



Hon. Marquis A. Harrison  
 Chairperson  
 Minah Whyte  
 District Manager

# CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

215 West 125th Street, 4th Floor New York, NY 10027  
 T: 212-749-3105 F: 212-662-4215  
 Website: <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb10/>

## **Resolution: To Support Renovation and Restoration of the Historic Harlem Apollo Theater Lobby, Theater and Upgrade of the Iconic Apollo Sign**

**WHEREAS** The Apollo Theatre Foundation (ATF) project will upgrade Harlem’s historic Apollo Theater, located at 253 West 125th Street in Manhattan Community Board 10, through interior renovations, restorations of the lobby and theater, and upgrade of the iconic marquee sign; and

**WHEREAS** The full-scale lobby renovation and restoration and marquee upgrade, at a cost of \$50 million, will begin June 2025 and be completed in 2026; and

**WHEREAS** The Soundstage and the Apollo Stages at the Victoria Theatre, located at 233 West 125th Street, will be used as alternate sites for Apollo Theatre performances during a phased six-month closure of the Apollo Theater due to the construction work; and

**WHEREAS** The facade and interior of the theater and marquee are New York City designated landmarks and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and

**WHEREAS** The nonprofit ATF operates the theater, as well as two smaller auditoriums at the newly opened Victoria Theater and a recording studio at the Apollo; and

**WHEREAS** The renovation of the historic theater will improve public areas and audience comfort, enhance artists’ accommodations, and preserve and update the iconic exterior Apollo building sign; and will include an expanded lobby with a newly designed café and bar that will be open to the public throughout the day. Every aspect of the Historic Theater will be updated to allow for more versatility. The restoration is being led by Beyer Blinder Belle Architects + Planners, with theater acoustics and digital consultants Charcoalblue and Flyleaf Creative; and

**WHEREAS** The project goals include:

- Upgrade of the iconic Apollo marquee to improve performance, energy and operational efficiency
- Expansion and reconfiguration of the lobby
- Installation of a new bar and café
- Restoration of the orchestra pit
- Upgrade of theater seating
- Installation of new lighting and sound systems
- Enhancement of soundstage
- Improved restrooms; and



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**WHEREAS** Additionally, with respect to ADA compliance, the design plans provide for assistive listening system upgrades throughout the historic theater's lobby, café/bar, and soundstage. Also, The relocation and planned layout of the front-of-house mix position also enables it to be accessed by wheelchair users; and

**WHEREAS** The Exterior Scope of Work includes:

- Replacement of existing neon tubing of the exterior signage (which was constructed around 1960)
- Replacement of red neon letters and blue stripes with LED neon letters and stripes at the existing blade and marquee signs; and

**WHEREAS** The Interior Scope of Work includes:

- Redesigning of the landmarked vestibule and lobby to more closely reflect historic conditions
- Creating a new opening between the lobby and the space to the east to allow for a new café space
- Removal of the existing bar
- Relocation of the sound and lighting booth
- Installation of upgraded seating and addition of 29 seats at the back of the orchestra level
- Removal of non-historic, obstructed-view seating at the back of the mezzanine level
- Installation of new lighting
- Installation of ventilation and fill speakers within the auditorium space
- Replacement of the existing fabric panels with new acoustic panels to match with additional acoustic panels at the upper levels of the auditorium to meet acoustic needs
- Restoration of the built-in orchestra pit
- Upgrade of the HVAC system providing additional energy efficiency
- Installation of new lighting and audio systems designed to enrich the experiences for artists and audiences; and

**WHEREAS** Post-renovations, ticket pricing will remain affordable and accessible; and

**WHEREAS** Upon opening, the 25,000 square foot space will host year-round programming that celebrates Harlem's cultural heritage, and be rented out at reduced rates to local artists and Harlem-based arts groups; and

**WHEREAS** The theater, which has approximately 1,500 seats across three levels, was designed by George Keister with elements of the neoclassical style; and

**WHEREAS** The Apollo Theater was developed by burlesque entertainment pioneers, Jules Hurtig and Harry Seamon as a burlesque venue, which opened in 1913 and originally served only white



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patrons. In 1928, the Minsky brothers leased the theater for burlesque shows. Sidney Cohen bought the theater building in 1934, and it became a venue for African-American performers. After Sidney Cohen’s death, the theatre was sold to Frank Schiffman and his family operated the theater from 1935 to 1976. A group of black businessmen briefly operated the theater from 1978 to 1979, and former Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton bought it at an auction in 1981. The Apollo reopened in 1985 following a major refurbishment that saw the construction of new recording studios. In September 1991, the New York State Urban Development Corporation bought the Apollo and assigned its operation to the ATF. Further renovations took place in the mid-2000s, and an expansion of the theater commenced in the 2020s<sup>[1]</sup>; and

**WHEREAS** The ATF and Breyer Blinder Belle presented the objectives, project scope and architectural design plans for the project at the Manhattan Community Board 10 Transportation, Landmarks and Historic Preservation Committee meeting on May 14th, 2024 where the Committee voted unanimously to support the project; and

**WHEREAS** the Executive Committee voted unanimously on May 29th, 2024 to support the Resolution; and

**WHEREAS** the full Manhattan Community voted unanimously with 29 Yes, 0 No 0 Abstain on June 5th, 2024 to support the Resolution; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** Manhattan Community Board 10 supports the design plans to upgrade the historic Harlem Apollo Theater lobby, theater and iconic Apollo sign through restoration, reconstruction, accessibility and sound upgrade installations; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that Manhattan Community Board 10 strongly encourages all parties involved in the upgrade, restoration, and reconstruction of the Apollo Theater to actively seek out and utilize Minority and Women Business Enterprises (MWBE) firms in all phases of the project, from planning and design to construction and completion;

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[1] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo\\_Theater](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo_Theater)