



**PROVIDENCE** THE CREATIVE CAPITAL

## **Request for Qualifications for Professional Services to Design the Providence River Pedestrian Bridge**

The City of Providence is staging a limited design competition to select the designer for the Providence River Pedestrian Bridge which will replace the old Interstate 195 Bridge that spans the Providence River. The bridge will create a new connection for pedestrians and bicyclists from the Fox Point and College Hill neighborhoods to Downtown, particularly to the emerging 'Knowledge District'. The bridge will also serve as the link between two new waterfront parks that will be developed as part of the I-195 relocation project. The City is undertaking a design competition as the next phase of the planning in order to provide a creative jumpstart for the design/construction process and to clarify program elements, design opportunities and associated project costs at the beginning of the project.

### **Project Background and Context**

Twenty years ago, the Providence Foundation and the City of Providence requested that the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) relocate the alignment of Interstate 195 through Providence, which physically isolated Downtown from both the Jewelry District and much of the waterfront. In 1997, RIDOT agreed to relocate the freeway viaduct to the south along a similar alignment as the Providence Hurricane Barrier. Now nearing completion, a key outcome of the I-195 relocation will be the creation of two new waterfront parks along the Providence River, connected by a new pedestrian bridge to be built on the granite piers of the current I-195 river crossing.

The Providence Foundation and the City of Providence invited Project for Public Spaces (PPS) to engage stakeholders to develop a preliminary program for the parks and to provide best practices for managing vibrant and successful public spaces. In early 2009, PPS held focus groups with area private developers, city staff, the project engineer and designers, community group representatives, and local institutions to discuss activating and managing the spaces and held a large public workshop. The themes that emerged from that process mirror the principles of creating a great waterfront, namely designing for flexibility and phased implementation, creating both active and passive recreation areas, encouraging non-vehicular access, programming seasonal uses, and connecting to other destinations in Providence.

Since then, an I-195 Pedestrian Bridge Committee—made up of local architects, neighborhood residents, staff from RIDOT and the City of Providence, and private business representatives—has been meeting to advocate for the construction of the pedestrian bridge, help determine the design and programming concepts for the bridge and initiate a "Friends of the Bridge and Waterfront Parks" group that will partner with the City on the management and maintenance of these important public spaces.

### **Design Objectives**

In addition to connecting the existing river walks and the College Hill and Fox Point neighborhoods with the Jewelry District, the new pedestrian bridge is an exciting opportunity to weave together the design themes

of the City's history and emerging future as a center of innovation, design excellence and creative- and knowledge-based businesses and industries. The proposed bridge must incorporate the five existing piers as a primary design element. The bridge should be twenty feet wide at a minimum (inside dimension) to allow for walkers, bikers, runners, strollers, and roller bladers to safely traverse the bridge. Adequate seating and passive gathering spaces should be included along the 450-foot span to accommodate small gatherings and passing pedestrians and bicyclists.

### **Budget**

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation has a \$2,000,000 (two-million dollar) budget for the pedestrian bridge, but is seeking an additional \$2,000,000 (two-million dollars) in funding for the bridge. The final construction budget will not be set before the selected finalists begin their designs; therefore, designs should be scalable to the available funding.

### **Selection Committee**

A Selection Committee composed of members of City staff, local architects, and representatives from local universities and private businesses will review the submissions and short-list up to ten finalists who will be invited to submit a design for the Providence River Pedestrian Bridge. Firms responding to this RFQ will be evaluated and ranked according to the following criteria:

- Design philosophy and approach to design;
- Experience of key personnel;
- Prior design experience with pedestrian bridge projects of similar scale and complexity;
- Articulated understanding of the functional and operational needs of the proposed bridge; and,
- Commitment to developing, within the timeframes and constraints identified herein, a proposed bridge design.

### **Schedule**

Responses to this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) must be submitted by Friday, September 17, 2010 at 4:00PM EST. Responses shall be electronically submitted via email to [planning@providenceri.com](mailto:planning@providenceri.com) or on a CD delivered by post or hand delivered. Email submittals must have the subject line "Providence River Pedestrian Bridge Design Competition." It is anticipated that the responses will be reviewed and up to 10 (ten) finalists will be selected by Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Finalists will be invited to submit designs for the pedestrian bridge, to be submitted to the City of Providence no later than Friday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010

### **Required Materials**

The City of Providence respectfully requests that you consider this RFQ and submit a letter of interest, a firm profile, a relevant and current project portfolio, and appropriate references for use by the Selection Committee in this phase of the designer selection process. Please limit this qualifications package to 10 (ten) pages. Upon review of all material, certain selected firms will be invited to participate in the next step of the designer selection process, which is to respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP) and submission of a competition design solution.

### **Award**

The City of Providence will work with the Selection Committee to review firm qualifications. The Selection Committee will develop a short-list of no more than 10 (ten) firms that will be invited to submit a design for the Providence River Pedestrian Bridge. The finalists will be provided \$500 (five-hundred dollars) to help cover production costs upon receipt of a submission by the deadline. After reviewing the complete submittals, the Selection Committee will engage in a short public process to receive feedback and comment

on the designs, and will make a recommendation to the City of Providence, who will ultimately select the winning design. The firm with the winning design will be invited to participate in the design of the pedestrian bridge along with the engineering firm that is working with RIDOT on the highway relocation project. The extent of participation will be negotiated after the winning design is selected.

**Reservation of Rights**

The City of Providence reserves the right to reject all firms, decline to proceed with the selection of any firm(s), request additional qualifications, and to make inquiries as necessary to verify qualifications. The City reserves the right to issue amendments and addenda to the RFQ, as well as the right to cancel or reissue this RFQ.

**Contact Information**

In order to ensure an accurate and efficient flow of information please address all questions and materials to:

Thomas E. Deller, AICP  
Director  
Department of Planning and Development  
400 Westminster Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903  
(401) 351-4300 x600  
[planning@providenceri.com](mailto:planning@providenceri.com)

Thank you in advance for your interest in this very exciting project. We look forward to receiving your qualifications package.



Providence River Pedestrian Bridge location in relation to the new waterfront parks, Downcity, the Knowledge District, Fox Point, and College Hill.



Existing granite piers of the Interstate 195 highway infrastructure over the Providence River.

**Providence River Pedestrian Bridge Schedule**

Schedule as follows:

|                                                 |                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Announcement of Request for Qualifications..... | Friday, September 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| Deadline for Consultant Qualifications.....     | Friday, September 17 <sup>th</sup> |
| Selection of finalists.....                     | September 20 - 24                  |
| Invitation to submit bridge design.....         | Week of September 27 <sup>th</sup> |
| Submission deadline.....                        | Friday, October 29 <sup>th</sup>   |
| Selection committee and public review.....      | November 1 – 29 <sup>th</sup>      |
| Notice of Award.....                            | Week of November 29 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Expected Design Start.....                      | TBD                                |
| Expected Design Completion.....                 | TBD                                |

## **Providence River Pedestrian Bridge Design Considerations**

### **Vertical profile considerations**

The bridge should provide adequate flat space to allow for gathering spaces for sitting, and the enjoyment of programming and refreshments.

The vertical clearance between MHW and the bottom of the bridge should be a minimum of 10 ft.

The bridge and the landings must be bicycle and wheel chair friendly.

The bridge landings should be intelligently incorporated into the design of the waterfront parks and should be modest in length.

Allow for 2-3 ft. of vertical space under the bridge for utility conduits.

Consider pedestrian access from the bridge down to one or more of the abutments to allow for boat access.

### **Horizontal geometry**

The shore to shore span is approximately 450 linear feet.

Bridge should respond to natural connections that should be made to the east and west side of the river.

Sight lines should be considered.

Consider the bridge alignment on the existing piers with respect to the landing locations, location of gathering area or areas, contribution of the alignment to the overall bridge aesthetic.

Width should allow for walkers, bikers, runners, strollers, and roller bladders to safely traverse the bridge.

Gathering space(s) should be large enough to distinguish programming areas from the travel lanes.

### **Green Design Elements**

Designs are encouraged to incorporate green design elements and plantings.

### **Programming considerations**

The adjacent waterfront parks will be the primary spaces for large gatherings, festivals, events and refreshments.

The gathering spaces on the bridge should consider seating and shade structures.

Programming ideas for the space vary significantly and include weekday lunchtime or evening music offerings, weekend farmer's market, food or craft vendors, space for public art, gathering space for Water Fire, etc.