



TWO COMMERCIAL TENANTS SELECTED FOR HOUSING HILLTOP SOUTH SPACES

Locally owned businesses Reyna Filipina and Lavonne's Room will each move into commercial spaces in Housing Hilltop South

TACOMA, WA – September 25, 2024— Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) has announced the first businesses selected to occupy two commercial spaces at Housing Hilltop South. Reyna Filipina Kitchen Tacoma, a Filipino restaurant owned and operated by Chef Jan Parker, will occupy space A. Children's retail store Lavonne's Room, owned and operated by Hilltop's own Bridget Demerson, will occupy space B. Space C will be open to future commercial applicants while HVAC, flooring, and other commercial improvements are completed.

In 2016, as part of the "Design the Hill" community engagement process, Hilltop community members stressed the importance of THA prioritizing local, minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE) for commercial spaces in the Housing Hilltop development. Taking this input into account, THA staff conducted extensive community outreach to identify businesses and startups throughout the Hilltop business community and encouraged them to submit a proposal for one of three spaces. At the end of the Request for Proposal (RFP) period, a committee made up of THA staff was assembled to draft a scoring rubric which would be used to grade applicants in categories ranging from business vision to community support, and the business owner's connection to the Hilltop neighborhood. THA staff, representatives from the City of Tacoma, and members of the Hilltop Action Coalition provided valuable scoring and commentary on applicant proposals. Using this process, Reyna Filipina Kitchen Tacoma and Lavonne's Room were selected based on their strong business plans.

Reyna Filipina Kitchen Tacoma is an MWBE with broad community support, years of established practice, comprehensive financials, and a clear vision for the business. Recognized as one of the "6 Women Changing the Restaurant Scene in Tacoma" by *The News Tribune*, Chef Jan Parker is well known to the Hilltop community having served the neighborhood for years at the Hilltop Street Fair.

"I am incredibly excited to open Reyna Filipina Kitchen Tacoma on Hilltop and start building on the relationships we've established with the vibrant Hilltop neighborhood," said Chef Jan Parker. "Our goal is to enhance the community by creating Filipino-centric events, hiring talented culinarians from Bates Technical College, and opening our space for budding BIPOC chefs and artists to pop up and showcase their talents. We can't wait to meet our neighbors and work together to bring even more enrichment to Hilltop."

Lavonne’s Room is an MWBE, and owner Bridget Demerson is a resident of the Hilltop neighborhood. Originally opened in the Hilltop in 2019, Lavonne’s Room formerly occupied space in the old Key Bank building where Housing Hilltop currently stands.

“I’m excited to return to the Hilltop community that I love, and coming back to the same exact location is quite amazing; kind of like it’s meant to be,” said Lavonne’s Room Owner Bridget Demerson. “Lavonne’s Room is a store totally dedicated to the kids. My goal is to make Lavonne’s Room a contributing fixture of the Hilltop area as a female, Black-owned and operated establishment.”

For more information on the background, funding, and community design effort behind Housing Hilltop, please visit tacomahousing.org/aboutHHT.

About Tacoma Housing Authority

Established in 1940, Tacoma Housing Authority provides high-quality, stable and sustainable housing and supportive services to people in need. It does this in ways that help them prosper and help our communities develop equitably. THA develops and manages real estate and provides rental housing. In partnership with thousands of private landlords, it helps families pay the rent in the private rental market. It delivers supportive services to help families succeed as “tenants, parents, students, wage earners and builders of assets who can live without assistance.” THA seeks to do its work in ways that help our community be an “attractive place to live, work, attend school, shop and play,” and that help Tacoma be “safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive and just.” Learn more at www.tacomahousing.org.

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Media Contact

Nick Tolley

Tacoma Housing Authority
Communications Manager
ntolley@tacomahousing.org