



## Office of the Mayor

Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor  
City-County Building, Room 403  
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
Madison, WI 53703  
Phone: (608) 266-4611 | Fax: (608) 267-8671  
[mayor@cityofmadison.com](mailto:mayor@cityofmadison.com)  
[cityofmadison.com](http://cityofmadison.com)

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Dear Economic Development Committee –

I am writing to ask for your support of item 63217, which supports the development of the Center for Black Excellence. Supporting this work now is one way for the city to ensure it is serious about addressing racial inequities in our city and to further our support of the South Madison community. Place matters, Space matters. This project is an offering from our black community partners to all Madison residents towards creating a vibrant, inclusive economy and culture. It will specifically provide space and support for black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs.

As we build back better post-pandemic, now is the time to invest in things that show our commitment to doing things differently and re-building in a way that values all our residents. Time and again I have heard from Madison residents that we have few culturally-centered spaces that celebrate historical contributions of black residents, develop current talent, and offer safe space for idea and business incubation.

Now is the time to ensure works such as the Black Cultural Center come to fruition. One of my four priorities when I came to office was to address racial equity. I have spent the last year and a half engaging with leaders and residents across our city and one message is very clear. When it comes to addressing racial inequities, people want action from their government. While the bureaucracies of government can make certain actions slower than we want, tonight is not the case. I believe you have the opportunity tonight to show residents that government can work at the speed of its people.

I understand that there is concern with the use of the SBER funds for this project. SBER was always intended to address both short term needs and longer term investments – on the one hand to provide immediate relief to small businesses owned by people of color and other marginalized groups and on the other to invest in projects that support these businesses in the long term. I feel that this is one endeavor that will have lasting impact on the landscape of our city. That is why I am supporting it now and asking for your support.

I hope you see the value of this work and of supporting it now and offer your vote for it.

Satya Rhodes-Conway  
Mayor