

March 19, 2019

Region 5 Children's Museum Site Selection Request for Proposal

To Whom it May Concern:

The Board of Directors of Region 5 Children's Museum (the "Children's Museum") is pleased to make available the following request for proposal, containing the process and search criteria for site selection of the permanent location for the new museum. As the Board of the Children's Museum, an independent nonprofit corporation and 501(c)(3) organization, we are dedicated to a transparent and fair site selection process. We understand that selecting the optimal site is a critical step in establishing a thriving children's museum befitting the unlimited potential of our region's children.

To create an inspiring vision and to spur action to achieve it, Sourcewell has contributed seed funding aimed at initiating a community-wide development effort. By working together across the region, we can create a state-of-the-art children's museum, that is truly of the region, by the region, and for the region. The vision of the children's museum has the power to transform, but it will take collaboration and collective investment.

To move forward with the site selection process, we are supplying interested property owners, whether private or public, with a clear process for submitting locations for consideration. We ask that each submission not only describe the property and its attributes, but also identify creative opportunities for further contributions and incentives. If you are interested in submitting a location that you own or have jurisdiction over, please review the enclosed packet and respond with a proposal narrative no later than May 3, 2019.

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On behalf of the founding Board of Directors, thank you for your interest in the Children's Museum, and we look forward to reviewing your proposal.

Sincerely,



Paul Drange, Board Chair Region 5 Children's Museum

1. Board of Directors, Region 5 Children's Museum

Paul Drange, Board Chair
Director of Regional Programs, Sourcewell

Cheryal Hills, Treasurer
Executive Director, Region Five Development Commission

Matt Kilian, Director
President, Brainerd Lakes Chamber of Commerce

Peter Olson, President, Ex Officio Director
Museum Project Director, Region 5 Children's Museum

Quinn Swanson, Secretary
Executive Director, Happy Dancing Turtle

Shannon Wheeler, Director
Early Childhood Coordinator, Pequot Lakes Public Schools

2. Opportunity

The region, community, or city where a museum, or any organization, is located is more than an address or destination. It is the place, the people, the past, stories, and possibilities. It is the backdrop and a starting point for understanding, planning, serving, and benefitting an area, its residents, businesses, and communities.

Located approximately three hours from the Twin Cities, Region 5 is one of 13 economic development regions in Minnesota. It is a rural and small-town area with deep pine forests in the north, rich farmland in the south, chains of lakes in the middle, and the Mississippi River running through it. The region's population of approximately 162,000 annually expands by approximately 300,000 with tourists and seasonal residents.

Region 5, like any other area, is characterized by both promise and challenge. Together these attributes inspire and shape the opportunity the children's museum intends to pursue in serving children, families, and community well.

Over the last decade, regional population has grown and is expected to continue. Population is expected to grow about 8% and to be increasingly ethnically diverse. The region enjoys a diversifying economy. The Brainerd Lakes Area is viewed as being on the cusp of positive and transformative change with multiple development initiatives. Families are considered vital to the growth and development of the region, apparent in housing, employment, educational, and recreational strategies.

Along with indicators of population and economic growth, the region can expect some challenges. While population is growing, it is uneven across the region, it is aging, and is older than the state average. Child poverty rates in the region are somewhat-to-significantly higher than statewide. The lakes, woodlands, and waterways of the region, critical assets to the local economy and quality of life, are also resources that are threatened. Visitors and permanent residents have access to a wide range of outdoor and recreational opportunities, yet there are relatively few out-of-school learning resources, especially during the area's long winters.

Covering a large geographic area, Region 5 holds diverse and varied landscapes, areas of wealth and poverty, urban and rural lifestyles, and a range of historical legacies. While these elements don't reveal a clear regional identity, there is evidence of certain social habits and values shared by many in the region, including: a love of the outdoors, being involved in civic life, cherished family traditions, and shared stories around events and locations. An understanding of these factors has guided Region 5 Children's Museum in envisioning a dynamic community asset for the region's children and families.

3. Response

Region 5 Children's Museum believes it can contribute to the vitality of the region by shining a bright light on children, their potential, and their role in strengthening community life.

The Museum's strategic master plan positions the museum to take an active role around valuing children, childhood, and play. It describes a place-based, informal learning setting that engages children with a particular focus on youth who are twelve years old and younger, their parents, caregivers, and teachers in making connections between ideas and actions, and across systems. A clear focus on children and families exploring and learning together, its understanding of the value of play, and its attention to 21st century skills come together in dynamic environments, experiences, and programs that are richly layered, locally relevant, and open to the wider world. These hands-on, informal learning environments complement and support school priorities and are a resource for field trip visits and professional development for teachers across the region.

As a year-round family destination, the museum will be a highly valued resource for local families and for schools in the winter as well as for visiting families in the summer. Long term, the museum will be an asset as the region strives to attract young families to the area. With time, the museum can expect to be an anchor in the lives of children and families, deepen regional pride, and strengthen connections across the region.

Places To Go is the overarching theme for six indoor and outdoor exhibit areas. It invites children and adults to explore places in the museum, in the region, and in the world; and to see the next challenge and get to it.

- At the Lake focuses on what is fascinating about the area lakes: fishing, catching the big one, sitting on the dock, and exploring water's ways.
- From the Garden is the museum's food hub; food-growing activities connect with eating, cooking, and occasional community gatherings around food and nutrition.
- Into the Woods straddles inside and out and invites exploration of several woodland-themed areas nestled together, from forest to pastures and farm fields.
- On the Road provides the set-up for imaginative travels, where children find familiar place names and landmarks while discovering clues about faraway places.
- Open for Possibilities is a changing space for changing exhibits or community projects.
- In the Great Outdoors is the place for big messy activities that can't happen indoors; for a year-round greenhouse, seasonal gardening, and living ecosystems.

Region 5 Children's Museum is on track to join a small but growing number of children's museums in smaller cities, serving rural areas, and spread across large geographic areas.

4. Vision, Mission, and Organizational Goals

Vision: Region 5 Children's Museum and its partners envision a more vibrant and connected region because all children enjoy the supportive relationships, expanding opportunities, and wellbeing they need to thrive.

Mission: The mission of Region 5 Children’s Museum is to bring together the region’s children and families in shared experiences that are grounded locally and open to the wider world. Dynamic, material-rich environments, exhibits, events, & programs engage children in the joy of play and the wonder of learning.

Organizational Goals: There are six areas in which the Museum intends to channel its efforts and measure its mission success. The Children’s Museum will be:

- A consistently rich array of play and learning experiences and environments that strengthen connections to the region and create openings to the world beyond;
- An indispensable asset in the region for families of all backgrounds to meet and engage around common interests and priorities for their children;
- A recognized regional convener that advances the larger regional agenda around children and the challenges and opportunities they face;
- An organization that connects and helps grow regional assets; people, nature, schools, business, agriculture, and the arts;
- A disciplined organization engaged in learning for itself, children and families, and the region;
- A sustainable organization that leverages regional assets, enjoys diverse support, and monitors selected measures.

5. Audience and How People Visit

The sustainability of the Children’s Museum depends on easy access for various audiences traveling from a large geographic region. While the museum will be enjoyed by a broad cross-section of the general public, our core audience will consist of children twelve years old and younger, their parents, siblings, grandparents, caregivers, and educators living in and visiting the five-county region. Special attention and effort will be leveraged to reach children experiencing participation barriers.

When considering location and access, it is important to remember that every child visiting the Children’s Museum will be accompanied by an adult, and the configuration of each visit may vary widely. We know from market research industry studies that most visits to a children’s museum are decided by the female head of household, that is true whether the child’s mother is attending or not. On the majority of visits, children are accompanied by either or both parents and arrive by car, or are brought by either or either or both grandparent, which seems especially true on school breaks during holidays and over the summer. Multi-generational family groups, including aunts, uncles, and cousins may visit in one or more vehicles. During the school year, it is the intention that all schools in the five-county region will be visiting the museum via field trips. While the children and chaperones will arrive on school buses, sometimes parents and even grandparents join the field trip by driving separately, increasing the need for weekday parking spots. Children may arrive with their childcare provider, and sometimes play-dates at the Children’s Museum will be arranged by parent friend-groups. Weather permitting, it is not uncommon for families to bike to the children’s museum, or for nearby neighbors to enjoy walking to the museum. In urban centers, public transportation is often an option with fare discounts offered. Home schoolers will visit, supplementing their at-home curriculum and will often use the museum as a venue to meet-up with other home school families. To reach children experiencing participation barriers, shuttle services may be chartered, along with accompanying volunteers and social service providers. To be successful, the Children’s Museum will need to be accessible in multi-modal ways to welcome a wide-range of visitation diversity.

6. Search Area

For the Children's Museum to truly serve all of Region Five and those who visit, setting a search area for locating the museum site has been given much thought. In concentrating the search area, a range of factors have been considered:

- Central location to all communities in the five-county region
- Areas of concentrated population including:
 - General population
 - Seasonal population
 - Children birth to twelve
 - Early childhood and early elementary classrooms
- Hubs for economic activity including retail and tourism
- Accessibility to major highway corridors
- Regionally identifiable, with scenic value

When analyzing all these factors, placing the Children's' Museum in proximity to the 210 corridor through the Cities of Brainerd and Baxter and along the 371 corridor from Baxter to Pequot Lakes would likely provide the greatest access from across the five-county region.

7. Site Selection Goal and Objectives

The goal of the site selection process is to secure the optimal permanent site for an accessible, thriving, and fundable Children's Museum destination. Through the site selection process, objectives include:

- Identify incentives and development opportunities to help fund construction and operations
- Increase awareness and generate excitement for the new Children's Museum
- Communicate a site selection process that is transparent and fair to all

8. Site Selection Process

The Board of Directors is committed to carrying out the following anticipated steps in the site selection process. Please note that as circumstances require, the Board of Directors in its discretion may consider alternative steps to achieve the site selection goal and objectives. The anticipated steps in the site selection process include:

- A. Board members available to meet with individual property owners, both private and public, gathering insight for establishing the site selection process
- B. Search criteria and the selection process determined by Board of Directors
- C. Request for Proposal packet made available to all interested property owners
- D. Site Proposals submitted by May 3, 2019
- E. Board of Directors reviews all proposals to narrow options to top-rated sites per established criteria
- F. Board members and client representative interviews and site tours with owners of the top-rated sites
- G. Board of Directors selects one or more preferred site/s
- H. Additional input sought as deemed necessary or valuable
- I. Terms negotiated and settled, letter of intent signed
- J. Launch fund-development strategies

9. Proposal Narrative

For any property to be considered for the physical location of the Region 5 Children's Museum, please submit a narrative proposal document, thoroughly answering the following questions and providing any further information you believe will be helpful to the Board of Directors' consideration of the site.

Basic Information:

1. Applicant's name, statement confirming that the applicant is the site's owner of record, contact information, and address of the site.
2. State whether this site will require new construction or renovation of an existing building. If a renovation, describe the existing building/s with as much detail as possible and what renovations will be necessary to become museum-ready. Include interior and exterior photos, as applicable.
3. What is the size of the property in acres or square feet and what is building size, if existing, in square feet and stories? Is there opportunity for expansion?
4. Are there any purchase costs for the Children's Museum to acquire the site? List examples of purchase costs.
5. Is this property available to lease or to own? Describe any covenants to be expected and if there are any on-going CAM or association requirements and fees.
6. What are the zoning requirements for this property and is a children's museum a permissible use under the current zoning requirements? Describe the zoning of the immediately surrounding area.
7. Describe access to utilities. If utilities are not present, describe what it would take to acquire utilities. Is there Broadband access?
8. Describe how long the current owner has owned the property, and describe the current use of the property and all historical uses to the extent known by the present owner.
9. Are there any known or suspected adverse environmental conditions or hazards associated with the property? If yes, please describe. You may be asked to provide copies of any existing environmental reports.
10. Does the owner of the property own the adjacent or surrounding land, or other land in close proximity to the site? If so, please describe.
11. Are there any known easements on the property? If so, please describe.

Priority Criteria:

Please describe in detail how well the site contributes to the following priorities:

12. Is it a recognized location, known to the people of Region 5, that's easy to access for families and field trips? Provide a description of proximity and access to either Highways 371 or 210. Includes maps and identify the property location.

13. Is there available parking and easy bus drop off? State how many parking spots are available and explain if any of the parking spots are shared with other businesses or individuals.
14. Is there space for outdoor learning environments that include natural elements? Describe if natural elements exist, such as trees, water view, water access, hills or berms, adequate soil for garden plots, etc.
15. Describe how the location would support and amplify the vision described in the Master Plan. See Section 10 of this RFP, below, for instructions on how to access the Master Plan.
16. Does the location contain historic, cultural, or environmental relevance? If so, please describe.
17. Are there family-focused businesses and resources existing in the area or in development? Are there nearby family-friendly food options? Please describe what currently exists, what is known to be in development, and if this is an area where momentum is building with synergy to locate the Children's Museum here.
18. Will the site be donated to the Children's Museum? Please list and describe if there are other contributions or incentives related to this site that would be financially beneficial to the Children's Museum.

Submission Requirements:

Please email a PDF of your proposal to polsonregion5cm@gmail.com no later than May 3, 2019. Attach any maps, images, or other support documentation. Submit questions to Peter Olson, Museum Project Director, by email at polsonregion5cm@gmail.com or by calling 507-995-2242.

The Region 5 Children's Museum reserves the sole right to not select a submitted site in its discretion. While the factors and guidelines in this Request for Proposal are intended to guide the selection process, they are not determinative. The Children's Museum retains the right and discretion to consider any other factors it considers relevant.

The Children's Museum may request additional documents and information from applicants during the site selection and development process to assist with its decision-making. Although an applicant is not obligated by this document to provide further documents or information, failure to provide such information to the Children's Museum may result in the applicant's property not being selected as the final site of the Children's Museum.

10. Master Plan Access

To access the full Master Plan:

<https://mft.sourcewell-mn.gov:4443> (using google chrome)
User: r5museum
Password: 2018Childrensmuseum
Select "Secure Folders" for illustrations and the narrative