

## Johnson Publishing Company Test Kitchen Repository and Display Proposal

Request for Proposal – released February 12, 2019

Due Wednesday, May 1, 2019, 5:00 p.m. Central Time

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### Executive Summary

Landmarks Illinois (LI), a nonprofit historic preservation organization headquartered in Chicago, is seeking an institution, organization, corporation or group to accept ownership of and reassemble for educational display or use the Johnson Publishing Company Test Kitchen. The Test Kitchen was created by famed Palm Springs-based interior designers William Raiser and Arthur Elrod in 1971 to provide a space for the testing of recipes to be published in *Ebony Magazine*. The Test Kitchen was formerly located in the Johnson Publishing Company Headquarters, publishers of both *Ebony* and *JET* magazines, located at 820 South Michigan Avenue in Chicago, Illinois a building designed by local African American architect John Moutoussamy in 1971.

LI acquired the kitchen from the building's new owner, who is undertaking a rehabilitation and residential conversion of the building and needed the interiors removed. In April 2018, in coordination with the owner, LI removed the Test Kitchen in order to find it a new home where it can continue to tell the Johnson Publishing Company story. The kitchen was documented, carefully disassembled and is currently in climate-controlled, secured storage.

Landmarks Illinois seeks proposals from qualified institutions to acquire, move, and reassemble the Test Kitchen in a manner and location that will publicly tell the Johnson Publishing Company story, as well as other significant narratives associated with the Test Kitchen. Project and proposal requirements are detailed below, as well as expectations and review criteria. Proposals are due on Wednesday, May 1, 2019 by 5:00 p.m. Central Time.

### HOW TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

#### Proposal Requirements and Submittal Process

To allow for easier comparison of proposals during evaluation, proposals should include the following in this order:

- A description of the institution, organization, group, entity or corporation including location(s), board and staff leadership, date established, mission, vision, values and strategic plan, tax status, accreditations, and specific policies such as an equity, diversity and inclusion statement and/or work with AALANA populations;
- A description of your interest in acquiring the Test Kitchen and its relevance to your work and community;
- A detailed description of the scope of work;

- A detailed description, which can include drawings, renderings, photos, video, or other medium, of the concept for the future use/display of the test kitchen for educational purpose;
- A total project budget detailed by line item, including removal, storage, exhibit fabrication, reassembly, interpretation, programming, and marketing;
- Statement of funds on hand for the project, amount left to acquire, and a plan for acquiring those funds;
- Credentials and description of historic preservation experience of the professionals who would complete the work, including removing and transporting the Test Kitchen, cataloguing, reassembly, interpretation, and marketing;
- Timeline to remove kitchen elements from current storage facility or for LI to transfer ownership to the successful proposer;
- Timeline to complete the reinstallation project;
- A statement that the proposer has property, casualty and liability insurance at or above \$1,000,000 per incident and that will name Landmarks Illinois as additionally insured.

Proposals are to be emailed to Lisa DiChiera, LI's Director of Advocacy, at [LDiChiera@landmarks.org](mailto:LDiChiera@landmarks.org) by **Wednesday, May 1, 2019 by 5:00 p.m. Central Time.**

### **Proposal Scoring and Selection Process**

Scoring criteria and the selection process will include the following factors:

- The success in telling the story of why your institution, organization, group, entity or corporation is the best steward for the Test Kitchen and how you will create a platform for it to inspire people;
- The degree to which the proposer's description of the approach to the scope of work and concept for the Test Kitchen's future use/display demonstrates creativity, innovative thinking, and an understanding of the significance of the Johnson Publishing Company's history, its role in African American life in the United States, its historic design and the vision for the reuse of the kitchen;
- The ability to demonstrate commitment to making the Test Kitchen accessible to the public both physically and digitally;
- A demonstrated level of understanding of the project budget and capacity to acquire the necessary funds to complete the project;
- Qualifications and experience in historic preservation, exhibition/interpretation/use of historic interiors or interior features and/or culinary arts;
- Ability for the proposer to ensure the removal of the Test Kitchen from storage by June 30, 2019 or incur storage costs from that point forward. (\$215 a month at Life Storage)

### **Limitations, Assumptions, and Agreements**

- Landmarks Illinois reserves the right to dismiss any and all proposals, call for a round(s) of subsequent proposals, or retain ownership of the Test Kitchen.
- Landmarks Illinois may change the timeframe for this RFP process with or without notice to the proposers and without liability for damages.
- An institution, organization, corporation, or group headquartered in the United States of America to display the Test Kitchen in the U.S.A. will be given priority; however, international proposals will be accepted.

- Aspects of this project will require LI review to assure the Test Kitchen’s safe transport and reassembly at its new location within an agreed upon timeline.
- Landmarks Illinois and the successful proposer will enter into a legal agreement outlining the terms to take ownership of the Test Kitchen.
  - The successful proposer is expected to take legal ownership of the Test Kitchen for the cost of \$1.00.
  - If the successful proposer does not meet the agreed upon project timeline, Landmarks Illinois reserves the right to reclaim the Test Kitchen.
  - Landmarks Illinois, the Skyline Council of Landmarks Illinois, and 3LRE will be acknowledged in communications, publications, interpretations and educational panels, tours, brochures, digital media, and social media, and other vehicles not described here, for their part in saving the Test Kitchen.

## **PROJECT REQUIREMENTS**

### **Project Scope of Work Requirements**

1. Arrange for removal of materials from their current storage location or transfer storage rental facility agreement to successful respondent;
2. Catalogue the materials upon taking ownership;
3. Prepare plans and specifications for the reconstruction of the kitchen at the new location as well as a curation plan of how the space will be used. Plans to be reviewed by LI;
4. Select a qualified contractor/building and or interiors professional to rebuild the kitchen at the new location who is familiar with historic materials and will carefully follow the scope of work.
5. Develop a communications and interpretive plan for the Test Kitchen going forward for 10 years;
6. Reconstruct the kitchen at the new location. New walls will be required to recreate the space and the historic cabinetry, appliances and fixtures can be reinstalled. Some elements and materials will need to be replicated or sourced as they were damaged or could not be removed;
7. Host an opening celebration with participation by Landmarks Illinois, the Skyline Council and 3LRE, among others.

### **Required Experience and Credentials**

The selected respondent must have a team with requisite experience and credentials, which includes but is not limited to the following:

- Demonstrated experience in art and design history, cultural studies, historic preservation, contracting, rehabilitation or reconstruction of historic buildings, interiors and/or finishes, technical design, exhibition design related to historic materials.
- Preferred experience with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Historic Preservation and Archeology*, especially the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties*.
- Institutions with experience featuring the history of African American culture, design, and culinary arts are encouraged to apply.

## TEST KITCHEN CONDITION

### Current Condition and Storage of Test Kitchen

The kitchen was documented (photo documentation, sketches and measurements), carefully disassembled and is currently located in a climate-controlled, self-storage facility in Chicago. While it is difficult to see the materials in their entirety in the storage facility, access to a dropbox of photos of the elements will be provided to anyone interested in submitting. The following is a list of the elements in their entirety currently in storage and their condition. Some elements of the kitchen will require repair or replication.

The following is a list of the existing kitchen elements and their condition:

- Walls – Originally consisted of metal studs and drywall. These elements were not saved.
- Doors and Window – Exterior sliding kitchen door, glass seating area door and sidelight with logo and glass window into kitchen were saved and can be reinstalled. Steel frame from glass door and wood frame at window were not saved but measurements were taken for replication.
- Exterior Wall Covering – Grass cloth wallpaper. Representative portions saved.
- Interior Wall Covering – Orange patterned wallpaper. Representative portions saved.
- Kitchen Flooring – Orange 12"x12" vinyl tile. Representative portions saved.
- Kitchen Baseboards – Orange vinyl. Representative portions saved.
- Seating Area Flooring – Carpet with basket weave pattern. Representative portions saved.
- Kitchen Ceiling. Drywall construction with raised center portion lighting area and dropped plastic lighting grid hung from metal hangars. Studs and drywall were not saved. Representative plastic grid elements and hangars were saved. Lighting was documented but not saved. Representative portions of the wallpaper were saved.
- Seating Area Ceiling – Drywall on metal studs with recessed can lights. Wallpaper applied to ceiling surface. Framing and drywall were documented but not saved. Representative portions of the wallpaper were saved.
- Kitchen Cabinets – Wood with painted finish and decorative applied door surface to match wallpaper. All cabinets and doors were saved. Repainting of sides and interiors may be necessary. Knobs are lucite and metal, some of which are missing or damaged.
- Upper Cabinets – One section of upper cabinets has sliding glass doors and under-cabinet lighting. Isolated laminate veneer loss will require repair.
- Kitchen Island and Hood – Metal cabinets with painted finish and stainless counter with butcher block ends. Hood is hung from the ceiling. All elements saved. Repainting may be necessary.
- Kitchen Counters – Olive green laminate. All elements saved. Isolated cracked/ broken laminate that will require repair or replacement.
- Kitchen Counter Section and Backsplash – Stone material was saved. One crack in stone material can be repaired when reinstalled.
- Sinks and Faucets – All sinks and faucets saved and intact. Below cabinet plumbing and grease traps were not saved.
- Appliances – Include oven, microwave, two dishwashers, trash compactor, toaster, two can openers, griddle, built-in mixer and below counter refrigerator. All original and intact. All were salvaged.

- Side-By-Side Refrigerator – Later replacement with white surface and applied orange panels. Salvaged but orange panels are loose.
- Seating Area Furnishings – Cabinet doors, shelves, table and bench seating were removed. Backup wood framing and interior of closet were documented but not saved.
- Controls – Electrical outlet covers, light switch covers, dimmer light switch controls and HVAC controls were saved.

The following is a list of the space requirements:

The kitchen consists of two separate but connected spaces. The larger of which is the kitchen, which is accessed via a sliding door at the short side of the rectangular room. At the far end of the kitchen is an opening in the wall and one step down to the seating area that contains shelving, storage and a table with bench seating. A glass door and fixed glass window provide direct access to the seating area from the original adjacent spaces.

- Overall dimensions of the kitchen and seating area – approximately 26' x 13'
- Height of kitchen space – approximately 8'-0"
- Height of seating area – approximately 8'-5"

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **The Johnson Publishing Company**

The Johnson Publishing Company was founded in 1942 and became one of the most important African American-owned companies in the nation. Founded by John H. Johnson, the media company gave voice and positive image to the African American population and was best known for the publication of Ebony and Jet magazines. Ebony Magazine, launched in 1945, was formatted to be similar to Life and Look Magazines, but focusing on inspiring stories of African Americans and special interest topics. In 1951, the pocket-sized Jet was launched, furthering coverage on important and successful African Americans, music and entertainment, history and politics. Johnson's great success was making his publications profitable by convincing corporate America to advertise in their pages and luring companies, which had never marketed their products to African Americans before. From 1983-1986 Johnson Publishing Company was the nation's largest African American-owned business.

### **The Johnson Publishing Company Building**

The Johnson Publishing Company building was completed in 1971 and designed by African-American architect John Warren Moutoussamy, the first African American to attain partner status at a large Chicago architecture firm, the firm of Dubin, Dubin, Black & Moutoussamy. While Johnson wanted a modern building, he did not want it designed in the more common glass and steel aesthetic led by Chicago firms such as Mies van der Rohe and Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. Moutoussamy, who studied under Mies van der Rohe at Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), rather than emphasizing verticality and the building's frame, employed a strong horizontal design for the façade of the eleven-story building located on South Michigan Avenue's prominent streetwall facing Grant Park. As described in the city of Chicago's 2017 Chicago Landmark designation report, the building's "...spans are given an independent and

hovering quality by the placement of the columns behind them. Recessed behind the rectilinear structure are wide expanses of windows, which extend across the full 40-foot width of the front façade. On floors 10 and 11, the windows are more deeply recessed creating outdoor terraces complimenting the executive offices and employee dining room.” “The building is an original and late example of the International Style of architecture. It’s clearly expressed structure, rectilinear forms, open floor plans, and absence of ornament are hallmarks of the style....However, the sculptural quality of the front façade is not a common feature of the International Style...” With Moutoussamy, Johnson got a modern building that conveyed strength and independence from its counterparts, which stands prominently on Chicago’s front door of Michigan Avenue, and remains today the only high-rise office building in downtown Chicago built by an African American. The Johnson family sold the building in 2010. The Johnson Publishing Company Building was designated a Chicago Landmark in November 2017, for which Landmarks Illinois advocated. The landmark designation protects the building from demolition, but does not protect its interiors.

### **William Raiser and Arthur Elrod**

While the Johnson Publishing Company headquarters was designed in a modern vocabulary by John Moutoussamy, the building’s interiors and test kitchen was designed by Palm Springs-based interior designers Arthur Elrod and William Raiser of Arthur Elrod Associates. The following information was supplied by author Adele Cygelman, whose book *Arthur Elrod: Desert Modern Design* will be published in February, 2019.

Arthur Elrod Associates:

Arthur Elrod was the most successful interior designer in the Palm Springs area from 1954 to 1974. Elrod’s fresh, energizing and innovative interiors paralleled the rise of desert modern architecture, and he worked alongside the top architects of the day, who included William F. Cody, E. Stewart Williams, Donald Wexler, Buff & Hensman and, most famously, John Lautner. In 1964 William Raiser joined the firm as an associate. Raiser had spent 30 years working with industrial designer Raymond Loewy in New York, and he brought a more pared-down modern aesthetic. He also spearheaded the firm’s entry into commercial work under the William Raiser/Arthur Elrod division, which included the groundbreaking headquarters for the Johnson Publishing Company in Chicago. Their work was published extensively in *Architectural Digest* and numerous design magazines.

### **Test Kitchen Significance**

While some of the building’s interior features and art were removed by the Johnson family or transferred to new ownership before the building was sold, the Ebony Jet fourth-floor test kitchen was left in place. The test kitchen strongly reflects the mod interior design styles and bright colors of the 1970s, which Raiser and Elrod employed throughout the Johnson Publishing Company Building. As noted by architectural journalist Lee Bey in his 2013 WBEZ blog,

*“Behind pioneering black architect John Moutoussamy’s four walls were offices designed with an exuberant, high-style and fearless mix of color, texture, art, contemporary furnishings and pattern. Created by interior designers William Raiser/Arthur Elrod, the offices embodied an*

*afrocentric modernism that was well-turned, avant garde and quite hip--a perfect match for publisher John H. Johnson's groundbreaking magazines."*

The test kitchen is where editor Charlotte L. Lyons would test meals before adding them to *Ebony's* monthly feature "A Date with a Dish." In a 2017 interview with WBEZ about the test kitchen, Bey stated,

"This test kitchen alone should make it (the building) qualify for the National Register of Historic Places. *Ebony* magazine used to have recipes, and if your mother cooked like mine did, she tried a recipe out of *Ebony*...So this kitchen has been responsible for millions of meals for millions of black folks all over the African diaspora. For that alone, it should be preserved."

In addition to the cultural and architectural significance of the test kitchen, the intact nature of the space was even more of a reason to ensure its preservation. The Johnson Publishing Company was an excellent steward of the interiors of the building. As finishes and materials aged or were damaged over time, they were replaced in kind. The original design intent of the kitchen and adjacent seating area were nearly intact. The cabinets, counters, lights, wallpaper, fabrics and fixtures remained in place as originally installed, including appliances that were in good condition. Only the refrigerator was a modern addition, and it had been modified with orange front panels to match the appearance of the original.

### **History of the Project**

LI acquired the kitchen from the building's new owner 3L, who is undertaking a rehabilitation and residential conversion of the former Johnson Publishing Company building and needed the test kitchen removed. In April 2018, in coordination with the owner, LI removed the test kitchen in order to find it a new home where it can tell the Johnson Publishing Company story. The kitchen was documented, carefully disassembled and is currently in storage. 3L previously been been working with representatives of DuSable Museum of African American History who wished to relocate the kitchen for a permanent exhibit. LI connected DuSable to W.E. O'Neil Construction for assistance. However, transitional changes at DuSable halted the project, at which time LI and its Skyline Council stepped in with its efforts to enable 3L to continue with its redevelopment timeline for the building.

In late March, 2018, LI discussed with 3L the possibility of involving members of the Skyline Council to remove the kitchen and store it until a new home could be found. At this point, contractors had removed a majority of the building's interiors and the test kitchen was the only remaining interior on the floor. A site visit was made to assess the amount of work and tools that would be required to dismantle the kitchen. The contractors on site had about two weeks in their schedule for the kitchen to be removed. The existing space was studied, photographed and measured. LI coordinated one night and two weekend days for Skyline members and other volunteers to disassemble the kitchen. A storage unit was found and movers were reserved to assist with transporting the removed items to the temporary location. The work days involved documentation, careful disassembly and labeling parts for their eventual reassembly.

After the removal and storage of the test kitchen was complete, LI assembled an advisory panel to advise on a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

## Partners Involved

- **Test Kitchen Advisory Panel** (See Appendix E)
- **Landmarks Illinois** is a membership-based nonprofit organization serving the people of Illinois. Founded in 1971, we inspire and empower stakeholders to save places that matter to them by providing free guidance, practical and financial resources and access to strategic partnerships. For more information, visit [www.Landmarks.org](http://www.Landmarks.org).
- **Landmarks Illinois Skyline Council**  
Skyline Council is Landmarks Illinois' committee of young professionals. It consists of more than 30 emerging leaders with an interest in historic preservation, the built environment and sustaining healthy communities. Through service, social engagement and advocacy, Skyline Council members promote Landmarks Illinois' mission to empower individuals to save places that are important to them while strengthening their networks. Skyline Council was founded in 2011.
- **3L Real Estate**  
3L is a real estate company that acquires legacy properties located in dense, amenity-rich, urban neighborhoods and transforms them into the residential units desired by today's discerning renter.

## APPENDICES

- A. Photos of the Johnson Publishing Company Building and Test Kitchen
- B. Photos of the removal of the Test Kitchen, April 2018
- C. Photos of Test Kitchen in storage
- D. Relevant articles
- E. Johnson Publishing Company Test Kitchen Advisory Panel names and bios