

**PROCLAMATION**

***WHEREAS, in the month of February, the City of Olympia celebrates the contributions of Black Americans to our national history and recognizes that Black History is American History; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia honors the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. whose birthday is observed this year on January 20 as a national holiday. Dr. King's leadership in the fight against housing discrimination and segregation led to the formation of national legislation to prohibit discrimination in housing. Within one week of Dr. King's assassination, Congress passed the Fair Housing Act to prohibit housing discrimination; and***

***WHEREAS, prior to the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, Black residents were restricted from purchasing homes due to discriminatory practices of redlining and restrictive covenants; and***

***WHEREAS, the Racial Restrictive Covenants Project involving research teams at the University of Washington and Eastern Washington University, has identified properties in Olympia with legal clauses that excluded people who were not white from purchasing; and***

***WHEREAS, Thurston County Auditor's Office has made it possible for landowners to strike the racially restrictive language from their deeds at no cost because some deeds still contain discriminatory language; and***

***WHEREAS, after the Fair Housing Act prohibited discriminatory practices, such as refusing to lend or sell based on a prospective homebuyer's race, many forms of unlawful discrimination endured; and***

***WHEREAS, approximately 42% of Black households in Washington State have zero net worth, compared to 14% of white households; and***

***WHEREAS, Black households in Thurston County have the lowest rate of homeownership of any racial or ethnic group. The homeownership rate in Thurston County for white, non-Hispanic households is 70%, while the homeownership rate for Black households is 51%; and***

***WHEREAS, Governor Jay Inslee signed 2SHB 1474, which created a downpayment assistance program for people affected by restrictive covenants, which were often used to prohibit property from being sold or rented to people of color. Descendants of those discriminated against also qualify under the law for the Covenant Homeownership Program; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia has completed work to identify disparities in access to homeownership through participation in the creation of a countywide Assessment of Fair Housing and formation of regional goals to increase homeownership for BIPOC residents in Thurston County; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia is committed to building on the strategies identified in an affordable homeownership study to broaden access to homeownership and expand supply of affordable housing; and***

***WHEREAS, the Black Home Initiative was formed in 2021 to close the racial wealth gap and disparities in homeownership for Black households with a geographic focus in South King and North Pierce counties; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia aligns with the Black Home Initiative's shared priority and will contribute to shared efforts to increase the supply of homes available to purchase, support low to moderate income Black households who want to buy a home, and overcome the existing fragmented housing ecosystem of public, private, and nonprofit organizations; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia has decided to join the Black Home Initiative to strive to right the wrongs of past discriminatory practices and commits to doing all it can to ensure Black homebuyers get an opportunity to purchase homes; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia has signed a pledge to join the Black Home Initiative as a network partner; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia wishes to establish goals to increase the number of new Black homeowners in order to make tangible progress towards addressing this history of racism and recognizes some form of reparations are needed to right these wrongs; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia, with several community partners in Thurston County, have been in conversation with the Black Home Initiative and the Black Home Initiative leadership has decided to formally expand the network to Thurston County; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia recognizes the important work of the Black Home Initiative, including advocacy to establish the Covenant Homeownership Program; and***

***WHEREAS, the City of Olympia encourages other jurisdictions to join the Black Home Initiative's efforts; and***

***NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Olympia City Council, does hereby proclaim February 11, 2025 as***

***BLACK HOME INITIATIVE AND HOMEOWNERSHIP EQUITY DAY***

***in the City of Olympia and calls upon the community to increase awareness and join the continued effort to repair wrongs of racist policies and practices that have led to the disparities that are still experienced today by Black community members, and invites the community to join our collective work to increase access to homeownership.***

***SIGNED IN THE CITY OF OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON THIS 11th DAY OF FEBRUARY 2025.***

***OLYMPIA CITY COUNCIL***

***Dontae Payne, Mayor***