



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

***Amended National Register Documentation
Historic Howard Theatre, 620 T Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001***

DC Preservation League | August 2024

Background: In 2024, the DC Preservation League (DCPL) received an award from the National Park Service African American Civil Rights grant program to underwrite the research and documentation needed to update and amend the existing National Register Nomination for the historic Howard Theatre, located at 620 T Street, NW, in Washington, DC (NRIS 74002162.)

Constructed in 1910, the Howard Theatre is one of the oldest theaters in the country. During the 1920s, the theater showcased vaudeville acts, talent shows, musicals, and other live theatre, making it the premier entertainment center for the Black Community in Washington, DC. At the time, it was the only space of its kind that both served Black audiences and showcased Black artists and performers. By the 1930s, names like Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Cab Calloway and Nat King Cole all graced the stage. And later, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Dizzy Gillespie, James Brown, and The Supremes stood in Howard's spotlight. For more than five decades of the twentieth century, the Howard Theatre stood at the forefront of Black entertainment, providing opportunities for artists on a local and national level.

However, the Howard was not just a music venue. It was a community gathering place where Howard University students were meeting as early as 1919 to support the NAACP's efforts to combat lynching. Black leaders like W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington gave speeches there, and poet and anti-lynching advocate Georgia Douglas Johnson hosted a weekly literary salon, the "Saturday Nighters," where guests would read their work, and discuss art and politics of the time. Local groups also organized benefit concerts and other events at the Howard to raise funds for civil rights organizations.

The theatre was added to: the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in 1973; the National Register of Historic Places in 1975; and named an American Treasure via Save America's Treasures program in 2000. However, designations do not include information about the role the theatre played as a prominent organizing space for African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. The updated nomination will include information on ways in which the Howard Theatre was critical to the African American struggle for Civil Rights in the 20th Century.

The grantee for this project, DCPL, is Washington's citywide nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enhancing the historic resources of our nation's capital—like the Howard Theatre. DCPL's mission is carried out through education, community outreach, research and documentation, and advocacy.

Purpose: DCPL seeks proposals from qualified Consultants (Consultant) interested in undertaking the research necessary to prepare an amendment to National Register Nomination for the historic Howard Theatre, specifically highlighting its role in the Civil Rights movement.

Scope of Work:

Task 1: Project Management

The Consultant will coordinate project tasks, ensuring that tasks are completed within scope, budget, and schedule. Project kick-off, schedule, and coordination of tasks and deliverables must be completed in consultation with DCPL.

Task 2: Background Research and National Register Amendment

In consultation with DCPL, the Consultant will conduct the research necessary to amend the existing individual National Register documentation for the Howard Theatre. This new documentation is to include information on the role the theatre played as a prominent organizing space, critical to African the American struggle for Civil Rights in the 20th Century.

The consultant will prepare an amended National Register form for submission to the DC Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service. ([See National Register Bulletin “How to Complete a National Register Form; Chapter 6: Amending National Register Forms](#)).

Task 3 – Consultation and Historic Preservation Review Board Presentation

To ensure final acceptance of the National Register documentation, the Consultant must conduct ongoing consultations with DCPL and HPO (with a mutually agreeable schedule to be determined) to solicit feedback on the research and documentation to be delivered. Consultant must also agree to present, with visuals, the completed amended nomination to the DC Historic Preservation Review Board for approval.

Timeline: The estimated start date for the project is October 1, 2024. Research and documentation must be complete by January 31, 2024. The entire project is expected to be completed by June 30, 2025.

Proposal Requirements: Experience preparing Multiple Property Documents, Historic Context Statements, and/or other National Register documentation forms is desired. All Consultant responses must include resumes of all staff assigned to the project and demonstrate that the project manager and applicable staff meet 36CFR61 Appendix A *Historic Preservation Professional Qualifications Standards*.

The budget proposal should not exceed \$10,000, including expenses related to photo permissions or other services required to complete the project. Please include the proposed timeline with start/end dates for each task and at least one example of a National Register nomination or other related documents the Consultant has produced in the past five years.

Deadline to Submit Proposals: Please submit electronically to Rebecca Miller (rebecca@dcpreservation.org) by 5:00 pm EST, September 9, 2024. The subject line should read “Proposal in Response to Howard Theatre NR Nomination Amendment”

Acknowledgements:

This project is funded in part by the [African American Civil Rights grant program](#) through the Historic Preservation Fund, which is administered by the National Park Service, Department of Interior. This grant program focuses on the preservation of sites and stories directly associated with the struggle of African Americans to gain equal rights.

This project has received Federal financial assistance for the identification, protection, and/or rehabilitation of historic properties and cultural resources in the District of Columbia. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the US Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability in its Federally assisted programs. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, US Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240.

Cover Photos:
Howard Theatre, DC Preservation League Archives