

Request For Proposals (RFP)

For The Ronald-Brennan House
631 South 5th Street, Louisville, KY 40202
Jefferson County
Parcel: 013K00970000



Issued: August 10, 2026
Louisville Preservation Fund, Inc. DBA Vital Sites
www.vitalsites.org/brennan-house-RFP

General Information

The Louisville Preservation Fund, Inc. DBA Vital Sites (“Vital Sites”) seeks potential partners and tenants with an interest in the revitalization and adaptive reuse of the Ronald-Brennan House (“Brennan House”), an 8,102 sq. ft. Italianate house built in 1868 and located in the downtown Louisville central business district. At one time, the Brennan House was one of many fashionable residences on 5th Street, but it now remains one of the only Victorian houses still standing downtown. It has long been an example of beautiful architecture and preserved history in Louisville, but the Brennan House is ready to write its next chapter and engage in new uses beyond that of a historic house museum.

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to generate conceptual ideas for consideration by Vital Sites board, staff, and advisors on the range of potential opportunities for the site in the current economic and cultural environment. Vital Sites will not compensate respondents for any costs or expenses incurred in providing a response to this RFP. Please do not submit any confidential or proprietary information. Vital Sites reserves the right to accept or reject any and all submissions for any reason or to waive minor informalities and irregularities in the proposals received.

Vital Sites seeks to activate the Brennan House to secure its long-term sustainability through financial independence and self-sufficiency. The ideal outcome preserves the historic character of the house, makes thoughtful use of its existing collection, and is financially sustainable well into the future. With that in mind:

- A compatible use that would link the property to the history of the Brennan House is preferred.
- Proposals should generate income and support the long-term financial sustainability of the property.
- Vital Sites sees a bed & breakfast or similar small-scale hospitality concept, potentially utilizing Historic Tax Credits, as a likely direction for the property, but remains fully open to other compatible adaptive reuse proposals that meet the goals above.
- Potential for future public access to the house via events or tours should be considered.
- Integrating potential office space for Vital Sites' organization as part of the overall proposal is an option.
- Creativity in thoughtful interpretation, stewardship, and/or use of the existing collection is encouraged. The Brennan House includes a substantial collection which contributes to the authentic experience of the house. Respondents are encouraged to propose their own approach to the collection — whether full retention and display (which may be especially well suited to a bed & breakfast or similar use), partial reuse, or another arrangement. Vital Sites is open to discussing the disposition of the collection with respondents and expects flexibility on both sides.

See Exhibits for a map and links to important reference documents.

Background

Vital Sites is a nonprofit that provides solutions to encourage investment in and redevelopment of historic properties, creating value in Louisville's neighborhoods. The Brennan House is owned by Brennan House, Inc., which is a subsidiary corporation of Vital Sites and maintains its own 501(c)(3) status.

The main house was built in 1868 for tobacco merchant Francis Slaughter Jones Ronald. It is a 3-story brick townhouse designed in the Italianate style with arched windows, corner quoins, and a bracketed cornice. The architect is unknown, but it resembles other residences designed by Louisville architect Henry Whitestone. Thomas Brennan moved his family into the house in 1884, and members of the family would live in the house for another 75 years. Brennan was a native of Ireland. In Louisville, he was an inventor and farm equipment manufacturer. He and his wife, Anna (Bruce) Brennan were the parents of nine children, eight of whom survived to adulthood. Three of the Brennan children married, but they all remained childless. Two of the sons were doctors and in 1912, Dr. J. A. O. Brennan added a waiting area and examining room to the north wing of the house for his practice.

*"Surprisingly, [the Brennan House] has survived in a period of widespread urban expansion in Louisville's downtown and has an interior that remains virtually intact. Even more remarkable, however, is the fact that the house is furnished with the personal effects of the Brennans. Worldly and well-traveled, the Brennan collection includes gilt-framed mirrors, Tiffany lamps, and a ten-foot-tall walnut hat rack." (From **Louisville Landmarks**)*

After the last Brennan family member died in 1977, the house and all the furnishings were bequeathed to the Filson Club (now Filson Historical Society). It served as offices for the Kentucky Opera for a number of years in the 1980s, but the Filson eventually sold the house to Brennan House, Inc. in 1992. Preservation Louisville, Inc. maintained an office at the Brennan House in the late 2000s to mid 2010s. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

In the past, the Brennan House has hosted weddings, receptions, parties, lectures, and other events. The backyard can be tented for a seated event for 150 people. Currently, there are 3 full bathrooms and 2 half bathrooms in the house, as well as a catering kitchen. In the past, Vital Sites has maintained an office and conference room in the Brennan House and would consider an office, possibly in the doctor's office, if compatible with new uses.

A detailed history of the Brennan House plus many historical photographs can be found here:

<https://brennanhouse.omeka.net/exhibits/show/brennanhouse/introduction/introduction>

Or HABS survey from Library of Congress here: <https://www.loc.gov/item/ky0004/>

The Location

See Exhibit 1 for a site map and Exhibit 2 for property and legal descriptions. The property is a rectangular-shaped parcel bordered by a wide driveway/deck entrance owned by Kindred Healthcare to the north (surface parking lot on the other side of the driveway); a large parking deck (671 spaces) owned by the Parking Authority

of River City to the east; and a large office building/support center owned by Kindred Healthcare to the south. Note: in between the Brennan House and the Kindred office building is a small, fenced, private playground used by the Bright Horizons child care center. Across 5th Street to the west is a large parking lot/loading area originally serving the needs of the Courier-Journal newspaper and printing company.

The Brennan House is located on South 5th Street just north of West Broadway, the southernmost of downtown Louisville's main east-west thoroughfares. It is convenient to all major interstates via downtown streets and located on major TARC bus system routes. Ample parking is nearby, but there is no parking currently on site. It is contained within the Downtown Management District and the Louisville Central Business District, which is home to more than 1,500 businesses. The Brennan House is located just one block from the Louisville Palace, an historic music and theatre venue located on 4th Street, and within walking distance of 4th Street Live!, a dining, retail, and entertainment destination. The historic Brown Hotel and Brown Theater is located to the southeast on the north side of Broadway.

Parking: there may be an opportunity to add up to six (6) new on-site parking spaces as part of a future redevelopment. Respondents are asked to describe their anticipated parking needs for their proposed use and how those needs might be met — whether through the potential new on-site spaces, the adjacent Parking Authority of River City deck, or another nearby arrangement.

Potential Uses

Vital Sites is looking for partners to develop the historic property. A triple net ground lease is one preferred structure, but Vital Sites is open to discussing other deal structures (e.g., a partnership, joint venture, or other arrangement) that best support the proposed use. Companies, nonprofits, municipalities, and others are encouraged to submit responses. The house will require capital improvements related to its new use, which will be reflected in the deal terms. Since the Brennan House is both listed on the National Register and a Local Landmark, renovations will likely qualify for historic tax credits. Due to the size of the parcel, significant exterior changes are not anticipated, and major interior alterations should consider the historic nature of the property and be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Known Capital Needs

For planning purposes, respondents should be aware that the building currently needs a number of building-system upgrades that will factor into any redevelopment budget, including:

- Replacement of all HVAC systems
- ADA-related accessibility improvements at the rear of the building
- Plumbing upgrades
- Kitchen upgrades

- Cosmetic improvements

These items are provided as general guidance only; the ultimate scope, sequencing, and cost of improvements will depend on the proposed use and will be refined collaboratively as a project moves forward.

Financial & Incentive Resources

The Brennan House qualifies for State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits that could amount to as much as 40% of redevelopment expenses, as well as other state and local incentive programs (e.g., property tax abatement, tourism funding, and downtown development loan funds). Vital Sites can act as a consultant on the historic tax credit process depending on the final agreement.

Supplemental Information

This RFP and its supplemental information may be accessed at <https://www.vitalsites.org/brennan-house-RFP>

Items included in the RFP packet:

- Exhibit 1: Site Map
- Exhibit 2: Property and Legal Description
- Exhibit 3: Plans (included as electronic attachment)
- Exhibit 4: National Register of Historic Places form (included as a link)

Proposal Requested and Submission Requirements

1. Cover letter
 - a. Basic Information
 - i. Legal name of entity
 - ii. Name of entity, if doing business under other company name
 - iii. Headquarters address
 - iv. Other office locations, if applicable
 - v. RFP contact name, email address, and phone number
 - vi. Website address
 - vii. Number of years in business
 - viii. Number of employees (total, by location, and by role)

2. Project understanding and approach

- a. Respondents must answer the following questions, and may add additional information or comments not covered in this list. The list is not considered to be exhaustive.
 - i. What type(s) of use(s) do you envision on this site and in the existing Brennan House?
 - ii. What market data substantiates the proposed use of the building and site?
 - iii. What additional market analysis will need to be completed and what information would need to be included in this analysis?
 - iv. What is the biggest challenge to the adaptive reuse of the Brennan House (identifying any items critical to overcoming issues that may initially present as barriers to the project)?
 - v. Provide examples of other adaptive reuse projects completed by your company, detailing how this experience qualifies your company.
 - vi. Provide details regarding overall development experience within the Louisville market as well as familiarity with historic preservation processes and standards.
 - vii. Provide initial concept of how the development improvements would be financed.
 - viii. What deal or ownership structure would you propose (e.g., ground lease, partnership/joint venture, or another arrangement), and why?
 - ix. What is your approach to meeting parking needs for your proposed use, whether through the potential new on-site spaces, nearby facilities, or another arrangement?
 - x. What is your model for achieving long-term financial sustainability for the proposed use?
 - xi. What is your proposed approach to the existing Brennan House collection (e.g., full retention and display, partial reuse, relocation, or another arrangement)?

3. Project leadership and team bios or resumes

4. Company statement of experience, org chart and references

5. Financial capacity

Vital Sites, Inc., in its sole discretion, will determine the appropriate next steps with regard to this project and the interest it receives in response to this RFP, which may include, without limitation: (1) the right to accept or reject any and all letters of interest submitted in response to this RFP for any reason or to waive minor informalities and irregularities in the letters of interest received; (2) issuing a new RFP with modifications or a RFP based on information learned from the RFP or other changing circumstances; (3) entering into an agreement with specific respondents; and/or (4) taking no further action related to the RFP or this project.

Site Tours & Questions

Tours of the house will be held by appointment, as well as an open house from noon – 3 pm on Tuesday, September 15, 2026.

Questions and clarifications will be due by noon on Friday, September 18, 2026. Please direct all questions by email to Heath Seymour at heath@vitalsites.org. Responses will be posted via the website by noon on Monday, September 21, 2026.

Deadline

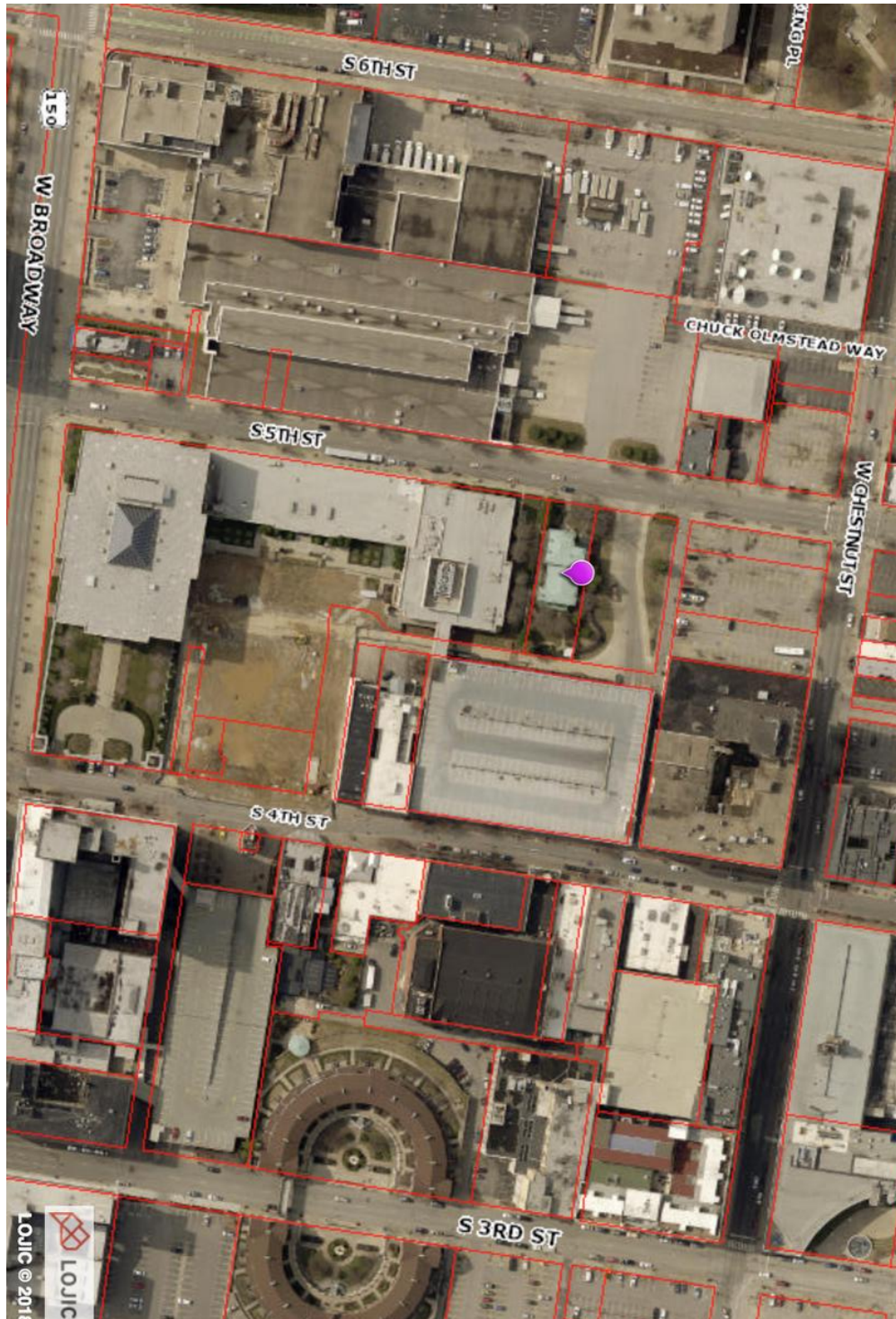
Proposals are due by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, September 30, 2026, via electronic submission. All proposals should be in fully bundled PDFs. Links made available through a file sharing resource are acceptable if the overall submission size exceeds email size limits. Submittal (and questions) should be directed to:

Heath Seymour, Executive Director – Vital Sites

E-mail: heath@vitalsites.org

Phone: 502-741-3372

Exhibit 1: Site Map



Site map — Brennan House parcel outlined at center (LOJIC, 2018 imagery)

Exhibit 2: Property and Legal Description

Property Description

Previous Use	House museum; event space; office space
Tenancy	Vacant; office space
Number of Buildings	1 house plus small garden gazebo in backyard
Number of Stories	3 plus basement
Year Built	1868; doctor's office wing added in 1912
Total Square Footage	8,102 sq. ft.

Legal Description

NOTE: For purpose of the preparation of these descriptions, no surveys of the described real estate were performed and no monuments were set. Legal description is from the public assessor records.

Address	631 South 5th Street
Lot Size	0.28 acres
Parcel ID	013K00970000
Current Zoning	C3
Form District	Downtown
Overlay District	Core Broadway
Neighborhood	Central Business District
Council District	4
Historic Site	Listed on National Register of Historic Places in 1975

BEGINNING on the East side of 5th Street 301 feet South of Chestnut Street; thence South along the East side of 5th Street 65 feet; thence East at right angles to 5th Street 200 feet to the West line of an alley; thence North with the West line of said alley 65 feet; thence West 200 feet to the point of beginning.

Being the same property acquired by Grantor from The Filson Club, by deed dated August 19, 1992, and recorded in Deed Book 6217, Page 426, in the Office of the Clerk of Jefferson County, Kentucky.

Exhibit 3: Plans

A basic current floor plan and other potential configurations and plans related to use as a B&B are attached digitally. If you don't see this attachment, please request this file with an email sent to: Heath@vitalsites.org

Exhibit 4: National Register Listing

Link to Listing: <https://www.loc.gov/item/ky0004/>

We can also send a digital copy of this file upon request to: heath@vitalsites.org