



# Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

March 13, 2026

## THE PROJECT:

Evansville Main Street Pavilion and Riverfront Restaurant Design Competition, Evansville, IN

## THE CLIENT:

Evansville Regional Economic Partnership (EREP) and Evansville Regional Development Corporation (ERDC)

318 Main St., #400  
Evansville, IN 47708

## **1.0 – PROJECT INFORMATION**

The Evansville Regional Economic Partnership (EREP) and the Evansville Regional Development Corporation (ERDC) invite design teams to submit qualifications for two landmark buildings on the Ohio Riverfront: the Main Street **Pavilion (Pavilion)** and the **Riverfront Restaurant (Restaurant)** at the heart of Great Bend Park.

This project is part of the **Ohio River Vision and Strategic Plan (ORVSP)**, which reimagines Evansville's waterfront as a people-first destination and catalyst for regional growth. The Pavilion and the Restaurant will be among the first signature projects to bring this vision to life, activating the riverfront with daily activity, dining, and gathering spaces.

### **1.1 The Clients**

This competition is sponsored by the **Evansville Regional Economic Partnership (EREP)** and the **Evansville Regional Development Corporation (ERDC)** (collectively, the "Clients"), who are advancing the Ohio River Vision and Strategic Plan.

EREP and ERDC are leading the competition process in close coordination with Sasaki as technical advisor. EREP will convene the selection committee, issue clarifications to registered respondents, and engage directly with shortlisted teams throughout Phase 2 and Phase 3 to provide programmatic guidance and feedback.

### **1.2 Technical Advisor**

As technical advisor, Sasaki brings direct familiarity with the project site and context, having led the ORVSP and the ongoing Evansville Riverfront Schematic Design. This continuity ensures that competing teams have access to accurate background materials and that proposals are evaluated against a well-established design framework. Stipend agreements and design contracts are administered by Sasaki through a Master Services Agreement with the Clients.

### **1.3 The Competition**

The Evansville Regional Economic Partnership (EREP) and the Evansville Regional Development Corporation (ERDC) invite design teams to participate in a three-phase design competition for the new Main Street Pavilion and Riverfront Restaurant buildings on the Ohio Riverfront.

These buildings are part of the Ohio River Vision and Strategic Plan, which reimagines Evansville's waterfront as a vibrant, people-first destination. Each will be a catalytic anchor in its own right, creating daily activity, supporting local business, and establishing a distinct iconic presence along the river.

The competition will unfold in three phases:

- **Phase 1** – RFQ Response: Interested teams submit qualifications for review by the selection committee. Three finalists will be selected to move on to Phase 2. See Section 3.0 for more details.
- **Phase 2** – Design Challenge: The three shortlisted teams will be invited to develop conceptual, visionary designs over a 7-week period, participate in a virtual mid-term review, and present their final proposals to the selection committee and the Clients. Each shortlisted team will receive a \$50,000 stipend for participation. See Section 4.0 for more details.
- **Phase 3** – Design Refinement: The selected team will receive an additional \$50,000 to further develop and refine their proposal in close collaboration with the selection committee and the Clients, incorporating operational guidance and program feedback. Final deliverables by the end of June 2026, exact date to be confirmed. See Section 5.0 for more details.

## 2.0 – PROJECT BACKGROUND & UNDERSTANDING

### 2.1 The Ohio River Vision and Strategic Plan

#### Project Background:



Diagram 1 - Conceptual Design Plan, March 2025

The Ohio River Vision and Strategic Plan (ORVSP) focuses on revitalizing the Evansville Region's riverfront and nearby communities, leveraging the Ohio River as a core asset to enhance economic vitality, quality of life, and regional identity. The plan emphasizes reconnecting communities with the river through new parks, public spaces, and trail systems, as well as infrastructure improvements to support and develop a more extensive multimodal connectivity throughout the region. The ORVSP document recommendations include transforming key downtown areas along a 50-mile stretch of the Ohio River in Evansville, Mt. Vernon, and Newburgh, along with integrating ecological resilience and addressing community priorities through extensive stakeholder engagement and innovative urban design strategies.

### 2.2 Schematic Design Context

For nearly a century, Evansville residents have envisioned a stronger, more accessible connection to the Ohio River. Protective walls, levees, and raised roadbeds, built to guard against flooding, gradually severed the city from its most defining natural asset. The Ohio River Vision and Strategic Plan, completed in May 2024, marks the first regional effort to reverse that separation. It is now being realized.

The Evansville Riverfront Schematic Design is translating that vision into built form. Great Bend Park, the centerpiece of the plan, will transform the Downtown riverfront from Bally's Evansville to the water treatment plant into a multi-level destination for daily life and special events alike: a performance stage, a reimagined Dress

Plaza, river access at the water's edge, a vendors' market, sports courts, and continuous multi-modal paths connecting it all. Riverside Drive, long a barrier between the city and its riverfront, will be reconfigured into a calmer, tree-lined boulevard that invites people across rather than turning them back.

The Main Street Pavilion and Riverfront Restaurant will be two of the first architectural elements to be realized within this larger transformation. The Pavilion anchors the Main Street Plaza at the heart of Great Bend Park; the Restaurant anchors the Walnut Street corridor at the river's edge. Together, they will be among the earliest permanent structures to bring this vision to life, setting the tone for everything that follows. As visible riverfront anchors, they will:

- Provide year-round dining and event opportunities.
- Support daily activation of Great Bend Park and Riverside Drive.
- Serve as civic ambassadors for Evansville in the riverscape.

## **2.3 Funding and Implementation**

This is a real project, and it is moving toward implementation. The Ohio River Vision and Strategic Plan, developed through extensive community engagement, transportation studies, hydrological analysis, and financial modeling, has already advanced from regional vision to active schematic design, backed by funding from Indiana's READI program. The Evansville Region has demonstrated, through years of sustained investment and public commitment, that this transformation is not a plan on a shelf. It is underway and ongoing.

The design concepts developed through this competition for the Pavilion and the Restaurant will directly inform project development and support ongoing efforts to secure federal and state grants, philanthropic investment, and local funding. Compelling, well-developed design strengthens every one of those applications. Evansville's community has spoken clearly: waterfront dining and gathering spaces are their top priority. These buildings are the answer to that call.

The Clients are committed to seeing the right design team carry this work forward. The selected team will have a meaningful opportunity to continue as the design architect through subsequent phases, from design development to construction documents and beyond, as funding is secured and implementation advances. That path is subject to funding alignment and contract negotiations, as is appropriate at this stage. The intent is clear: to find a long-term partner in bringing this vision to the riverfront, not simply a competition winner.

## **3.0 – PHASE 1 - RFQ RESPONSE**

Teams are invited to submit a concise, digital qualifications package (up to 50MB, up to 15 pages, up to tabloid in size, as a single PDF). Reference materials including a site base map, conceptual design plan, and master plan-level building site studies are provided in the Appendices to support your response. The package should address the following:

- **Team Composition:** Identify the lead firm and key disciplines. Introduce core team members and describe their roles in this project. Highlight any subconsultants and explain how the team is structured to deliver on both the Pavilion and the Restaurant.
- **Relevant Experience:** Use your portfolio to tell a story. We are looking for built and visionary projects that speak directly to this opportunity — civic buildings, waterfront destinations, hospitality and dining environments, or public spaces that demonstrate how your team thinks about place, scale, and experience. Projects need not be built to be relevant; design competition entries, speculative work, and visionary proposals are welcome where they help convey your team's design sensibility and ambition.
- **Vision & Understanding:** Provide a direct response to this site and this moment. Use vision boards, precedent imagery, and inspirational references — including your own work — to convey how your team would approach the Pavilion and the Restaurant in Evansville, Indiana. We are not looking for a polished concept design at this stage. We are looking for evidence that your team understands what Evansville is building toward, and has the vision and capability to help get it there.

### **3.1 Submission Details & Anticipated Timeline**

**Pre-Proposal Meeting (Virtual): Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 3:00PM CST**

Meeting details will be provided to all interested parties - Please email [adiekmann@evvregion.com](mailto:adiekmann@evvregion.com) to be included in the meeting invitation.

**Deadline: April 10, by 5:00 PM CST.**

**Format:** Single PDF file, maximum 50MB, maximum 15 pages, up to tabloid in size

**File Naming:** LeadFirm\_EvansvilleCompetition\_YYMMDD.pdf

**Submission:** Submit to [adiekmann@evvregion.com](mailto:adiekmann@evvregion.com) and [shao@sasaki.com](mailto:shao@sasaki.com) either as direct email attachments (20MB email attachment limit) or as a download link via a file transfer service (e.g., WeTransfer, Dropbox, or Google Drive), up to 50MB. Please ensure download links remain active for at least 30 days following the submission deadline and files can be downloaded without password requirements.

**Questions:** All questions must be submitted via email to Ashley Diekmann and Shuai Hao at [adiekmann@evvregion.com](mailto:adiekmann@evvregion.com) and [shao@sasaki.com](mailto:shao@sasaki.com) no later than 5:00 PM CST on March 23, 2026. Answers and any addenda will be distributed to all registered respondents.

#### **Anticipated Timeline**

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|---|-----------------|
| ● RFQ Release Date:                                 | March 13, 2026  |
| ● Pre-Proposal Virtual Meeting - <b>3:00PM CST:</b> | March 19, 2026  |
| ● Questions due by <b>5:00 PM CST:</b>              | March 23, 2026  |
| ● Questions Returned by <b>5:00 PM CST:</b>         | March 27, 2026  |
| ● RFQ Submission due by <b>5:00 PM CST:</b>         | April 10, 2026  |
| ● Formal RFP Release Date to selected teams:        | Late April 2026 |

## **4.0 – PHASE 2 - DESIGN CHALLENGE**

The Main Street Pavilion and Riverfront Restaurant will be among the first structures to rise from Great Bend Park — the buildings that turn a vision into a place. This competition is not just a search for a design team. It is the beginning of a long-term partnership to bring one of Evansville's most significant public investments to life.

### **4.1 Pavilion (Light Food & Beverage Service)**

The Pavilion is the everyday heartbeat of Great Bend Park, a welcoming, light-touch presence that makes the riverfront feel alive on a Tuesday morning as much as a Saturday afternoon. It should feel like it belongs to the landscape: rooted in the city and park context, responsive to the seasons, and effortlessly integrated with the Main Street Plaza and the river beyond.

Phase 2 proposals should lead with vision. The selection committee is looking for a clear design point of view: how the Pavilion sits in the landscape, how it reads from the river and the park, and what it feels like to arrive, linger, and return. Concept-level operational and technical ideation will be developed collaboratively in Phase 3.

- **Look & Feel:** The Pavilion should feel as if it is an extension of the park itself, not a building dropped into a landscape, but a structure that grows from it. Designs should demonstrate resilience, seasonal adaptability, and a clear understanding of the flood and levee context that shapes this site.
- **Program:** Compact footprint (approximately 1,500–2,500 GSF) with café and light food-service capacity, flexible indoor-outdoor seating, small event adaptability, and service/storage. The Pavilion should connect naturally to the Main Street Plaza and the broader Great Bend Park circulation network.
- **Deliverables:** Submitted as a digital PDF packet, up to 15 pages, tabloid size, including:
  - Site plan and floor plan(s), minimum two sections/elevations
  - Renderings & Sketches (minimum 2 perspectives); visionary design sketches and creativity is encouraged and supported over highly polished photo-realistic renderings.
  - Narrative describing design intent, major cost drivers, landscape and park integration, and its role as a landmark in the heart of the park

### **4.2 Restaurant (Waterfront Dining & Event Venue)**

The Restaurant is a landmark in the fullest sense, a destination that will draw people to the riverfront from across the city and the region. Positioned at the heart of Great Bend Park along the Walnut Street corridor, it should command its site with architectural confidence while remaining deeply connected to the river, the park, and the life of the city around it.

Phase 2 proposals should lead with vision. The selection committee is looking for a strong, visionary architectural idea: what this building looks like from the river, how it announces itself to the city, and how it makes people feel when they arrive. Conceptual interior layout, operational planning, and program refinement will be developed collaboratively in Phase 3.

- **Look & Feel:** The Restaurant should be unmistakably of this place. It should feel like a building that could only exist on this bend of the Ohio River, in this city, at this moment in its history. Designs should balance civic presence with warmth, creating a structure that feels as welcoming on a weeknight dinner as it does during a sold-out riverfront event.
- **Overview:** Approximately 9,500 GSF across two levels, including a flexible ground-floor dining hall, rentable event and private dining space, an upper level with roof terrace for expanded capacity and events, and efficient back-of-house operations. The building should support year-round activation and adapt gracefully to different operators over time.
- **Deliverables:** Submitted as a digital PDF packet, up to 15 pages, tabloid size, including:
  - Site plan and floor plan(s), minimum two sections/elevations

- Renderings & Sketches (minimum 2 perspectives); visionary design sketches and creativity is encouraged and supported over highly polished photo-realistic renderings.
- Narrative describing design intent, major cost drivers, landmark role, and the buildings integration with the city and river

## **5.0 – PHASE 3 - DESIGN REFINEMENT**

The selected team will enter Phase 3 with a \$50,000 refinement stipend and a clear mandate. The selected team will further develop their Phase 2 concept into a resolved, presentation-ready design in close collaboration with the Clients and selection committee. Phase 3 will incorporate client feedback, programmatic guidance, and operational input gathered through the selection process.

### **5.1 Scope of Work**

Phase 3 will advance the approved Phase 2 concept across both buildings into a resolved, presentation-ready design. Working closely with the Clients and selection committee, the selected team will incorporate feedback from the selection process and develop the design with particular attention to:

- Exterior design resolution, materiality, and site integration
- Diagrammatic approaches for interior layout and spatial organization, including logical relationships between dining areas, kitchen and service zones, back-of-house spaces, and vertical circulation
- Operational feasibility at a conceptual level, including service access, maintenance considerations, and adaptability to different operators over time

### **5.2 Deliverables**

Final deliverables are due by the end of June 2026, exact date to be confirmed in collaboration with the selected team, and should be submitted as a digital PDF packet in the same format as Phase 2. Deliverables should include:

- Updated site plan and floor plans for both buildings
- Updated sections and elevations reflecting design refinements
- Final Renderings and Sketches (minimum 2 perspectives per building)
- Narrative describing design evolution, operational strategy, and response to client feedback
- High-level, conceptual opinion of probable cost for both buildings identifying major cost drivers

## **6.0 – APPENDICES**

- A. Ohio River Vision & Strategic Plan (summary)
- B. Evansville Riverfront Schematic Design Updates
- C. Master Plan-level building site studies
- D. Site Base Map (CAD)