

The Liberation Collective – Conditional Use Scope of Work

Building connection, healing community, and supporting social justice.

Our Request:

We are seeking a conditional use permit to establish our property as a mixed residential and commercial property. The property is currently only zoned for residential uses. The upstairs will remain a separate residence and the main level of the building will host all business operations.

Background:

For most of their childhood, Aherlow Kasjaka (they/he) was raised in Olympia and the surrounding area. They and their family experienced domestic violence, homelessness, and chronic mental and physical health challenges and there was a lack of accessible and inclusive resources to help them recover from trauma and thrive. For nearly a decade, Aherlow, now a health equity practitioner and author, has been dreaming of creating a healing space in Olympia where everyone can feel a sense of belonging, especially LGBTQIA+ and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. A year ago they began brainstorming this vision with over a dozen members of the Olympia community, including healers, teachers, business owners, and local non-profits. In October 2022, The Liberation Collective (TLC) was born from this collaborative effort.

Who We Are:

TLC is a collaboratively lead community gathering and healing space, located at 1223 Bethel Street NE in the northeast Olympia neighborhood. There are two residents living in the upper level of the house paying the rent and all business expenses, allowing TLC to offer free support groups, classes, and meeting space for small groups at no cost to the community. Our goal is to make healing and connection physically, economically, and socially accessible to all Olympians. We do this by offering a variety of classes and groups provided by healing practitioners that are trained to serve marginalized communities and/or whom are members of marginalized communities, themselves (i.e. BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, etc.).

Why We Chose Our Business Model and Location:

Most Westernized healing spaces are exclusionary to BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, and lower-income individuals. Typical business structures located in commercial areas are dependent on steady income to pay the rent and other overhead

costs—this then builds pressure to charge larger fees for facility use and that ultimately trickles down to the customers. This also leads many healing spaces to depend on larger class sizes and more “trendy” wellness modalities, that often exclude culturally appropriate services for (and offered by) marginalized communities. There are at least two other organizations in Olympia (Rainbow Health Center and Olympia Yoga Sanctuary) that had a similar vision as TLC, but who were located in commercially zoned areas of town and had to close their doors within the last two years because of financial complications. Traditional business models and commercial areas in Olympia were not meant to support small community-centered organizations. By locating TLC in a residential area, we are able to sustainably cover our costs without creating undue burden on the community. We are also located in one of the most racially diverse and lower-income areas of the community, right next to Roosevelt Elementary, and just off the bus line, making our offerings more accessible to the community and potentially reducing vehicular traffic to access these services.

Long-Term Vision:

We plan to:

- Add an addition on our building this winter to create a 600 square foot studio. This will expand the type of classes we can host in our space, such as yoga and meditation classes focused on spiritual centering and mental wellness.
- Add additional gravel paved street parking on the Leavenworth Ave. side of the property.
- Purchase the building from the current owner sometime in the next ten years. The current tenants have the first right of refusal for the house sale.
- Provide professional development opportunities for healers, educators, and government workers across the Olympia community on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics to further our community’s growth towards anti-racism.

As we expand and plan for the future, our costs will increase slightly and we will need some income to be generated from our operation. We also want healing practitioners to have the ability to charge fees as a part of some classes to sustain their services to the community. Under current city permitting requirements, Aherlow’s home occupation business license for TLC only covers their own business services and not that of others using the space.

Questions:

Contact Aherlow Kasjaka (they/he) at info@tlcoly.com or call (360)-584-6494.