

Center for Black Excellence and Culture: Launches public capital campaign with historic investments, unveils building floor plan

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Led by over 300 Black donors and honorees, capital campaign already raises over \$5 million, including \$2 million gift by Summit Credit Union and \$1 million earmark by Rep. Pocan

Madison, Wis.—December 2, 2021—Today, The Center for Black Excellence and Culture (The Center) – a first-of-its-kind Black-inspired, Black-designed and Black-led multimillion-dollar project in Madison – unveiled historic advancements toward opening its doors in 2023 and celebrated the hundreds of Black community members who helped to design a one-of-a-kind, multi-faceted collection of offerings that promote the key elements that will allow the Black community in the Madison area, and beyond, the opportunity to engage with experiences that inspire and empower them to reach their full potential.

At a celebration event held on the grounds where The Center will stand, CEO and Founder Dr. Alex Gee, Black donors and influencers, and community leaders announced major milestones, including:

- The launch of the principal \$36 million capital campaign with over \$5 million already raised
- The inspiringly successful results of the Black women-led [Black Excellence Campaign](#), demonstrating galvanized support across Madison with Black donors leading the way
- The anticipated opening date of late 2023

- The public unveiling of The Center's detailed renderings and floor plan
- The first six- and seven-figure gifts

The Center is a groundbreaking endeavor for Madison's Black community to gather and network, showcase and celebrate our world-changing culture, inspire leadership development and innovation, attract and retain Black talent, and create holistic solutions in a space the Black community will call its own. As such, the effort has experienced a groundswell of support that spans generations. Already, over 300 Black donors and their honorees have led the early fundraising effort, with hundreds more Black donors anticipated to give next year. Black professionals and cultural influencers are also contributing their expertise at every level of the project, from design to programming to operations.

"Madison's Black community has rallied together in a way we've never seen before, setting in motion an initiative that is a true reflection of its voice for the key opportunities and experiences that must be developed to support the broad spectrum of opportunities that the Black community needs to thrive," said Dr. Gee. "Even in these early stages, we are already witnessing the power of The Center, which is leveraging Black talent to create a space that makes the region feel like a true home to the Black community."

For generations, Madison has fallen short of developing the types of spaces that the Black community needs to feel connected, inspired, empowered and rooted in the community. The Center for Black Excellence and Culture will be transformational for Black community members of all ages, backgrounds and talents by offering invaluable support for:

- Using Black culture to celebrate and inspire Black excellence and perseverance in our community
- Using Black culture and history to inspire and teach our youth to become leaders and innovators of tomorrow
- Enhancing Black wellness for all stages of life
- Creating an enhanced quality of life not yet fully available for the Black community in our region
- Creating a cultural home for networking, celebrating and creating solutions to strengthen the entire community, and making the region a desirable place for Blacks to live and thrive
- Creating the space for Black performing and visual arts to take center stage in our community

- Building a Center to create a bold counter-narrative that affirms Black excellence

The leadership from hundreds of Black community members has inspired others across Dane County to step up with sizable gifts to help launch The Center's capital campaign. Summit Credit Union became The Center's first Founding Donor with a \$2 million gift, and Congressman Mark Pocan has secured a federal earmark of \$1 million with support from Senator Tammy Baldwin.

"We chose The Center for this gift because the Black community has made it clear this pivotal effort will provide real, lasting change – and we're proud to help support this transformative mission" said Kim Sponem, CEO and President of Summit Credit Union. "The \$2 million donation is Summit Credit Union's largest in our history and the first corporate donation for The Center."

The Center also launches the capital campaign with numerous six-figure gifts from across Dane County including \$500,000 from the Pleasant Rowland Foundation, \$500,000 from the W. Jerome Frautschi Foundation, \$125,000 from Marla and Larry Frank, \$100,000 from UW Health, \$100,000 from M3 Insurance and a \$100,000 anonymous gift. The Center previously received \$810,000 from Dane County and \$250,000 from the city of Madison.

"The heartfelt donations we have received from individuals, businesses and organizations in the Madison region and across the country for this transformational initiative to date are a reflection of the importance of efforts that support and celebrate Black excellence in the Madison community," commented Dr. Gee. "Our opportunity today is to encourage and challenge other leaders in our community and beyond to support an initiative that not only empowers the Black community to thrive, but has ripple effects beyond The Center for our economy, our education system, our businesses and everyone's quality of life."

The Center's design and programming are a product of Black architects, artists, business leaders and experts inspired by numerous visioning sessions with hundreds of Black residents to create a place that perfectly meets the Black community's needs. The sessions were supported by Lord Cultural Resources – the visionaries behind renowned cultural spaces including the Smithsonian Museum of African American History in Washington, D.C.

[Click here](#) for the detailed floor plan of The Center.

Numerous other Dane County organizations and individuals have provided indispensable services to help support The Center's development. These include JLA Architects, J.H. Findorff & Son Inc., Hiebing, Frank Productions, Baker Tilly, Carlson Black O'Callaghan & Battenberg LLP, and Husch Blackwell.

Organizations and individuals can give to The Center at <https://www.theblackcenter.org/donate>. For more information about The Center, visit <https://www.theblackcenter.org/>.

About The Center for Black Excellence and Culture:

The Center for Black Excellence and Culture (The Center) will answer the decades-long absence of cultural space to celebrate and advance Dane County's Black community. Located on six acres within the heart of a historically Black neighborhood, The Center will be a physical place where Dane County's Black residents and others throughout the community can gather to plan for and celebrate current and future growth and advancement.

Specifically, The Center will: Celebrate and promote Black excellence; Foster a sense of family and community; Pay tribute to Black history; Nurture and develop Black business and community leaders; Attract, connect and retain Black talent; and Provide the space for conversation, connection and growth.