



**CITY of EAST PROVIDENCE**



# REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (RFEOI)

## SERVICES SOUGHT:

Development Services

## PROJECT TITLE:

Oldham School Building & Site Development Project

## CLIENT:

City of East Providence, Rhode Island

## PROJECT CONSULTANT (PRIMARY CONTACT):

New Venture Advisors (Consultant Team)

## ISSUE DATE:

Thursday, 07.24.25

## DEADLINE TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS:

Friday, 08.15.25

## RESPONSES DUE:

Thursday, 08.28.25



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## REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (RFEI) FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR THE OLDHAM SCHOOL BUILDING AND SITE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

### INTRODUCTION

The City of East Providence is seeking Expressions of Interest from vendors (“applicants”) with expertise to lead the development of the former Oldham School, a prominent historic structure owned by the city, located at 640 Bullocks Point Avenue (map 413, block 11, parcel 001). The city is looking for expertise in developing mixed-use housing and multi-purpose community facilities, among other areas. Recently, the city completed a feasibility study to explore developing the site as a multi-use campus focused on a community center and small business incubator/accelerator. Proposals should aim to preserve the historic architectural features of the former school. Generations of families have attended school there, and it remains a key landmark of the community. Successful proposals will demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the exterior architectural features, adherence to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, and a clear benefit to the city and surrounding community.

If successful with this Expression of Interest, it is expected that up to three teams will be included in a shortlist of potential development partners. The applicants on the shortlist will be invited to submit a formal proposal in response to a subsequent Request for Proposal (“RFP”) for the development of the building and land parcel, in line with the City’s redevelopment objectives in the Riverside community neighborhood.

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

In December 2023, after receiving funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the City of East Providence hired a consultant to conduct a feasibility study. The decision to fund and undertake this study was based on preliminary recommendations from a 2022-2023 Revitalization Assessment<sup>1</sup> conducted by Roger Williams University and GrowSmart RI (in partnership with the City of East Providence), which identified the need to find alternative uses for the Oldham School site as part of a Riverside Redevelopment plan. The report proposed repurposing the facility as a specialized food and/or arts-focused business incubation space.

The city, after completing a preliminary needs assessment and engaging select stakeholders in the referenced industries, issued an RFP in fall 2023 for development proposals to purchase, lease, or develop the Oldham School parcel into mixed-use housing and a small business incubator. During the RFP process, the city was advised that a feasibility study might help confirm the proposed uses, and the city identified EDA funding to support the study work.

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<sup>1</sup> The full study report is included in the Resource Documents attachment to this RFEI.



The goal of the feasibility study was to evaluate converting the former municipal school, Oldham Elementary School, into a small business incubator. This study was prompted by independent research that identified a local need for community-led programming space, specialized food production areas, arts-based business incubation, and support for blue economy industries. In April 2024, the project team hired [New Venture Advisors \(NVA\)](#), a firm specializing in food systems and food infrastructure, to conduct the study and assess the optimal components, programs, services, and feasibility of repurposing the space.

NVA's 2024-2025 Feasibility Study, which included extensive community engagement (demographic research, community interviews, a community and small business survey, and community meetings), demonstrated a broad community interest in developing the Oldham School with spaces and programs such as recreational facilities, a commercial kitchen, rentable maker and arts spaces, coworking areas, career training, and blue economy spaces. Creating flexible lease and rental structures for these spaces would support the growth of current and future small businesses. This development would also foster partnerships with existing nonprofit and for-profit organizations interested in collaborating on the project to expand their capacity for programs like education, recreation, job training and upskilling, workforce development initiatives, and art.

The City of East Providence is home to several growing industries, including food production, the hospitality sector, and the blue economy. The study identified potential programming and design opportunities for the Oldham School building that support these industries by providing physical space and community engagement opportunities. The Oldham School development will promote sustainable economic growth in these sectors and advance equity and opportunity within the East Providence community.

During the study, the consultant team also identified potential interest from the local community, stakeholders, and the state in exploring housing as part of the proposed parcel/site development plan. Housing massing was considered during design development, shared during one community engagement, and included in funding plan development as part of the study.<sup>2</sup> The city is interested in affordable and/or market-rate housing opportunities for this parcel. Given this strong potential for a successful mixed-use site, the City is looking to engage with interested vendors who can manage the development and (potentially) operations of the Oldham School site.<sup>3</sup>

## PROJECT DETAILS

The chosen applicant will oversee the project's execution through all subsequent pre-development and development stages. This assumes that the entity will collaborate with the City and community stakeholders to ensure the space aligns with and supports local needs and values.

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<sup>2</sup> The full study report is included in the Resource Documents attachment to this RFEOL.

<sup>3</sup> It is understood that not all development applicant firms will be interested in operational roles at the conclusion of the build and construction process. As is outlined later in this document, the City is interested, at a minimum, in development partners who do not wish to proceed into an operational role acting as a partner to identify qualified applicants to act as facility and campus operators and/or identify specialized operators for the specific space functions within the Oldham School and housing components of the project.

*Project Name* Oldham School Building & Site Development Project

<i>Purpose</i>	Develop the Oldham School parcel to support a mixed-use community-focused building (school building) and housing campus.
<i>Facility Size (Interior)</i>	~33,900 sq. ft. (proposed school building development measurement)
<i>Facility Size (Exterior)</i>	~6,600 sq. ft. (proposed school building exterior space measurement) *Full parcel as referenced will be included in full project scope.
<i>Parcel Size</i>	3.9-acre lot
<i>Location</i>	640 Bullocks Point Avenue, East Providence, RI
<i>Development Phase</i>	Pre-Development
<i>Target Engagement of Developer</i>	Target of Q1 2026
<i>Project Consultants, Lead Contacts Contact Email</i>	Hailey Grohman, Consultant, New Venture Advisors Maura Rapkin, Consultant, New Venture Advisors <a href="mailto:hailey@newventureadvisors.net">hailey@newventureadvisors.net</a> <a href="mailto:Maura@newventureadvisors.net">Maura@newventureadvisors.net</a>

## PROJECT ELEMENTS

The proposed development of the Oldham School building could include various uses based on the findings and suggested programs of the feasibility study. Although the selected applicant will need to refine the concept and model to ensure the project is financially viable, it is preferred that the final site feature some or all of the following:

- **Flexible commercial kitchen space**, designed to serve a variety of users, featuring designated hot and cold cooking areas, prep and packaging zones, dry and cold storage, and a scullery.
- **Demonstration and performance spaces** to facilitate culinary and other educational activities.
- **Makers' studios and creative production spaces** to support local craftsmen, artists, small businesses, and manufacturing entrepreneurs/start-ups.
- A **full-service café**
- **Multi-purpose classrooms** for job readiness, hands-on workforce training, pipeline programs, workshops, and organizational meetings.
- Rentable **coworking spaces** to enable flexible business operations.
- **Event and community gathering spaces**, both indoors and outdoors
- Publicly accessible **existing gymnasium** to serve as a recreation facility, potentially operated by the City's Parks Department.

This facility should serve as a long-term investment in community entrepreneurship, housing, and economic development opportunities.



## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This project aims to design and develop a mixed-use site that smoothly integrates the existing Oldham School building in East Providence, RI, with a fully operational community campus. This facility will support the economic growth of various industries, promote entrepreneurship, enhance community wellness, and increase community access to the arts and opportunities.

The selected applicant(s) will be responsible for:

- **Concept and Design Development:** Developing a successful mixed-use plan that refines the programs identified in the feasibility study, incorporating community feedback on housing density and external space functions such as parking and pedestrian/car circulation.
- **Community Engagement:** Continue involving stakeholders and the community to make sure the campus is accessible and welcoming for people of all ages, cultures, and business types.
- **Fundraising:** Identifying and obtaining the right mix of capital, including public funds, philanthropic support, debt, investment, and incentives, to finance the project's development.
- **Consultant and Project Team Sourcing:** Assessing, approving, and managing all design and development consultants required for project execution.
- **Construction Administration:** Sourcing, evaluating, and contracting with construction firm(s) needed to execute the project, as well as daily management of budget, schedule, and RFIs.
- **Operations and/or Tenant/Operator Sourcing:** Partnering with the city to (at a minimum) identify, assess, and secure operating partners and/or anchor tenants as needed for the development plan to ensure a successful operational program mix.<sup>4</sup>

Successful plans will articulate a compelling vision and clear direction for implementing this project – from design development through operations and occupancy.

## SERVICES AND EXPERTISE SOUGHT

The City is seeking to partner with a multidisciplinary firm, team, or consortium. The RFEI process aims to promote collaboration among leading local and national development professionals to create a comprehensive plan with a clear vision, guiding principles, objectives, and an implementation or operational strategy to revitalize and enhance this vital and historic asset in the Riverside neighborhood of East Providence.

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<sup>4</sup> As stated prior, it is not required that a development entity also assume an operational role for the housing, Oldham school facility, or campus as a whole. It is assumed that, at a minimum, the development entity will act as a partner to the City in ensuring that a qualified candidate or candidates is/are identified to support the long-term operational needs of the final concept that proceeds into development. The complexity of potential operational roles and relationships, as well as potentially interested partners, is discussed at length in NVA's Feasibility Final Report included in the supporting resource packet.



The successful applicant must identify members of a core team who have the expertise and ability to provide services in—at a minimum—areas such as underwriting and financing, asset management, concept development and modeling, consultant sourcing and onboarding, entitlements and permitting, construction administration, design development, community engagement processes, and building operational management or planning. Other required disciplines for the development plan will be identified at the RFP stage.

The lead of the applicant team should be a **Development Team Project Manager** to oversee the work of the development team, while also serving as the primary liaison with the City.

Engagement and communication with the public and stakeholders will be essential for the successful development and implementation of the site's master plan. This area matters to a wide range of residents and businesses, and there have been many aspirations and competing visions for its future. Several levels of government, public groups, community organizations, and special interest groups need to be considered. Achieving the project's goals relies on close collaboration with the City of East Providence and incorporating the perspectives of diverse groups, residents, and community members.

## SCOPE OF WORK

The following activities are expected to be included in the applicant's scope of work. This is not an exhaustive list, and additional activities may be added to the scope as project timing, budgets, inclusions, or applicants' experience dictate. **The final RFP process will clearly outline specific tasks based on the interest and ideas shared during this RFEI process.**

### CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT (PRE-DEVELOPMENT PLANNING)

- Concept development in partnership with the City and community stakeholders including refinement of the program mix and schematic design for both the existing building and the surrounding parcel
- Coordination with relevant City officials and regulatory bodies

### FUNDRAISING AND UNDERWRITING

- Financial modeling, including development budget, sources and uses, and P&L
- Identification, planning and securing of capital stack, including both private and public funding sources
- Coordination with the City to formalize incentives

### DESIGN SERVICES

- Oversight of a team of design consultants, including architects, interior designers, MEP, structural, and civil engineers
- Creation of renderings, cost estimates, and schematic designs
- Completion of design development and preparation of construction documents
- Project management and coordination with all engaged firms and consultants



## CONSTRUCTION AND PROJECT OVERSIGHT

- Coordination of construction planning, permitting, and administration
- Oversight of all consultants, contractors and subcontractors throughout project execution

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Firms must demonstrate a commitment to community engagement and describe their strategy for integrating the needs and input of the community, to include:
  - Collaborating with key stakeholders and community members
  - Ensuring broad accessibility and responsiveness to community needs
  - Facilitating community meetings or events to gather feedback and share required publication of intents.

## OPERATOR ENGAGEMENT

- Coordination of the process to identify required operational expertise for the campus, facility, and specialized functions or programs within.
- Collaborate with the City to maintain engagement with potential partners, interested anchor and auxiliary tenants, and programming organizations.

## RFEOI PROCESS

Interested parties (“applicants”) should respond to this RFEOI in accordance with the following process instructions.

1. Expressions of interest are being solicited to allow the City of East Providence to gauge responses and assess Applicant’s expertise. This will enable the City to conduct a more formal procurement process, which may be tailored (at the City’s discretion) based on the responses received and, if the City chooses, limited to all or some of the RFEOI applicants. The city expects to issue a request for proposals, which is anticipated to be released to multiple qualified applicants during Q4 of 2025 or Q1 of 2026.
2. The RFEOI process aims to encourage businesses with the necessary expertise to participate. Applicants should ensure that their Expressions of Interest clearly demonstrate expertise relevant to the scope of work and the specific expertise sought (as outlined on pages 6-8 of this request).
3. Applicants should be prepared to submit a formal proposal related to the subject matter outlined in this RFEOI if the City invites the Applicant to participate in a request for proposals at a later date.





## SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The client team has requested that all applicants compile the following materials into a single PDF packet and submit to the contacts listed (NVA project consultants).

1. **Cover Letter (“Expression of Interest”)** statement addressing the Applicant's decision to apply, acknowledgement of stage of process (RFEI), and willingness to prepare/submit a formal proposal if engaged for an RFP process.
  - a. **Must include:**
    - i. Firm name, primary contact name, contact information (phone, email, address), and state licensing information relevant to this project.
2. **Statement of Qualification** showing that the Applicant / Applicant team has the necessary qualifications as outlined in this RFEI and identified as needed for this project.
  - a. **Must include (but not limited to):**
    - i. Firm’s history, mission, and areas of specialization. Describe the type of entity (for example, individual, corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship) and if a joint venture, clearly state this and state who the joint venture parties are and identify who is acting as the lead.
    - ii. Current capacity and availability for this project, including description of the company/entity size, depth, and annual sales volumes (in dollars). Provide a demonstrated history of collaboration with public service. Describe the Respondent’s capability (financial, experience and workload capacity) to undertake the role of supplier.
    - iii. Names of key personnel and subcontractors with relevant experience, bios, and resumes
3. **Statement of Approach to Project Execution, including** methodology for design/development process, community engagement strategies, project management plan, and operational approach.
  - a. **Must include (but not limited to):**
    - i. Describe your understanding of the project, its opportunities and challenges.
    - ii. Describe your team’s project approach philosophy and high-level approach to the services to be provided.
    - iii. Provides a discussion of your team’s approach to community engagement, demonstrating an understanding of the stakeholders involved in the process.
4. **Statement of Relevant Project Experience**
  - a. **Must include a minimum of three relevant references that demonstrate (including contact information and total construction/project value):**
    - i. Experience with culturally relevant, food infrastructure, or public-serving facility work;
    - ii. Experience in housing in urban, high-density, or mixed campus projects;
    - iii. An ability to apply expertise to both desired building and housing outcomes on a mixed-function campus/project.



5. **Statement clarifying any conflicts of interest** (such as prior City employment, relationship or relation to elected officials or City employees, conflicting clients or projects).

Please keep your submission to no more than ten pages, excluding relevant project examples and resumes organized in an appendix. Proposals will be evaluated based on the process outlined below, and qualified candidates will be invited to a preliminary interview with City officials and a site visit.

### SUBMISSION CONTACT (PROJECT CONSULTANT)

All submissions, questions, or requests should be submitted in writing by email to the project consultants listed below, following the timeline and process notes provided. *\*Please do not email, call, or visit the City directly.\**

- **Maura Rapkin**, *Consultant*, New Venture Advisors; Email: [maura@newventureadvisors.net](mailto:maura@newventureadvisors.net)
- **Hailey Grohman**, *Consultant*, New Venture Advisors; Email: [hailey@newventureadvisors.net](mailto:hailey@newventureadvisors.net)

### QUESTIONS

Interested applicants may submit questions or request a preliminary call with the project consultant. The project consultant will not make any commitments or promises outside of the process described below.

Questions or requests for a preliminary call should be submitted in writing via email to the project contacts (information above) by **5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, August 15<sup>th</sup>**.

### RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

To help applicants develop a submission, the consultant team offers the following resources for review. Please [click here](#) to access the resource packet.

- Final Project Report (August 31, 2021) of the Citywide Survey of Historic Public School Buildings East Providence R.I. developed by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh (Historic Preservation Consultant)
- Final Summary of Findings (Report) developed by Roger Williams University; Riverside Square Revitalization Assessment and Recommendations (January 2023)
- Feasibility Study Final Report (July 2025) developed by New Venture Advisors (NVA), including preliminary concept designs, community engagement findings, modeling, and site analysis
- Asbestos Abatement Plan for Roof prepared by SAGE Environmental, Inc. (September 12, 2024)
- Summary Report for Oldham School Hazardous Building Materials Assessment prepared by SAGE Environmental, Inc. (April 9, 2025)



## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The City, supported by the project consultants, will review the Expressions of Interest submitted to determine whether, in the City's opinion, each Applicant has demonstrated:

- Relevant experience, qualifications, and capacity (including experience with similar large-scale mixed-use projects) needed for the applicant to progress in the City's procurement process.
- Appropriateness and effectiveness of the methods proposed for the project approach and objectives.
- Demonstrated understanding of the needs required to inform and engage the community and relevant stakeholders.
- Familiarity with permitting, entitlements, and construction in RI.

This determination will advance qualified applicants in the City's procurement process and allow the city to select a number of applicants who are pre-qualified to respond to a formal RFP process.

The project team will use both qualitative and quantitative evaluation matrices to review submitted Expressions of Interest. The evaluation criteria mentioned above may not be listed in order of importance and will not necessarily be weighted equally.

## INQUIRIES

The City, or the project consultants engaged on the City's behalf, without any obligation to do so, may conduct inquiries or investigations, including but not limited to contacting references, to verify the statements, documents, and information submitted in connection with an Expression of Interest. They may also seek further clarification from applicants, their references, and referenced projects regarding their experience.

## INFORMATION DISCLAIMER

The City and the project consultants make no representations regarding these RFEOI documents, and all individuals affiliated with either the City or the project consultants' firm will not be liable or responsible for the accuracy or completeness of the information in these RFEOI documents or for any other written or oral information provided to any interested party. Each applicant should conduct its own independent investigations of all relevant matters and should not rely on the City or the project consultants in this regard. The information contained in this RFEOI and its supporting resources is provisional and is expected to be superseded by information in an official request for proposals issued by the City of East Providence at a later date.



## EVALUATION PROCESS TIMELINE

The expected process for evaluating firms engaged includes the following key activities:

- **July 24 – August 15, 2025:** RFEI issued and open for questions. Interested parties should email the project consultant to request or schedule an informational call or to submit any questions related to this RFEI. All questions, resource requests, and follow-up call requests must be received by **5:00 pm EST on Friday, August 15, 2025**.
- **Late August 2025,** the Project Consultant, working with the City, will host an in-person site visit and interview at the Oldham School for all interested parties with City officials to answer questions and discuss the project.
- **August 28, 2025,** EOIs are due to the Project Consultant as outlined in the Submission Contact section.
- **September 2025,** the Project Consultant will provide updated status and response to the submitted Expressions of Interest informed by the City's review and feedback.
- **Q4 2025 – Q1 2026:** The City of East Providence plans to release a formal RFP. This RFP will be administered via the City's website and will follow traditional City RFP and procurement processes. Pre-qualified candidates will be invited to participate in this process.