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Urban League plans up to 300 affordable units in Rainier Valley

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An almost vacant block at [2001 Rainier Ave. S.](#) sold this week for a little over \$14.3 million, according to King County records. The new owner, via an LLC, is the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, which also announced the nearly 1.2-acre deal.

The nonprofit is planning to base its headquarters in a new building to be developed with SRM Development. Above the offices, up to 300 affordable units are planned. No architect has been named for what's now dubbed The Empowerment Center. SRM generally acts as its own contractor, and often works with architect Olson Projects on its affordable housing projects. No building plans have been filed yet with the city.



Photo via Coldwell Banker Bain [\[enlarge\]](#)

Looking south, the block is at the crossing of Rainier (center) and 23rd (left). The three old structures have been removed.

Also bounded by South Hill and Plum streets, the trapezoidal block was previously home to a Burger King, 7-Eleven and Baskin-Robbins — all recently demolished by the seller. (More on that below.) It's about a 12-minute walk north to Judkins Park Station, where light rail service should begin in 2025.

The Urban League's Michelle Merriweather said in a statement, “We are so excited and thankful for the opportunity to bring more affordable housing and community services to our Rainier Valley neighbors. The Empowerment Center can be a cornerstone for generations to come in the Central District, Rainier Valley and beyond. Our work is just getting started on this project and there will be ample opportunity to connect in the years to come as this project is anticipated to start in summer 2025.”

If that schedule holds, completion in 2027 would be a reasonable goal. The land is zoned up to 75 feet, meaning a midrise project.

The league projects a mix of family-friendly apartment sizes, from one- to four-bedrooms. Affordability levels are envisioned to suit households earning around 60% of area median income. Design review is optional for such entirely affordable housing projects, and there won't be any Mandatory Housing Affordability fee.

About 150 underground parking stalls are planned for tenants, the league and possibly shoppers. Some amount of retail/commercial space seems likely.

The purchase was backed by loans from the city of Seattle, Washington State Housing Finance Commission and Microsoft-funded Community Development Land Acquisition Program at the WSHFC.

The league currently rents its office space near Yesler Terrace and Bailey Gatzert Elementary School. Yesterday's announcement also revealed that the league is partnering with SRM on a 207-

unit affordable housing project in North Seattle, just east of Jackson Park Golf Course. Olson Projects is the designer; a master use permit is still pending, and the land sale hasn't yet closed. The DJC first reported that plan, at 14343 15th Ave. N.E., last year.

Also last year, following a \$96 million, 354-unit portfolio deal spanning six buildings, the Urban League and SRM said they partnered in that purchase to preserve affordable units.

Back in the Rainier Valley, the seller's broker was David Irons at Coldwell Banker Bain, in a deal worth about \$280 per square foot. The property was listed last year.

The seller was O'Brien Investment Co., which had owned the property for decades. That family group has owned and often sold similarly polluted or remediated gas station properties around our region.

An underground fuel tank, or tanks, still need to be removed. But the seller last year received a determination of no further action (NFA) from the state Department of Ecology. That followed a voluntary, decade-long cleanup effort from tenant 7-Eleven.

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