



City of Rochester, NY
Lovely A. Warren, Mayor
Rochester City Council

Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) for Restaurant Operator at the Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial

BCA City Building ID No. 9.39
Rochester, New York

Issued: June 26, 2020



City of Rochester
Department of Environmental Services
Bureau of Architecture and Engineering
Architectural Services
414 Andrews Street
Rochester, New York 14604

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The City of Rochester (the City) invites Expressions of Interest (EOI) from qualified Restaurant Operators interested in operating a full-service restaurant at the Blue Cross Arena located at 100 Exchange Boulevard, Rochester, NY. The following information provides prospective respondents pertinent information about the City of Rochester, downtown context and existing Blue Cross Arena facilities and operations.

General Information

PROJECT TITLE: Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) for Restaurant Operator at the Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial
LOCATION: Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial
100 Exchange Street, Rochester, N.Y. 14614
OWNER: City of Rochester, N.Y.
Bldg. ID No. 9.39

For an electronic version of this REOI, please go to the following web site:
<http://www.cityofrochester.gov/bidandrfp/>

Regional Context

The City of Rochester, located in the Genesee Finger Lakes region of New York State, is the third-most populous city in the State with a population of 205,000 residents in 2019. Rochester is the County seat of Monroe County. The larger Rochester metropolitan area has a population of just over one million people.

The region is home to major employers including XEROX, Rochester General Health System, Wegmans, University of Rochester and University of Rochester Medicine, Strong Memorial Hospital, Paychex and Unity Health System, in addition to Monroe County government and the City of Rochester government services. Rochester is well-known and regarded for its cutting edge industries, rooted in the history of KODAK and continuing today with a diversified business base at the Downtown Innovation Zone, Eastman Business Park, and other sites in the region. Rochester also benefits from a strong higher education presence, including the University of Rochester, Monroe Community College which recently opened a downtown campus, St. John Fisher College and Rochester Institute of Technology, among others. Each of these institutions support the local employment base and bring in students both locally and regionally.

Amongst the economic fallout associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Rochester was recognized by Redfin in 2020 as the American city least likely to fall into a coronavirus-induced economic downturn due to the City's business diversity and employment sectors. The City was also recognized on the "Most Livable City" list and identified by Forbes as one of America's "Best Places to Raise a Family".

Downtown Context

Downtown Rochester is the center of growth and investment across the Finger Lakes region, with more than \$2.35 billion dollars invested in the downtown since 2000 and over \$700 million dollars of investment projects in the pipeline. Today, 8,000 people call downtown home, and that number is expected to top 10,000 by 2023. In addition to the strong residential base, Downtown Rochester also boasts 48,000 employees that work within a broad range of service and professional industries. Both residents and workers take advantage of the varied entertainment, sporting events, festivals and performances that occur within downtown throughout the year.

ROC the Riverway

The City's commitment to downtown revitalization has never been stronger. In 2019, the City created an innovative and forward-thinking strategy for downtown investment – ROC the Riverway – which identified over \$500M worth of public and private sector projects focused along the Genesee Riverfront from the University of Rochester campus at the south to the Running Track Bridge at the north end. The ROC the Riverway plan was embraced by New York State for its vision, with the State awarding the City \$50M to advance the first phase of implementation. Blue Cross Arena received \$6M in Phase 1 funding through ROC the Riverway, with the intent to enhance the riverfront promenade, improve facility access, and set the stage for the establishment of a riverside restaurant to provide a unique waterfront dining experience for residents and visitors. As defined in the ROC the Riverway Vision Plan, the Arena project will create an open and dynamic riverfront interface with activities in and around the arena, and will open up public spaces to complement activity at the arena.

More information about ROC the Riverway can be found here:

<https://www.cityofrochester.gov/roctheriverway/>

Blue Cross Arena

Blue Cross Arena is one of the primary destinations for the 5 million visitors that come downtown annually. It is ideally situated in the heart of the downtown core, along the Genesee Riverfront and within a 5-minute walk from major employment and residential centers, the Joseph E. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center, Central Library, City Hall and the Monroe County Office Building. Major regional transportation routes are within one mile of the Arena, which also benefits from nearby street and surface parking, as well as a parking garage accessible via a fully covered walkway.

Blue Cross Arena is a multi-purpose indoor arena that opened in 1955 and underwent major renovations in 1999. Recent upgrades since 2018 have included a new center scoreboard, a new ribbon board, enhanced audio and video equipment and bathroom and locker room upgrades, making it a more desirable destination for a wide variety of sporting and entertainment events. Blue Cross Arena is owned by the City of Rochester and is home to the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League and the Rochester Knighthawks of the National Lacrosse League. In 2018, operations of the Arena were transferred to Pegula Sports

and Entertainment (PSE), the owners of the Americans, Buffalo Sabres and Buffalo Bills and operators of KeyBank Center in Buffalo. Blue Cross Arena hosts more than 140 annual events, attracting more than 525,000 visitors to the site.

SECTION 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Purpose

The purpose of this solicitation is to identify a short list of Restaurant Operators to manage and operate a full-service restaurant at the Blue Cross Arena. As envisioned in ROC the Riverway, the newly developed restaurant space would be located on the first floor of the Arena facing the Genesee River and the public War Memorial Terrace along the riverfront.

Scope

The City is currently engaged with an architectural design firm to advance conceptual designs for the integration of an approximately 10,000 SF restaurant space as part of the Arena complex. The restaurant space will be newly constructed and will take advantage of existing commercial support spaces, such as loading docks, that exist on-site.

The City is open to creative and innovative ideas from interested Restaurant Operators and will work collaboratively with the preferred Restaurant Operator to tailor a program for the restaurant space. The Restaurant is expected to be open and able to accommodate guests on both days where events are occurring on-site as well as non-event nights.

The City is two years into a ten year agreement with PSE for management of the Blue Cross Arena. During this period, the City maintains ownership and oversight of the physical plant and infrastructure investments at the facility. During the contract commitment term, the selected restaurant operator will be responsible and enter into an agreement with the City of Rochester. A joint agreement will be established with the City of Rochester and PSE for the use of any shared spaces, utilities, etc.

Funding and Incentives

A portion of funding designated for Blue Cross Arena through Phase 1 of ROC the Riverway will be delegated to design services and to assist with buildout as it relates to the associated arena expansion and public space modifications. Additional incentives and loan opportunities can be explored at the RFP phase. Creative funding options may be considered.

General

- 1) The City reserves the right to amend or withdraw this REOI in the City's sole discretion, including any timeframes herein, upon notification of all Respondents as set forth above, and in such case, the City shall have no liability for any costs incurred by any Respondent.
- 2) The City may request additional information from any Respondent to assist the City in making its evaluation.

- 3) The proposal and all materials submitted with the proposal shall become property of the City and will be subject to NYS Freedom of Information Law. If any proprietary information is submitted with the proposal, it must be clearly identified and a request to keep such information confidential must be submitted.
- 4) The selection pursuant to an REOI is within the City’s sole discretion and no reasons for rejection or acceptance of an EOI are required to be given. The City reserves the right to reject any or all EOIs or to accept an EOI that does not conform to the terms set forth herein. The City further reserves the right to waive or modify minor irregularities in the EOIs and to make decisions that serve the City’s best interest.
- 5) Questions must be submitted in writing (preferably e-mail) to the project contacts, listed below. All questions and City responses will be shared with all who have indicated intent to submit and have provided an e-mail address.

SECTION 3. SUBMITTAL PROCESS

Process

Interested parties are required to respond to this Expression of Interest in accordance with the terms listed in this REOI. In the first phase of this two-phase process, responses to the REOI are being requested to provide the City an opportunity to evaluate the Respondent’s experience and financial capacity. This will allow the City to identify a shortlist of operators, deemed to be pre-qualified, who will be invited to submit a full proposal in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP).

Key Dates

To assist Respondents, the following are Key Target Dates associated with the EOI process.

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| • REOI for Restaurant Operator Issued | June 29, 2020 |
| • Site Tour | TBD (see below) |
| • Inquiries Received Up To | July 24, 2020 |
| • Due Date for EOI Submissions | July 31, 2020 |
| • Short List of Respondents Identified | August 2020 |
| • Interviews | August 2020 |
| • Selection of Respondents to Advance to RFP Phase | September 2020 |

All dates shown may be subject to change within the City of Rochester’s sole discretion. The City anticipates the RFP will be distributed within one month following the completion of the EOI Evaluation Process.

Site Tour

There is no requirement to perform a site visit. Individuals interested in participating in a site visit and tour of the existing facility should contact Chris McManus, Project Manager at Christopher.mcmanus@CityofRochester.Gov.

No group tour will be scheduled. Site visits will be scheduled with individual interested parties between July 6, 2020 and July 24, 2020.

Notifications

Respondents will be notified by the date above, if they have been selected as being pre-qualified and will be invited to submit a full proposal under the RFP process. A separate RFP will be provided to short-list firms within three weeks of identification of a pre-qualified short-list.

SECTION 4. SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Submittal Deadline

Respondents should provide five (5) hard copies and one (1) electronic copy of their Expression of Interest by 4 PM on Friday, July 31, 2020. Hard copies should be in an envelope clearly labeled "BCA Restaurant Operator EOI".

Hard copies should be address to the attention of:

Norman H. Jones, DES Commissioner
Chris McManus R.A., Project Manager
City of Rochester
Department of Environmental Services
Bureau of Architecture and Engineering,
Architectural Services,
414 Andrews Street
Rochester, New York 14604

The required electronic copy of the EOI should be submitted via email in advance of the submittal deadline to:

Chris Mc Manus, R.A.
Christopher.mcmanus@cityofrochester.gov

Questions and Inquiries

The deadline for all questions and inquiries regarding this Request for Expression of Interest is Friday, July 24th at 4:00 PM.

All communications by parties who have indicated an intent to submit or have submitted a proposal in response to this REOI (“Respondents”), including any questions or requests for clarifications, submission of the proposal, requests for status updates about the proposal selection process and any other inquiries whatsoever concerning this REOI shall be sent, in writing, to the following City staff person(s):

Chris Mc Manus, R.A.

Christopher.mcmanus@cityofrochester.gov

585-428-6846

To ensure that all Respondents have a clear understanding of the scope and requirements of this RFP, the City will respond to all timely questions submitted via e-mail to the City Contact by the question deadline stated above. Questions and the responding answers will be sent via e-mail to all Respondents who have provided an e-mail address to the city contact and will be posted on the City’s web page for this REOI. The City’s failure to timely respond or provide responses to any questions shall not delay or invalidate the City’s right to make decisions pursuant to this REOI.

The City will make every reasonable effort to keep Respondents informed about the REOI process. Notifications about timeline date changes, amendments to the REOI and other information about the REOI will be sent by e-mail to Respondents who have provided an e-mail address to the city contact and will be posted on the City’s website for this REOI. The City’s failure to provide such information shall not delay or invalidate the City’s right to make decisions pursuant to this REOI.

Format Requirements

Responses should be no more than 30 pages (15 pages double sided), not including attachments, and should include the following content. Unless otherwise noted, the requirements below count towards the 30-page maximum. Respondents are advised that they have no claim for compensation associated with the preparation of their submission.

Introduction

Title Page: The Title Page should identify the EOI and Respondent’s name, physical address, telephone number, email address and contact person’s name and title.

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Cover Letter: Clearly stating the Respondent’s intention to respond to this EOI and highlighting overall approach.

Section 1. Experience

Overview: Describe the company (corporation, partnership, etc.) and if a joint venture, clearly state this and identify who the joint venture parties are and the lead for the joint venture. Identify individuals who will have a primary role in the oversight and operations of the Restaurant, both physically and financially. Resumes may be included as an attachment and do not count towards the page limit.

Staff and Financial Capacity: Indicate the capacity to undertake the vision identified in this EOI. Describe any other projects that the Respondent has active or scheduled. Provide a brief statement on financial capacity and financing availability for undertaking the long-term operations of the Restaurant at Blue Cross Arena. If the respondent has any initial requirements for lease terms that would make this venture successful, please note them here.

Pertinent Experience: Describe the experience of the Respondent in operating all aspects of a Restaurant business. List specific project names, associated costs, operating expenses, and personnel involved.

References: Provide a minimum of three (3) references.

Section 2. Statement of Intent

Overview: Provide a brief statement reflecting a summary restaurant and concept for the Restaurant at Blue Cross Arena. This may include ideas on desired square footage, theme, intended food menu choices, operating hours, etc. Describe any unique programming ideas.

Needs and Expectations: Identify any needs and expectations from the City of Rochester or Blue Cross Arena in association with the restaurant use and desire to implement the identified restaurant vision.

Review of Submissions

The City will review the Expressions of Interest submitted to determine whether the Respondent has demonstrated that it has the required experience and qualifications to fulfill the vision associated with services and operations as identified in this REOI. Other criteria may be considered and evaluated by the City if it is determined to be in the best interest of the City and the success of the initiative to do so.

SECTION 5. QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

The selected Respondents shall have previously and successfully operated a restaurant of similar size and complexity as the scope defined herein, or shall show a history of related food industry experience and financial capability to facilitate successful execution of the desired vision. All submissions will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Understanding of the City's objectives and vision;
- Demonstrated past experience in food and restaurant industry, including any other restaurants either currently owned and operated or restaurants that have been previously owned and operated;
- Statement of financial capacity and stability (financial statements requested in RFP process);

- Strength and capacity of restaurant operations team, including education and areas of expertise;
- Approach and ability to communicate and work effectively with the City of Rochester and Pegula Sports and Entertainment; and
- Innovation and creativity in restaurant concept.

SECTION 6. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

City Provided Items

The City will provide interested parties with a copy of the existing floor plans for the Blue Cross Arena to assist with preparation of EOI submittals.

Applicable Regulations

The Restaurant Operator is required to obtain and comply with all pertinent regulations as set forth by the New York State Department of Health and New York State Liquor Authority associated with the operations of a full-service restaurant establishment.