

ECONOMIC INCLUSION & IMPACT



ISSUE STATEMENT

WE RECOGNIZE the historic and ongoing contributions of Black entrepreneurs, business owners, and other economic drivers to the development and continued advancement of Flagstaff; yet we also recognize that the voices of Black leaders are underrepresented in the local business sector, employment advancement opportunities, and economic development discourse. We believe in the need for sustainable initiatives focused on both historic and current African American service providers and leadership development in order to ensure Black economic and employment parity and sustain the continuous economic growth of Flagstaff with equity.

BACKGROUND

A central tenant of all community development is the access to and development of business and economic capital. Flagstaff, as a city of both corporate and small, independent businesses, has long focused on the ongoing development of a vibrant economy where business is viewed as a catalyst for community and economic development. Recent national dialogs about historical wealth distribution and economic equity have focused a spotlight on the support of Black-owned businesses. In a recent *Business Insiders* article, it was noted that supporting Black business means "seeing [Black business owners, and Black citizens in general] as equals and experts and not assuming our skills, services, and creations are less than, which has been the common narrative when discussing supporting Black ideas, creativity, and business."



CONTEXTUALIZATION

Nationally, it is typical of communities to enjoy the presence of businesses and economic drivers reflective of the various, diverse populaces they serve. As noted in a prior discussion of Representation and Preservation, the presence and preservation of Black community is typically reflected in local businesses that provide services unique to the culture; barbershops, hair salons, restaurants, and other economic establishments both serve and celebrate this culture, and provide the means for the economic sustainment of both the Black community and the broader communities in which it sits.

Flagstaff historically had a number of brick and mortar establishments representative of Black business and economic community. Furthermore, such establishments provided a needed sense of cultural refuge: places where Black culture could not only provide valuable economic support to the broader Flagstaff community, but also be celebrated as visible representations of essential communal bonds. The lack of visible representations of Black business suggest a broader disparity in Black economic equity, Black cultural representation, and the general visibility of the Flagstaff Black community.

Today, only two brick and mortar representations of Black business exist in Flagstaff: the Kuttz Barber Shop and College, and a co-op market. General representation of Black business is less visible, operating from proprietor homes, virtually, or in other decentralized locations.

It is important to understand that culture is central to community development. The absence of cultural representation in community development suggests that something is missing. This conversation aims to discuss and discover what those missing pieces of culture are in Flagstaff's ongoing community development. We will examine the subject of "cultural economics," the fundamental connection between culture (the shared beliefs and preferences of respective groups, here specifically referencing Black culture) and economic outcomes. We seek to understand why there appear to be limited representations of Black businesses; the impact this limited economic representation has on the perceptions of the Black community (namely, the perception of Black "invisibility" within Flagstaff); and how meaningful change can be encouraged in Flagstaff to simultaneously rectify economic disparities, increase cultural visibility, and ensure continued economic and cultural growth.

KEY QUESTIONS

- WHAT do you feel are the primary concerns facing the Black community of Flagstaff in this area?
- WHAT Black businesses are you aware of within Flagstaff, if any? What experience have you had with these businesses? What stories can you share about the development of Black business, economic development, etc. in Flagstaff?
- WHAT business representation is missing within the Flagstaff community? What types of businesses do you think should be present that are not? Why do you think that is?
- WHY do you think there are not more Black businesses or economic opportunities within the Flagstaff community?
- WHAT challenges have you faced in securing or advancing in employment in Flagstaff?
- WHAT do you feel needs to change in order to ensure continued positive development of the Flagstaff community in this area?
- WHAT does change look like to you when it comes to Black Economic Inclusion and Impact?

QUICK FACT

According to the 2012 Survey of Business Owners, of the approximately 6,382 total firms in Flagstaff, 935 (14.65%) identified as "Minority-owned firms," while 5037 (78.93%) identified as "Nonminority-owned firms."