

ELDORADO BALLROOM

AT PROJECT ROW HOUSES



Press Kit

About the Eldorado Ballroom

Anna Johnson Dupree and Clarence Dupree opened the Eldorado Ballroom in the fall of 1939 to provide Black residents of Third Ward a place where they could see performers, hosts events, and celebrate milestones with dignity and without discrimination. After three decades of successful operation and the death of her husband, Anna Johnson Dupree sold the Eldorado in the 1970s as the neighborhood fell into decline. Soon thereafter, Hubert "Hub" Finkelstein, the founder of Medallion Oil Company and a generous but modest philanthropist who had grown up in Riverside Terrace, purchased the Eldorado to save it from destruction. In 1999, Finkelstein donated the building to Project Row Houses so that it could be preserved for the use of the community.



About the Eldorado Ballroom

Restoration & Rehabilitation

A nearly \$10 million campaign has underwritten the Eldorado Ballroom construction project, which includes the historic rehabilitation of the original building's historic fixtures, finishes, and façade, and the addition of an architecturally-sensitive annex to create more space for meetings and events and for modernizations including, for the first time, an elevator to the second floor ballroom. The second story ribbon windows, reduced in size by two-thirds when air conditioning was added in the 1950s, have been restored to their original size, and provide a stunning view of the downtown skyline over Emancipation Park.

The campaign was co-chaired by Hasty Johnson, Anita Smith, and Chris Williams. David Bucek, who has extensive experience with historic buildings, and his team from Stern and Bucek Architects oversaw the design. Forney Construction has served as general contractor. A team from Hines, led by Hasty Johnson and Bert Brown, III, generously stewarded the building committee which has overseen the project as it has unfolded over more than 5 years.

PRH's goal with this campaign was not just to preserve a historic building with deep cultural significance to Black Houston, but also to demonstrate that historic preservation has a role to play in economic revitalization in cultural placekeeping. Once PRH rededicates the building, an operator will assume management of the spaces opening a collection of businesses designed to benefit the community and running the event rentals in the ballroom. Project Row Houses will manage a ground floor multipurpose community space for programming and community gatherings, and from time to time will also stage programs in the upstairs ballroom.

Building Operator

As part of our commitment to expanding opportunities for artist and entrepreneurs PRH is proud to have Chris Williams and Lucille's 1913 as the official Operator of the Eldorado Ballroom building.

Lucille's 1913 is building a vertically integrated ecosystem that will combat food insecurity and waste; create training and employment opportunities in traditionally under-resourced neighborhoods; and empower communities to discover a self sustainable livelihood through culture & food.

Since 1999, PRH has managed all aspects of the Eldorado Ballroom's operations, from coordinating community partners' use of the ballroom itself to serving as a landlord for several other nonprofits and newly-launched small businesses.

The pivot to a business operator independent of PRH reflects our desire to create a stronger base for the neighborhood's ongoing economic revitalization by bringing in people with proven expertise whose business and philanthropic endeavors are a strong complement both to our own programs and mission, but to those of the other neighborhood institutions, including our immediate neighbors at the Emancipation Park Conservancy.

Having Lucille's 1913 as the Operator and our neighbor will expand the ways we can partner on programming and add a new level of retail diversity to the cluster of businesses and nonprofit organizations that are located in the immediate blocks around the Third Ward's historic crossroads at Elgin and Emancipation.

THE HISTORIC ELDORADO BALLROOM

AT PROJECT ROW HOUSES

Historic and progress photos of the Eldorado Ballroom at Project Row Houses can be found here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/x9a12coyejpfswwhy71btd/h?dl=0&rlkey=2ytfn7g59lzobw7dr69q2u0zo>



History

THE DUPREE LEGACY

Built by Anna Johnson Dupree and Clarence Dupree, the Eldorado opened in 1939. At a time when segregation prevented Black Houstonians from entering many public and private spaces, or relegated them to back doors and balconies, the building filled a crucial niche in the Black community. Soon after opening, it became one of the most acclaimed live music venues for international stars like Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, and Ray Charles, as well as local legends including Arnett Cobb, Lightnin' Hopkins, and Jewel Brown.



est. 1939

THE HISTORIC ELDORADO BALLROOM

History



Project Row Houses acquired the ballroom in 1999, as a gift from oilman Hub Finkelstein. During that time, the Ballroom served as a retail space, meeting facility, and gathering place for Third Ward residents and African Americans near and far.

Utilizing community-driven revitalization efforts to steer the inevitable gentrification in a constructive and inclusive direction, the time came to restore the Ballroom and reclaim it as a cultural, social, and economic hub. By leading and successfully concluding the \$9.7M Road Back to The Eldorado Campaign, Project Row Houses has preserved the rich history and culture embodied in one of Houston's best-loved Black landmarks.

The restored cultural gem will now enhance the quality of life and economic vitality for Third Ward and capture a slice of Houston life that deserves to be remembered and carried forward into a new era.

Press Release

PROJECT ROW HOUSES BRINGS HISTORY TO LIFE WITH THE GRAND REOPENING OF THE ELDORADO BALLROOM

Houston, Texas. Project Row Houses (PRH) is excited to announce the highly anticipated grand reopening of the Eldorado Ballroom on Thursday, March 30, 2023, from 6 pm to 9:30 pm. This historic venue holds significant cultural value and preserving its rich history is an important part of Project Row Houses' commitment to the community.

Project Row Houses Executive Director Eureka Gilkey was thrilled to see the finishing touches being put on the ballroom as she toured the space with PRH staff. "Third Ward deserves this revival! I am excited for the community to see what has come to fruition, as we work to preserve and protect historic black spaces, black culture and history."

Invited guests will step back in time to the 1940s and relive the glamour and elegance of Third Ward's heyday as PRH regifts this historic gem back to the community. Encouraged to dust off their dancing shoes and come dressed to impress, attendees are in for an evening of live music and performances, glitzy catering, and glamorous cocktails.

Gilkey is thankful for the supporters of this historic venue who played key roles in our revitalization efforts. Together, we are honoring the Dupree legacy and restoring the heart and soul of Third Ward.

The One-Two Punch

PRH Board Members Anita Smith and Hasty Johnson should never be underestimated. Their focus and commitment never faltered, always inspired, and consistently landed right on target. We're grateful for their leadership of this campaign.

Anita Smith

Anita Smith didn't just open doors for the project. She blew them off the hinges, walked in, and painted a picture that showed people what the Eldorado Ballroom means to PRH, Third Ward, and Houston.

Hasty Johnson leveraged his professional expertise and personal reputation to bring together the dream team that made the whole project possible.

Hasty Johnson

Key Players

The entire community came together to make the rehabilitation of the Eldorado Ballroom happen, and the list of those involved is long, but these people stepped up at critical moments to give shape and power to the project. It would not be all it is without them, and they have our deepest gratitude.

David's expertise in restoring historic buildings and preserving modern landmarks made him an invaluable lead architect for the project. PRH first approached him in 2011 about adding an elevator. We're glad he was willing to think bigger.

David Bucek
FAIA, LEED AP

Nancy & Rich Kinder

The Kinders' transformational gift of \$4.xM, which included a \$2M challenge, propelled the campaign to success faster than dared dream. The vision driving their investment in Third Ward goes beyond this one historic vision, however, and is a key element in how the community is maintaining a voice and presence in the neighborhood's ongoing economic revitalization.



Eldorado Language + Promotion Guidelines

Nomenclature – Eldorado Ballroom at Project Row Houses

The formal name is Eldorado Ballroom at Project Row Houses.

Eldorado should be one word, "Eldorado Ballroom," or "The Eldorado," rather than two words, El Dorado. NB that the historical record shows both usages, but PRH has consistently used Eldorado since receiving the building as a gift.



Home of Happy Feet



Eldorado Language + Promotion Guidelines

The historic rehabilitation of the Eldorado Ballroom has long been a Project Row Houses' priority and dream. Our primary goals for the project, which align with our mission to empower people and enrich communities through engagement, art, and direct action, and our strategic plan include:

- Restoring the historic façade and finishes while updating operating systems both to make the building function better and to demonstrate the effective use of historic preservation in culturally-connected economic revitalization.
- Adding new retail and community space that will benefit and be affordable for and accessible to legacy Third Ward residents, artists, and entrepreneurs.
- Creating opportunities for artists and entrepreneurs with connections to the community to showcase their creations and expertise.



Standard History + FAQs

We would like to share the following Eldorado Ballroom history resources.

Building History

The best resources for the history of the Eldorado Ballroom from its establishment in 1939 through its donation to Project Row Houses in 1999 are:

- Texas State Historical Association, Handbook of Texas
<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/eldorado-ballroom>
- Eldorado Ballroom, Houston History Magazine:
<https://houstonhistorymagazine.org/2012/11/eldorado-ballroom/>

Project Row Houses' ownership of the building and connection to its rehabilitation and ongoing use can be found:

- <https://projectrowhouses.org/our-work/neighborhood-development/eldorado-ballroom/>

Timeline of Eldorado Ballroom's History

- https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/2zcor2xc60xtl2vq3fuuw/History-of-Eldorado-Ballroom_2023.docx?dl=0&rlkey=curivbs6zmqy3w8udlnkislaj

Venue Spaces

Restored to its historic façade and finishes, Eldorado Ballroom will hold four venue spaces available for public use and rental opportunities.

The Anna and Clarence Dupree Community Room is the perfect indoor executive space, ideal for community meetings and presentation.

Room Size: 849 sq. ft.

The Dupree Community Room

Hogan Brown Art Gallery

The Hogan Brown Art Gallery will showcase community art.
Room Size: 1357 sq. ft.

The Rado Market is a café that will offer a micro-grocer experience with curated products from local black-owned businesses.

Room Size: 1346 sq. ft.

The Rado Market

Historic Ballroom

The Ballroom is a gathering space for community events and family celebrations, and will serve as an outstanding music venue.

Room Size: 4038 sq. ft.

Website + Social Media

Website

www.eldoradoballroom.org

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/eldoradoatprh>

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/eldoradoatprh/>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/EldoradoAtPRH>

LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/eldorado-ballroom/>

Hashtags

#EldoradoBallroomReopening

#EldoradoBallroomAtPRH

#HistoricEldoradoBallroom



Key Donors

The Brown Foundation
Cadence Bank
Cullen Foundation
Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts
Elkins Foundation
Houston Endowment Inc.**
Hunton Andrews Kurth
Kinder Foundation**
MD Anderson
The Meadows Foundation
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Roberts Markland LLP
Scurlock Foundation
Skiles Foundation
Vivian L Smith Foundation

**Principal Level Donor



Construction + Project Team

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Forney Construction
Aaron Craft | Bob Fretz | Kenneth McGowan

ARCHITECT

Stern & Bucek
David Bucek | Delaney Harris-Finch

HINES CONCEPTUAL CONSTRUCTION

Thomas Bay | Brian Donahue | David Robinson

HINES SUPPORT

Bert Brown | Debbie Emory

LEGAL

Scot Dixon
Matt Lueckenhoff
Glen Rosenbaum

HINES CONSTRUCTION

Matt Lewis

HISTORICAL TAX CONSULTANT

Anna Mod

CULINARY TEAM

Lucille's Hospitality Group
Chris Williams, operator | Cleve Tuttle, designer

PROJECT ROW HOUSES BOARD MEMBERS

Jim Derrick
Hasty Johnson
Anita Smith
Andrew Speckhard
Deveron Yates
Eureka Gilkey, Executive Director



Media Contact

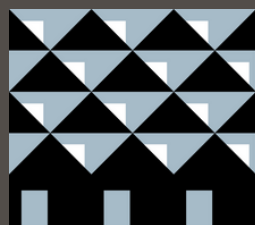
Please contact Wando Okongwu for more information about Eldorado Ballroom at Project Row Houses.

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