



# Request for Concepts East End Facilities



July 14, 2025

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# 1 OVERVIEW

## 1.1 INVITATION

Navy Pier, Inc. (NPI) seeks responses from qualified firms, partnerships and/or teams (hereafter Respondents) interested in undertaking the redevelopment and potential operation of Navy Pier's East End Facilities (EEFs), a project detailed more specifically in this Request for Concepts (RFC). NPI invites interested Respondents to participate in the concept submission process.

After reviewing submissions to this RFC, NPI intends to invite selected Respondents to participate in a future Request for Proposals issuance.

## 1.2 OVERVIEW

NPI is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation responsible for the operation, maintenance, and redevelopment of historic Navy Pier in Chicago. Under its long-term lease with the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA), NPI seeks concepts for the development and operation of Navy Pier's EEFs that will boldly revitalize the spaces and optimize their continued use.

Situated on Lake Michigan, Navy Pier is one of the top-attended cultural destinations in the Midwest. The 109-year-old Pier stretches into the water more than six city blocks and offers authentic Chicago experiences alongside one-of-a-kind vistas. Since it first opened as a mixed-use recreational and commercial facility in 1916, the Pier has been integral to the city's social, cultural, and economic advancement. Today, the organization's mission statement guides its activities: *Navy Pier is the People's Pier, Chicago's lakefront treasure, offering welcoming experiences through programs and partners that inspire discovery, wonder, and fun.* NPI's vision defines the future it strives to achieve: *A global model of urban waterfront excellence, Navy Pier is an ever-evolving, sustainable, vibrant and inclusive landmark that showcases Chicago's unique character while setting new standards for public spaces that foster connection, creativity, and civic pride.* As a mission-driven organization, Navy Pier is committed to its values of Integrity, Diversity, Excellence, and Stewardship. Contributing to the community, creating meaningful partnerships, and providing unparalleled guest experiences represent the core of the organization's operations.

Navy Pier consists of fifty acres of public space on Chicago's lakefront and features an array of diverse offerings: shops, restaurants, and entertainment throughout the Family Pavilion including Flyover; Pier Park with the iconic Centennial Wheel, Wave Swinger, and Drop Tower; commercial sightseeing and dinner boat cruises; cultural anchor partners the Chicago Children's Museum and Chicago Shakespeare Theater; Festival Hall's exhibition

and meeting spaces; an outdoor Beer Garden; and the historic Aon Grand Ballroom. Navy Pier has distinguished itself as the Midwest's top tourist attraction, welcoming more than 8.5 million visitors annually. NPI operates seven days per week, 365 days per year.

In anticipation of the Pier's Centennial, NPI began advancing its *Centennial Vision*. This strategic framework has guided more than \$450 million of public and private investment into the Pier's physical transformation. Completed projects include the SITES-certified South Dock Pierscape, the 198-foot-tall Centennial Wheel, Polk Bros Park, the People's Energy Welcome Pavilion, the renovated Family Pavilion and South Arcade, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, a renovated Chicago Children's Museum, Sable Hotel, the Flyover attraction, and, most recently, the transient vessel marina on the Pier's north side. Each of these improvements advanced *The Centennial Vision's* core set of guiding principles: 1) Navy Pier is a real place that is uniquely Chicago; 2) Improve the quality of the public realm; and 3) Emphasize quality over quantity.

Notably, apart from Sable Hotel and Offshore Rooftop bar and restaurant, no major investments have been made to improve the Pier's East End Facilities. Festival Hall and its adjacent meeting rooms, Lakeview Terrace and its adjacent north and south beer gardens, and the Aon Grand Ballroom all appear and function in largely the same ways as they did when the Pier reopened in the mid-1990s. This request is the next phase of NPI's efforts to redevelop Navy Pier so that the entirety of the 109-year-old facility continues to thrive as a vibrant, impactful, and welcoming place for millions of guests every year.

## 2 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF SERVICES

NPI seeks a partner to undertake the redevelopment and potential operation of Navy Pier's East End Facilities under one of two scenarios:

Scenario A includes the following spaces:

- 170,000 sf of Festival Hall
- Approx. 58,000 sf of adjoining front- and back-of-house spaces to include potential kitchen space and loading dock bays

Scenario B includes the following spaces:

- All spaces included under Scenario A
- An additional 40,000 sf of space adjacent to Festival Hall
- 100,000+ sf across two floors of the historic Terminal and Shelter Buildings
- Outdoor beer gardens adjacent to the Shelter Building on its north and south sides
- 60,000+ sf across two floors of the Aon Grand Ballroom building, a Chicago landmark

Additional details regarding both scenarios and their respective spaces are included in Section 3, below.

NPI is receptive to concepts that completely reimagine and develop these spaces for novel and unique use. Whatever the proposed purpose may be, the successful Respondent will craft a creative development concept that accounts for the guiding principles set forth in *The Centennial Vision* (available for distribution upon request). The successful Respondent will also indicate the proposed operational structure for their development concept.

## 3 EAST END FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

### 3.1 EAST END FACILITIES OVERVIEW

Navy Pier's East End Facilities (EEFs) consist of four buildings: Festival Hall and its adjacencies, the Terminal Building, the Shelter Building and its adjoining beer gardens, and the Aon Grand Ballroom. The Terminal Building, Shelter Building, and Grand Ballroom were part of the Pier's original construction in 1915. Festival Hall and its adjacencies were constructed as part of Navy Pier's redevelopment in the 1990s. These facilities currently operate as rentable spaces for third party events, including galas, conferences, sporting competitions, concerts, meetings and more.

These EEFs are serviced by two vehicular drop-offs, two garages with a total of 1,200+ parking spaces, and a loading dock with ten bays. Navy Pier Marina, the newest development at Navy Pier, is in the water directly to the north of the EEFs. Sable Hotel, a 223-room boutique hotel, rises seven stories along the southeast portion of Festival Hall and includes Offshore Rooftop, a bar, restaurant, and event space atop the Shelter Building.

A pedestrian promenade outside these spaces and adjacent to Lake Michigan circuits the Pier's 1.2-mile+ perimeter. This space is open to the public during the Pier's hours of operation. The south portion of this promenade is the mooring site for a dozen commercial cruise vessels and the location for several food establishments. A plaza to the east of the Aon Grand Ballroom is the Pier's terminus. The north portion of the promenade is straddled by the Navy Pier Marina in the water to the north and North Dock Road, the Pier's only vehicular access route, to the south.



## 3.2 DEVELOPMENT OPTION A

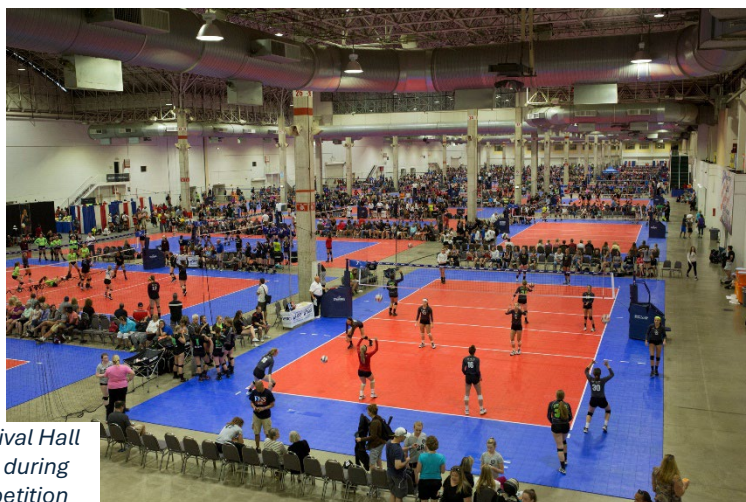
Option A represents the opportunity to develop and then potentially operate more than 220,000 sf across three levels within and adjacent to Festival Hall at Navy Pier. A detailed site diagram can be found at [this link](#). The following photos are representative of the spaces in their current conditions.



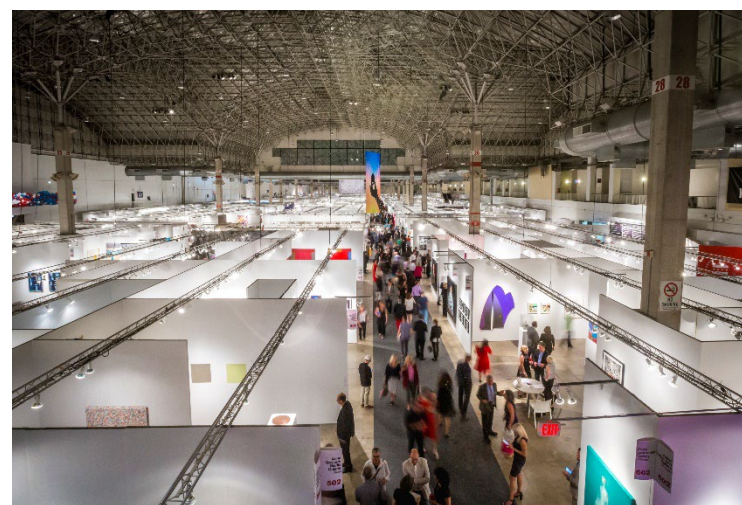
*Image 2. Typical 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Meeting Room adjacent to Festival Hall*



*Image 1. Festival Hall looking south during car show*



*Image 4. Festival Hall looking south during athletic competition*



*Image 3. Festival Hall looking South from 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Meeting Room during EXPO Chicago*



### 3.3 DEVELOPMENT OPTION B

Option B represents the opportunity to develop and potentially operate all spaces included in Option A, as well as the Terminal Building, the Shelter Building along with its beer gardens, and the Grand Ballroom. A detailed site diagram can be found at [this link](#). The following photos are representative of the spaces in their

current conditions.



*Image 7. View looking north through atrium between Festival Hall adjacencies (left) and Terminal Building (right)*



*Image 5. 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Meeting Rooms directly east of and open into Festival Hall*

*Image 6. Pre-function area on 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor outside of Meeting Rooms in Image 5.*

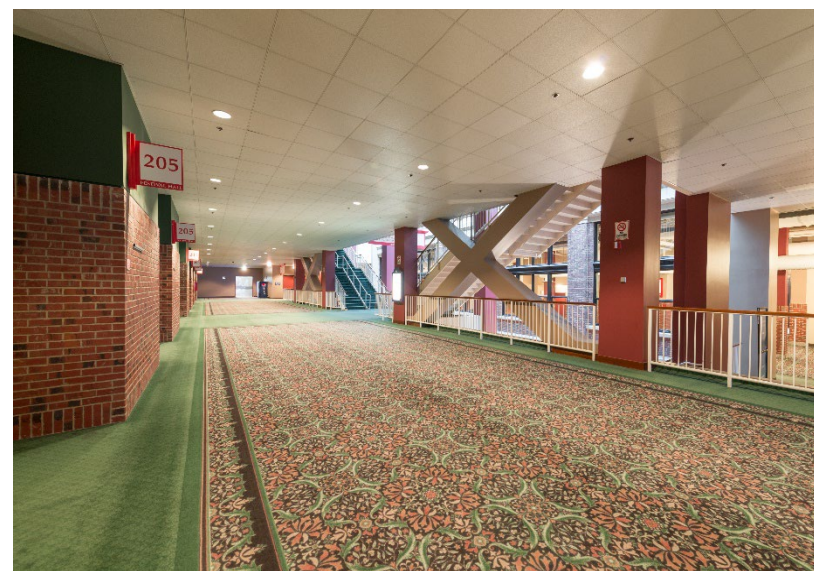




Image 8. Lakeview Terrace (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of Shelter Building) looking east

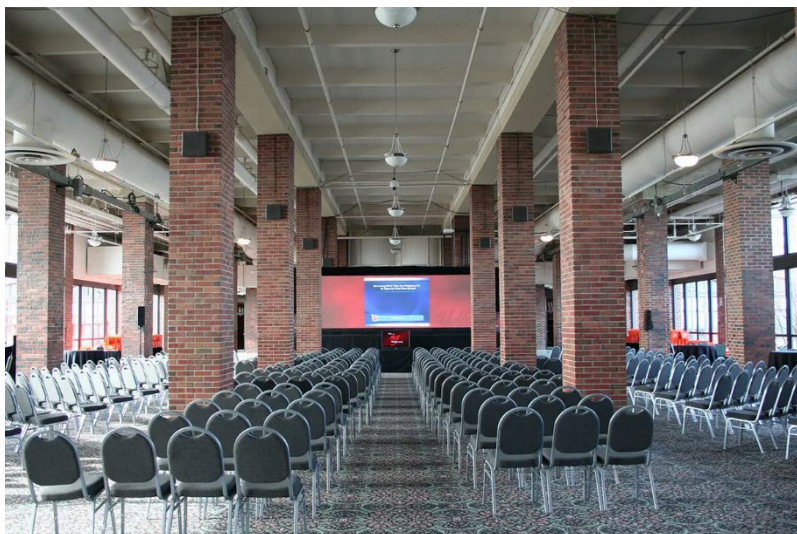


Image 9. Aon Grand Ballroom looking northeast



Image 10. Lakeview Terrace (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of Shelter Building) looking west

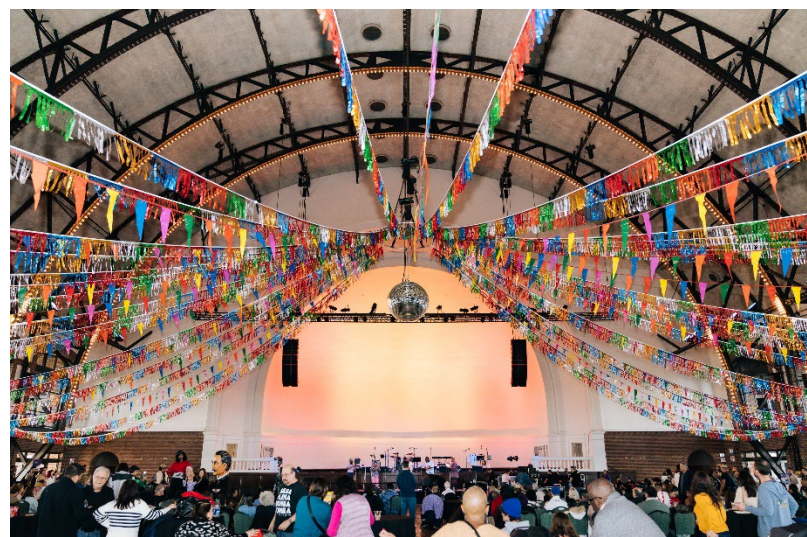


Image 11. Aon Grand Ballroom looking west



Image 12. Exterior of Shelter Building and Aon Grand Ballroom with north beer garden looking southeast



Image 13. Exterior of Aon Grand Ballroom, Shelter Building, Terminal Building and Festival Hall, looking southwest from above

## 4 RFC PROCESS

### 4.1 RFC PROCESS OVERVIEW

Respondents are advised to carefully read the requirements for providing submissions in response to this RFC as described herein. Additional information regarding this RFC may be available from time to time and will be emailed directly to Respondents.

If this document is amended, NPI will issue a revision by written addendum to Respondents. Respondents are solely responsible for obtaining all such addenda and acknowledging receipt of any addenda that have been issued.

Respondents are to contact Joe Zyer, NPI's Director of Grants & Strategic Initiatives, by email ([jzyer@navypier.org](mailto:jzyer@navypier.org)) with questions concerning this RFC and should not rely on representations, statements, or explanations other than those made in this RFC or in any written addendum to this RFC. No contact regarding this process, formal or informal, shall be made with staff or the Board of NPI or any major stakeholder entity, such as MPEA, the City of Chicago, or any entity with operations on Navy Pier. Any such communication will be grounds for elimination from the process.

Written questions will be accepted via email, until three (3:00) PM central daylight time, on 8/25/2025. Questions should be submitted in writing to Joe Zyer at [jzyer@navypier.org](mailto:jzyer@navypier.org). A summary of questions with any related responses will be issued as an addendum and distributed via email to all Respondents who have provided NPI with valid contact information.

RFC submissions are due no later than twelve (12:00) PM noon central daylight time on 11/3/2025 via email to Joe Zyer at [jzyer@navypier.org](mailto:jzyer@navypier.org). The subject line should read "NPI East End Facilities RFC Electronic Submission".

A timeline showing the important dates for the RFC process is included below in Section 4.3.

Respondents are solely responsible for submitting timely and complete responses to this RFC on or before the stated time and date. NPI will in no way be responsible for delays caused by technical difficulties or by any occurrence.

By submitting a response, Respondent agrees to accept and abide by the terms of this RFC. NPI reserves the right to reject any or all submissions, to waive any informality or irregularity, and to accept any responsive submission, which it may deem to be in the best interest of NPI. Only submissions from responsible Respondents complying with the provisions of this RFC will be considered.



The submissions can be withdrawn at any time, if requested in writing, until the deadline date, at which time they will be considered final.

NPI shall not be responsible for expenses incurred in obtaining the RFC or preparing any submission related to this process.

Submissions will be evaluated by NPI. NPI reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to determine which Respondents, if any, submit concepts that align with the goals of this RFC and to reject any or all submissions.

## 4.2 PRE-SUBMISSION MEETING AND SITE TOUR

The Pre-submission meeting and site tour will be held at Navy Pier at 600 East Grand Avenue, followed by a walking tour of the facilities on 8/18/2025. The conference room location and information regarding the meeting time and other details will be provided in a separate email sent to interested Respondents. The following list of items pertains to the site tour criteria:

- A. The purpose of the tour is to view the East End Facilities and discuss their features.
- B. NPI requests that Respondents submit a list of persons who will attend to Joe Zyer via email at [jzyer@navypier.org](mailto:jzyer@navypier.org). In an effort to keep the number of attendees manageable, Respondents are required to limit listed attendees to three (3) individuals or fewer.
- C. Respondents are required to attend the pre-submission meeting and site tour as a condition of the RFC.
- D. Respondents should not rely solely upon oral statements made by NPI's representatives during the pre-submission meeting.
- E. Questions that arise during the pre-submission meeting and site tour should be submitted in writing via email before 3:00 P.M. CDT on 8/25/2025 to [jzyer@navypier.org](mailto:jzyer@navypier.org)
- F. Written answers to questions will be provided to Respondents in the form of an Addendum that will be issued on or about 9/22/2025.

## 4.3 RFC PROCESS TIMELINE

The dates listed below are targeted dates and subject to change. All times are central time zone.

Request for Concepts Issued	July 14, 2025
RSVP for Pre-Submission Meeting Due	August 4, 2025
Pre-Submission Meeting & Site Tour	August 18, 2025
Written Questions Due	August 25, 2025 at 3:00 PM CDT
Response to Written Questions Issued	September 22, 2025
Submissions Due	November 3, 2025 at 12:00 PM CDT

## 5 RFC SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

This Section of the RFC provides the necessary information for Respondents to prepare their submission. Respondents should carefully read these requirements to ensure that their submissions fully and accurately meet the requirements of the RFC. Emphasis should be on conforming to the instructions, responding to the requirements, and ensuring the completeness and clarity of content as succinctly as possible. The following outlines the information to be included in the submittal for the RFC.

### 5.1 COVER LETTER / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Respondents shall provide highlights of the submission materials and reasons the firm/team should be selected.

### 5.2 RESPONDENT TEAM OVERVIEW

Respondents shall provide a statement describing the following:

- Legal name, principal officers, architect (if known).
- A description of the type of entity that will develop and potentially operate the property (e.g., corporation, LLC, joint venture, etc.) and a list of other owners of interest that may provide equity to the ownership entity including an estimated percentage of ownership for each.
- Three previously completed developments including date completed, location, and any relevant information regarding partnerships and eventual operations.

### 5.3 CONCEPT(S) DESCRIPTION

As part of the Project description, provide a narrative statement and summarize the concept, the factors taken into consideration in developing the layout, and other information that Respondent believes would clarify the presentation. This element of the submission is not intended to be a design submittal. However, renderings and/or diagrams of the development concept will assist significantly as Navy Pier evaluates submissions.

At a minimum, a complete response to this section will include the following:

- The scenario, A or B, this concept elects to develop.
- How the concept intends to utilize all spaces within the selected scenario including whether the concept utilizes multiple, divided spaces.
- The target audience for the concept once operational.
- Estimated annual attendance assuming Navy Pier attracts 8.5 million guests.
- Whether the concept is original or previously demonstrated. If the latter, where?
- How the concept relates to the vision and guiding principles of *The Centennial Vision*.



- How the concept enhances Navy Pier's operations and appeal.

## 5.4 OPERATION

Respondents shall include a written description of how the proposed concept will be operated and managed. Specifically, Respondents will provide the following:

- A description of the operational structure for the concept.
- An operational schedule: daily hours, duration of any anticipated closures, how the concept's schedule corresponds with Navy Pier's hours of operation.
- A brief history of the operator/management company.
- The performance of the operator/management company.
- A list of comparable operations managed by the company.

## 5.5 CONCEPT SCHEDULE

Respondents shall provide an estimated schedule for the concept's development, from authorization to negotiate a development Agreement through opening of the concept.

## 5.6 CONCEPT BUDGET AND FINANCING

Respondents shall include a written description of how the development of the concept will be funded. Specifically, Respondents will provide the following:

- A budget estimating the cost to develop the concept.
- An initial financing plan, showing:
  - The amount of equity proposed from the Respondent or development partners, by equity source.
  - The amount of debt to be issued to the Respondent, the assumed loan terms and the source of that debt.
  - NPI assumes that the development concept will be fully self-funded by Respondent.
- A statement of income and expenses for the concept for the first three years after opening. This should be based upon the projection of attendance provided in response to 5.3, above.

NPI considers information provided during the RFC evaluation process as confidential.

## 5.7 PROPOSED DEAL TERMS

Respondents shall provide details regarding how they propose to structure an agreement with NPI for the opportunity to develop and potentially operate these spaces. For example, does Respondent propose leasing the space? If so, under what terms? The successful Respondent will provide sufficient detail for NPI to evaluate the proposed deal.

## 6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

In evaluating the concepts, NPI will consider the quality and strength of the following:

1. Respondent team
2. Detail and quality of proposed concept
3. Concept relation to vision and guiding principles of *Centennial Vision*
4. Concept enhancement of Pier's operations and appeal
5. Concept operation and management
6. Concept schedule and timeline
7. Concept budget and financing
8. Proposed deal terms

## 7 CONDITIONS AND DISCLOSURES

Navy Pier, Inc. (NPI) is the authorized agent of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA) for the development of historic Navy Pier. NPI will be the lessee of record. All negotiations relative to any future agreement will only be conducted with designated NPI contact.

The following conditions apply to the forgoing Request for Concepts (RFC) issued by NPI:

1. All requests for interpretation must be made in writing and submitted electronically as set forth in this document. NPI's representatives will attempt to respond to questions on a timely basis in groups based upon the number of questions received. The deadline for questions and answers is set forth elsewhere in this document. Contact with NPI staff or Board members is not allowed during the RFC submission process period, beginning with the issue date of this document and concluding with the selection of a Respondent, except as may be initiated and authorized by NPI as part of the RFC selection process. No contact with relevant stakeholder entities, such as MPEA or the City of Chicago, is allowed regarding this process during the RFC process period. All communications regarding this process should be made through the email provided in this document.
2. By submitting its Concept, the Respondent agrees to accept and abide by the terms and conditions of this document.
3. This document does not represent a commitment or offer by NPI to enter into an agreement with the Respondent or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFC.
4. Final award of any contract is contingent upon the execution of an Agreement between NPI and the selected Respondent.



5. NPI reserves the right to request additional information or clarification of information provided by the Respondents when it believes such information is necessary to properly evaluate a submission.
6. Respondents acknowledge that submissions will not be returned to the sender. NPI reserves the right to retain any ideas in a submission regardless of whether a Respondent is selected.
7. The selected Respondent is responsible for all existing and future applicable federal, state, and local taxes, whether direct or indirect, incurred in connection with a contract. NPI is exempt by law from Retailers' Occupation Tax, the Service Occupation Tax (both state and local), the Use Tax, and the Service Use Tax in Illinois on materials or services purchased in connection with this Project.
8. The Respondents shall not offer any gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value to any official or employee of NPI for the purpose of influencing the outcome of the RFC selection process.
9. The Respondents shall not collude in any manner or engage in any practices with any other Respondent that may restrict or eliminate competition or otherwise restrain trade. Violation of this instruction will cause the Respondent's submission to be rejected by NPI. This prohibition is not intended to preclude joint ventures or subcontracts.
10. Submissions that do not comply with the requirements of the RFC, or that contain omissions, erasures, alterations or additions not called for, or that are irregular in any way, may be rejected as nonresponsive and insufficient. Notwithstanding the foregoing, NPI reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to waive any or all failures, irregularities or informalities in a Submission, or failures to comply with this RFC, when such a waiver is considered to be a waiver of NPI's best interest. In addition to any other basis for rejection, any Respondent found to have falsified any information to NPI in relation to this or any other RFC, or which has been barred from doing business with NPI, the City of Chicago, or State of Illinois, or which has been convicted of a felony related to procurement contracting with any unit of government, may be rejected.
11. NPI shall have the right to reject any or all Submissions for any reason whatsoever, in its sole and absolute discretion. In addition, NPI reserves the right to (a) reject or cancel any or all Submissions; (b) reject any portion(s) of a Submission; (c) reissue the RFC with or without modification; (d) negotiate all Submission elements; and (e) reject all Submissions and undertake the work contemplated herein in a different manner.
12. NPI owns all Concepts. Concepts will not be returned to Respondents. All costs and expenses incurred by each Respondent in preparing, developing and/or submitting

its Concept(s), including preparing any designs, drawings, or specifications in response to this RFC, shall be borne by the Respondent alone, regardless of whether such Respondent is awarded the work. In confirmation and furtherance thereof, NPI shall not be responsible for, nor pay or reimburse any such cost to Respondent(s) for any such costs or expenses.

13. NPI shall retain full title to and ownership of all Concepts. Unsuccessful Respondents shall retain the copyright and other intellectual property rights, if any, to the unique design elements of their Concepts; provided, however, NPI may use and reproduce any design or other elements of a Concept that are not subject to copyright or other intellectual property right of the Respondent, and do so in connection with the design, construction and operation of the Project.