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**City of Madison Announces Grant to
The Center for Black Excellence and Culture**

\$250,000 commitment to Black community center referred to Finance Committee today

Madison, WI—January 11, 2021—Deepening its commitment to supporting small businesses owned by people of color, the City of Madison is pledging \$250,000 to The Center for Black Excellence and Culture in 2021. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway recently introduced a resolution for the funding, a portion of Madison’s Small Business and Equity Recovery program, which will be referred to the Finance Committee today. The resolution is cosponsored by Council President Carter.

Recently announced for construction on Madison’s south side, The Center for Black Excellence and Culture (The Center) will be a shared space to celebrate Dane County’s Black community while showcasing Black excellence to audiences at the local, state and national levels. The \$250,000 allocation from the City will support crucial pre-development work as The Center continues to establish its identity through strategy, planning and programming.

“I am pleased the City will play a role in promoting and establishing The Center for Black Excellence and Culture. This is an important way for us to support, honor and promote our Black community, its leaders and businesses,” said Mayor Rhodes-Conway, “Our community needs spaces like this Center, and I appreciate Dr. Gee’s leadership and vision in creating it. I truly look forward to its opening and operation.”

The City’s Small Business and Equity Recovery program, unveiled in October, is an initiative created to recognize the historic and current inequities in funding and support for small businesses owned by people of color. With a wealth of community resources and programming including a Center for Black Enterprise, The Center will only further amplify this support by empowering Black business leaders and entrepreneurs in Madison and beyond.

Funding from the City will support an array of The Center’s goals in its pre-development phase, including shaping project strategy, community outreach and engagement, architectural design, site development and capital fundraising. The City’s investment, in addition to ongoing support from an upcoming capital campaign, will be essential in keeping The Center on a path to groundbreaking in 2022.

“This funding serves as a representation of the City’s commitment to acknowledging and empowering its Black community,” said Rev. Dr. Alex Gee, Jr., pastor of Fountain of Life Covenant Church and founder/CEO of the nonprofit Nehemiah Center of Urban Leadership. “We’re grateful to Mayor Rhodes-Conway and the City of Madison for embracing The Center’s mission to uplift and nurture generations of Black excellence.”

In addition to helping develop Black business in Madison, The Center is poised to fill a decades-long

lack of a shared cultural space in Dane County while fostering a sense of community, celebrating Black culture and history and providing a venue for community members to connect and grow. The City's financial contribution reflects its steadfast commitment to working with the Black community by supporting a project that will promote healing and build beneficial, enduring relationships.

A public capital campaign to fund the construction and development of The Center will be launched later in 2021, with construction beginning in 2022. The Center will be an iconic landmark in Madison, positioned prominently at the city's Park Street entrance on the south side. Those interested in helping fund the creation of The Center can donate at thecenterwi.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 6.5 acres on the 700 block of West Badger Road, 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: Foster a sense of family and community; Nurture and develop Black business and community leaders; Celebrate and teach Black greatness and culture; Attract, connect and retain Black talent; and Provide the space for conversation, connection and growth. Anyone interested in supporting or donating to The Center should visit <https://thecenterwi.org/>.

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