

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Architectural Design Services

Fort DuPont War Department Theater Renovation and Additions

Issued by the Friends of Fort DuPont
In coordination with the Fort DuPont Redevelopment and Preservation Corporation
Delaware City, Delaware

Issue Date	June 29, 2026
Questions Due	July 20, 2026, by 5:00 PM
Proposals Due	July 31, 2026, by 5:00 PM
Submit To	Valerie Miller, vmiller@fortdupont.org
Anticipated Project Budget	Approximately \$8,000,000
Agreement Form	AIA B101, as modified by the parties

1. Statement About the Project

1.1 Description

The Friends of Fort DuPont (the “Friends” or “FFoFD”), in coordination with the Fort DuPont Redevelopment and Preservation Corporation (“FDRPC”), invites qualified architectural firms to submit proposals for architectural design services for the rehabilitation, renovation, and potential additions associated with the historic Fort DuPont War Department Theater (Building 046) in Delaware City, Delaware.

The project is intended to transform the Theater into an active, accessible, code-compliant, and financially sustainable community arts and cultural venue while preserving the historic character of the building and strengthening Fort DuPont as a regional heritage, recreation, and community destination.

The anticipated total project budget is approximately \$8,000,000. This figure is preliminary and is expected to be refined through programming, schematic design, project cost estimating, fundraising, and the approvals process. Respondents should demonstrate strong project budget discipline and experience designing within phased funding environments.

The anticipated contracting party for design services is the Friends. FDRPC will participate as the redevelopment and preservation partner, including coordination on site-related information, approvals, ownership considerations, and Fort DuPont campus integration. Final contracting roles will be confirmed before contract execution.

1.2 Goals for the Theater Project

- Rehabilitate the historic War Department Theater as a flexible community arts, cultural, educational, and civic gathering venue.
- Preserve character-defining historic features and advance the project in a manner consistent with applicable historic preservation standards and review requirements.
- Create a high-quality audience experience, including appropriate acoustics, lighting, theatrical systems, accessibility, comfort, and public amenities.
- Support a range of uses, including live performance, music, lectures, film, community meetings, nonprofit programming, donor events, and Fort DuPont partner activities.
- Evaluate opportunities for additions, support spaces, backstage/front-of-house improvements, and site enhancements needed to make the facility functional and sustainable.
- Develop compelling visual materials, project cost estimates, and design documentation that can support fundraising, grants, public engagement, and board-level decision-making.
- Advance a design that is practical to permit, bid, construct, phase, operate, and maintain.

1.3 Overview of Requested Services

The Friends seek a qualified architectural team to provide comprehensive design services across three potential phases. Phase 1 is expected to proceed first and will focus on community engagement, programming, schematic design, initial approvals, project cost estimating, and fundraising/development renderings. Phase 2 and Phase 3 may proceed subject to available funding, project approvals, and authorization by the Friends and/or FDRPC.

The selected firm will be expected to serve as the prime consultant and single point of responsibility for the design team, including all required subconsultants. The proposed agreement type is expected to be AIA B101, as modified by the parties.

2. Context for Fort DuPont and the Theater

Fort DuPont is a historic former military installation located in Delaware City, Delaware, and is undergoing long-term redevelopment, preservation, and public activation. The campus includes historic buildings, recreational assets, natural resources, cultural landscapes, and emerging public/private redevelopment opportunities.

The War Department Theater is a significant historic campus asset and a priority opportunity for adaptive reuse. The Theater has the potential to become a signature cultural anchor for the Fort DuPont campus and a community-serving venue for Delaware City and the surrounding region.

The project should be understood within the broader Fort DuPont setting, including nearby historic buildings, public open spaces, trails, programming areas, parking and access needs, and future redevelopment initiatives. Respondents should demonstrate sensitivity to the historic campus context and the need for a design approach that supports both building rehabilitation and district-scale activation.

3. Context for the Friends

FFoD is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the preservation, interpretation, public programming, and community activation of Fort DuPont. The Friends work with FDRPC, public agencies, nonprofit partners, community organizations, funders, and volunteers to advance the Fort as a place for history, arts, education, recreation, and community life.

The Theater project is central to the Friends' long-term vision for expanding cultural programming, creating new opportunities for partnerships, and strengthening the historic core of Fort DuPont. The selected design team should be comfortable working with a nonprofit client, public redevelopment partner, donors, community stakeholders, public agencies, and preservation reviewers.

4. Outline of the Project

4.1 Work Completed to Date

The following work has been completed or initiated to support the Theater project. Respondents should review the available attachments and identify any additional information needed to confirm existing conditions, refine the scope, and advance design:

- Initial project visioning and prioritization of the Theater as a future community arts and cultural venue.
- Preliminary conceptual design and theater consulting work, including direct engagement of Schuler Shook by the Friends for conceptual theater design services.
- Initial fundraising and development planning for the Theater project.
- Ongoing coordination between the Friends and FDRPC regarding the Theater's role within the Fort DuPont campus and historic core.
- Compilation of available site, building, planning, and background materials to be provided as attachments or made available during the RFP process.

Respondents are responsible for identifying assumptions, gaps, recommended due diligence, and any information required before proceeding into each design phase.

4.2 Components for This Proposal

Proposals should address the full design-services pathway for the project while recognizing that work may be authorized in phases. At minimum, proposals must include a clear proposed scope for Phase 1 and describe the firm’s ability to support later phases as described in Section 5.3.

- Phase 1: Community engagement, programming, schematic design, schematic project cost estimate, four color renderings for development/fundraising, and initial approvals process.
- Phase 2: Design development, design development project cost estimate, construction documentation, approvals and permitting, and bidding/negotiation support.
- Phase 3: Construction administration services through project closeout.

4.3 Projected Overall Project Schedule

Milestone	Tentative Date / Timing
RFP issued	June 29, 2026
Non-mandatory site visit	By appointment; anticipated week of July 6, 2026
Questions due	July 20, 2026, by 5:00 PM Eastern Time
Responses/addenda issued	July 22, 2026, if needed
Proposals due	July 31, 2026, by 5:00 PM Eastern Time
Proposed award	August 28, 2026
Contract negotiation / notice to proceed	Mid-September 2026
Phase 1 work	Anticipated to begin after award and contract execution
Phase 2 work	Subject to funding and authorization; gap of up to one year may occur after Phase 1
Phase 3 work	Subject to construction funding, approvals, bidding, and authorization

The Friends reserve the right to modify the schedule, issue addenda, conduct interviews, negotiate with one or more respondents, or cancel the RFP at any time.

5. Design Services

5.1 Prime Consultant and Design Team

The selected architect will serve as the prime consultant and lead a complete design team appropriate for a historic theater/adaptive reuse project. The team is expected to include, or have access to, the following disciplines as needed for the scope:

- Architectural design and historic rehabilitation leadership.
- Civil/site design, including access, grading, drainage, utilities, parking/service access, and campus integration.
- Structural engineering for existing conditions, rehabilitation, additions, and code-related upgrades.
- Mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection engineering.
- Coordination with the owner-retained theater consultant and, as needed, supplemental theater planning, acoustics, theatrical lighting, audiovisual, rigging/stage systems, and performance infrastructure support not covered by Schuler Shook’s attached conceptual scope.
- Interior design and front-of-house/back-of-house experience planning.
- Code, life-safety, accessibility, egress, and occupancy analysis.
- Project/construction cost estimating at required milestones, including contingencies, escalation, alternates, and phasing recommendations.
- Historic preservation consulting, if not provided directly by the architect.
- Other specialty consultants that the respondent believes are necessary to meet the project goals.

Respondents should clearly state which services are included in the proposal, which are excluded, and which are recommended as optional or additional services. No pricing should be included unless separately requested by the Friends.

5.2 Coordination with Schuler Shook

Schuler Shook has been retained directly by the Friends as an owner-retained consultant for conceptual theater design services. The selected architect will be expected to coordinate with Schuler Shook, incorporate relevant conceptual theater recommendations into the architectural work, avoid duplication of services, and identify any additional theater, acoustical, theatrical systems, or performance-infrastructure services needed beyond Schuler Shook’s attached scope.

Respondents should explain how their proposed team will integrate Schuler Shook’s work with architecture, preservation, building systems, code compliance, accessibility, project budget discipline, phasing, and constructability.

5.3 Phased Scope of Services

The requested services are organized by the phases below. Phase 1 is the immediate priority. The Friends anticipate that the initial authorization may focus on Phase 1. Respondents should demonstrate the ability to support the full project through later phases, but future phases will be authorized only if funding, approvals, and project direction allow.

Phase	Primary Purpose	Expected Services / Deliverables
Phase 1: Engagement, Programming, Schematic Design, Project Cost Estimate, Renderings, Initial Approvals	Create a fundable, reviewable, and decision-ready design package.	Kickoff; review of available materials; existing conditions review sufficient for schematic design; three community engagement meetings; programming; code/accessibility/life-safety assumptions; preservation approach; schematic design package; schematic project cost estimate; four color renderings for development/fundraising; initial approvals roadmap and support.
Phase 2: Design Development, Construction Documents, Permitting, Bidding	Advance the selected schematic design into permit-ready and bid-ready documents.	Design development package with updated project cost estimate; construction documents; permitting and approval support; coordination with review agencies; bidding and negotiation support; value management and alternates as needed.
Phase 3: Construction Administration	Support construction through closeout.	Construction administration services, including meetings, submittal and RFI review, site observations, payment application review, change order support, punch list, and closeout support.

5.4 Deliverable Expectations and Design Standards

Deliverables should be clear enough to support board decisions, public presentations, fundraising, grant applications, approvals, and phased implementation. Drawings, narratives, estimates, renderings, and presentation materials should be provided in electronic format. Native files may be requested as part of the final agreement.

The final agreement should provide the Friends and FDRPC with a license to use project deliverables for Theater project planning, fundraising, grant applications, public presentations, approvals, and implementation, including if later phases are paused or separately authorized.

The project should be designed in accordance with applicable building, fire, accessibility, zoning, historic preservation, and permitting requirements. The design team should identify the applicable review path, including any historic preservation review, Delaware City approvals, State Fire Marshal review, accessibility/code review, and funding-related requirements.

5.5 Available Information, Assumptions, and Due Diligence

Respondents should state whether their proposal includes, excludes, or assumes owner-provided information for the items below. If any item is recommended but not included in the proposed scope, the proposal should identify it as an optional service or recommended owner-provided service without pricing:

- Measured drawings or building documentation beyond available existing information.
- Topographic survey, boundary information, or utility survey.
- Hazardous materials testing or environmental review.
- Geotechnical investigation or subsurface exploration.
- Structural probes, destructive testing, or detailed structural investigation beyond visual review.
- Utility investigation, capacity confirmation, or service coordination beyond schematic assumptions.
- Detailed code, accessibility, life-safety, or occupancy analysis beyond the level proposed for each phase.
- Other investigations needed to confirm scope, project budget, phasing, permitting, or constructability.

6. Proposal Submission Requirements

Please submit proposals electronically to Valerie Miller at vmiller@fortdupont.org by 5:00 PM on July 31, 2026. Concise, project-specific proposals are encouraged.

Proposals are encouraged not to exceed 25 pages, excluding cover letter, resumes, references, proof of insurance, and any required forms or requested supplemental materials.

Fee proposals should not be submitted with the proposal. Respondents should not include proposed compensation, hourly rates, reimbursable expenses, fee schedules, or pricing for optional/additional services. If needed, fee information may be requested separately by the Friends during a later stage of the selection or negotiation process.

Proposals should be organized generally as follows:

1. Cover letter and primary contact information.
2. Project understanding and proposed approach.
3. Proposed scope for Phase 1 and description of ability to support future phases.
4. Assumptions, exclusions, optional/additional services, and recommended due diligence, without pricing.
5. Firm and consultant team description, including key team leaders.
6. Three to five relevant project profiles, with emphasis on historic theaters, adaptive reuse, cultural venues, nonprofit/public projects, and phased funding environments.
7. Project team resumes, if appropriate.
8. Three references with current contact information.
9. Proof of current insurance coverage. Final insurance requirements will be addressed in the contract.
10. Any requested exceptions to the proposed AIA B101 agreement approach or material business terms.
11. Availability of key team members for an optional interview, if requested during the selection process.

7. Selection Process

Proposals will be reviewed based on the criteria below. The Friends may request clarifications, conduct optional interviews with selected respondents, check references, and negotiate final scope and contract terms with one or more respondents. Final selection will be based on the proposal, qualifications, demonstrated understanding of the project, interview if requested, references, and overall fit for the Theater project.

The Friends may request optional interviews with selected respondents to clarify project approach, team structure, availability, relevant experience, and proposed scope.

8. Selection Criteria

The Friends expect to select the firm that offers the strongest combination of relevant experience, project understanding, team quality, approach, schedule, and demonstrated performance. Selection will be guided by the following criteria:

Criterion	Weight	Considerations
Historic theater/adaptive reuse and preservation experience	25%	Experience with historic theaters, cultural venues, assembly spaces, adaptive reuse, preservation standards, and phased rehabilitation.
Project approach and understanding	25%	Clarity, practicality, project budget discipline, project cost-estimating approach, phasing strategy, schedule, constructability, and understanding of the Theater's role within Fort DuPont.

Criterion	Weight	Considerations
Project team and consultant coordination	20%	Qualifications of the architect, subconsultants, project manager, specialty disciplines, and approach to coordinating with Schuler Shook.
Community engagement approach	15%	Ability to support clear, productive engagement with stakeholders, partners, donors, and the public.
References and client performance	10%	Relevant client references and demonstrated ability to complete comparable work successfully.
Completeness and clarity of proposal	5%	Quality, responsiveness, and clarity of assumptions, exclusions, optional services, and business exceptions.

9. General RFP Conditions

This RFP is not a commitment to award a contract. The Friends may reject any or all proposals, request clarifications, request an optional interview with selected respondents, negotiate with one or more respondents, modify the schedule, issue addenda, or cancel the RFP if doing so is in the best interest of the project.

Respondents are responsible for their own proposal costs. Any contract award will be subject to final scope, funding availability, required approvals, board action as applicable, and successful contract negotiation.

The Friends reserve the right to award, negotiate, or authorize services by phase, task, or revised scope based on project needs, funding, and approvals.

Respondents should clearly mark any proprietary or confidential material. The Friends will make reasonable efforts to protect such material, but records may be subject to applicable disclosure requirements depending on the contracting entity, funding source, and public review process.

10. Attachments

The following materials will be provided with the RFP or made available to respondents upon request:

- Attachment A: Fort DuPont Site Plan.
- Attachment B: Building 046 / War Department Theater background materials.
- Attachment C: Schuler Shook conceptual theater consulting scope.
- Attachment D: Available photographs and existing-conditions materials.
- Attachment E: Relevant Fort DuPont planning or redevelopment background materials.
- Other available drawings, studies, photographs, reports, or reference materials determined to be relevant before issuance.