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Application to Become a Member Collective of the Omni Commons: Acta Non Verba: Youth Urban Farm Project

1. How does ANV participate in commoning and how would it apply these practices to it's occupation of the Omni?

Similar to the Omni Commons, [Acta Non Verba](#) has spent the last 9 years developing our own Safer Space culture and have cultivated the same ideals of creating safe, positive and empowering experiences for everyone that comes into contact with Acta Non Verba. We take this culture everywhere we go and will continue to do so as occupants of the Omni.

Both outdoors and indoors, ANV is dedicated to Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and the stewardship of public spaces. We clean up after ourselves and believe deeply in leaving any space better than we found it.

Roya and Chicago, former staff members of Phat Beets, will be employed at Acta Non Verba as the CSA transitions organizations and into the future. They are both very familiar with the commoning practices of the omni (Roya has attended delegates meetings) and will pass on their experiences with commoning to ANV. Chicago is very respectful of the Omni Commons, always ensuring the spaces used for CSA are tidied up well and maintained.

Because of its work as a fiscal sponsor and Steering Committee Member of the East Oakland Grocery Co-Op (EOGC), Acta Non Verba is a member of Network of Bay Area Worker Cooperatives (NOBAWC). We have learned a lot about cooperatives and commoning practices through training provided by various members of this network that we will utilize at the Omni as well.

2. What do you do that makes a difference in the world?

Acta Non Verba: Youth Urban Farm Project offers vital services in education, youth development, economic empowerment, and access to green, safe spaces and healthy food to a number of communities.

Our award winning Camp ANV is in its 8th year of existence and is currently being hosted online. The camp serves primarily African-American and Latino children in communities where local schools, Acorn-Woodland and Encompass, report that 99% of their students qualify for free and reduced school lunches.

ANV will be absorbing Phat Beets' Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, with the aim of continuing to create a just food system in the Oakland flatlands, supporting immigrant/POC farmers, and using the

proceeds to financially support youth that participate in ANV's programs and farm activities through IDAs (Individual Development Accounts). These are accounts that are stewarded by Acta Non Verba, but belong to individual children aged 5-15.

Fusion of Phat Beets CSA program with Acta Non Verba's existing CSA Program, will directly contribute to the redistribution of wealth and resources in Oakland. ANV is a well connected organization, maintaining and utilizing ties to other amazing food justice oriented organizations in the bay and nationwide. ANV intends to fold those relationships into its much larger CSA program-including with the [East Oakland Grocery Cooperative](#).

3. Briefly recap your history as an organization.

After reading several negative articles about her childhood community of East Oakland (such as, Oakland's nearly 40% dropout rate and the FBI's ranking of Oakland as one of the most dangerous cities in the United States), Acta Non Verba was started by Kelly Carlisle, a Navy veteran, in 2010. From there, Kelly decided to dedicate her life toward starting an urban farm for youth to learn about nutrition, food systems, and to invest in themselves and their futures.

In 2011, Kelly connected with the Director of the Tassafaronga Recreation Center in East Oakland, who was interested in starting a garden on the property. Since then it's been a whirlwind of struggle and success on the farm. Since 2011, hundreds of children have participated in ANV's seasonal camps, and now run three small farm plots in the city of Oakland.

4. What is your incorporation status? (501c3? Unincorporated Association? etc.)

*Acta Non Verba: Youth Urban Farm Project is an incorporated exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; EIN:45-0935667.

5. How do you make decisions?

Each staff member has autonomy to make decisions in their departments as they see fit, and are trusted to do so. ANV does have a board of directors, but the board does not serve as a decision making body and does not interfere with everyday decision making within the organization.

[AMENDED7/25]: At Acta Non Verba, when a decision needs to be made that will impact the staff or organization in any way, large or small, the Executive Director frames the decision and presents it to the staff during our weekly meetings.

Together, the staff lists, evaluates, accesses and weighs the possible pros and cons of the decision.

When the decision is made, we review and reflect it as a team.

Example: *When it became clear that Covid-19 and the county's Shelter In Place order were not going to be solved or rescinded in time for our summer camp to open in person; over the course of the month of May, ANV'S Year-Round staff came together to re-envision our largest (8-week 7:30am-6pm, 20 staff member) program onto an online platform.*

If a decision needs to be made that will impact an individual's work, The Executive Director approaches that individual and discusses it with them directly. The Staff member has an opportunity to ask questions and weigh in on the impact the decision will have on their work. Then the decision is made collaboratively.

Example: *When the opportunity to absorb Phat Beets' CSA Program came up, the Executive Director, Kelly Carlisle approached Aaron De La Cerda ANV's Farm Manager and they discussed the increased workload for Aaron and the organization. Through discussion, they came up with a plan to make the opportunity work for Aaron and brought the decision to the rest of the staff for further discussion and decision making.*

ANV's Board of Directors is charged with assisting with organizational governance, finance and organizational evaluation and programming. They are our thought partners on strategic growth, but do not make decisions on our day to day operations.

**6. State your goals for becoming an Omni member collective.
How would your presence in the Omni contribute to its purpose
and Statement of Solidarity?**

Acta Non Verba would like to become a member of the Omni Collective for a few reasons.

First, it has absorbed the BeetBox CSA Program from Phat Beets. The Beetbox CSA program has operated out of the Omni Commons for many years now, and ANV would like to continue its foothold and legacy of operating out of North Oakland.

Second, Acta Non Verba would be contributing to two goals of the Omni, one foundational and one more recent. ANV would fulfill the Omni's desire to support, "*Poor, working class, unemployed and enslaved people struggling against a world dominated by money and capital.*" and "*People of color struggling against racism & white supremacy*".

ANV's dedication to and actions towards the creation of a just food system are inextricably linked to undoing systems of oppression directly tied to white supremacy and the exploitation/enslavement of working class peoples.

Additionally, ANV will fulfill the Omni's more recent desire/adaptation to COVID-19 of becoming a mutual aid/distribution center. The CSA program distributes food to low-income folks who are able to afford our shares through partnerships with the Ecology Center as well as the Children's Hospital. Through our partnership with the UCSF Children's Hospital, we distribute at least 20 produce shares to families with diet-related illnesses in East Oakland. Our partnership with the Ecology Center and their Market Match program allows us to provide reduced prices to folks who receive EBT/SNAP benefits.

7. Explain how you will finance your Omni membership dues/rent.

Acta Non Verba is diversely funded through many individual donors and foundations, actively applies to grants and engages in numerous fundraising strategies. The BeetBox CSA program, when managed well, is self-sustaining enough to support the program and the expenditures associated with it.

[AMENDED 7/25] **Proposed Rent: \$675/month, paid quarterly (if needed by the Omni Commons)**

8. Describe what dedicated physical space (if any) you need. What will you do in the dedicated space? What can you do in shared space? Will you need to make any modifications of the building? Include floor plans if that makes your proposal clearer.

Acta Non Verba will use Phat Beets' previous office space, similarly as an office space. The space may be used for storage, and as a quiet working place where ANV employees would be able to get away from the noise of their very public office in East Oakland. ANV will also need to use either the main entrance or the ballroom as a packing space on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 8am-5pm, just as Phat Beets has been doing for the years preceding this change. ANV will be using the Omni primarily for the CSA program, as it's other office is used for its other programs.