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Contact: Lenora R. Knowles, 614-404-2562
volarbmore@gmail.com

Village of Love & Resistance Purchases Old Centennial Church to Convert to Community Wellness Center and Affordable Housing

November 23rd 2020, Baltimore, MD - Tuesday, November 24th, the Village of Love & Resistance (VOLAR) will close on the purchase of Old Centennial Church & rectory (1025 & 1031 East Monument Street).

Community members will convene online on Tuesday, November 24th and gather in person (with masks and social distancing) on Wednesday, November 25th to celebrate the purchase of two church buildings from the Trustees of Centennial - Caroline Street United Methodist Church.

“Buying Old Centennial Church marks an important step for establishing community control of how development happens in this city and reclaiming land for Black folks in Baltimore,” says Kenneth Clemons, a member of the Caretaking Council of the Village of Love and Resistance.

VOLAR is a Black and Brown led community development and grassroots organizing collective that is looking to redefine the status quo of development in the city. The group aims to create opportunities for poor and low-income Black residents to build community power, co-own land and property, and become investors in East Baltimore.

The VOLAR hub will be the home of a community wellness center, affordable cooperative housing units, a small business incubator, popular education school, community event space, and community gardens. It is the first of many properties to be purchased and cooperatively owned by East side public housing residents and other low-income East side residents via the *“Own Your Hood”* Community Investment Program.

The hub is strategically located at a key intersection of three public housing complexes, including Latrobe, Douglass, and Somerset Homes, and in the immediate vicinity of the Perkins Somerset Oldtown Transformation Plan, and the John Hopkins Medical Complex.

The footprint of the future VOLAR hub tells the story of inequitable and extractive development in East Baltimore. The historic racial and economic inequalities evident throughout East Baltimore have been spurred in large part by corporate and state sponsored gentrification and so-called urban renewal projects.

Marisela Gomez, a member of the VOLAR Caretaking Council explains, “our vision for housing and neighborhood development in Baltimore is one based on values of cooperation, equity, radical love, healing, and collective ownership.”

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Village of Love & Resistance - The mission of VOLAR is to co-create a cooperative community in East Baltimore owned by Black and Brownpeople. We seek to build this cooperative community through the reclamation of land, healing, reconnecting and building a base of community power. www.volar.site; www.change.org/p/baltimomre-washington-conference-of-the-united-methodist-board-of-trustees-support-baltimore-residents-in-taking-back-the-land