



Legislation Text

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CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____

A RESOLUTION regarding the impact of Seattle’s Urban Renewal program in displacing Black community members from the Central Area; supporting community demands to fund quality affordable social housing to prevent and reverse displacement; and urging the Office of Housing to fund the affordable housing project proposed by New Hope Community Development Institute.

WHEREAS, in May 1959, The City of Seattle passed Ordinance 88190 declaring a 340-acre region of Seattle’s predominantly Black Central Area to be a “blighted area,” authorizing an Urban Renewal project later known as the Yesler-Atlantic Neighborhood Improvement Project (Wash. R-5); and

WHEREAS, in February 1960, The City of Seattle passed Ordinance 89036 authorizing a contract with Seattle Urban Renewal Enterprise (SURE) for “professional services for education, organization and dissemination of information, all in connection with [the Yesler-Atlantic Neighborhood Improvement Project]”; and

WHEREAS, in 1961 SURE submitted to the City its Yesler-Atlantic Report and Summary in accordance with that contract which claimed that, “To preserve this community for “decent” folks and families three things are needed: (1) Assistance to those who need it in improving their way of life in every respect; (2) encouragement to middle and upper-income whites to move into the community; and (3) relocation of those undesirables - the purveyors of vice and crime, the chronic trouble-makers, the undeserving poor - who are the source of the most social blight in the area.”; and

WHEREAS, throughout Seattle’s Central Area in the 1960s, dozens of Black families were displaced, forced to sell their houses, small businesses, and church properties, under threat of eminent domain; and

WHEREAS, in May 1969 the City of Seattle informed the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church that the City

would use eminent domain to require the sale of the church property in the current location of the south side of Spruce Street Mini Park; and

WHEREAS, in December 1969, under the threat of eminent domain, the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church sold its property at the current location of the Spruce Street Mini Park to the City for \$34,000, which if adjusted for inflation is the equivalent of \$275,433.83 in 2021 dollars; and

WHEREAS, the value of the same property in today's real estate market has been estimated to be \$2 million, almost eight times the inflation adjusted value of its purchase price; and

WHEREAS, when forced to sell their property under threat of eminent domain, community members and their organizations lost the opportunity to share in the benefits of the increased value of land in Seattle; and

WHEREAS, in a July 14, 2020 opinion article in the South Seattle Emerald, Reverend Lawrence Willis and Reverend Angela Ying explained that, “[t]he City’s coercive seizure of land from the Black church is just one example of how the City’s political establishment over the decades has been complicit in the impoverishment and destruction of the Central Area’s African American community. Between City policies like the notorious Operation Weed and Seed, which was set up in the 1990s explicitly to gentrify the Central District while fast-tracking the mass incarceration of young Black men, and profit-hungry corporate developers who snapped up entire blocks in recent years, evicting long-time homeowners, Seattle’s African American community today has been decimated and scattered beyond the city”; and

WHEREAS, the New Hope Community Development Institute (NHCDI), a community based non-profit organization created by New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, has submitted to the Office of Housing an Intent to Apply for approximately \$11 million in funding for the New Hope Family Housing project to provide approximately 86 studio, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units for families and individuals making at or below 60% of the area median income. The housing will serve seniors, families

with children, homeless persons and persons with disabilities. New Hope Family Housing will utilize the City of Seattle Office of Housing Community Preference policy, prioritizing housing for Central Area residents who have been displaced from the neighborhood or current residents at risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Housing received Intent to Apply for over \$122 million in affordable housing proposals in anticipation of its fall Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), but has indicated that only \$35 million will be available in the balance of 2021 budget; and

WHEREAS, the big business payroll tax fought for by working people and community members, including the Tax Amazon Movement, is estimated to provide over \$132 million in funding for affordable housing in 2022 including over \$17 million explicitly to “affirmatively further fair housing and to address past discriminatory policies and practices, which could fund affordable housing projects responding to the Office of Housing’s fall 2021 NOFA given the typical gap in time between a NOFA and when funds are actually spent; and

WHEREAS, Central Area community organizers and more than 230 faith leaders have demanded increased taxes on big business and the rich to fund building 1,000 affordable homes in the Central Area to bring back households who have been displaced by racist policies like redlining, Urban Renewal, Weed and Seed, and rising housing costs in general; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THAT:

Section 1. The City Council condemns the displacement of African American Central District residents caused by The City of Seattle’s Yesler-Atlantic Neighborhood Improvement Project (Wash. R-5). The City Council apologizes for the harm done and urges all City Departments to find opportunities to make reparation for that injustice.

Section 2. The City Council urges the Office of Housing to support development and funding of the New Hope Family Housing project.

Section 3. The City Council intends to provide direction and increased resources, if needed, to the Office of Housing to use funds appropriated for affordable housing acquisition and development in the 2022 City Budget for projects that apply for funding through the Office of Housing’s 2021 Fall Notice of Funding Availability for the Rental Production Program.

Section 4. The Council affirms its support for increasing progressive taxes on big business and the rich to develop more quality affordable social housing.

Adopted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2021, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2021.

President _____ of the City Council

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2021.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)