

Media Contacts:
Aimedra Kelley 404-526-8975
John Ahmann 404-793-2678

King Center Acts to Preserve 220 Sunset Ave.

Atlanta, GA (January 24, 2020) – The King Center recently sold the building at 220 Sunset Avenue to Westside Future Fund (WFF) to ensure the property is preserved and to provide an affordable housing option in the historically significant neighborhood. The property was once the home of Atlanta’s first African American mayor, Maynard Jackson, Jr. The historic property is a three-story apartment building adjacent to the home where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his family once lived at 234 Sunset Avenue. WFF will master lease the property to the Atlanta University Center (AUC) to house graduate students, researchers, and faculty studying Atlanta’s Civil Rights Movement and leadership. Once the property has been restored, the AUC will identify potential tenants and oversee the selection process.

The apartment building (220) was built by Rev. Maynard Jackson, Sr. in 1949, and was home to the Jackson family, including a young Maynard H. Jackson, Jr., in the 1950s. Several years after the Jackson family moved out, Martin Luther King, Jr. and his family moved into the house next door. (The King Center has owned 220 Sunset Avenue since the 1970s.)

“After hearing the concerns of Vine City residents and conducting research on the history of the property, we redirected our efforts to ensure the property was not demolished but preserved,” said Bernice King, CEO of The King Center. “Vine City was not only my home, but it holds a special place in the Civil Rights Movement and we want to ensure the very people that built that community and their descendants have fair housing options as the neighborhood changes. Since Westside Future Fund is working to preserve significant landmarks within the Westside community, we were able to come together to find a viable solution to preserve our history.”

WFF continues to implement the [Westside Land Use Framework Plan](#), a core tenet of which is to address the historic preservation of significant landmarks within the Westside community. The plan has been grounded in community input and involvement since the beginning.

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms is focused on housing affordability in her first term via her [Housing Affordability Action Plan](#). With 220 Sunset Avenue being revitalized as apartments for AUC graduate students and researchers, WFF continues to work with the Mayor and the community to elevate the quality of life in Atlanta’s historic Westside neighborhoods while prioritizing community retention via its [“Home on the Westside”](#) as the area’s economic fortunes continue to improve.

“This historic revitalization reflects Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dream for the Beloved Community,” said Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms. “Thank you to the Westside Future Fund for understanding the importance of preserving our communities. As the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement, Atlanta has a rich history of supporting young advocates of change. We look forward to continuing to build upon that legacy on the Westside.”

“We understand the cultural history attached to the homes located on Atlanta’s Westside; preservation remains a key priority,” said John Ahmann, President and CEO of Westside Future Fund. “A number of our city’s African American leadership - past and present - were raised in these neighborhoods. We’re working to help revitalize historic landmarks in alignment with the objectives voiced by the community in the Westside Land Use Action Plan.”

The property’s builder, Rev. Jackson, also served as pastor at nearby Friendship Baptist Church while his wife, Dr. Irene Dobbs Jackson, eldest daughter of John Wesley Dobbs, was a professor and department head at Spelman College. She was living at 220 Sunset when she became the first African American to



receive a library card from the main branch of the Atlanta Public Library system located on Carnegie Way Northwest.

WFF will apply for historic status from the State Historic Preservation Office to help commemorate the legacy of the property. The restoration timeline will partly depend on the National Register nomination process and is expected to begin by October 2020.

“Atlanta is widely recognized as ‘the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement,’ and the Atlanta University Center played a meaningful role in helping shape leaders during that pivotal era,” said Todd Greene, Executive Director, Atlanta University Center Consortium. “We are excited to come alongside residents in our community as they work with both the WFF and King Center to continue an amazing legacy and further support our future leaders.”

About The King Center

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change (The King Center) is a 501(c) (3) organization established in 1968 by Mrs. Coretta Scott King. The King Center is the official living memorial and programmatic nonprofit organization committed to educating the world on the life, legacy, and nonviolent teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The King Center is committed to preparing global citizens to utilize the principles and strategies of Nonviolence (Nonviolence365) to create a more just, humane and peaceful world.

thekingcenter.org

About Westside Future Fund

Westside Future Fund is a nonprofit formed by Atlanta’s public, private, and philanthropic partners who believe in the future of Atlanta’s Westside and are committed to helping Historic Westside neighborhoods revitalize and develop into a community Dr. King would be proud to call home.

westsidefuturefund.org

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