

# THE FREELON

Experience the legacy of Sugar Hill



# Summary

The Freelon at Sugar Hill is a mixed-use development consisting of residential, retail and parking space for residents and visitors of Detroit's Sugar Hill Historic District. It consists of 68 new mixed-income apartments and 11,000 square feet of commercial space. Of the apartments, 25 percent are designated as affordable, including 14 apartments for veterans. The development also includes a 160-space parking garage for residents and visitors along with green alleyways, all anchored by art-focused retail space.

The Sugar Hill Historic District has a rich history as an epicenter for Black-led music, culture and visual art. The Freelon will carry this legacy into contemporary day by enhancing and expanding access to all the District has to offer.

The project's progressive architectural design and nostalgic character celebrate the District's cultural past while charting a future where innovation, creativity and collaboration can thrive. The Freelon is one of the final projects by the late architect Phil Freelon, design director at Perkins+Will—best known for his work on the Smithsonian National Museum of African-American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., among other high-profile projects. In line with The Freelon at Sugar Hill's mission, he believed that all people deserve to experience beautiful and purposeful architecture in their daily lives

The Freelon is led by a joint venture comprised of Develop Detroit and Preservation of Affordable Housing in collaboration with the City of Detroit.





## Mission

Provide high-quality residences and retail locations that enhance and expand access to the artistic and cultural epicenter that is Detroit's Sugar Hill Historic District.

## Vision

Serve as a model for community-rooted living and build upon the cultural legacy of Detroit's Sugar Hill Historic District by cultivating an accessible, art-focused community that inspires Detroit's future generations.

# Core Values

## Welcoming

It is necessary that the Sugar Hill Historic District is open and inviting to individuals of all abilities and backgrounds. Through parking, art-focused living spaces and retail, we provide an epicenter where Detroit can come together for cultural engagement and innovation.

## Anti-racist

We are conscious of the racist and discriminatory housing policies and practices that have harmed Detroit, specifically the Sugar Hill Historic District in which we are located. We support racial equity so that all Detroiters are welcomed and have equal opportunity for cultural and economic growth.

## Culturally engaged

The Freelon is rooted in Sugar Hill's history of Black-led cultural innovation, which has defined the area throughout the twentieth century and in present day. We aim to celebrate this legacy and expand it into the contemporary moment by providing a central space for Detroiters and visitors to access and build upon all the Historic District has to offer.

# Core Values

## Community-centered

We are proud to be a part of the thriving Sugar Hill Historic District, a community that has played an integral role in Detroit's cultural and economic history. We aim to be responsive and receptive to community aspirations and feedback. The Freelon at Sugar Hill values transparency, honesty and trust in all interactions with residents, retail tenants, visitors and Detroit at large.

## Creative

We believe that to cultivate an equitable future, we must provide an environment for creativity and human expression to flourish. We are striving to catalyze a world in which all individuals have a physical space and community that provides access and support for artistic exploration.

## Future-rooted

We are inspired by the Sankofa, a Ghanaian symbol highlighting the importance of leaning on wisdom from the past to create a progressive future. We have reflected on Sugar Hill's important history and envision The Freelon serving as a model for thoughtful, community-rooted and art-focused real estate. All developments should be human centered and in-step with community needs. Through this model, we believe a more just, collaborative world can emerge.

# We Promise to Deliver...

High-quality residences and responsive building management for all apartment residents and retail tenants.

A space that is Enterprise Green Communities Certified.

Prompt and effective customer service and staff members that serve as advocates and liaisons for resident concerns and questions.

25 percent of residences designated as affordable, including 14 apartments for veterans.

Centrally located and within walking distance to restaurants, retail stores, arts and cultural venues, museums, education and employment opportunities, major health centers, green pedestrian alleys and parking.

# Art Installation Engagement Process

Develop Detroit partnered with Sidewalk Detroit to curate a community engagement process for the art installation that will be featured on the exterior of The Freelon parking garage. This artwork will be on public display for 5-10 years and will be seen from the greenway that connects organizations and businesses such as MOCAD, Sugar Hill Clay Studio's, The Griot, and the N'namdi Gallery. The artwork will be formatted and printed to fit on 10 large-scale mesh panels ranging from 12'-14' in height by 9' in length.

Thirteen community members representing art museums, senior citizens, veterans, artists, and more, were invited to join a Steering Committee give feedback and input on the overall priorities for the building and installation. Throughout four engagement meetings, the Steering Committee was responsible for helping identify target user groups, establishing the desired values, feel, and mission of the installation, discussing potential artists to design the artwork and providing feedback on the selected artist and their final design.

The driving questions was: what is the purpose of the mural and what should the mural accomplish for the building and community? Steering Committee members engaged in activities and discussions geared at identifying community values and artistic excellence while also adhering to community standards and requirements regarding historical preservation, material format, and typologies. Their collective input formed the following statement of intent:

**The installation should speak to an intergenerational audience, centering the history of Sugar Hill while challenging creative minds and inspiring visitors to root themselves in the practice of looking back as we progressively move forward.**

The Steering Committee selected Judy Bowman as the artist they felt would best represent the vision for the installation. Develop Detroit and Sidewalk Detroit are pleased to commission Judy to be the featured artist for the art installation.



# Installation Mockup



Left: The Freelon garage mesh screen installation layout  
Above: mesh screen example by Britten Inc.

# Judy Bowman

## Artist Biography

Judy Bowman is a mixed-media collage artist who was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. Her art practice centers on exalting America's Black culture. Bowman's use of vibrant hues, textured paper and acrylic paint illuminates' narratives that move beyond institutional racism and disparaged perspectives of the Black experience—a view in which America too often limits the full picture.

Considering herself a visual griot, she sees her job to tell stories that are reflective of her coming-of-age in Detroit's Eastside and Black Bottom neighborhoods. Scenes in her vibrant collages depict love, community and a type of fellowship that resides in jazzy nights, the sway of young Black women and the swag of young Black men, church on Sundays followed by family dinner, family outings and cultural dignity and richness.

Bowman's work appears in private and public collections—nationally and internationally—including Institutional Collections of the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition, Sarasota, Florida; The Free Press building, Detroit, Michigan; R.W. Norton Art Gallery/ Museum, Shreveport, Louisiana; Georgetown University Library, Booth Family For Special Collections, Washington DC, US Department of State, Art Bank Program, Washington, DC; and the Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, Michigan.

After Bowman retired as principal of Detroit Academy of Arts and Science in 2008, she rebooted her career as an artist. She lives in Romulus, MI and works throughout Metro Detroit.

# Judy Bowman

## Artist Statement

Art has given me the space and freedom to reframe narratives about African American people and culture. My art is not an imagined existence, it is one rooted in scenes that have nurtured my upbringing in Detroit's Eastside community and Black Bottom neighborhood. It is the narratives of my family, friends, and the everyday people in the community and how we loved each other. Although my art reflects the personal memories of my family, it is also the memories of families in my community. My work is one founded on the vision to uplift humanity and leave a legacy that highlights the beauty and dignity of Black people.

Working primarily in figurative collage, my technique style is intuitive. After finding the right papers, colors, and textures, I create moments in time that give off a feel-good elixir reminiscent of Detroit's Black Bottom and the Harlem Renaissance era. I begin with the eyes and allow my subconscious to connect with a rhythm and freely allow the story play out on the canvas. I have been working in this style over the last five years.

I am often told my collage work recalls the style of Romare Bearden's photomontage compositions. I see my collages in the traditions of Kerry James Marshall and his use of black skin tones and a focus on details and emotion. "Mom On Seneca" jpeg #1. I am also inspired by the aesthetic and talents of Charles White, Gordon Parks, Elizabeth Catlett, and Benny Andrews. Like their works, my collages serve as archives of Black life and resilience; style and pride; music and spirituality. I envision myself as a visual griot with a mission to illustrate the story of how I see my people, how we lived and the power of our being.

Through my artistry, I aspire to leave a legacy for my children and grandchildren that paints our rich and complex history. I want my art to serve as a gift of joy from me to the universe and continue to make an impact long after I am gone.

Artwork Drafts - 01.12.22

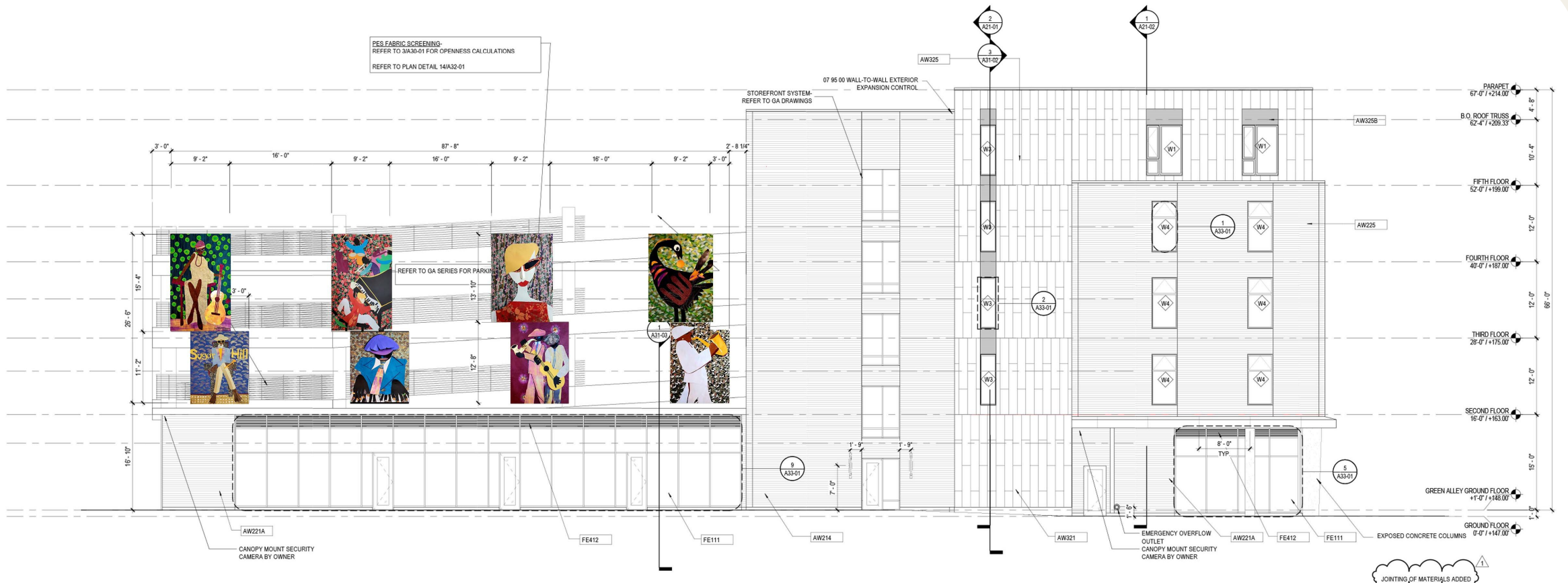








# Elevation



2 WEST ELEVATION- GREEN ALLEY  
1/8" = 1'-0"



# Next Steps

## Finalize Artwork

The Steering Committee gave Judy Bowman a final round of feedback during the January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 meeting. Judy will submit the final artwork by February 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Printing & Installation

Britten Inc. in Traverse City, MI will print, and install, the mesh screens that will depict the artwork. The installation of the screens is tentatively scheduled for mid-February, 2022

