

Application Narrative

Please use single-spaced, 12 point font with 1-inch margins. Responses to the narrative section should not exceed five pages.

- 1.) **Please describe the project in 250 words or less.**
- 2.) **Describe the main population you propose to engage in this project (neighborhood, identity-based group, etc.).**
- 3.) **If your project is a collaborative effort, list all partners/partnering organizations, and describe their anticipated roles. Letters of support not required. *(Include both private and public organizations.)***
- 4.) **What existing community resources or organizational support will you draw from to ensure this project's success (such as organizational membership, volunteers, funding, or staff support)?**
- 5.) **Describe how your project advances Portland's community vision through at least one value and at least one of the five elements (Built, Economic, Environment, Learning and Social) articulated in the visionPDX document. *(Please refer to Appendices A and B.)***
- 6.) **Explain how your project idea is creative and innovative.**
- 7.) **List your overall goals, specific project activities, and outcomes anticipated in the first six months of project implementation. Outcomes should be measurable, such as the number of people engaged, events orchestrated, or projects produced by the community.**
- 8.) **How your project will contribute to long lasting change?**
- 9.) **Please discuss your plans for project evaluation. How will you gauge your project's success?**

Application for '08-'09 VIA Grant – by Central City Concern

“After church...we would go to the [Golden West] hotel in order to have our dinner....There was a great swapping of laughter, plans for the coming week, just a great get-together, socializing.”
Katherine Bogle

“Back then...we had racial prejudiceOf course, there wasn't any place where you could eat in restaurants.”
Marie Smith

“Oregon was a southern state transplanted to the north....Oregon was a Klan state.”
Otto Rutherford

0) Preface and historical context to the project:

Despite a series of blatantly racist nineteenth century Oregon laws, codes, and practices aimed at excluding AfricanAmericans and other peoples of color, AfricanAmericans have been a presence in Portland from its beginnings. By 1900, the majority of the city's 1,000 AfricanAmerican citizens were living near Union Station. Prior to 1885, most AfricanAmerican Portlanders were limited to jobs as boot blacks, domestics and laborers. This changed as the railroads and steamships flourished, and the grand Portland Hotel downtown actively recruited skilled employees from southern states. An AfricanAmerican middle class began to emerge from relatively prestigious and relatively well-paid jobs as Pullman porters, skilled barbers, cooks and restaurant waiters.

The new workers and their families formed the nucleus of a vibrant AfricanAmerican community during the first decades of the 20th century. The business, social, and cultural axis ran east-west along Everett and Flanders. They established newspapers, and built churches, social clubs and businesses such as barbershops, restaurants, haberdasheries, and pool halls. The major neighborhood hub was the Golden West Hotel, owned and operated by Fisk-University-educated AfricanAmerican entrepreneur W.D. Allen. The hotel had nice rooms and modern bathrooms, as well as a street-level restaurant, candy shop, and a barber shop run by Waldo Bogle.

The virulent rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, the pressures of downtown development, and the lure of railway jobs led many westside AfricanAmericans and their businesses and churches to create a new tight-knit community on the east side of the river, just on the other side of the Broadway Bridge. Several decades later, this neighborhood also succumbed to the interests of the dominant population. It was bulldozed to accommodate the Memorial Coliseum and Interstate 5, a repetition of an all too familiar story of “loss of home” by peoples of color.

1) Describe the project.

Summary: An innovative, street-level exhibit about AfricanAmerican history in Portland. Central City Concern, in collaboration with several partners including the ‘Golden West Project’

and the ‘Old Town History Project’ will create and install a new multi-panel, multimedia historical exhibit. The exhibit will tell the story of AfricanAmerican history in early Portland, specifically the neighborhood that surrounded the Golden West Hotel in the early 1900s. The publicly-accessible display will face the sidewalks at a well-traveled corner near downtown, Old Town and the Pearl District.

In 1989, Central City Concern (CCC) bought and renovated the Golden West residential building at the corner of NW Everett and Broadway. It is one of the oldest remaining landmarks of AfricanAmerican history in Portland. The Friends of the Golden West, a group of mostly AfricanAmerican citizens, came together in 1991 to create a historic display as a way of honoring the AfricanAmerican history of the building. The original two-panel display, created by Katherine Bogle, has been worn by weather and time and is currently illegible.

CCC has committed funds sufficient to restore the original display. However, we now have the opportunity, with the help of partner organizations and grant funding, to not just restore, but to substantially improve and expand the original display. We are proposing to broaden from the original focus on the Golden West building. The exhibit will tell a bigger social and ethnic story: of the vibrant AfricanAmerican community that surrounded the Golden West in the early years of Portland, and the successes and challenges of its residents.

There is a particular need for this multimedia exhibit in this location. In Portland, the relative invisibility of AfricanAmericans and AfricanAmerican history adds to race-related challenges in our city. Our project will increase awareness of the AfricanAmerican legacy in Portland. Increased awareness and understanding will deepen Portlanders’ understanding and respect for AfricanAmericans’ experiences, and strengthen the city’s opposition to racism.

2) Describe the main population you propose to engage in this project.

The street level exhibit is aimed at pedestrians. There is lots of pedestrian traffic along NW Everett and Broadway, drawn by Old Town entertainment venues, Pearl District art and cultural establishments, restaurant, retail and other commerce throughout the area, by the main city post office, the immigration offices, the Classical Chinese Garden, the north park blocks, the bus and train stations, and by the proximity to downtown. Pedestrian traffic at our corner will increase with the upcoming re-use of the 511 building for the PNCA art school (three blocks away) and by the hoped-for re-use of the adjacent Customs House.

An exciting variety of people walk by on Everett and/or Broadway, some by happenstance:

- Neighborhood residents – from low-income people hanging out in Old Town to young professionals and well-off empty nesters living in the trendy Pearl District
- Neighborhood business people – a wide variety of job-holders
- Portlanders who come to the area, e.g. for First Thursday art openings
- Travelers

Others will deliberately seek out the Golden West historic streetscape exhibit:

- Sight-seers
- History buffs
- School class groups on field trips

3) List all partner organizations and describe their anticipated roles.

The project sponsor is **Central City Concern** (CCC) who will host and manage the project. CCC is a major non-profit social service agency that has substantial credibility from its 30 years of operations in Old Town.

Dr. Jacqueline Peterson, founder of the Old Town History Project, is the historian who will guide the research and curate the exhibit. The **Old Town History Project** will contribute historical content from its recorded oral history and photograph collections.

An interest group - **The Golden West Project** – has informed a wide array of Portlanders about the need for this project. Leadership from the Golden West Project has participated in Vision PDX and are partners in the Vision into Action phase of this process.

SERA Architects, also in Old Town, will contribute **graphic** design services.

The Oregon Historical Society has contributed research services and is the source for most old photographs and other archival resources.

Cathy Galbraith has been a leader in recovering Portland's 20th century AfricanAmerican history and in recording its architectural history.. She is the director of the **Bosco-Milligan Foundation**, whose focus is Portland historic architecture. She will provide historical information and serve as a primary consultant on the content of the display.

4) What existing community resources or organizational support will ensure this projects success?

Central City Concern (CCC), as noted above, will host and sponsor the project. The historic Golden West building – the outer walls of which are home to the display - belongs to and is managed by CCC. CCC will devote staff time to grant applications, grant administration, and project management. CCC has years of success with a variety of private and public grant funders. CCC has been a leader in the Old Town / Chinatown neighborhood association and can draw upon that organization's support to further this project, as necessary. CCC's executive director has high visibility with the City of Portland and within the downtown business community, and can advocate for the project if difficulties arise.

The Old Town History Project **and the Bosco-Milligan Foundation** are strong partners to the project. The leaders of the Golden West Project have shown an ongoing, multi-year commitment to honoring the historical AfricanAmerican presence in the areas north of Burnside.

5) Describe how your project advances PDX community vision through at least one value and at least one of the five elements.

Values: The project advances *community connectedness* and *sustainability* and *inclusive diversity* through a sidewalk display that surfaces several crucial messages.

Message: *The AfricanAmerican community here was vibrant and interesting.*
Message: *AfricanAmericans were (and are) an integral part of Portland's history.*
Message: *AfricanAmericans confronted and surmounted challenges due to racism.*
Message: *The experiences of AfricanAmericans have much in common with other Americans.*
Message: *The story of AfricanAmericans in Portland is worth everyone's attention.*
Message: *We are all affected by and responsible participants in the ongoing weaving of history's tapestry.*

Giving voice to Portland's AfricanAmerican history reveals the complexity of our collective past. Deeper understanding is a foundation that fosters respect and trust among identity-based groups. This encourages broader community engagement leading to better decisions for our future.

Built environment: The project physically enhances a well-traveled public space: the walls facing a busy downtown-area sidewalk. The exhibit will draw attention to the both the area's history and the area's historic architecture, adding cultural depth to this keystone neighborhood. The exhibit will be approachable and vibrant; it will engage pedestrians in an interactive experience. The exhibit will promote a sense of 'place' and community that spans the passing decades.

Learning and social elements: The exhibit will teach history to both individuals and groups in an active, multisensory manner. It will engage a wide variety of people, expanding their sense of Portland as multi-faceted and evolving community. Viewers will learn something about diversity. Viewers will note how change – from decade to decade - often weaves all our fates together.

6) Explain how your project idea is creative and innovative.

The history of AfricanAmericans in early Portland is a complex racial and interracial story. This project takes that history to the streets, the ultimate in democratic 'accessibility'. The exhibit will go beyond simple education: it will convey the human flavor of a group experience. Images and vignettes will evoke empathy and recognition in the viewer. This empathy is one way to build commitment to citizenship.

Traditionally, historic buildings are memorialized by outdoor plaques whose content is largely architectural, stating names and dates. Our exhibit reaches for a much more engaging kind of public history. It will fill four large window cases. It will be visually stimulating, using color, photos, and possibly physical mementos.

As part of this project we are including a "soundscape" at the exhibit, i.e. a visitor-activated audio component for the exhibit. This would include music (ragtime, jazz or blues), sound effects representing activities in the early 20th century hotel storefronts, and voices reminiscing about the AfricanAmerican neighborhood. We have included a request for \$3,000 for research and production of the exhibit's audio component.

7) List your overall goals, specific project activities, and outcomes anticipated in the first six months of project implementation. Outcomes should be measurable.

The overall goal is to install an exciting street level, multi-panel exhibit in four large window cases in the historic Golden West building at the corner of NW Everett and Broadway. The specific project activities will be:

- gathering historic information and materials
- distilling the 'storylines' and themes for the exhibit,
- drafting text, choosing quotations, historic photos, archival materials, and design to engage the viewer,
- consulting with advisors and with members of the AfricanAmerican community,
- fabrication and installation of the exhibit,
- publicity and media coverage for the unveiling of the exhibit.
- ensuring that organizations (i.e. educational, neighborhood, history-oriented and African-American organizations) know about the exhibit and put it in their brochures, maps, etc.

The measurable outcomes of the first six months: The public unveiling will draw at least 50 people and will garner media attention. During the first six months, many dozens of pedestrians will stop to look at the display. Over the first six months, the exhibit will become part of the historic resources of the city. Specifically, it will be listed as an option on the materials that guide school class fieldtrips in Old Town. It will be listed on brochures for sight-seers. It will become a stop on neighborhood historic tours. It will be incorporated into materials on Portland African-American history. The number of viewers will actually keep increasing over the first couple years.

8) How will your project contribute to long-lasting change?

The exhibit will likely become its own minor landmark, hopefully inspiring other celebrations of diversity and/or other commemorations of struggle and survival. The story of AfricanAmericans in early Portland will be on display for at least 15 years and will be seen by thousands of people. To the extent that people are touched by the exhibit, that influence will bear fruit in a number of ways. We hope that increased inter-racial awareness builds respect and trust. Ultimately, this should strengthen the city's commitment to equalizing opportunities for all citizens.

9) Discuss plans for project evaluation. How will you gauge your project's success?

Success is measured in both quantity and quality. For quantity of viewers, the simplest measure will be the frequency with which we need to clean fingerprints off the glass of the display cases. Another simple measure will be brief and informal observation of people stopping to view the display on First Thursdays. One of the best measures will be the ongoing inclusion of the exhibit on tour group and school field trip itineraries.

To measure the quality of our success, we'll assess the exhibit's impact on its viewers. We will set up booths during First Thursday and query passersby, both orally and with brief written surveys. We'll ask people how their interest, empathy and/or attitudes were affected by viewing the display.