

Community in Action: Exploring the Young Black Professionals Workforce Housing Initiative in Portland Oregon

The Design Colloquium and the Global Design Alliance are excited to host a presentation of an inspiring project that is taking place in Portland OR.

The Young Black Professionals (YBP) Workforce Housing initiative was born of a moment in time, the culmination of a history of systemic racism and inequality that burst forth onto the streets of America in the Spring of 2020.

Our collective witness to the devastating murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery—tragedies in a long line of death and disregard for human life—struck a chord like never before. As a nation, we were called to action, beyond protesting or issuing statements. We were called to make change with a true material impact.

The YBP Initiative is an answer to this call for action. BORA Architecture & Interiors and Andersen Construction, in partnership with Self Enhancement Inc. (SEI) and HMS Development, are working together to create a home for young Black professionals in Portland interested in a career in the AEC industry—a place where they can live together in community to support one another in a city where few share their lived experience as a person of color. Residents will participate in a three-year Professional Apprenticeship Program, an initiative that mentors high school and college graduates toward careers in construction management, architecture and engineering in Portland.

The intention is that this project serves as an investment in the Black community, supporting the long-term health and prosperity of Black lives. In isolation, a building project does very little to address the issue of wealth disparity; the YBP Workforce Housing strives to do much more. It seeks to demonstrate what a building can empower beyond its walls, creating opportunities for young Black professionals to thrive. The vision is to create an initiative that is achieved by the community, for the community, with generational wealth investment opportunity from the community.

The Project Partners who will be telling their story are Joel Andersen of Andersen Construction; Anthony Deloney of SEI; and Amy Donohue of Bora Architecture & Interiors. In addition, members of the project A/E team from PAE and Holmes Structures will participate in sharing information about this initiative.