

Creative Place-Making & Adaptive Reuse

Request for Proposal



Historic Ajo Townsite

Ajo, Arizona

January 5, 2012





Program

The International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA) has been funded through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Our Town program to improve livability in the town of Ajo, Arizona through creative place-making strategies. ISDA's main partners on the project are Pima County and the Conway School of Landscape Design. The work will focus on the town's core public spaces within the Historic Ajo Plaza and the Historic Curley School Campus (approx. 13 acres). The focus is to address the interface between buildings and the spaces that connect them within the downtown area. These public spaces create nodes of activity connected by streets and sidewalks across institutional, commercial and residential properties.

The town of Ajo, including the historic downtown, is a master planned community built to accommodate mining activity. Originally designed by Kenyon and Maine in 1914, the town's architecture and landscape design were largely based upon the principles of the City Beautiful movement. It is a radial plan with a central axis connecting the important institutions of civic life, and a resulting centrally located public realm in the form of the Historic Plaza.

Much has changed since the town's initial plan and development, including the closing of the mine that brought initial construction, people and prosperity to this isolated town. The town's population is a third of what it once was, but what remains is exemplary Spanish Colonial Revival Architecture, and an intact but under-utilized core ripe for interaction and activity.

The goals of the project are to improve upon existing quality of life, encourage creative activity, and generate community identity and sense of space based not upon how it used to be, but upon current conditions and today's existing culture.

A firm or team comprised of architects, urban designers, landscape architects, and/or planners will be hired to:

- Analyze existing qualitative data from community surveys
- Conduct two community-based design charrettes
- Identify how spaces are currently being used/envisioned for the future
- Develop outdoor public space use designs
- Produce schematics for two interior public spaces
- Broadly address the connectivity of these space resources to increase use and accessibility

The central challenge of this project is to balance historic integrity with the revival of an architecturally and culturally historic activity center to meet the needs of current citizens and future uses. The resulting work should envision spaces for current residents that are attractive, healthy, inviting, accessible, safe, lively, and diverse.



Introduction

The International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the environment, culture, and economy of Sonoran Desert communities. ISDA is based in Ajo, and since 2002, has been working to revitalize the town of Ajo by re-purposing historic spaces in the town center. Two large structures that dominate Ajo's core, the historic Curley School Campus and the Ajo Plaza—13 buildings on 13 acres of land—are owned by ISDA and, for the first time in their history, under some degree of community control. Following the successful adaptation of the Curley School high school and junior high school buildings into 30 affordable live/work units for artists, the creation of additional studio work spaces and the renovation of the cafeteria building into an art gallery, ISDA received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts to address the need for adaptive reuse of the elementary school on the Curley School campus, the Plaza Recreation Hall, the Plaza Movie Theater, central Plaza Park and all the connection points between them. The vision for the program is to reclaim the town center—the Curley School and Plaza—as the people's center, to encourage the creative use of public space, to create a vitality fueled by the intermingling and expression of Ajo's tri-cultural heritage, and to engender a stronger sense of common purpose, social equity and shared future.

The core of this project will serve to increase the use of public spaces through increased connectivity, community involvement, and the positive interaction between the built environment and people through place-making strategies. These public spaces should be designed to holistically, yet incrementally respond to people's needs to improve the environment in which people live. The new plans should create spaces that are livable today and sustainable tomorrow.

Scope of Work

ISDA is seeking to contract with firm capable of pulling together a multi-disciplinary team of architects, urban designers, landscape architects and designers, planners, and other related professionals to function as a team and perform the following major tasks:

1. Two Community-Based Charrettes in Ajo, AZ

- a. Analyze existing planning docs and public intake data to incorporate
- b. Plan appropriate structure and process for workshops (approx. 45 people)
- c. Conduct one day long community intake/design workshop
 - i. Future use of major public space use areas—both indoor (Plaza Movie Theater and Rec Hall) and outdoor
 - ii. Identify how the community would like to improve existing spaces focusing on the Ajo Plaza and the Curley School Campus
 - iii. Develop strategy for maintaining historic integrity
 - iv. Address issues of connectivity between spaces on site
 - v. Public awareness of the issues facing redevelopment
 - vi. Public support for future development
- d. Conduct one day long community review and feedback workshop (approx. 45 people) that results in:
 - i. Community ownership of the resulting designs/plans
 - ii. Community interest for the next phase of the project

2. Develop Public Space Use Designs---based upon community and client input

Outdoor Public Spaces

- a. Site Analysis
- b. Make recommendations for future use of public spaces
- c. Develop plan and designs that consider/include the following elements:
 - i. Pedestrian Experience/Networks
 - ii. Circulation
 - iii. Wayfinding:
 - Develop appropriate visual language
 - Locate Sites for cues
 - iv. Planting Guidelines:
 - Recommendations for change to existing plantings
 - Identify key areas for new plantings
 - v. Recommendations for physical improvements:
 - Location/conceptual design of street furniture
 - Streetscape design for key locations/connections
 - Public art site locations
 - Lighting concepts for spaces
 - Enhancement of historic character

Indoor Public Spaces

- d. Schematic Plans for the Interior Public Spaces—Plaza Movie Theater (6498 sq.ft.) and Rec Hall (8235 sq.ft.)
 - i. Develop architectural program based on community and client input
 - ii. Develop schematic plans/designs
 - iii. Provide cost estimates for each program by sq. ft.
- e. Visualizations/Renderings
 - i. 3D Renderings/Graphics that convincingly describe the recommendations/designs of the new plan/schematics of:
 - Plaza Movie Theater and Rec Hall interiors
 - Key Linkages between Ajo Plaza and Curley School
 - Landscape Improvements to Plaza Park and South Lot
 - Key entrance points to activity center
 - Enhancements to key sites (identified through intake)

3. Final presentation of Space Use Designs and Schematics in Ajo, AZ with representatives from ISDA and Pima County. ISDA will organize the meeting.

Deliverables

- a. At least two scenarios/alternatives
- b. Combined Planning Document of considered public spaces including:
 - ✦ Public Space Use Designs
 - ✦ Wayfinding Plan
 - ✦ Planting Recommendations
 - ✦ Streetscape Designs
 - ✦ Public Art Site Locations
 - ✦ Conceptual Lighting Schemes/Ideas
 - ✦ Physical Improvements
 - ✦ Circulation Interventions
- c. Elevation of proposed streetscape improvements where applicable
- d. Schematic drawings of Plaza Movie Theater and Rec Hall
- e. 3D Visualizations/Renderings of Key Project Locations
- f. Final Report/Narrative addressing how outcomes address design challenges
- g. Summary of Data Intake from Public Workshops

Required Information

1. Statement

A concise (no longer than 2 paragraphs) statement of how the team being proposed has the expertise, sensitivity, and collective wisdom to tap into Ajo's past history and architecture and generate options for the community going forward that leverage the community's strengths in creative ways. Include how your team is able to effectively engage with a public that is multi-cultural and from varied socio-economic background.

2. Contact Information

- a. Name of Firm
- b. Address of Firm
- c. Contact Info and Website
- d. Primary Contact Info

3. Brief History of the Firm:

- a. Size of Firm/Staff
- b. Years in Business
- c. Minority/Women owned?
- d. Areas of Expertise

4. Project Team Background

- a. Team Members' Bio's
- b. Relevant Consultants

5. Representative Projects: Please list a minimum of five (5) projects completed by your firm that best represents a similar scope, budget, program, and complexity. For each project please include where possible:

- a. Completion Date
- b. Name and Location
- c. Budget
- d. Description
- e. Photographs / Visuals
- f. Participation of proposed team members (if any)

6. Project Experience in community-based charrettes: Please list a minimum of four (4) projects that have included planning and conducting community-based workshops or charrettes as part of a larger project scope.

- a. Completion Date
- b. Name and Location
- c. Describe how the public process was conducted/methodology used
- d. List of Team members who lead the workshops/meetings
- e. Objective of the workshop/meeting
- f. Describe how you effectively incorporated community input, client objectives and vision for the problem addressed
- g. Describe how you address conflict between historic interests and vision for the furniture when working with the public
- h. Photographs/Visual of Completed projects that included public component

7. Project Approach

- a. Describe your firm’s management approach for place-making and participatory design. Please include a rationale for why you prefer the approach you describe.
- b. Please describe any unique aspects your firm may employ in the design of this project
- c. Please describe how your approach addresses the notion that spaces are never finished but continue to evolve over time.
- d. Please describe your methodology/approach for maintaining historic integrity while designing for the future
- e. Describe ways that your design approach can meet the needs of a struggling market to create affordable solutions

8. Schedule

- a. Please confirm that you will be able to schedule the following events in Ajo, AZ:
 - i. Interview Process/Site Visit—second week of Feb.
 - ii. Initial community-based workshop—March
 - iii. Community review and feedback workshop—April
 - iv. Final Presentation—TBD

Budget

This project has a maximum budget of \$50K for the items described in this RFP, including any travel expenses that will be incurred. Please itemize your costs in the following categories:

- i. Community-based Workshops/Charrettes
- ii. Building Schematics
- iii. Public Space Use Designs
- iv. Renderings/Visualizations
- v. Final Presentation/Meeting

Selection Criteria

Experience of team members with creative place-making	10%
Experience of team members working with nonprofits or public agencies	10%
Experience of team members working with community-based charrettes	15%
Experience of team members in the design of public/cultural spaces/historical	20%
Degree to which the firm and its proposal meet client needs expressed in this RFP	35%
Experience of team members working with multi-cultural, mixed income groups	10%

Application Process

Submissions may be made through February 1, 2012.

Electronic submission only as a pdf file (budget may be separate doc)

Please send to Maria Gmuca, maria.gmuca@gmail.com and copy Tracy Taft, tracy@isdanet.org

A confirmation email will be sent on February 2, 2012

Please limit written content to six pages. Graphics and photos of work samples are not included in this limit.

From submissions received we will invite several firms for a site visit and interview process in Ajo during the second week of February. Travel costs for this trip will not be covered. A final selection and notification will be made by the third week of February.

Documents to be provided to selected firm:

- To scale interior floor plans of Plaza Rec Hall, Movie Theater
- To scale drawing of Plaza Park, Curley School campus
- Past planning documents including the Ajo Vision Plan from 2001
- Photographs of existing conditions
- Additional documents can be provided upon request

Please direct all questions to Maria Gmuca by phone (602.790.8097) or email (maria.gmuca@gmail.com)