

# Expanding the Narrative of Black History in Seattle's Central District

MITHUN



Liberty Bank Building's art program reinforced local ownership by commissioning eight local black artists to design permanent installations. Curated by Al Doggett Studios, the artists' work honors the legacy of the bank and celebrates the vibrancy of the black community in the Central District. Artists included Lisa Brown, Minnie Collins, Al Doggett, Esther Ervin, Aramis Hamer, Lisa Myers Bulmash, Lawrence Pitre, Ashby Reed and Inye Wokoma.



## Celebrating Neighborhood Culture

Located on the site of the former Liberty Bank, the first bank west of the Mississippi River dedicated to serving the African American community, this project honors a rich history and cultural significance. Community recommendations were essential to the project design, which incorporates salvaged elements from the original bank, exterior colors and patterns inspired by Afrocentric design, and work by a team of local, black artists curated by Al Doggett Studios.

## Affordable for Families

The project provides an attractive and affordable home for families earning between 30 and 60 percent of the area median income, providing a buffer for local families at risk of displacement due to rising rents. To encourage community connections, the design features a welcoming entry courtyard flanked by lounge and workshop spaces, as well as a rooftop terrace with entertaining and children's play areas.

## Advancing Healthy Living

A HomeFree demonstration project, Liberty Bank Building features materials that provide a healthier indoor environment for residents. Corridors are filled with daylight, and amenities like bike storage support healthy lifestyles.

## Designing with Equity Front and Center

Liberty Bank Building was designed as an intentional response to the redlining, disinvestment and gentrification of the Central District community. Mithun worked with organizations such as Capitol Hill Housing and Africatown to execute the project in a way that would stabilize the community, protect local businesses and secure African-American ownership of the residential and commercial space in the building. In an effort to support local wealth-building opportunities, the team designed the commercial spaces to prioritize affordability for small, women and minority-owned businesses—achieving 100% occupancy of African-American-owned businesses, including neighborhood staples such as That Brown Girl Cooks and Earl's Barbershop.

## PROJECT—

Liberty Bank Building  
Seattle, Washington  
2013–2019

## DEVELOPMENT TEAM—

Capitol Hill Housing (CHH)  
Africatown Housing Land Trust (Africatown CLT)  
The Black Community Impact Alliance  
Byrd Barr Place

## DESIGN TEAM—

Landscape Architect / Mithun  
Architect / Mithun  
Structural and Civil Engineer / Coughlin Porter Lundeen Inc.