



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Project Row Houses Announces Rehabilitation and Renovation of Historic Eldorado Ballroom

A \$9.675 million rehabilitation project will breathe new life into the famed community social club

Houston, TX – April 30, 2022 – In keeping with its role as a pioneer in creative placekeeping, Project Row Houses announced today that the rehabilitation and renovation of the historic Eldorado Ballroom is underway. One of the nation’s most acclaimed venues for Black musicians, “The Rado” was founded by Houstonians Anna Johnson Dupree and Clarence A. Dupree in 1939, when segregation laws prevented Black Americans from socializing in the same venues as white people. Project Row Houses, whose mission is to empower people and enrich communities through engagement, art, and direct action, leads the project with an investment of \$9.675 million that will bring the building back to the cultural, social, and economic hub of the community that it once was.

The rehabilitation will include restoring the original 10,000-square foot building and its historic fixtures and finishes. Although two fires destroyed much of the interior of the building, whenever possible, original wood paneling, stucco, and other original finishes and fixtures will be rehabilitated and preserved. To allow for adding modern features, Project Row Houses is adding a 5,000-square-foot annex. The annex will have space for community gatherings and meetings, a green room, a space for brides and grooms to prepare for weddings, an elevator, and upgraded bathroom facilities. The original façade had “ribbon windows,” large windows that ran the length of the Ballroom facing Emancipation Park. The ribbon windows will return to the upstairs exterior, returning to the modernist style of the original building. The project is expected to be complete in early 2023.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Eldorado Ballroom was one of the nation’s most acclaimed live venues for Black musicians and audiences and hosted performances from stars like Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, B.B. King, and local legend Lightnin’ Hopkins. In the early 1970s, the Eldorado Ballroom was closed to the public after a period of economic stagnation and was gifted to Project Row Houses in 1999 by Hubert Finkelstein. It received a Texas Historical Marker in 2011.

The rehabilitation and renovation work is led by global real estate development and management firm Hines, with architectural design by Stern and Bucek Architects, and construction by Forney Construction. In keeping with Project Row Houses’ mission to support Black artists, creatives, and craftspeople, the building team surpassed the goal set by the Board of Directors for minority contractor participation.

In addition to the rehabilitation of the second-floor ballroom and the construction of the annex spaces, the first floor of the building, which originally housed retail offerings ranging from appliances and furniture to a barber and a tailor, will be renovated to feature a café and community market, a nonprofit art gallery, and flexible meeting and community space.

The \$9.675 million campaign, co-chaired by Anita Smith, Hasty Johnson, and Chris Williams, has received support from the Project Row Houses Board of Directors, Kinder Foundation, Houston Endowment, Brown Foundation, and a diverse range of long-time and newly-engaged Project Row Houses supporters.

“Project Row Houses is grateful for all who have joined us to make this project possible. The Eldorado Ballroom, from the moment its doors open, has always been the soul of the Third Ward. As creative placekeepers with a deep commitment to our neighborhood, Project Row Houses is as proud to be preserving the history of this storied venue as we are to be preparing it to serve as a center for Black art, culture, and community long into the future. We can't wait to celebrate with our friends, partners, and neighbors when the lights go down, the band hits the stage, and the 'Rado is reborn,” said Eureka Gilkey, Executive Director of Project Row Houses.

Rich Kinder, Chairman of the Kinder Foundation said, “Our investment in the Third Ward and Project Row Houses remains long-term in focus and our support of Eldorado Ballroom recognizes its unique place in Third Ward and Houston history. We are proud to support the effort to restore this jewel of the community and bring the building back to life, restoring a cultural resource and social center that will continue to have a meaningful impact on the neighborhood and its residents.”

“Eldorado Ballroom holds a distinct place in the history of the Third Ward and Houston. We at Hines have been honored to be able to bring our expertise to the renovation of this landmark and to assist in bringing the building back to the needed community gathering center in originally was,” said Hasty Johnson, Vice Chairman of Hines.

“This has been an extremely special project to work on because the building was more than a musical venue, it was a gathering space that brought the community together and it’s rare when a building like that survives. The building exudes optimism. It was quality space and it is going to be returning to that, and will allow for generations of residents to be in the space together creating new memories,” said David Bucek, Principal at Stern & Bucek Architects.

Photos of the Eldorado Ballroom can be found [here](#).

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About Project Row Houses

Project Row Houses is a community platform that enriches lives through art with an emphasis on cultural identity and its impact on the urban landscape. We engage neighbors, artists, and enterprises in collective creative action to help materialize sustainable opportunities in marginalized communities.

Project Row Houses occupies a significant footprint in Houston’s Historic Third Ward, one of the city’s oldest African-American neighborhoods. The site encompasses five city blocks and houses 39 structures that serve as a home base to a variety of community-enriching initiatives, art programs, and neighborhood development activities.

About Hines

Hines is a privately owned global real estate investment firm founded in 1957 with a presence in 255 cities in 27 countries. Hines oversees investment assets under management totaling approximately \$83.6 billion¹. In addition, Hines provides third-party property-level services to more than 367 properties totaling 138.3 million square feet. Historically, Hines has developed, redeveloped or acquired approximately 1,486 properties, totaling over 492 million square feet. The firm currently has more than 171 developments underway around the world. With extensive experience in investments across the risk spectrum and all property types, and a foundational commitment to ESG, Hines is one of the largest and most-respected real estate organizations in the world. Visit www.hines.com for more information. ¹Includes both the global Hines organization as well as RIA AUM as of June 30, 2021

About Stern & Bucek Architects

Stern and Bucek Architects has distinguished itself as a leading design firm with equal dexterity in new construction, adaptive reuse, renovation, and historic preservation. Principals David Bucek FAIA and Daniel Hall lead a team of creative and talented professionals whose work is informed by a keen sense for history and craft, and is driven by a clear, exacting, and thoughtful design vision. Taking great care to maintain the highest standards of documentation, team coordination, and involvement throughout the design and construction process, the architecture of Stern and Bucek is expressed through sensitivity to context and attention to detail and material choice at every level of the design. Each building responds precisely to its particular challenges and manifests the firm's impeccable client service and collaborative design process.

About Kinder Foundation

The Kinder Foundation, a family foundation established in 1997 by Rich and Nancy Kinder of Houston, Texas, provides transformational grants that impact urban green space, education, and quality of life. More at www.kinderfoundation.org.