



Local Black Businesses Find A Home At Liberty Bank Building

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Local catering company, That Brown Girl Cooks, has announced that they are opening up shop at the Liberty Bank Building and will join Earls Cuts & Styles as Black owned businesses that will operate inside the historic building when it is fully open in 2019.

The Liberty Bank Building development rises on the same land that once housed the historic Liberty Bank, which first opened its doors 50 years ago and at that time was the first Black owned bank in the entire Pacific Northwest. The Liberty Bank Building is a partnership between the Africatown Community Land Trust, Capitol Hill Housing, Byrd Barr Place, and the Black Community Impact Alliance.

That Brown Girl Cooks is one of a number of Black owned businesses opening or to have recently opened in the Central District as a whole. A business that opened earlier this year is The Postman, a postal and shipping business located on MLK between Union and Spring.

The Postman is owned by lifelong Central District resident, DVonne Pickett and his wife Keanna. According to DVonne, it was only natural for him to open a business in the neighborhood he grew up in. Our services are universal everyone needs shipping services said Pickett So when it came to opening a business, my wife and I, wanted to do that right here in the CD. We feel like this is our turn on the platform our elders built to make good things happen for our community. added Pickett. Pickett said that he was inspired to launch The Postman in part to honor his late grandfather, Jacques Chappell, who was a USPS Letter Carrier for 37 years serving the Central District from 1950 to 1987.

According to the Africatown Community Land Trust (ACLT), although all of the commercial space in the Liberty Bank Building is fully leased, additional projects including an upcoming ACLT development just across the street from the Liberty Bank Building at Midtown will make thousands of square feet of commercial space available. The project development, currently titled Africatown Plaza, will add over one hundred more affordable rental housing units as well as retail space for large and small businesses alike.

With iconic businesses like Earls Cuts & Styles choosing to stay in the Central District despite a demographic trend which has seen many African Americans be displaced from the neighborhood, as well as businesses like The Postman and That Brown Girl Cooks launching businesses in the Central District, this very well might

signal a turning of the tide that saw many legacy Black businesses close or relocate over the year. This as well might be a strong indication that African American business owners see viability in serving their traditional customer base who long to be back in the Central District as well as being able to attract new customers that represent the shifting demographics of the CD.