

Memorial
Montpelier Burial Ground of the Enslaved
Request for Qualifications
Release Date: March 20,2024
Response Deadline: April 20, 2024

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

The Montpelier Descendants Committee (“MDC”) and The Montpelier Foundation (“TMF”) are seeking letters of interest and supporting materials from qualified landscape architects, architects, and/or artists, as individuals or in teams, to develop a design for a memorial at the Montpelier Burial Ground of the Enslaved at Montpelier in Orange, Virginia. The memorial will honor those who were enslaved at James Madison’s Montpelier, and surrounding plantations owned by the Madison family and others.

Finalist design teams or individuals will be invited to meet with the MDC Memorialization Committee, and the MDC and TMF Boards to present a selection of previous work and a community engagement and design process based on past experiences.

The MDC and TMF have budgeted \$3,400,000 from a Mellon Foundation grant to fund the design, materials, and construction of the memorial.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Montpelier memorial to the enslaved will honor the lives and contributions of the approximately 300 people who were enslaved at James Madison’s Montpelier and an unknown number who were enslaved at the surrounding plantations owned by the Madisons and others. The chosen firm will design the memorial with significant engagement and contributions from the Montpelier Descendants Committee from August 15, 2024, through completion of the project. The design process must include the MDC Memorialization Committee in design charrettes and the generation of ideas. The memorial will be incorporated into the James Madison’s Montpelier landscape on a site that includes the Burial Ground of the Enslaved, a four-acre woodlot in the center of the property. Firms will be expected to collaborate closely with the Memorialization Project Director and TMF’s Director of Archaeology throughout the design process.

MDC HISTORY AND STRUCTURE: Established in 2019, The [Montpelier Descendants Committee](#) is the first independent, descendant-led organization to establish itself as an equal co-steward of a major historic site in America. The MDC is devoted to restoring the narratives of enslaved Americans at plantation sites in Central Virginia, including but not limited to James

Madison's Montpelier, from the margins to the center of historical discourse. The MDC promotes a more accurate understanding of the lives of enslaved people based on broader, richer, and more truthful interpretations of American history. Through a series of public programs, events, research, and communications, the MDC seeks to demonstrate how the lives of enslaved persons made possible and informed the ideals of universal liberty enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution yet denied to them.

MONTPELIER FOUNDATION STRUCTURE: [Montpelier](#) embraces its unique identity as a memorial to James Madison, a museum of American history, and a center for constitutional education that engages the public with the enduring legacy of Madison's most powerful idea: government by the people. As the lifelong home of James Madison, Father of the Constitution and Architect of the Bill of Rights, Montpelier's mission is to communicate Madison's role in creating our modern, democratic government. Located on 2,700-acres in Orange County, Virginia, Montpelier serves diverse audiences from our local community, the United States, and throughout the world with both onsite programs and digital engagement. Last year, 32,976 people toured the Montpelier House and grounds; 439 people, represented and comprised of educators, international leaders, and members of the public, participated in educational programs at Montpelier's Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution; 102 individuals participated in multi-day public archaeology programs, and over 650,000 people visited the website.

'The RUBRIC': The MDC is the first descendant organization to achieve equal, formal co-stewardship between a presidential museum, a designation of Montpelier, and a descendant group (achieved in 2022). This new model is based on "structural parity," which ensures equal representation, authority, and decision-making power for the MDC on the Montpelier board as the formal representative body of the Montpelier descendant community. The primary scholarly resource for structural parity, and the basis for The Arc project being descendant-focused and led, is the 2018 study, "[Rubric of Best Practices for Engaging Descendant Communities](#)." The "Rubric" was developed in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and The Montpelier Foundation at the inaugural National Summit on Teaching Slavery held at Montpelier in February 2018. This model is now being developed further through collaborations between TMF staff and MDC members on committees, through projects and conversations on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. All consulting parties are required to submit an outline for how they will engage with communities, using the Rubric as a basic framework to be adapted by the consultant for use in the development of the design of the memorial.

QUALIFICATIONS: Through the conceptualization and design of this memorial, the MDC seeks to engage with teams who demonstrate the value of working within a cultural landscape framework, to honor and make visible the complex web of relationships between natural and cultural systems, the built environment, and stakeholder interests with the goal of recognizing a sacred space in which African American ancestors are celebrated and revered.

Firms must provide material to demonstrate extensive experience in planning and designing built projects similar in scope and scale in a public place. Preference will be given to teams or individuals who have at least one key representative who understands the lived experience of African American culture and history. Demonstrated experience with conceptualizing designs through engagement with multiple stakeholders from diverse backgrounds throughout a design process is a critical element in the selection of this nationally facing commission.

SELECTION PROCESS SCHEDULE:

- RFQ advertised: March 20, 2024
- Response deadline: April 20, 2024
- Advisory group reviews proposals and makes recommendations to the MDC Memorialization Committee and Board: April 20-May 10.
- Short List Approvals at the committee and board levels: May 10-15
- Short List Notified: May 15, 2024
- RFPs issued: May 15, 2024
- Mandatory pre-proposal virtual discussions with MDC Memorialization Committee, MDC Board Members and TMF Board representatives: May 2024
- Proposal Deadline: July 10, 2024
- Interviews: July 19-August 1, 2024
- Design firm selection and contract agreement August 1-15, 2024
- Design Process Begins: August 15, 2024

Late submissions will not be accepted for any reason.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS

Submissions must be digital copies only. The digital copy should be one PDF file of the entire submission emailed to Allison James, Memorialization Project Director, Montpellier Descendants Committee memorial@montpelier.org.

1. Letter of Interest addressed to the MDC Memorialization Committee and Proposal Advisory Committee. This letter should state the individual's or team's successful experience in planning and designing commemorative spaces in public landscape settings. (Two pages maximum).

2. Statement of Qualifications. The submitting firm (or a member of the submitting team) must be licensed to work in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Please provide the following information:

Applicant information

Company name

Company description

Name of primary contact

Email address and phone of primary contact

Mailing address

Website address

Name, title, and email address of additional team members or firms, if submitting as a team

Portfolio of past work

Information for five relevant projects completed in the last ten years with related explanatory text and illustrations. Include three general references. (Two pages maximum per project).

Resumes for each key team member

Describe education, relevant work experience, licenses, certifications, and other qualifications. (Two pages maximum per resume).

3. Description of the individual or team's approach to community engagement.

The statement should include culturally relevant strategies for engagement with the MDC members and stakeholders in the surrounding communities to develop the design. The approach statement should address how the firm plans to address the Montpelier Descendants Committee's [guidelines for memorialization](#). (Four pages maximum)

EVALUATION: Proposals will be evaluated based on the demonstrated relevant experience of the firms, key personnel, and the design/community engagement strategy. A short-list will be determined by the Advisory and MDC Memorialization Committees. The short-listed firms will receive a detailed Request for Proposal (RFP).

Candidates should demonstrate competency in some of the the following through their submissions of materials including portfolio examples and written statements:

Candidates should demonstrate the following:

- The ways in which they will clearly communicate their design process through which they will connect stakeholders around the topic of memorialization, develop a concept, vision, and design.
- Collaborate with municipalities and civic organizations.
- Specifically engage with the Montpelier Descendants Committee, The Montpelier Foundation, and local stakeholders throughout the design and installation process.
- An understanding of the conceptual themes as framed by the Montpelier Descendants Committee's Memorialization Committee, especially as they relate to the contributions and voices of those who were enslaved and the continuous impedance that it has on descendants.
- Honor and respect given to the indigenous communities and their relationship to enslavement and enslaved communities and individuals.
- Demonstrated competency to conceptualize and build a public memorial that aligns with the vision of the Montpelier Descendants Committee.
- Demonstrated ability to shape an inclusive design and building process that works across cultures, institutions, organizations, and ability to consider and include diverse voices.

Proposals should demonstrate the team's ability through experience, evidence, or willingness to work with/in some of the following:

- Architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, landscape design, and complex ethical considerations of designing in the public realm.
- Approach to design statement: The approach to design statement should address how the firm plans to design a space at the Burial Ground to the Enslaved [at Montpelier](#), to

honor and share the history of ancestors and descendants. The space should provide a gathering place for reflection, testimony, and healing; reflect the enslaved ancestors' sense of hope, humanity, cultural customs, and resilience; and incorporate the landscape that gets to the broad feeling of the place. See the MDC's [guidelines for memorialization](#) for reference.