued support of artistic creation, economic vibrancy, livability, affordability, desirability, and artistic vitality

#### Consistency with Zoning and Land Use Regulations

The William Grose Center would be classified for land use regulatory purposes as a community center. Existing zoning of the site is the Lowrise 3 (LR3) multifamily zone. Community Centers that meet development standards are an allowed use within Seattle’s multifamily zones. The location is within the 23<sup>rd</sup> and Union-Cherry-Jackson urban village, and the proposed uses and activities would be consistent with the intended mix of land uses in an urban village location.

#### ***Proposed Lease***

The lease is an attachment to the proposed Ordinance. The key terms of the proposed lease include the following:

- City of Seattle will make the Fire Station 6 building and grounds available for occupancy by Africatown Community Land Trust for a period of 99 years.
- Africatown Community Land Trust will occupy the existing Fire State 6 structure and provide community supportive services described in this report and elsewhere in the William Grose Center.
- [any other key terms?]

## **FINDINGS**

1. City and ACLT mutually desire the activation of Fire Station 6 and its development it into the WGC through a long-term lease of the property while working toward the criteria established in a separate Transfer Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) for a permanent transfer of the property to community ownership.
2. The proposed lease and reuse of Fire Station 6 as the WGC would directly carry out the City's formally adopted Equitable Development Initiative Implementation Plan and adhere to the adopted Equitable Development Initiative Financial Strategy.
3. The attached proposed bill is intended to authorize the FAS Director to execute a lease to subsequently transfer FS6 to Africatown Community Land Trust.
4. On August 6, 2020 OPCD issued a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Determination of Non-Significance for the proposed lease of property and change of use, and no appeal of the determination was filed.
5. The proposed reuse of the existing Fire Station 6 site would be allowed by existing zoning and land use regulations, and the proposal would be consistent with the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan, adopted 23<sup>rd</sup> and Union-Cherry-Jackson Neighborhood Plan Goals and Policies, and the goals of the Historic Central Area Arts and Cultural District.
6. The proposal fulfills fundamental municipal governmental purposes in topical areas including but not limited to economic development, community development and cultural and historic preservation as documented in the Equitable Development Initiative Implementation Plan and Comprehensive Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

OPCD recommends approval of the proposed legislation authorize the Director of Finance and Administrative Services to execute a lease and related agreements with Africatown Community Land Trust.