



Minneapolis
Park & Recreation Board
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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
WATER WORKS PAVILION RESTAURANT &
CONCESSION OPERATOR

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS RELEASED ON:
DECEMBER 22, 2025

PROPOSALS DUE ON: FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2026.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is seeking a highly qualified operator for the Water Works Pavilion. The Water Works Pavilion is part of Mill Ruins Park which is located within the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park and is in the Downtown West neighborhood. The Water Works Pavilion consists of carefully preserved mill remnants from Bassett's Sawmill and Columbia Flour Mill, dine-in restaurant, Lenzmeier Family Foundation Classroom, six bathrooms, and a visitor center welcome desk. The grounds adjacent to the Water Works Pavilion consists of The Bank of America City Steps with social seating and terraced green spaces, Columbia Terrace with outdoor dining space and event lawn overlooking St. Anthony Falls, General Mills Plaza with three gas firepits, industrial relics unearthed during construction, mezzanine lawn with open green space overlooking St. Anthony Falls, native plants featuring medicinal and edible properties, nature play lab, nature-themed playground for small children, and stone remnant walls from Occidental and Columbia mills. The Minneapolis Park system has 21 million visitors annually, with the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park attracting nearly 3.6 million visitors annually.

The Water Works Pavilion is located adjacent to the Mississippi River at 425 West River Parkway. MPRB bought the site in 1990. It was during an era of riverfront park development that saw the nearby Stone Arch Bridge transition from railroad to pedestrian and bike use, and an expansion of trails on West River Parkway. The site had been dormant for more than 20 years. Following an international riverfront park design competition in 2010, the MPRB launched RiverFirst, a generational vision for transforming areas of once-industrial Mississippi Riverfront into a welcoming place for all people through improved habitat and miles of new interconnected parks and trails. Water Works was one of the first projects identified through RiverFirst. Construction on Water Works started with archeological investigation that began in 2017. Park and pavilion construction began in 2019, and the project was completed in the summer of 2021.

A Request for Interest was issued in 2017, and a private operator was selected to operate the Water Works Pavilion. The operator has been in the Water Works Pavilion since 2021.

The current operator's contract expires in April, 2026 and the MPRB is interested in reviewing all proposals related to operation of the Water Works Pavilion. The goal is to have a new operator in place in April of 2026.

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE

The key concepts we would like to see outlined in a proposal to operate the Water Works Pavilion are:

- 1.) Maximizing income to the MPRB
- 2.) Providing reliable service to the public with extensive hours and minimal closings
- 3.) A unique venue oriented to the neighborhood and visitor demographics
- 4.) An environmentally friendly business approach
- 5.) An expandable business approach to meet the needs of large crowds
- 6.) An operator with the resources to invest into equipment and facility improvements
- 7.) A venue that respects and appreciates the unique setting and backdrop of the Mississippi River
- 8.) An operator with integrity and commitment to the park system and park patrons
- 9.) An operator which will provide a service that is efficient, effective, excellent and equitable to park patrons.

PROPOSALS

The proposals should clearly outline the type of venue, income estimates, payment to the MPRB, investments in equipment and facilities, business plan, terms, operating season and hours and sample menu pricing. The operator must also include their experience in the restaurant or concession business. A template for the proposal format is included as Attachment A – please use this format in your submission.

Proposals Due: Friday, January 23, 2026, 4:00 pm CST

Submit to: Shane Stenzel, Park Activation and Enterprise Development Manager
Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
2117 West River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55411-2227
sstenzel@minneapolisparcs.org

EVALUATION OF THE PROPOSALS

A committee comprised of MPRB staff, technical experts and key stakeholders will evaluate all the proposals and will provide their recommendation on a preferred operator to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners. The final decision on entering into an agreement will be made by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners.

PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS

The committee may request a presentation by the proposal submitter to clarify the proposal. The MPRB may require Proposers to make a formal presentation of their respective proposals to the Board of Commissioners. An agenda of specific interest points identified by the Board may be provided to respondents prior to the presentation date.

SCHEDULE

Listed below are the dates and times by which stated actions must be taken or completed. If the Board determines, in its sole discretion, that it is necessary to change any of these dates and times it will issue an Addendum to this RFP. All listed times are local Minneapolis, CST.

Date/Time	Action
Friday, December 19, 2025	Request for Proposal released
Monday, January 12, 2026, at 10 am Friday, January 16, 2026, at 9 am	Walk through at the facility for interested parties
Friday, January 23, 2026 at 4 pm	Proposal Due Date
February 2026	Proposal Presentations to Selection Committee
February 2026	MPRB decision on recommended proposal
Wednesday, March 4, 2026	Recommendations Presented at Administration & Finance Committee
Wednesday, March 18, 2026	Final Board Action Full Board
By April 1, 2026	Contract Executed
April 15, 2026	Facility Available for new tenant
By May 15, 2026	Facility Open to the Public

BOARD RIGHTS

The MPRB may reject any or all responses to this request or accept a response in whole or in part. The MPRB also reserves the right to cancel the solicitation process without penalty, if circumstances prevent the process from being completed.

PROPOSER BACKGROUND CHECKS

The MPRB will require full criminal history background checks and credit history checks for all proposers.

PROPOSAL VALIDITY PERIOD

Any submitted proposal, shall in its entirety, remain a valid proposal for twelve (12) months after the proposal submission date.

DISPOSITION OF PROPOSALS

All proposals become the property of the MPRB and the MPRB shall have the right to use all ideas, and/or adaptations of those ideas, contained in any proposal received in response to this RFP. Any parts of the proposal or any other material(s) submitted to the MPRB with the proposal that are copyrighted or expressly marked as “confidential”, “proprietary”, or “trade secret”, will be exempted from the “open records disclosure requirements”. The MPRB's selection or rejection of a proposal will not affect this exemption.

INDEPENDENT PARTIES

Except as expressly provided otherwise in the contract resulting from this RFP, if any, the MPRB and the Proposer shall remain independent parties and neither shall be an officer, employee, agent, representative or co-partner of, or a joint venture with, the other.

PERFORMANCE INVESTIGATIONS

As part of its evaluation process, the MPRB may make investigations to determine the ability of the Proposer to perform under the response of this RFP. The Board reserves the right to REJECT any proposal if the Proposer fails to satisfy the MPRB that it is properly qualified to carry out the obligations under the response of this RFP.

INTEREST OF MEMBERS OF BOARD

The Proposer agrees that no member of the governing body, officer, employee or agent of the MPRB shall have any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, in the contract resulting from this RFP.

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT/ COVENANT AGAINST CONTINGENT FEES

Proposer hereby certifies that, to the best of its knowledge and belief, no individual employed by the Proposer or subcontracted by the Proposer has an immediate relationship to any employee of the MPRB who was directly or indirectly involved in any way in the procurement of the contract, if any, resulting from this RFP or goods or services thereunder. Violation of this section by Proposer shall be grounds for cancellation of such contract. The Proposer also warrants that no person or selling agency has been employed, engaged or retained to solicit or secure any contract resulting from this RFP or any advantage hereunder upon an agreement or understanding for a commission, percentage, brokerage or contingent fee, or in exchange for any substantial consideration bargained for, excepting that which is provided to the Proposer's bona fide employees or to bona fide professional commercial or selling agencies or in the exercise of reasonable diligence should have been known by the MPRB to be maintained by the Proposer for the purpose of securing business for Proposer. In the event of the Proposer's breach or violation of this warranty, the MPRB shall, subject to Proposer's rights, have the right, at its option, to annul any contract resulting from this RFP without liability, to deduct from the charges otherwise payable by the MPRB under such contract the full amount of such commission, percentage, brokerage, or contingent fee, and to pursue any other remedy available to the MPRB under such contract, at law or in equity.

DATA PRACTICES

The Proposer agrees to comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and all other applicable state and federal laws relating to data privacy or confidentiality. The Proposer shall immediately report to the contract monitor any requests from third parties for information relating to this agreement. The MPRB agrees to promptly respond to inquiries from the Proposer concerning data requests. The Partner agrees to hold the MPRB, its officers, department heads and employees harmless from any claims resulting from the Proposer's unlawful disclosure or use of data protected under state and federal laws.

ATTACHMENT A - PROPOSAL FORMAT

Business Plan
Description of Venue, Menu, Season, Hours and Pricing
Description of investments to the facility, equipment investments
Proposal Terms (income to the Park Board, term of agreement, other)
Estimated Income – Years 1 to 5
Operator Experience
Sustainability Initiatives
References
Other information