The Center @ Sixth is an ambitious and innovative mixed-use development expected to break ground in the spring of 2022 along the 6th Avenue Corridor Urban Neighborhood Main Street District and designated Iowa Great Place District in Des Moines. The Center @ Sixth project includes 12,000 square feet of ground level retail space and 32 upper-story apartments. 51% of the residential units will be rented at an affordable rate at the 80% Polk County Area Median Income for a period of no less than 5 years. Plans for the exterior will incorporate large-scale public art wrapped around the façade of the building. Ashworth and his development team intend for Center @ Sixth to serve as an inspiring backdrop for community events in the district.

Center @ Sixth will be owned and operated by Marquas “MarkAUS” Ashworth, local rap artist and entrepreneur. Ashworth and his development team are currently pursuing letters of intent from local black-owned businesses for a variety of retail shops including a coffee shop and restaurant. The remaining commercial space will house a non-profit black and brown-owned business incubator. The project will also feature a tasting room, distillery experience, and bottling operation featuring Ashworth’s successful line of prohibition-era whiskey and craft liquor.

The property at 1714 6th Avenue is currently owned by the 6th Avenue Corridor Urban Neighborhood Main Street Program and its redevelopment has been a key priority as part of the area’s Iowa Great Places visioning. In December of 2021, the organization released a Request for Qualifications seeking dynamic redevelopment proposals for the land. A diverse selection committee comprised of area stakeholders reviewed submissions and ultimately selected Ashworth’s team to move forward. Current and anticipated project partners include the City of Des Moines, Polk County, Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, Iowa Economic Development Authority, Evelyn K. Davis Center, The Director’s Council, and the Small Business Administration.

The project’s name is derived from the historical Center Street in Des Moines. Center Street was a thriving black commercial district from 1945-1970, destroyed when the Des Moines freeway system was constructed. Center @ Sixth seeks to carry forward the legacy of Center Street through enhancing Des Moines’ most ethnically diverse neighborhood with affordable housing, a retail center that promotes existing local black and brown-owned businesses and a main street business incubator to foster future black and brown-owned businesses.