



**JOINT PRESS RELEASE  
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## **Liberty Bank Building Ribbon Cutting March 23rd** **Celebrating the village that built the Liberty Bank Building in Central District**

Seattle, WA — Africatown Community Land Trust (ACLT), the Black Community Impact Alliance (BCIA), Byrd Barr Place, and Capitol Hill Housing (CHH), will host a ribbon cutting celebration of the Liberty Bank Building on Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. The ribbon cutting celebration will take place from 11AM – 2PM at its official new residential address – 1405 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue. 24th Avenue will be closed between E Union St. and E Pike St. to make plenty of room for the festivities.

Liberty Bank, founded in 1968 as a community response to redlining and disinvestment in Central Seattle, was the first Black-owned bank in the Pacific Northwest. Until it closed in 1988, Liberty Bank provided critical financial services to the community at a time when African Americans and other minorities were often denied opportunity due to redlining and systemic racism.

"Today is an important step towards a future that is inclusive of the Black community that has called the Central District home for almost 140 years. We celebrate knowing that we have long ways to go to repair the damages that have been done and realize a truly equitable Seattle," said K. Wyking Garrett, CEO of Africatown Community Land Trust.

Today, the newly-open Liberty Bank Building honors the legacy of the bank that once stood on its site and offers 115 affordable homes for people earning between \$13,000 and \$65,000 a year, featuring a mix of studios, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments, as well as affordable retail space for three local minority-owned businesses on the ground floor. New residents began moving in this February.

One of the new residents, Miriam Pratt, is the descendent of civil rights leader Edwin T. Pratt. "I can hardly find the words to express what Liberty Bank housing means to me. It's really going to change my life, and I'm now a few blocks from where my parents moved in 1956, when they came to Seattle. I am so pleased to see my father honored by the amazing tributes at the Liberty Bank Building. Historian



Quintard Taylor called my father the dean of Seattle’s civil rights establishment. He worked so hard for equality and he would be humbled by this building and the way he is being honored,” said Ms. Pratt.

The success of the Liberty Bank Building was created through the dedication and support of many community members and organizations with deep roots in Seattle’s Central District. The celebration will reflect the community by bringing together the village that helped this momentous project succeed. Speakers will include community leaders, the partners and funders behind the project, and Mayor Jenny Durkan. The event will also feature live music and performances by Akua Kariamu, DJ Kun Luv, and others. Food will also be available for all attendees.

The joint effort of the Liberty Bank Building has been hailed as a template for inclusive development, thanks to the groundbreaking Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the partners to use the development of the site to address gentrification and displacement head-on and maximize empowerment of the African American community. The partners used an array of strategies to achieve this goal.

“This monumental project didn’t just happen, we made plans, visualized, overcame doubts, did the hard things, said no to security, said yes to the unknown and then came LBB,” said Andrea Caupain, CEO of Byrd Barr Place.

The MOU secures long-term African American ownership of the building. Central District-based community partners have the first right of refusal for ownership of the building following the exit of the tax credit investor after 15 years.

Alongside the MOU partners, there were many more contributors to the Liberty Bank Building’s success. The project development partners: Walsh Construction; Mithun Architects; Kantor Taylor; Foster Pepper; PBS Environmental; Perkins Coie; OnPoint Real Estate Services; Pacific Communication Consultants; Al Doggett Studios and the artists mentioned above, and many more subcontractors. The building would not have been possible without those who invested in the vision of affordable homes and community empowerment for the Central District: Heritage Bank; Washington State Department of Commerce; City of Seattle Office of Housing, Office of Arts & Culture and Office of Planning & Community Development; Enterprise Community Partners and Bellwether Enterprise; Lucky Seven Foundation; Impact Capital; KeyBank and KeyBank Foundation; Norcliffe Foundation; Wyncote Foundation NW; BECU Foundation; TEW Foundation; The Ariel Fund; and dozens of individual supporters and board members.

Throughout construction, this development also prioritized local and minority subcontractors. Of the \$16.7 million available for subcontractor work, more than 30%—over \$5 million—is going to Women- and Minority-owned Businesses, substantially beyond the partners’ original 20% goal. Over \$2.9 million is going specifically to Black-owned businesses.

The building reaffirms the Central District as a hub of the pan-African community. It stands as a living marker of community history and resilience. Critical input was gathered from an advisory board of the descendants of Liberty Bank founders and Central District neighborhood leaders: Jocquelyn Duncan,



Derryl Durden, Michelle Purnell-Hepburn, Merle Richlen, George Staggers, and Pastor Reggie C. Witherspoon. They helped ensure that the building now tells the story of the Liberty Bank through art, historic documents, and architecture. Led by Co-curators Al Doggett and Esther Ervin of Al Doggett Studio, a team of nine local Black artists (Lisa Brown, Minnie Collins, Al Doggett, Esther Ervin, Aramis Hamer, Lisa Myers Bulmash, Lawrence Pitre, Ashby Reed, and Inye Wokoma) developed art installations to honor the legacy of Liberty Bank and celebrate the vibrancy of the Black community in the Central District. Over the course of the project, events were held to promote the artists' work. The total investment in the building's art program is over \$250,000.

"It's been an incredible experience to witness and participate in the creation of the Liberty Bank Building as a community asset for the Central District. Its existence honors the legacy of an important institution and ensures that the history that surrounds it will not be erased," said Christopher Persons, CEO of Capitol Hill Housing.

In conducting the residential lease-up, the partners helped to affirmatively market openings to those who may have been displaced from the neighborhood. For the commercial space, they worked closely together to develop and support Black-owned businesses and ensure affordable commercial space. Three Black-owned enterprises have signed Letters of Intent to occupy the ground floor: Earl's Cuts and Styles (owner Earl Lancaster), That Brown Girl Cooks! (owners Kristi Brown and Damon Bomar); and Café Avole (owner Solomon Dubie).

RSVP for the event at <http://bit.ly/lbb-2019>

More information on the building at [LibertyBankBuilding.org](http://LibertyBankBuilding.org)

### **About the Partners**

#### **Africatown Community Land Trust**

The mission of Africatown Community Land Trust is to acquire, develop, and steward property in the greater Seattle region to empower and preserve the Black Diaspora community. Learn more at

[www.africatownlandtrust.org](http://www.africatownlandtrust.org)

#### **Black Community Impact Alliance**

The Black Community Impact Alliance (BCIA) is a group of cooperating organizations serving the Black Community in Western Washington. We make sure that taxpayer-funded initiatives and organizations that receive government money to work in the Black community are actually doing work to better the lives of Black children and families, particularly those with low income and the working poor. Our scope includes all elements impacting the well-being of the Black Community, such as: health, education, jobs, housing, technology, safety, art, criminal justice, economic development, and the environment. We empower the Black Community to create and own their future by educating themselves on how to access and manage resources in health, education, workforce, business creation and housing. The BCIA's Planning & Strategy Advisory Committee presently includes representatives from: Village Spirit Center, Central Area Development Association, Gardner Global, olio design strategies, Hack the CD, Black Out



WA, Africatown Central District Preservation and Development Coalition, Umoja PEACE Center, and First Place Schools, Inc.

### **Byrd Barr Place**

Byrd Barr Place is a Community Action Agency supporting the diverse neighborhoods of Seattle's Central District with a variety of services for those in poverty. The agency recently celebrated its 50th Anniversary as part of the first generation of community-inspired organizations funded by the Economic Opportunity Act. Over the course of its history, Byrd Barr Place has been instrumental in combating poverty throughout Seattle, supporting basic needs and providing education and assistance to the community and beyond. Services such as energy assistance, housing support, food distribution, and financial education are provided for more than 20,000 individuals each year. Learn more at <http://byrdbarrplace.org>

### **Capitol Hill Housing**

Since 1976, Capitol Hill Housing has worked alongside the community to build and preserve apartments affordable to working families and promote the qualities that make Seattle a vibrant and engaged city. Today, we provide safe, affordable homes to over 2,200 of our neighbors in 50 buildings across the city, while working to make our neighborhoods safer, healthier and more equitable through the Capitol Hill EcoDistrict. Learn more at [capitolhillhousing.org](http://capitolhillhousing.org). See [previous related press releases](#).

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