

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SERVICES
NORTH MAIN STREET REDEVELOPMENT



Opening Statement:

NEST is seeking qualifications from community engagement organization interested in providing professional outreach services for community feedback on the development of a Master Plan for parcels collectively named and formerly known as the Chase Rolling Mill Industrial Complex and the Waterbury Clock Company and other surrounding/abutting/adjacent properties in Waterbury, Connecticut. Our vision for the community engagement firm will emphasize collaboration, listening, organization of ideas and feedback into manageable soundbites, and tangible concepts.

The selected community engagement firm will collaborate closely with NEST, local stakeholders, and the designated architectural firm Interface Studio Architects (ISA) to deliver community feedback that can be integrated into ISA's architectural design and schematic work.

Project Development Team:

NEST is a non-profit, NeighborWorks America affiliate organization with a mission to build strong neighborhoods and communities of choice through affordable and comprehensive housing development, financial education, and furthering home and community ownership. Our mission reflects the organization's embrace of a range of business lines and programs to meet its objectives of community revitalization and individual economic empowerment. NEST is a significant provider of homeownership education and foreclosure and loss mitigation counseling services in the Greater Waterbury, Danbury, and Torrington areas.

Interface Studio Architects (ISA) is an award-winning architecture firm based in Philadelphia. ISA is a design and research office engaged with the complex context of the American city. We design buildings, master plans, installations, and conversations that address changing climates, lifestyles, technologies, and urban environments.

Scope of Services and Approach

The community engagement firm will support the Master Plan process being led by ISA. The firm will organize, facilitate, and document meaningful engagement opportunities with residents, neighborhood stakeholders, local businesses, civic leaders, nonprofit partners, property owners, and other community voices. The anticipated start date is July 2027. The goal of this work is to ensure that ISA receives detailed, community-informed feedback, ideas, concerns, and priorities that can directly enhance the Master Plan design and ensure the final plan reflects the needs, history, identity, and aspirations of the surrounding community. The following list outlines the key components of the scope of services but not limited to:

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- **Community Engagement Strategy** - The selected firm shall develop a clear and practical community engagement strategy in coordination with NEST and ISA. This strategy should identify target audiences, outreach methods, meeting formats, engagement goals, and a timeline that aligns with the Master Plan schedule.
- **Stakeholder Identification & Outreach** - The firm shall assist NEST in identifying key stakeholders who should be included in the Master Plan conversation. This may include developing a stakeholder list, outreach calendar, contact scripts, flyers, email language, phone scripts, and social media language. The firm will need to demonstrate ability/capacity to produce outreach materials in Spanish. The firm shall conduct proactive outreach to encourage participation and ensure that engagement opportunities are accessible, well attended, and representative of the broader community.
- **Community Meetings** - The firm shall organize and co-lead three (3) community engagement opportunities with NEST and ISA. These may include public meetings, listening sessions, resident conversations, and design feedback sessions. The firm shall be responsible for supporting meeting logistics, including: agenda development, sign-in sheets and participant tracking, facilitation materials, collection of verbal and written feedback. However, based on community feedback, an expanded scope is possible i.e., another meeting; to further identify and document community feedback or information. The firm will also need to demonstrate the ability/ capacity to provide Spanish translation at the meetings.
- **Co-Facilitation with ISA** - The engagement firm shall co-lead conversations with NEST and ISA in a way that encourages open, respectful, and productive dialogue. The firm should help translate technical planning and design concepts into plain language so that residents and stakeholders can meaningfully participate. The firm shall guide conversations around topics such as community needs and priorities, public space, streetscape and walkability, neighborhood history and identity, housing, commercial and mixed-use opportunities, small business needs, amenities, potential impacts and benefits of redevelopment, safety, design preferences, and concerns.
- **Feedback Collection and Documentation** - The firm shall collect, organize, and summarize community feedback in a format that is useful to ISA's planning and design team. Feedback should be documented clearly and should distinguish between major themes, specific concerns, design ideas, community priorities, and potential conflicts or tradeoffs.
- **Feedback Integration** - The firm shall work with ISA and NEST to ensure that community feedback is communicated in a timely and practical manner so it can inform the Master Plan. The firm shall participate in coordination meetings with NEST and ISA to review engagement findings and discuss how feedback can be reflected in the evolving Master Plan.

Deliverables

1. **Community Engagement Work Plan**
A written plan outlining engagement goals, audiences, outreach methods, meeting formats, schedule, and coordination points with NEST and ISA.
2. **Stakeholder Outreach List**
Develop a working list of residents, businesses, organizations, public agencies, and community representatives to be contacted with the assistance of NEST.
3. **Outreach Materials**
Using NEST branding, draft flyers, emails, phone scripts, social media language, and meeting notices to support participation.
4. **Engagement Event Agendas and Materials**
Meeting agendas, sign-in sheets, discussion questions, presentation support, comment forms, and facilitation tools.
5. **Facilitation of Community Engagement Activities**
Organization and co-facilitation of three (3) agreed-upon meetings, listening sessions, and, or resident conversations.
6. **Community Feedback Summaries**
Written summaries after each engagement activity identifying key themes, concerns, ideas, and recommendations.
7. **Final Community Engagement Report**
A comprehensive report summarizing all engagement activities, participation, major findings, stakeholder feedback, community priorities, and recommendations for ISA's Master Plan design.
8. **Design Consideration Memo**
A concise memo to ISA and NEST identifying the most important community-informed design considerations that should be evaluated in the Master Plan.

Selection Criteria

Selection will be based on the following criteria:

A. Firm Qualifications and Experience: (20 Points)

- Firm's capacity and area of expertise.
- Demonstrated work experience in similar community outreach and engagement initiatives, especially those related to this specific type of project.
- Experience with gathering community feedback to inform large scale community investments.
- List of similar projects and references from previous clients.

B. Key Personnel and Team Composition: (15 Points)

- Qualifications, credentials, roles, and responsibilities of team members.

C. Project Approach: (15 Points)

- Evidence of culturally responsive facilitation, trust building, and plain language communication
- Approach to community engagement for master planning design work

D. Technical Capabilities: (20 Points)

- Documenting feedback in a way that supports design and decision-making.
- Engagement in historically underserved or disinvested communities
- Public meeting facilitation and conflict-sensitive dialogue
- Experience with urban planning, neighborhood revitalization, or real estate development projects

E. Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion: (10 Points)

- Information about the firm's commitment to diversity within its team.

F. Schedule and Project Management: (15 Points)

- Demonstrated ability to meet project deadlines on past projects.
- Ability to collaborate with clients, consultants, and resident stakeholders.

G. Submission Quality: (5 Points)

- Overall quality, completeness, and professionalism of the submitted RFQ response.
- Adherence to the RFQ requirements, including format and content.

Submission Process

All qualifications must be submitted electronically as a PDF with the subject line: "Request for Qualifications – North Main Street Community Engagement " **by 3:00PM EST on July 30, 2026.**

Please send your response to Ian Blake at ian@nestct.org.

The submission cover page must follow this format:

- a. Project Name or Description
- b. Company Name
- c. Address
- d. City, State, and Zip Code
- e. Contact person
- f. Telephone
- g. Email Address

Submission Criteria/Requirements

Each Submittal shall be organized in the following order:

Outside Cover and First Page shall contain:

- (i) the title, “**North Main Street Community Engagement Services**”
- (ii) the name of the Respondent, and
- (iii) the Submittal date.

Table of Contents:

Include a table of contents.

Transmittal Letter:

Include a short Transmittal Letter. The Transmittal Letter shall:

- Summarize why the Respondent believes itself to be the most qualified.
- Contain a statement to the best of the Respondent’s abilities, all information contained in the RFQ submittal is complete and accurate; and
- Contain a statement granting NEST and its representative authorization to contact any previous client of the Respondent (or a Respondent’s Team Member) for purposes of ascertaining an independent evaluation of the Respondent’s or a Respondent’s Team member’s performance.

Section I - Description of the Respondent

I-A Firm Description:

Include a complete narrative description of the Respondent’s firm (or firms if the Respondent is comprised of a team of firms). Information should include:

- a. The Respondent’s areas of specialization
- b. Firm history.
- c. Honors and awards.
- d. Location of home and branch offices.
- e. Names of the principal officers of the firm.

I-B Organization Chart:

Include a simple organization chart showing how the Respondent, if selected as the community engagement firm, would organize its personnel for the project.

I-C Key Professionals:

Identify the key members of your team that would be involved in the project and describe their area of expertise and what role they will perform in the team.

I-D Resumes:

Provide resumes of any person identified as a key professional. The resumes should contain the following:

- a. Name.
- b. Educational background.
- c. Employment history.
- d. Proposed role in the Project.
- e. An identification of other relevant projects in which the person has been involved and the name and phone number of a representative of any project cited that can be contacted for a reference.
- f. Other information you believe to be relevant.

Section II - Narrative

Set forth are the criteria on which the selection will be made. Your RFQ should be organized to clearly address:

- a. Demonstrated experience designing and leading community engagement processes for neighborhood planning.
- b. Proven ability to reach and meaningfully involve residents, businesses, property owners, nonprofit partners, civic leaders, youth, seniors, and historically underrepresented community members.
- c. Strong ability to organize and co-facilitate public meetings, listening sessions, focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and community conversations in a respectful, neutral, and productive manner.
- d. Ability to clearly collect, organize, summarize, and translate community feedback into useful reports, meeting summaries, design considerations, and recommendations that ISA can use to improve the Master Plan.
- e. Demonstrated capacity to manage schedules, communications, logistics, deliverables, and coordination with NEST, ISA, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in a timely and professional manner.

Section III – Relevant Experience of the Respondent

List no more than three relevant projects. A relevant project is one which best exemplifies your qualification for this Project:

- a. Name of project
- b. Type of engagement(s)
- c. Project location

- d. Total project cost.
- e. Project description.
- f. Project delivery method.
- g. Describe the services your firm provided.
- h. Indicate which team members were involved in the project and specify their role.
- i. Provide a statement acknowledging if the project was completed on time/on budget.
- j. Provide a few illustrative photographs or renderings, if available.

References for at least three current or recently completed projects. For each project, include the name and telephone number for the owner.

Cost Information

While the purpose of this RFQ is to evaluate the qualifications of respondents, it is requested that the following cost information be provided:

- a cost structure (i.e., hourly basis)
 - provide the hourly fees charged by position (e.g., principals, project managers, interns) by the firm for each position anticipated to do this work.
- Travel and **all** other reimbursable expenses.
- How can the firm accommodate early community engagement work prior to funding availability.

Since NEST will be evaluating the respondent's experience, qualifications, approach, and other aspects of the response to this RFQ prior to selecting a firm(s) with whom to commence negotiations, **the Cost Information shall be a separate attachment titled "Confidential: Cost Information"**. Funding for the community engagement services is from the State of Connecticut/DECD through the Community Investment Fund. The selected firm will need to adhere to the invoice requirements.

Information Regarding: Failure to Complete Work, Default and Litigation

Please respond to the following questions:

- a. Have you ever failed to complete any work awarded to you? If so, where, and why?
- b. Have you ever defaulted on a contract? If so, where, and why?

- c. Is there any pending litigation that could affect your organization's ability to perform this agreement? If so, please describe.
- d. Has your firm ever had a contract terminated for cause within the past five years? If yes, provide details.
- e. Has your firm been named in a lawsuit related to errors and omissions within the past five years? If yes, provide details.
- f. During the past seven years, has your firm ever filed for protection under the Federal bankruptcy laws? If yes, provide details.
- g. Are there any other facts or information that could affect your firm's ability to perform the types of services being sought by NEST about which NEST should be aware?

Exceptions and Alternatives:

Respondents wishing to take any exceptions to any requirement in the RFQ shall state and explain such exceptions. NEST may accept responses which take exception to any requirements in this RFQ, or which offer any alternative to a requirement herein, as well as consider such exceptions and alternatives in evaluating responses. Any exception or alternative must be clearly delineated and cannot materially affect the substance of this RFQ.

Selection Process:

The selection process will involve evaluating submissions based on the firm's qualifications, experience, demonstrated commitment to listening, collaboration, and the rating system noted in the selection criteria. Shortlisted firms may be invited for interviews or presentations.

Any contract resulting from this RFQ will be based on a two-step process. The first step will be to review and evaluate the qualifications of architectural/ engineering firms submitted in response to this RFQ. The second step will solicit lump-sum cost proposals from the most highly rated firms which will then be interviewed before a winning firm is chosen.

Reserved Rights

NEST reserves the right to award, award in part, to reject any and all responses in whole or in part for misrepresentation or if the respondent is in default of any prior NEST contract, or if the proposal limits or modifies any of the terms and conditions and/or specifications of the RFQ. NEST also reserves the right to waive technical defects, irregularities, and omissions if, in its judgment, the best interest of NEST will be served.

Contact Information:

For any questions or further information, please contact:

Ian Blake
Real Estate Development Project Manager
203.753.1896 ext. 216
ian@nestct.org

General Information:

1. NEST is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate in its hiring, employment, or business practices. NEST is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to, or operation of its programs, services, or activities.
2. All questions and communications about this RFQ and submission requirements must be directed via email and must be received by **July 17th, 2026**. Prospective respondents must limit their contact regarding this RFQ to Ian Blake or such other person otherwise designated by Mr. Blake. Emailed responses to questions submitted via mail or electronically by the above date **as well as any changes or amendments to this RFQ, will be emailed no later than July 21, 2026**, to all those who have submitted questions or who attended any such Information Session. If you have any procedural questions in this regard, please call Ian Blake.
3. Exhibit 1 identifies the project timeline for Interface Studio Architects. The community engagement firm should leverage this document as a guide to learn when input is need from the community and when information should be shared with the ISA. **The anticipated start date for community engagement services is August 10, 2026.**

Conditions:

All respondents must be willing to adhere to the following conditions and must positively state this in the proposal:

1. All responses to this RFQ are to be the sole property of the NEST. Respondents are encouraged **not** to include in their responses any information which is proprietary.
2. Firms shall disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including prior relationships with NEST, ISA, or property owners in the project area.
3. Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under any contract awarded as a result of the RFQ is to be the sole property of NEST.
4. The timing and sequence of events resulting from this RFQ will ultimately be determined by the NEST.

5. The Respondent agrees that its response will remain valid for a period of ***ninety (90)*** days after the closing date for the submission and may be extended beyond that time by mutual agreement.
6. NEST may amend the terms or cancel this RFQ any time prior to the execution of a contract for these services if the NEST deems it to be necessary, appropriate, or otherwise in the best interests of NEST. Failure to acknowledge receipt of amendments, in accordance with the instructions contained in the amendments, may result in a firm's response not being considered. At our option, NEST may provide all respondents with a limited opportunity to remedy any technical deficiencies identified by NEST in their initial review of responses.
7. The respondent must certify that the personnel identified in its response to this RFQ will be the persons actually assigned to the project. Any additions, deletions, or changes in personnel from the proposal during the course of the agreement period must be approved by NEST, with the exception of personnel who have terminated employment. Replacements for personnel who have terminated employment are subject to approval by NEST. At its discretion, NEST may require the removal and replacement of any of the respondent's personnel who do not perform adequately, regardless of whether they were previously approved by NEST.
8. That all subcontractors hired by any firm awarded a contract as a result of this RFQ must have prior approval of NEST during the agreement period.
9. Any costs and expenses incurred by respondents in preparing or submitting responses are the sole responsibility of the respondent.
10. Respondents must be prepared to present evidence of experience, ability, financial standing, and any other information deemed necessary by NEST to satisfactorily meet the requirements set forth or implied in the response.
11. Respondents must be prepared to provide insurance certificates including General Liability with \$1M in coverage per occurrence and a \$2MM aggregate, Workers' Compensation, Professional Errors and Omissions Liability.
12. No additions or changes to the original response will be allowed after submittal, except as may be allowed by NEST, at its option. While changes are not permitted, clarification of responses may be required by NEST at the respondent's sole cost and expense. The final price and scope of services of any contract or purchase order resulting from this RFQ may be negotiated with responsible respondents.
13. Respondents may be required to give presentations to the extent necessary to satisfy NEST's requirements or needs. In some cases, respondents may have to give presentations or further explanations to any RFQ selection committee established by NEST.
14. The respondent represents and warrants that its response is not made in connection with any other responder and is in all respects fair and without

collusion or fraud. The respondent further represents and warrants that it did not participate in any part of the RFQ development process, had no knowledge of the specific contents of the RFQ prior to its issuance, and that no agent, representative or employee of NEST participated directly in the respondent's preparation of their response.

15. All responses to the RFQ must conform to instructions. Failure to include any required signatures, provide the required number of copies, meet deadlines, answer all questions, follow the requested format, or fail to comply with any other requirements of this RFQ may be considered an appropriate cause for rejection of the response.
16. Any contract resulting from this RFQ process will represent the entire agreement between the respondent and NEST and will supersede all prior negotiations, representations, or agreements, alleged or made, between the parties.
17. NEST shall assume no liability for payment of services under the terms of the contract until the successful respondent is notified that the contract has been accepted and approved by NEST. Any contract resulting from this RFQ may be amended only by means of a written instrument signed by the respondent and signed by the Executive Director of NEST.

EXHIBT 1

PHASE	DURATION	TARGET DATES	KEY ACTIVITIES	DELIVERABLES
Project Kickoff / Mobilization	1 Week	May 6-10	Kickoff meeting, confirm scope, collect base documents, establish communication and meeting schedule. coordinate with City staff/agencies on pre-approval path.	Project work plan, document request list, schedule confirmation
Site / Context Analysis	3 Weeks	May 6-24	Review zoning/context, neighborhood conditions, access, utilities, surrounding land uses, opportunities/constraints	Site/context analysis summary
Existing Conditions Documentation	4 Weeks	May 6- June 1	Site visits, photo documentation, review available drawings, verify major existing conditions	Existing conditions report / base documentation
Programming / Needs Assessment	4 Weeks	May 20 – June 15	Stakeholder interviews, space needs, project goals, priorities, adjacencies, operational needs	Program and needs assessment memo
Code Review	4 Weeks	May 20 - June 15	Preliminary building/zoning/code analysis, occupancy/use, accessibility, life safety, likely approval path	Preliminary code review memorandum
Conceptual Design – Options Development	5 Weeks	June 18 - July 19	Prepare initial design concepts, massing/site options, layout studies, test program against site constraint	2–3 conceptual design options
Community Engagement / Stakeholder Meeting #1	1 day	August 13	Present early concepts to community/stakeholders and gather feedback	Meeting summary and comment log
Design review with Connecticut DEEP & SHPO	4 Weeks	July 23 - August 14	Present early concepts to SHPO and DEEP to gather state requirements.	Addition of DEEP & SHPO required elements
Conceptual Design – Preferred Concept Refinement (Meeting 1)	4 Weeks	July 29 - August 24	Refine preferred concept based on feedback, code findings, and owner priorities	Preferred conceptual design package
Community Engagement / Stakeholder Meeting #2	1 day	September 14	Present refined concept, confirm alignment, gather final stakeholder input	Updated meeting summary and revisions log

PHASE	DURATION	TARGET DATES	KEY ACTIVITIES	DELIVERABLES
Approvals Strategy / Pre-Application Coordination	4 Weeks	Sep 3 -28	Prepare approvals path, pre-application meetings, revise materials	Approvals checklist, submission strategy
Approvals Submission Preparation	3 Weeks	Sep 30 – Oct 18	Finalize concept plans, narrative, supporting materials for submission (40 – 60 % drawings)	Draft approvals submission package
Community Engagement / Stakeholder Meeting #3	1 day	Oct 21	Show the community final design concept	Meeting summary
Approvals Review / Responses / Closeout	3 Weeks	TBD	Respond to comments, minor revisions, finalize approvals-related materials	Final concept and approvals response package

Monthly Summary

May 2026

Kickoff, site/context analysis, existing conditions work, begin programming and code review.

June 2026

Complete programming and code review; move into conceptual design.

July 2026

Develop concept options.

August 2026

Refine preferred concept and hold first stakeholder/community meeting.

September 2026

Advance approvals strategy, coordinate with agencies, prepare submission materials, and hold second stakeholder/community meeting.

October 2026

Refine preferred concept and hold third stakeholder/community

October to early November 2026

Submit, respond to comments, and close out approvals-related scope.

Notes

- This schedule assumes **timely owner feedback** and **regular access to site information/documents**.
- **Approvals timing can vary** depending on municipal review calendars, completeness of submission, and whether public hearings are required.
- A good planning assumption is that several items will **overlap**, especially code review, stakeholder coordination, and approvals preparation.