



South Milwaukee Community Development Authority

2906 Sixth Avenue
South Milwaukee, WI 53172
(414) 762-4114 phone (414) 762-7271 fax

Request for Proposals/Call to Artists
909 Menomonee Building Memorial
February 2009

Overview

The South Milwaukee Community Development Authority (SMCDA) invites qualified artists and artist teams to submit proposals for the design and construction of a memorial sculpture or monument to commemorate the historical significance of the events and building at 909 Menomonee, South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This memorial is intended to serve as a permanent marker in place of the physical building, which is scheduled for demolition.

RFP packages are available from:

Danielle Devlin
Executive Director, South Milwaukee CDA
Phone: 414.762.4114
Cell: 414.750.5542
Fax: 414.762.7271
E-mail: ddevlin@bizwi.rr.com

Site visits may be arranged through the above contact information.

Proposals are due no later than 4:00 pm CST on April 6, 2009.

All proposals should be submitted to:

South Milwaukee CDA
Attn: Danielle Devlin
2906 6th Ave
South Milwaukee, WI 53172

All submittals should be clearly marked "909 Memorial."

Background

The SMCDA seeks proposals for design and construction of a memorial to commemorate the events and past occupants of the building at 909 Menomonee in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin in advance of the demolition and redevelopment of the site in 2009.

The westernmost section of the building was built of brick in 1916 to house a rubber manufacturing company. In 1919, Alfred Lawson relocated his airliner manufacturing operations to the building and started to work on his latest passenger airline prototype. During this time he was awarded the first US postal service airmail delivery contract. The airliner crashed on takeoff at the neighboring field and Lawson went bankrupt but many of his aviation concepts and terms have survived to modern times.

In 1928 the Continental Faience and Tile Company built the easternmost portion of the building at 909 Menomonee to serve as workshop, showroom and offices. The building today retains varied examples of Continental's work. Reportedly Continental went out of business at the onset of WWII when clay could no longer be easily imported from Italy.

In 1944, Midwest Pottery relocated from Morton, Illinois to take up operations in the Continental facility. Examples of the art deco style lamp bases and figurines produced here during this time are held by the South Milwaukee Historical Society. The company relocated to Texas in the early 1950s and went bankrupt soon after.

Since the 1950s the buildings have served many warehousing or light industrial uses, including most recently auto repair and boat storage. In 2005 the city of South Milwaukee acquired the site and a large tract to the south for the purpose of blight elimination through redevelopment. Efforts to engage a developer for a suitable adaptive reuse of the deteriorated building were fruitless.

As the property has been considered historically significant, the SMCDA wishes to create a memorial to commemorate the building and site before proceeding with demolition and continued redevelopment efforts in this area.

See pages 4-5 for a detailed narrative of the historical significance of 909 Menomonee.

Description

Proposals are requested that will showcase the events and history of the building in a lasting physical memorial. Preferably the memorial will incorporate materials harvested from the building, such as ceramic tiles, metal and bricks, but incorporation of other materials for the sake of durability and vandal and weather resistance is encouraged as well. This includes metals, stone, glass, ceramic, concrete or any such material that would be safe and durable in an outdoor setting. The design may not include electrical power, pumps, plumbing, water or any other element requiring maintenance or repair.

Proposals may suggest a permanent site for the memorial and should include a description of the method of permanent attachment but ultimate placement will be the decision of the South Milwaukee CDA and Common Council. The design should allow for the range of precipitation and temperature for exterior placement in Wisconsin.

This project is supported with increment funds generated by tax dollars received for redevelopment purposes in South Milwaukee's Tax Increment District 3. The proposal must include a breakdown of material costs, labor costs and artist's fee (if any) for the total fee to design and construct the memorial as proposed. Total project costs should not exceed \$5,000.

Timeline

The deadline for response this RFP/Call to Artists is 4:00 pm CST on April 6, 2009. Submittals will be reviewed by staff and the SMCDA in April before forwarding a recommendation to the South Milwaukee Common Council. The SMCDA may require additional information or a pre-selection meeting with one or more submitters to arrive at a recommendation.

Any materials from the 909 Menomonee building proposed for use in the selected design must be harvested by May 15, 2009. Memorial completion is desired by June 1, 2009 but it is understood that certain factors such as fabricating could affect timeline targets.

Eligibility

This Request for Proposals is open to all professional artists or skilled tradespersons. Entrants may be individuals or teams.

Submission Requirements

All materials must be received by Monday, April 6, 2009, 4:00 pm CST at the following location:

South Milwaukee CDA
Attn: Danielle Devlin
2906 6th Ave
South Milwaukee, WI 53172

All submittals should be clearly marked "909 Memorial."

Submissions must include the following materials:

1. Contact information including Name, Address, Telephone and E-mail address.
2. A written narrative describing the proposal along with how it corresponds to the historical significance of the buildings/uses/events at 909 Menomonee.
3. Graphic rendition or photo of the design concept, including a plan showing installation or attachment.
4. Photos or prints of three (3) examples of previous work of a similar nature with a description of each example.
5. Biographical information, including previous experience, for all team members.
6. List of materials and general construction process/specifications.
7. Total fee for the proposal including a breakdown of materials, labor, fees and other costs for the design and fabrication of the memorial.

Insurance

The selected artist/team will be required to carry liability insurance and acknowledge and release the city of South Milwaukee and the SMCDA from any risks that may be associated with visiting or removing materials from a vacant building.

Selection

The winning entry will be selected based on a review of the following criteria:

- ❖ Overall strength of design concept.
- ❖ Ability to integrate and communicate the historical significance of the events and buildings at 909 Menomonee.
- ❖ Sustainability and durability of the design to weather exposure and community interaction.
- ❖ Taxpayer value.
- ❖ Experience with similar projects.

Historic Significance

The following text is adapted from article written by South Milwaukee Historical Society member Steven Schreiter in 2007 and illustrates the history of the site and structure.

The building at 909 Menomonee in South Milwaukee was first built to house the Pan-American Rubber Company (also reported as the Fisk Rubber Company) in 1916.

In about 1919, Alfred Lawson, a former professional baseball player, conceived of an airplane large enough to provide long distance service throughout the United States. This plane would accommodate 35 passengers and 6000 pounds of mail. His facilities in Milwaukee would not accommodate this large ship so he purchased the factory and 3 acres of adjacent land at 909 Menomonee. By late fall 1920 the plane was nearly ready.

Lawson was a proven aircraft manufacturer, he had started his efforts in Green Bay, Wisconsin in March of 1917 and the MT-1 flew on September 10, 1917, followed by the MT-2 on May 1, 1918. He moved to Milwaukee in February 1919 and began work on his first "airliner" or passenger aircraft at a loft at Cream City Sash and Door Company. Mayor Daniel Hoan and the city of Milwaukee provided assistance by allowing Lawson to use facilities at State Fair Park to assemble his plane. It was then moved to a site in Butler, Wisconsin for the test flight. His 2 engine aircraft, the LT-2, first flew in August 1919. Buoyed by the reception shown this plane on a barnstorming tour of the eastern United States, Lawson planned a larger 3 engine craft. For this purpose he acquired the South Milwaukee site. The planes were designed by a skillful aircraft designer named Vincent Burnelli and flown by either Lawson himself or a professional pilot with Lawson as the copilot. Machining, woodworking and subassembly was done in the South Milwaukee building and the fuselage completed there. A wooden hanger was built on the site for final assembly. The plane was huge for its day with a wingspan of about 120 ft and a fuselage 65 ft long. For comparison the DC 3 aircraft of WW II fame was 64-½ ft long and had a wingspan of 95 ft.

Unfortunately the plane crashed during takeoff on an improvised runway in a neighbor's field east of the South Milwaukee building on May 8, 1921 and Lawson was unable to raise funds to effect repairs. Bankruptcy ensued and by 1922 the company ceased to exist. Many aviation terms and concepts, such as "airliner" and the center passenger aisle, still in use today are credited to Alfred Lawson.

Continental Faience and Tile Company (Faience refers to a style of tile first produced in Faenza, Italy) was incorporated in 1924 with Belgian native Carl Bergmans as its manager and later president. Bergmans was a ceramist who had immigrated to the United States in 1910 and worked tile companies in of Zanesville, Ohio. Continental specialized in custom artistic tile but also manufactured colored tiles in various shapes, sizes and designs. Examples of their work can be seen today in the lobby of the South Milwaukee High School. In 1928 they built the eastern most portion of the building at 909 Menomonee to serve as workshop, showroom and offices. The showroom and offices feature varied examples of Continental's work.

Today the tiles embellishing the Continental Faience and Tile Company showroom are considered "art tiles," and were advertised and promoted as "handmade" and "artistic," but they were primarily intended to be used on floors, walls, fireplaces, and as decoration in residential and commercial buildings. Continental's tiles were a product of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which emphasized handmade objects reflecting the skill of the craftsman, rather than the machine made products that represented the preceding Industrial Era. Machine made tiles were pressed from a damp clay mixture, where Continental's handmade tiles were created from wet clay, using manual labor to pack the clay into molds and to decorate the finished tiles. Continental Faience's advertising brochure proclaimed "Being Hand-made it has a distinction of texture and artistic merit unequalled in machine-made tiles, yet its cost compares with any similar material."

Reportedly with the onset of WWII the company was unable to import the Italian clay required for their product and went out of business, leaving the building to be acquired by Midwest Pottery Company in 1944.

Midwest Pottery Company can trace its roots to the Morton Pottery Works, founded in 1878 by six brothers from Germany named Rapp, located in Morton, Illinois. After World War I, the pottery was operated by Matthew Rapp and his 4 sons under the name Cliftwood Art Potteries, Inc. After Rapp died in 1938 the pottery was sold to local investors and renamed Midwest Pottery. It operated in Morton until 1944 when the building was leveled by fire. The owners of Midwest at this time then purchased the Continental Faience and Tile Company property in South Milwaukee and resumed their pottery business without the Rapp brothers. John Rapp eventually rejoined the company and produced the spray glazes that he had perfected in Morton. A newspaper article in the August 21, 1947 issue of the South Milwaukee Journal by its editor Gordon Lewis reported that the gold glaze used by the firm cost \$20 for a 3-½ oz. bottle. Designer Howard Kron joined the company and they produced art pottery under the name "Kron" and "Cliftwood" that included lamp bases and figurines of great detail. Reportedly production was up to 2000 to 3500 pieces per day.

For unknown reasons Midwest Pottery relocated to Tyler, Texas in the early 1950s where the company soon collapsed under an employee embezzlement scheme. Howard Kron designed art pottery for many more years with the Texans Company and many examples of his "TV lamps" can be found today.

Building Images

Continental exterior and showroom tile samples:



Lawson Airplane Company work shop exterior and interior:

