

TOWN OF STAFFORD CONNECTICUT

REQUEST FOR INTEREST, IDEAS & INNOVATION

FOR THE
REHABILITATION, CONVERSION AND/OR
REDEVELOPMENT OF THE

FORMER EARL M. WITT INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

LOCATED AT

**20 HYDE PARK ROAD
STAFFORD, CT**

Proposals Deadline: 11:00 a.m., November 1, 2021

Proposal Submission To: Amber Wakley
Grants & Marketing Office
Town of Stafford
1 Main Street
Stafford, CT 06076
Office: 860.331.0243
Email: amberw@staffordct.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Objective

The Town of Stafford is preparing to offer the former Witt School located at 20 Hyde Park Road in Stafford for adaptive reuse or other creative redevelopment proposals by qualified entities. The Town is seeking ideas and/or expressions of interest ("Letters of Interest") from persons or companies who recognize the unique opportunity to breathe new life into this building located in Hyde Park and close to the Central Business District.

The Town is requesting Letters of Interest from prospective developers for the reuse or redevelopment of this structure. The Request for Interest, Ideas, & Innovation (RFI) precedes the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP). The Town may issue an RFP after reviewing the Letters of Interest and presenting them to interested parties including, but not limited to, the Board of Selectmen.

The Town will look favorably on proposals that:

- Optimize the Central Business District and serve as a catalyst to advance town-wide economic development
- Promote a business-friendly philosophy by supporting viable, sustainable and creative ideas
- Be compatible with the unique small-town character of Stafford

2. Community Desire

The Town has hired consultants to produce ideas for possible reuse scenarios of the Witt building. Subsequently, outreach to the community has taken place through a number of public meetings. At this time, the community is seeking input from the development/private investment community and interested development professionals about how they might envision redeveloping the site within the themes and visions proposed by the community and consultants.

Community feedback through the planning process has demonstrated that potential future uses for the former School structure include new market-rate housing, mixed-use development, community and/or indoor recreation space, possible restaurant/retail space, hotel use and open space.

Concepts that can provide strategies for meeting inclusion of several community desires will be looked upon most favorably.

3. Goals

Letters of Interest are being sought to:

- Determine feasible reuse projects of the structure that meet community needs and desires while considering property conditions and the neighborhood.

- Help gauge the type and extent of interest in the redevelopment, including proposals about how to integrate the proposed use with the surrounding public park and hiking trails.
- Provide opportunities for developers to identify other entities that may be interested in participating as tenants or co-developers in a possible joint venture; and
- Generally, inform the preparation and issuance of a final Request for Proposals.

The goal of this RFI is to build off of the public visioning sessions by educating and informing the Board of Selectmen, Economic Development Commission and other Town entities as to the interest in site redevelopment or reuse and to guide them in their decision as to the type of feasible redevelopment that is most likely to occur.

Attachments

1. [Report of Hazardous Building Materials Investigation](#)
2. [Conceptual Reuse Plans \(9/30/2020 & 11/3/2020\)](#)
3. [Community Feedback Survey Results](#)
4. [School History & Recommendations from the Stafford Historical Advisory Commission](#)

Materials also available for download at: <http://www.explorestaffordct.com/witrifi>
Stafford Brownfields Initiative: <https://www.explorestaffordct.com/brownfields>

PROPERTY DETAILS

1. Property History

The Witt School was built in 1938 and occupied from January of 1939 through 2007. The building is surrounded by 157-acre Hyde Park, where Town-sponsored activities take place as well as passive recreational uses. The park includes over 147 acres of forest land with hiking trails.

Any development of the school building should not detract or effect these public uses, but rather enhance them. The underlying zone of the property is Open Space. This a zone that allows little development. However, there are commercial and residential zones nearby that could allow the developer the option to change the zone to be compatible with the concept. The Town would consider rezoning for proposals that take into consideration the community's desires and needs.

2. Property Statistics

The property consists of two, adjoining parcels of land designated as Map 70, Lot 82 and Map 67, Lot 12 on the Town Assessors' maps and comprises approximately 157 acres. The Witt School contains approximately 46,417 square feet of space. Also, on the site is the Town's Family Services department. This building is not part of the proposal. The lots are known as 20 and 21 Hyde Park road and are not legally divided. The structure is serviced by public water and sewer.

In addition to the structures, the property includes open space, ball fields, a band shell, playground, historical landmarks, among others, and areas for passive recreation. Any proposal would need variances or special permits from either the Planning and Zoning Commission or the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Town would consider a long-term lease for the property or else a parcel would have to be created out of the 157 acres that would be acceptable to the Town and that would allow the park use to continue. Any proposal should show a new lot configuration for the proposed use and include the required parking, if applicable.

The park is used for passive recreation, Town functions, sporting events, as well as concerts.

3. Zoning and Other Restrictions

Zoning: The Witt School is located in the Open Space district which allows for passive recreation, education, and municipal type activities. For the purposes of this RFI, projects that conform to the zoning are not required. Respondents may present creative concepts that require zoning changes needed to achieve their goal, and they should outline these proposed zoning changes. These changes may include rezoning the lot or proposing a special overlay district.

Public Access: Walking access from the Central Business District and Hyde Park should be considered as part of the proposal. It is critically important that the development not disturb the public use of the Park and the hiking trails. No development should hinder public access to the site, but should enhance it.

Reuse or Demolition: The Town prefers adaptive reuse of the existing buildings, however demolition and new construction may be proposed. Partial demolition may also be proposed. The Town especially wishes to hear creative and visionary ideas for how to connect this former school to the surrounding parkland/hiking trails, the Central Business District, and the community at-large.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Letters of Interest will provide the Town with the ability to better understand the type and level of interest in the Witt School and will provide interested parties with an opportunity to provide input to the Town on possible reuse scenarios or considerations.

Letters of Interest are requested for submittal to the Grants & Marketing Office no later than 11:00 a.m. on November 1, 2021, in any of the following methods (listed in order of preference):

1. Complete and submit an RFI Letter of Interest
2. Submission in PDF format (under 10MB or via link to cloud-storage service) by email to amberw@staffordct.org
3. Submission by mail on paper in 8 ½" x 11" format for text, and to the extent practical, for graphics (oversized pages or graphics should be folded to 8½" X 11" to:

Amber Wakley
Grants & Marketing Office
Town of Stafford
1 Main Street
Stafford, CT 06076

SUBMITTAL REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Review Authority: Commencing at the beginning of November 2021, an Evaluation Committee will begin to review submitted interest packages.

Review Basis: Each submission will be evaluated based on the submission's responsiveness to Town interests, community objectives and guidelines and such other criteria as deemed helpful in assessing the best future use of the structure and overall property.

Distribution of Submissions: During the review process, interest packages may be directed to applicable Town departments, boards, commissions, and individuals whose comments and observations will assist in the assessment/review process. Additionally, the Evaluation Committee may seek advice and input from any Town boards, committees or individuals, and from the Board of Selectmen, during the review process.

Additional Information/Interviews: The Committee may request additional information of one or more respondents relative to a submission. Respondents may also be invited to appear before the Committee. The right to an interview does not automatically extend to all whose submissions are accepted for review, but is granted at the sole discretion of the Committee.

Selection of Concepts: The Committee will evaluate the submitted interest packages and concepts based on a number of criteria, including community input to date, the contribution of a project to the needs of the Town and the neighborhood, the feasibility of the project, any information relative to preservation of the school building and its features, and whether or not zoning relief or a zoning change may be needed.

These concepts will then be brought to the community through an open forum at which point the selected respondents may be invited, though not required, to attend and present their concepts. Based on the community feedback on the concepts presented at the forum, the Town will then determine next steps towards revitalizing the School property. The goal of the RFI process is to assist in the generation of an RFP with comprehensive and defined requirements and criteria to guide developers in formulating proposals.

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SUBMITTAL COMPONENTS

Cover Letter

1. Statement of Interest.
2. Identify the primary respondent and qualifications.
3. Provide name, address and contact information of all interested parties.

Basis of Interest

1. Describe the intended use.
2. Describe the extent of building use (reuse all/part/none of current structure).
3. Describe the extent of land use and what areas would be needed for parking and other amenities.
4. If possible, provide an expanded description of your redevelopment vision, including diagrams, renderings, or other drawings related to the plans and/or layouts.

Financial Overview

1. Describe the proposed Investment, specifically a long-term lease of the building from the Town, purchase of property from the Town, or another form? The Town is open to hearing creative ideas.
2. Describe how the proposed reuse will cover all anticipated ongoing operating and maintenance costs.
3. Estimated costs.
4. What potential capital funding sources would be appropriate for the reuse vision?

4. Relevant Experience

5. Tenancy Opportunity

The Town encourages those who may not be prepared to advance proposals for reuse of the entire Witt School structure, but would wish to be considered as a tenant within another entity's proposal to provide information on the space needed within the site and an overview of the desired use.

6. Additional Information

The Town further encourages persons to present any additional pertinent information or suggestions that the Town should consider prior to issuing an RFP.

RIGHTS RESERVED BY THE TOWN OF STAFFORD

- The Evaluation Committee may request additional information to supplement and further develop a response.
- Each respondent should include sufficient supporting material to allow a meaningful and comprehensive evaluation of its submission.
- The Town reserves the right to reject any and all submissions, or to cancel the RFI, with no penalty, if deemed to be in the best interests of the Town.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Respondents may submit more than one response to this RFI. However, each submission to reuse the property must be a separate, complete package that can be considered independently.
- The Evaluation Committee may amend or revise the RFI as a result of questions submitted by respondents or for any other reason that causes the Committee to believe it would be in the best interests of the Town to do so. Such amendments or revisions will be published on the RFI listing on ExploreStaffordCT.com/brownfields

- The Town will not be liable for any costs incurred by any respondents in the preparation and presentation of responses to this RFI or in the participation in views, interviews, or any other aspect of this RFI process.
- The selection of a submission by the Evaluation Committee for consideration during this RFI process does not presume approval of the proposed plans nor impose any obligation upon the Town to select said respondent in a future RFP. Conversely, a respondent whose proposal is selected by the Evaluation Committee has no obligation to participate in a future RFP process.

QUESTIONS

Written responses will be provided to requests for clarification or interpretation of the meaning of the provisions of this RFI, to all questions raised at the pre-submittal meeting, and to those questions otherwise submitted in writing, which responses will be provided on the RFI listing on ExploreStaffordCT.com/brownfields. Questions must be submitted to the Grants & Marketing Specialist via email or mail as provided in the Submittal Requirements.

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

All submission packages, their contents and accompanying documentation, no matter when submitted, will become the property of the Town and will be regarded as public records when received as directed by *Sec. 1-210. (Formerly Sec. 1-19). Access to public records. Exempt records.* Respondents should be further aware that, with certain exceptions, the Town is required under *Sec. 1-210. (Formerly Sec. 1-19). Access to public records. Exempt records* to make its records available for public inspection. Respondents should appropriately mark all materials they deem confidential or proprietary. However, the Town will bear no liability to any respondent in the event that the Town is legally required to disclose information that a respondent may define as confidential or proprietary.