



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Parks, Arts and Culture Committee
FROM: Samantha Dunn, Asst. Director for Community Works, CEDO
DATE: September 23, 2022
CC: Brian Pine, Director, Community and Economic Development Office
RE: Communication: Memorial Auditorium Update

This memo is to provide an update on the current status of Memorial Auditorium and proposed next steps to ensure that this important gateway to the City of Burlington can be returned to active use and a community asset.

Background

Memorial Auditorium was built in 1927 as a World War I Memorial and Public Assembly Space. Since that time Memorial Auditorium has hosted public performances, private functions, athletic events, farmers' markets, exhibits, a day care, and a teen center. In 1988, Memorial Auditorium was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building with the Main Street - College Street Historic District - many in Burlington and the surrounding area have a favorite memory linked to this building. While the building served many important uses, the City struggled to maintain the capital requirements of the building. In 1994 the Ballot Item for needed renovations did not pass. The building continued to operate but was shut down at the end of 2016 as it was no longer safe to occupy.

In 2017, CEDO was tasked with creating an adaptive reuse plan for Memorial Auditorium to remain a publicly-owned, public assembly space with input from a variety of stakeholders and members of the public. An overview of that process can be found [here](#).

Following the 2018 study the City began working on the feasibility of moving forward with the Community Hub vision including an RFP process for a potential operator. With the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, this project lost momentum as other priorities took over. In November of 2021, the voters did not approve a Capital Bond that included \$10M for Memorial Auditorium. In March of 2022, the voters did approve a Capital Bond that included \$1M for Memorial Auditorium assessment and stabilization.

In June 2022, we heard unanimously from City Council that the building should be stabilized, not demolished, while we continue to find a path forward for this important institution.

Current Condition of Memorial Auditorium & Stabilization

As described previously, Memorial Auditorium has continued to deteriorate since 2016 and stabilization is required to reduce the potential of injury to people in and around the building and reduce the potential for further weathering or structural failure over the next 3-5 years to enhance the feasibility of a potential renovation in the future. The City is currently working to implement the recommendations provided for stabilization and hopes to have this work completed in the next six months.

Next Steps

The City now seeks to identify a long-term partner(s) that shares the City’s goals and is qualified to deliver, finance, operate and maintain the building through an adaptive reuse project. The goal of this RFP is to solicit proposals from firms and organizations with the vision, skills, relevant experience and financial capacity necessary to move forward with an adaptive reuse of the building through a public-private partnership. The City envisions negotiating a long-term lease in which the City would retain ownership of the building while the selected entity(ies) will be responsible for the required renovations and operation of the building.

The City has the following goals and objectives for the Memorial Auditorium Property:

- Renovation and reactivation of vacant building with construction beginning within 24 months
- Public/Private partnership that maintains long-term public benefit
- Attractive and welcoming entrance to the downtown
- Preserve Veterans Memorial
- Incorporation of one or more public uses as identified in 2018 community survey
- Maintain Historic Fabric
- Street Activation at Main and Union Streets
- High quality employment opportunities or new, mixed-income housing
- Long-term economic benefit for the community

Proposals will be evaluated by an ad hoc committee which will consist of elected officials, community members with relevant skills and experience, Burlington youth and City staff. If the process results in a proposal that the Administration supports, it will be brought forward for conceptual approval by City Council prior to the pursuit of more detailed work and long-term agreements.

Proposals will be evaluated based upon the following factors and weight:

Compliance with proposal requirements	
1) Alignment of proposed project with City goals and objectives	20%
2) Ability to incorporate public uses as identified in 2018 community survey	20%
3) Overall public benefit of the proposal	20%
4) Experience of the Development Team	15%
5) Financial Feasibility	20%
6) Timeline	5%
	<hr/>
	100%

Proposed Timeline

RFP Release	October 5, 2022
Proposals Due	December 2, 2022
Selected Proposal to City Council	November/December 2022

Attachments:

DRAFT Request for Proposals for the Adaptive Reuse of Memorial Auditorium

Requests for Proposals for the Adaptive Reuse of Memorial Auditorium

City of Burlington

Date

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DRAFT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FOR THE ADAPTIVE REUSE OF MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM, BURLINGTON, VERMONT

Date of Issuance: October 1, 2022

Issued by: City of Burlington, Community and Economic Development Office

Site visit: Optional upon request

Due Date for Questions:

Submit via email to sdunn@burlingtonvt.gov

Responses will be posted on:

Due Date for Proposals:

Proposals shall be submitted electronically to sdunn@burlingtonvt.gov

Notice to Proposers: This document constitutes a Request for Proposal, and is not a request for professional services, a request for a bid or a construction contract. Acceptance of a proposal may result in a binding project agreement between the City and the proposer, contingent upon certain acts of the City Council related to a Development Agreement and/or long-term lease.

Issuing Point of Contact:

Samantha Dunn, CEDO Asst. Director for Community Works

sdunn@burlingtonvt.gov

(802) 829-6385

BACKGROUND

Memorial Auditorium, located at 250 Main Street in Burlington, was designed and constructed as a public auditorium and civic center in the heart of downtown Burlington in 1927. Built to honor World War I veterans, the building has continued to serve as a monument to veterans of all subsequent wars. The centerpiece of the Auditorium was a 2,500-seat hall with a proscenium stage that supported a wide range of performances and community events. Memorial Auditorium was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988 as a contributing building within the Main Street – College Street Historic District. From 1928 to 2016, Memorial Auditorium served as an important civic space offering civic events, child care, performances, artist workshop space and more.

Beginning in the early 2000s the building began to suffer from deferred maintenance and unable to make the investments needed to address structural and safety concerns, the City closed the building in 2016. More information about the history of the building and past project updates is available on the [City's website](#).

During the summer and fall of 2018, the City undertook an extensive community engagement process with stakeholder and community input collected through community workshops, public tours, interviews, and a city-wide survey to understand the community's interests and goals in the future of Memorial Auditorium. In addition to performance and entertainment space, the top uses for Memorial Auditorium identified by the public were 1) civic and community gathering space; 2) indoor farmers market; 3) arts and crafts; 4) youth-led program space; and 5) rehearsal space. The result of this process was an adaptive reuse plan for Memorial Auditorium to remain a publicly owned, public assembly space. Incorporating the public's feedback, the City engaged various architectural design and rehabilitation professionals in the creation of conceptual designs, construction pricing, and financing options and created a conceptual plan for a proposed "hub for community events, arts education, and a possible winter home for the farmer's market." The City anticipated financing the renovation through a mix of public and private sources including general obligation and tax increment financing bonds and private equity.

With the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, this project lost momentum as other priorities took precedence. In November of 2021 the voters did not approve a Capital Bond that included \$10M for Memorial Auditorium, and now with the City's bonding capacity restricted until at least 2030 by the need for financing the new Burlington High School and a range of other priorities and challenges at this time, the City is not able to move forward with public financing to implement the 2018 vision.

At the end of 2021, recognizing that the building was continuing to deteriorate and was a considerable liability, the City contracted with a structural engineering firm to provide a structural stabilization review and recommendations, material testing and cost estimate for demolition. In March of 2022, the voters approved a capital bond, which included \$1M for Memorial Auditorium assessment and stabilization. In May of 2022, this information was presented to City Council and there was unanimous support for stabilizing the building (versus demolition). Contracting for stabilization of the building is now underway and the stabilization work is expected to be completed by the end of February 2023.

The City now seeks to identify a long-term partner(s) that shares the City's goals and is qualified to deliver, finance, operate and maintain the building through an adaptive reuse project. The goal of this RFP is to solicit proposals from firms and organizations with the vision, skills, relevant experience and financial capacity necessary to move forward with an adaptive reuse of the building through a public-private partnership. The City envisions negotiating a long-term lease in which the City would retain ownership of the building while the selected entity(ies) will be responsible for the required renovations and operation of the building.

CITY GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The City has the following goals and objectives for the Memorial Auditorium Property:

- Renovation and reactivation of vacant building with construction beginning within 24 months
- Public/Private partnership that maintains long-term public benefit
- Attractive and welcoming entrance to the downtown
- Preserve Veterans Memorial
- Incorporation of one or more public uses as identified in 2018 community survey
- Maintain Historic Fabric
- Street Activation at Main and Union Streets
- High quality employment opportunities or new, mixed-income housing
- Long-term economic benefit for the community

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The City of Burlington is issuing this RFQ/RFP to identify an entity to enter into a public/private partnership and long-term lease in support of the successful adaptive reuse of the Memorial Auditorium to reactivate this important component of the City's historic fabric and enhance the vibrancy of downtown Burlington. Proposers are advised that the building has known structural deficiencies (existing studies can be found [here](#)). Outside of the scope of work being completed by the City over the next six months, it will be the responsibility of the development team to perform sufficient testing and due diligence to the proposed project is viable.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria described in this document. The entity selected through this process will enter into exclusive negotiations with the City with the intent of executing a Project Agreement that will establish the basis for future legal agreements associated with the project development, including the access and/or relocation of the Veterans Memorials currently located in the building.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

1. A signed letter on the proposer's letterhead indicating an interest in the Project and the primary contact person and contact information.
2. Description of Development Team
 - Lead development firm and key personnel
 - Development or programmatic partners
 - Technical partners (e.g. architects, engineers, financial and legal advisers)
 - Experience with comparable adaptive reuse developments
 - Identification of any unique resources, capabilities or assets which the proposer would bring to the project
3. Description of Proposed Project
 - Project Vision
 - Organization and management approach to the project
 - Programming Components (with proposed square footage)
 - Target Market / Beneficiaries
 - Proposal for Veterans Memorials
 - Expected scope of rehabilitation
 - Treatment of Historic Façade
 - Treatment of Historic Interior

4. Community Benefit
 - Describe how the proposed project will respond to the City’s goals as described above.
 - Describe how the proposed project will incorporate community-identified priorities for Memorial Auditorium. (Results from the Community Survey can be found [here.](#))
 - Describe how youth will be engaged in your development process and ongoing operations.
 - Describe other public benefits of the proposed project.

5. Financial
 - Contemplated public financial participation
 - Description of how the project addresses and corresponds to market demands and conditions
 - Construction and Operating Proformas
 - Statement of Sources and Uses with projected dates for receipt of all sources
 - Demonstration of financial capability with submission of financial statements

6. Timeline
 - Proposed project timeline including design, financing, construction and start of operations

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Proposals will be evaluated by an ad hoc committee which will consist of elected officials, community members with relevant skills and experience, Burlington youth and City staff. The committee will make a final recommendation to the City Council for approval.

Proposals will be evaluated based upon the following factors and weight:

Compliance with proposal requirements	
1) Alignment of proposed project with City goals and objectives	20%
2) Ability to incorporate public uses as identified in 2018 community survey	20%
3) Overall public benefit of the proposal	20%
4) Experience of the Development Team	15%
5) Financial Feasibility	20%
6) Timeline	5%
	100%

TIMETABLE

Release of RFP:	October 5, 2022
Receipt of proposals:	December 2, 2022
Selected Firm Approved by City Council:	January 2023

LIMITATIONS OF LIABILITY

The City assumes no responsibility or liability for the response to this Request for Proposals.

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PROPOSAL

Any costs incurred by any person or entity in preparing, submitting, or presenting a proposal are the sole responsibility of that person or entity, including any requests for additional information or interviews. The City will not reimburse any person or entity for any costs incurred prior to the issuance of the contract.

INDEMNIFICATION

Any party responding to this Request for Proposals is acting in an independent capacity and not as an officer or employee of the City. Any party responding to this Request for Proposals will be required to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the City, its officers, and employees from all liability and any claims, suits, expenses, losses, judgments, and damages arising as a result of the responding party's acts and/or omissions in or related to the response.

REJECTION OF PROPOSALS

The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to negotiate with one or more parties, or to award the contract to the proposal the City deems will meet its best interests, even if that proposal is not the lowest bid. The City reserves the right to re-advertise for additional proposals and to extend the deadline for submission of the proposals. This Request for Proposals in no way obligates the City to award a contract.

OWNERSHIP OF DOCUMENTS

Any materials submitted to the City in response to this Request for Proposals shall become the property of the City unless another arrangement is made by written agreement between the City and the responding party. The responding party may retain copies of the original documents.

PUBLIC RECORDS

Any and all records submitted to the City, whether electronic, paper, or otherwise recorded, are subject to the Vermont Public Records Act. The determination of how those records must be handled is solely within the purview of the City. All records which the responding party asserts to be trade secrets, as that term is defined by subsection 317(c)(9) of the Vermont Public Records Act, or that the responding party otherwise seeks to have the City consider as exempt must be identified clearly and specifically at the time of submission. It is not sufficient to merely state generally that a proposal is proprietary, contains a trade secret, or is otherwise exempt. Particular records, pages, and sections which are believed to be exempt must be specifically identified as such and must be separated from other records with a convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify each exemption from release consistent with Section 317 of Title 1 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated.

DRAFT