



The power of unity—preserving communities, building equity

The intersection of Union Street and 23rd Avenue is a hub of Seattle's Central Area, long identified as the heart of the African-American community in the region. When an entire 2.5-acre block there was placed on the market a couple of years ago, many in the community feared that the Central Area would reach a tipping point in its ongoing gentrification, and the African-American community would irrevocably lose its historic home.

Yet activists and area residents hoped for a different future for this rare, large-scale site. With the right redevelopment program, the site could instead help the Central Area retain its neighborhood character and culture and offer affordable housing and storefront space for local businesses to counter displacement.

Recognizing the opportunity and the necessity of actively pursuing this, Yesler Community Collaborative stepped up as convener and facilitator to bring together fledgling community organizations that believed in this vision, with developers willing to commit to it and expertise and resources to bring to the table. "We

were able to help people come together and disrupt the regular development project in a positive way," notes Doris Koo, YCC's lead consultant.

A new model for redevelopment

The process was arduous. Two offers on the property were tendered and accepted. Both fell through. Still, community groups including Africatown Community Land Trust, Capitol Hill Housing, Forterra, several City of Seattle offices and YCC continued to work together toward a redevelopment program that included community ownership and addressed community needs.

Unity of purpose, a willingness to risk innovation, persistence and

optimism finally prevailed. Lake Union Partners, a Seattle-based private real estate developer, purchased the site for \$23.3 million and invited Africatown to share in the ownership. Africatown will own 20 percent of the new development, which will include approximately 120 low-income apartments.

Koo noted, "Everyone's willingness to partner with community-based organizations and build local capacity for long-term ownership and stewardship makes deals like this possible. It is a model that can, indeed, be applied in other neighborhoods. It proves how powerful we can be when we share a united vision of equity and community preservation."



2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Policy Cohort convenes community leaders

Bringing together executive directors and senior staff from both community organizations and City departments, YCC supported these leaders as they addressed policy issues. The cohort consistently evaluated issues from the perspective of preserving community integrity and repairing historic disparity.

Leaders across neighborhoods worked with YCC to develop anti-displacement strategies and educate City departments and Council. These strategies included application of requirements for a higher percentage of affordable housing in new development, prioritizing under-used City-owned land for housing, the importance of affordable commercial spaces for local small businesses and the need to address the retrofit of unreinforced masonry buildings to make them safer in an earthquake.

Because these leaders coordinated their approach to City policymakers through YCC, thus speaking with one voice on important issues, they were successful in informing legislation and policy.

Income disparity in King County continues to grow. In 2017 the area median income grew to \$96,000, an increase of 6.3 percent since 2016 and one of the highest median incomes in the U.S.



Accomplishments

- Partnered with community organizations and the City of Seattle to craft workable legislation addressing displacement and rampant growth. Contributed significantly to policy initiatives to address community preservation, equity and the effects of historic disparity in YCC neighborhoods.
- Supported collaboration among Africatown Community Land Trust, Forterra, Capitol Hill Housing and Lake Union Partners to achieve a model of equitable development at 23rd and Union.
- Served as an effective backbone organization for our partners, adding a critical increment of capacity for effective community building and advocacy.



YCC receives recognition for leadership

Yesler Community Collaborative has been recognized by several local organizations for its efforts to counter displacement and serve as a catalyst for equitable development and opportunity. In March, Futurewise conferred its “Community Champion” award to Doris Koo and the Yesler Community Collaborative.

This was followed in October by Crosscut’s Courage in Business Award presented to lead consultant Doris Koo for her work in catalyzing the partnership among businesses and organizations that led to the Midtown Center project. In November, Seattle Jobs Initiative honored Koo at their annual community celebration, entitled Building Strong Working Communities.

“As the program manager of a similar community collaborative, I have seen and learned from the way YCC provides the framework and community inclusiveness model that allows our various organizations to speak with one voice.”

—Denis Comer, Central Area Collaborative

Partner meetings inform connection and collaboration

Bringing together leaders from across YCC's partner organizations remains a core function. Two lively gatherings shed light on economic development and job creation. At the March meeting healthcare and career development specialists shared their work on creating a career ladder for health care workers, and Seattle University faculty described their

program to bring together business students and entrepreneurs for shared mentoring and business development.

July's meeting focused on the Midtown Center development. A panel of key players from this development discussed the details of how they were able to come together to create a new model of community participation in redevelopment.

Property taxes in King County rose 43 percent in the last four years, displacing many older and low-income families who cannot afford the increase.



“Forterra is known for its work preserving land for healthy ecosystems in undeveloped places. For true sustainability we also see the need to invest in strong communities in urban places. Acquisition of this keystone property represents an investment in keeping this community—including its economy and culture—healthy and sustainable.”

—Michelle Connor, Forterra

YCC serves partners as “backbone” organization

During 2017 Yesler Community Collaborative focused on providing backbone services to its partner organization. Often this meant working side by side with them on grant-writing, leadership development and coaching.

Assistance from YCC helped Africatown Community Land Trust apply for and receive \$75,000 from Enterprise Community Partners. YCC helped the Central Area Collaborative with a successful grant application for \$100,000 from the City of Seattle's Only in Seattle program. Communities of Opportunity will also support a coalition of YCC partners to continue its anti-displacement policy work.

Services especially valued by partners included convening and coordinating. Even taking on simple administrative tasks such as scheduling a meeting and articulating an agenda meant that nonprofit leaders could pause from their specific work to consider the bigger picture. The opportunity for partners to confer with YCC consultants on important issues and receive support in approaching City leaders has also been cited as a valuable backbone service.



In 2107 Seattle real estate appreciated at the rate of 13.2 percent, twice the national average, fueling displacement and homelessness.

As growth and displacement increase, our work becomes more important

Over the past several years, we have witnessed how much can be gained for our communities from a backbone organization by convening and connecting. We have leveraged the strength of our partners by helping them articulate a shared vision and coordinating common actions. We have seen that vision embedded in anti-displacement strategies across the city, raising awareness around issues of equity and the preservation of neighborhood identity and culture.

Our continued success rests on the commitment and follow-through of local government, and the involvement of local anchor institutions. We also depend upon the willingness of private and nonprofit organizations to contribute resources and to participate with us in this work.

We experienced a change on our board this year, as Bill Block replaced Tom Tierney. We remain indebted to Tom, both for visionary leadership in the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, and his wisdom and commitment as a YCC board member.

The pace of growth and real estate appreciation has not slowed; displacement of long-time Seattle residents continues unabated. We face increasing challenges. Thus, our work is both more difficult and more important.

We hope you will continue to join us in this work.



Sue Taoka
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Collaborative Partners

Africatown Community Land Trust
Black Community Impact Alliance
Byrd Barr Place
Capitol Hill Housing
Catholic Community Services
Central Area Collaborative
Craft3
Enterprise Community Partners
First Hill Improvement Association
Forterra
Friends of Little Saigon
Futurewise
Harborview Medical Center
International Community Health Services
International Living Future Institute
Keiro Northwest NDC
Neighborcare Health
Odessa Brown Children's Clinic
Public Health | Seattle & King County
Seattle Colleges
Seattle Chinatown International District PDA
Seattle Goodwill
Seattle Housing Authority
Seattle Jobs Initiative
Seattle University
Swedish Medical Center
Workforce Development Council
YMCA, Meredith Mathews Branch

Contributing Partners

JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Communities of Opportunity
Seattle Foundation
The Boeing Company
The Bullitt Foundation
Weber Shandwick

Consulting Team

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