

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

**A CLASS III INTENSIVE HISTORIC
ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF THE
DOWNTOWN AREA OF
BISMARCK, ND**

Issued: October 20, 2025

**Proposals Due: December 19, 2025, at
5:00 p.m. CST**



City of Bismarck
Planning Department
221 North 5th Street
P.O Box 5503
Bismarck, ND 58506

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP):

A CLASS III INTENSIVE HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF THE DOWNTOWN AREA OF BISMARCK, ND

Summary RFP Schedule:

RFP Issued	October 20, 2025
Proposal Deadline	December 19, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. CST
Selection of Proposal by Historic Preservation Commission	January 21, 2026
Selection of Proposal by City Commission	February 10, 2026

Any interested individual may request to be on an email list to receive updates on the RFP process, including addenda to the RFP if any are issued. The City may alter this RFP at any time.

Submittal Instructions

Proposals must be received by the City of Bismarck no later than **5:00 p.m. CST on December 19, 2025**. Proposals received after this deadline will not be accepted.

Send proposals and direct questions regarding the RFP to:

Lauren Oster,
Planner
City of Bismarck
PO Box 5503
Bismarck, ND 58504
701-355-1846
laoster@bismarcknd.gov

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Purpose for Request

The Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission (BHPC) is looking to complete a Class III intensive architectural survey of properties surrounding Bismarck's current Downtown Historic District and to update the site forms for the Downtown Historic District (see the Proposed Survey Boundary Map under the [Resources section](#)). This will be inclusive of, but not limited to, conducting thorough background research, establishing a period(s) of significance, and completing and submitting a draft and final written report and all associated site forms for the Class III.

Additional buildings have become historic since the original investigation twenty-five years ago. All the historic buildings in the project area need to be evaluated to see if they still meet eligibility criteria or contribute to additional time periods of significance or to additional themes to the current District (e.g., Urban Renewal). It is possible they need to be considered as a separate Historic District(s). There have been changes in this core area including changes to building appearances, demolitions, additions, and address changes. Today, the project area is comprised of commercial, public, office, and multi-family residential uses. The Class III project will look at structures built on or before 1980 in order to prepare for a possible amendment, or nomination, as a next step, that may occur after the conclusion of this Class III Inventory.

Scope of Services

The BHPC, through this Request for Proposals (RFP), seeks a qualified consultant to conduct a Class III intensive architectural survey of the Downtown area.

The scope of services includes the following tasks:

1. **Archival Research & Historical Narrative.** Conduct thorough literature review of previous related projects and Class III inventories of the project area using the ND State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) system and other available materials. The project consultant will use all applicable archives, the State Historical Society of North Dakota, City, County, and other records, as needed, to gather data on the properties in the project area. This will include reviewing the previous National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination for the Bismarck Downtown Historic District (see the [Resources section](#)).
2. **Architectural Intensive Survey.** Conduct an intensive level survey of buildings and structures within the identified survey boundary to collect new field data and complete new and updated site forms for qualifying properties. The intensive survey will:
 - a. Document the existing historic character and conditions of each property within the survey area, completing a North Dakota Cultural Resources Survey (NDCRS) Architectural Site Form for each property in the survey area. Data collected will include locational information, property boundaries, current ownership, date of construction, known architects or contractors, assessment of integrity, evaluation

- of significance under the NRHP Criteria, and site photographs meeting or exceeding minimum NDCRS Site Form Data requirements.
- b. Update existing documentation of any previously recorded cultural resources within the survey area. Where eligibility has been recommended or determined in a previous survey, such recommendation will remain unchanged unless the consultant provides evidence that the statement warrants change.
 - c. Provide a historic context and architectural themes for the development of the survey area and make recommendations for future preservation activities, including evaluation of whether the current NRHP historic district should be amended and/or if a new nomination should occur.
 - d. Not include entry onto private property. All work, including photography, will be conducted from the public right-of-way adjacent to the property.
3. **Boundary Recommendation.** This would include the creation of a map showing the boundary for the period of significance. This boundary may be different from the current NRHP historic district boundary and should be noted if so. This should be updated based on current conditions identified within the survey area.
4. **Establish Period(s) of Significance and Themes.** A table identifying historically or architecturally significant properties, including evaluation of both individually eligible and contributing sites is required. The evaluation of the significance of historic properties using established criteria is required. This may include the application of the criteria within identified historic contexts and architectural themes of the current District or the consultant may provide revised historic contexts and/or architectural themes with justification.
5. **Formatting.** Edit all documents for grammar, punctuation, and clarity prior to submission to the BHPC or SHPO.
6. **Document Submission.** Submittal of the written report and NDCRS Architectural site forms for review and final submission must follow all SHPO site form and report requirements (see ND SHPO Guidelines Manual for Cultural Resource Inventory Projects and NDCRS Architectural Site Form Manual under the [Resources section](#)).
- e. NDCRS architectural site forms will be submitted first to the BHPC for review and comments. The BHPC will provide comments within 15 days to the consultant. The consultant will have 15 days to make the corrections and will submit to SHPO. An initial ten percent of the site forms should be submitted to SHPO for review early on to ensure compliance with format and data requirements. Typically, SHPO has 15 days for review of the submitted site forms. The consultant will be responsible for making any modifications required by SHPO within 15 days of SHPO providing comments. Submission of revised site forms should be submitted to SHPO by the end 2026, unless otherwise agreed upon by all parties.

- f. The draft written report will be submitted first to the BHPC for review and comments. The written report must address the survey results and methodology. The BHPC will provide comments within 30 days to the consultant. The consultant will have 15 days to make corrections and submit the written report to SHPO for review. Once submitted, SHPO has 30 days for review. If corrections are required, the consultant will have 15 days to make corrections and submit the revised written report to SHPO. SHPO will have 30 days for review of the revisions.
 - g. All final deliverables including, but not limited to, all required final hard and digital copies of the written report and site forms, photographs, and GIS data must be submitted to SHPO no later than June 30, 2027. Consultant is responsible for submitting all final deliverables and ensuring that they are accepted.
- 7. **Communications.** Maintain regular communications with Planning Department staff through email, meetings, or phone calls throughout the process of surveying the project area, filling out the site forms, and drafting the survey report, to include, at a minimum, monthly remote meetings with staff unless otherwise discussed. Staff will provide regular updates to the BHPC and SHPO on the progress of the project based on these communications.
 - h. City of Bismarck Planning Department staff will include the staff coordinator of the BHPC and the Planning Director. The Planning Department will remain a local resource to the consultant throughout the process. The Planning Department will help the consultant facilitate public engagement for this project including, but not limited to, property notifications, City documents like assessing cards (when available), the addition of project resources on the City's website, and public input opportunities at public meetings.

Project Budget

The BHPC received funding for this project through the National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grant which is distributed by the ND SHPO to North Dakota's Certified Local Governments. A fixed fee contract of an amount to be specified in the proposal, not to exceed \$34,670, will be used. Project costs may be invoiced at regular intervals throughout the project.

Community Profile

Bismarck, the capital city of North Dakota, is the second most populous city in the state with an estimated 2023 population of 75,092. The city is a growing regional retail and medical center that is consistently recognized as a great place to live for its quality schools, parks, open space, low crime, affordability, and strong economy.

The city is located on the banks of the Missouri River, which for thousands of years was the homeland of the Mandan tribal nation. Bismarck today is located near the Standing Rock and the Fort Berthold Reservations, homes of the Sioux Nation, and the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara.

The river has long served as a trade and transportation corridor, with Bismarck situated as the key commercial hub, developing adjacent to the transcontinental railroad. Bismarck served as the major shipping center for the military, freight, and settlers via the steamboat trade on the Upper Missouri until the railroad bridge was built. As Bismarck developed, the city grew into the financial, warehousing, and retail center of the region. Main Avenue housed the primary financial institutions of the region. The buildings along Main Avenue backing the railroad reflect the role of Bismarck as a key warehousing and distribution center, especially for fruits and vegetables. The west end of the Downtown District was the hub of automobile dealerships, garages, and body shops that reflect the city's important role in the transportation history of the region. The civic buildings, including the Courthouse, the Belle Mehus, and the WWII Auditorium signify the importance of public life of the Downtown. The historic hotels, bakeries, shops, and clubs represented the thriving social life of the city for over a century of Bismarck's history.

The Downtown Bismarck Historic District was designated in 2001. A subsequent amendment to the district was completed in 2012 to clarify some inconsistencies in the original nomination. The project area contains 11 properties already individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and 19 properties that are individually eligible/contributing within the current historic district boundary. Additionally, there is one NRHP Historic District within three blocks of the boundary of the project area, the Cathedral Area Historic District, and the Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission is currently in the process of considering another potential future district nearby.

The buildings in the current Bismarck Downtown Historic District are assigned to the Period of Significance: 1872-1951. Within that, they are considered within the context of five time periods and assigned to several National Register Areas of Significance and Historic Functions: Commercial, Social, Political/Governmental, and Warehouse/Transportation:

- 1872 – 1897 Bismarck's Founding – Before the Great Fire
- 1898 – 1900 The First Great Dakota Boom Ending – After the Fire
- 1901 – 1918 The Second Dakota Boom
- 1918 – 1942 The Inter-War Years – between WWI and WWII
- 1942 – 1951 World War II and the Early Postwar Boom

Based on City Assessing records of the parcels in this project area, a majority of the buildings were built on or before 1975. The majority in the current Historic District fall in the time period between 1901-1942.

Resources

The following resources should be reviewed prior to the submission of a proposal:

1. [Proposed Downtown Survey Boundary Map](#)
2. [Original Downtown Historic District Nomination](#)
3. [North Dakota SHPO Guidelines Manual for Cultural Resource Inventory Projects](#)
4. [NDCRS Architectural Site Form Manual](#)
5. [Historic Preservation Commission Ordinance](#)

All manuals, forms, and ordinances provided as resources above are the most recent version available at the time of release for this RFP. However, it is up to the consultant to make sure that the most recent versions of these resources are used when conducting services for this project.

Proposal Request and Selection Process

Schedule of Process

The schedule of the RFP issuance and evaluation process is intended to occur as follows. This schedule may be revised by the Planning Director to accommodate unforeseen circumstances, contract negotiations, or additional review time needed as identified by either the BHPC or SHPO.

Event/Process	Date(s)
RFP Issued	October 20, 2025
Interested parties may correspond with the City for clarification on the RFP, if necessary. Interested parties are encouraged to leave contact information for updates.	October – December, 2025
Submittal deadline for questions regarding RFP	November 26, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. CST
Addition of addendum to RFP in response to questions, if necessary	December 12, 2025
Proposal Deadline	December 19, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. CST

Proposal distributed to selection committee for review. The selection committee may conduct an initial cut-down of proposals based on evaluation criteria and may request virtual interviews.	December 29, 2025 – January 2, 2026
Remote consultant interviews conducted, if requested by selection committee.	January 5 - 9, 2026
Final recommendation of selection committee submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission for review in agenda packet.	January 16, 2026
Selection of proposal by Historic Preservation Commission for recommendation to City Commission.	January 21, 2026
Final recommendation of Historic Preservation Commission submitted to the City Commission for review in agenda packet.	February 3, 2026
Selection of proposal by City Commission.	February 10, 2026
Development of contract, including negotiation with the selected firm on terms, scope, conditions, and costs.	February 11 – March 13, 2026
Contract approval by City Commission.	March 24, 2026
Notice to proceed.	March 25, 2026
10 percent of physical site forms submitted to SHPO for review.	TBD
Remaining site forms submitted to SHPO for review.	TBD
Final site form submittal.	TBD
Draft written report to BHPC for review.	TBD
Final written report and other submittals to SHPO for review.	April 2, 2027
Project completion.	June 30, 2027

Submittal Instructions

All proposals should be submitted in PDF format by **5:00 p.m. CST on December 19, 2025**. Digital files may be transferred via email.

Large files should be uploaded with a link to download files provided via email. The City is not responsible for communication errors. Consulting firms are advised to call the Planning office at 701-355-1840 to confirm that a submittal has been received.

Lauren Oster,
Planner
City of Bismarck
PO Box 5503
Bismarck, ND 58506
701-355-1846
laoster@bismarcknd.gov

Required Proposal Contents

Proposals should include sufficient information about the firm's qualifications and intended project approach to allow the selection committee to effectively evaluate the proposal. However, no proposal may be longer than 15 pages, excluding any attachments or linked documents. The following information should be provided, in no particular order:

1. **Firm Capacity.** Identify the size, history, and subject-matter expertise of the firm, as it relates to the purpose of this request. If any portion of the project would be subcontracted to additional firms, provide information about each subcontractor's qualifications.
2. **Work Products.** Provide the three most relevant examples of firm work products, as they relate to this request. Ideally, examples will involve historic architectural surveys or other work completed within the past ten years for a community with similar characteristics to Bismarck. However, projects in process or provided for larger cities may also be considered. Each community is different, and there is no expectation that the examples provided will align with Bismarck's own goals.
3. **Geographic Accessibility.** Describe the accessibility of the firm, and/or any proposed subcontractors, to the Bismarck geographic region. Describe travel, if necessary, which will be the responsibility of the selected firm.
4. **Individual Roles.** Identify the principal investigator and other staff who would perform the work, and describe the role, qualifications, and availability of each person. A single project manager should be identified with contact information included. The principal investigator for the project must be permitted as an architectural historian per NDCC 55-03-01 and NDAC 40-02-02 and must meet the professional qualification standards outlined in 36 CFR 61 for historians and architectural historians prior to contract approval. Other appropriate standards set forth in the ND SHPO guidelines must also be met.

5. **Project Approach.** Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of this request and the local context of Bismarck by suggesting an approach to meet each task listed in the scope of work above, including the historical narrative, the intensive survey, and the document submission process. Ensure that any approach will be compliant with any state and federal law that would intersect with provisions of conducting background research and an architectural reconnaissance survey.
6. **Timeline.** Propose a timeline for completion of each item in the project scope with the goal of final project completion on, or prior to, June 30, 2027. Identify and account for any potential revisions of site forms and the written report if necessary. The consultant is responsible for incorporating SHPO's required review periods for site forms and reports into their proposed timelines. It may be helpful to account for more than one review period.

Itemized Budget. Identify the total estimated cost for completion of the project, not to exceed \$34,670, and provide proportional cost estimates for each task described in the project approach. The itemized budget should include travel expenses, if any, and any other incidentals necessary to complete the work. Allowable travel costs cannot exceed the rates established by the State of North Dakota:

- i. The rate of mileage cannot exceed the 70¢ per mile in North Dakota.
 - ii. The rate for meals cannot exceed \$45 per day per person in North Dakota.
 - iii. The rate paid for lodging cannot exceed the General Service Administration (GSA) rate per night per person.
7. **Staff collaboration.** Describe how the consultant intends to involve staff from the Planning Department and members of the BHPC. A basic communication plan involving all parties should be included.
8. **Proof of Insurance.** Consultant will be required to carry, for the period of the contract, Comprehensive General Liability Insurance (personal injury, bodily injury, and property damage to a combined single limit of \$2,000,000 for each occurrence and \$500,000 per person) and comply with worker's compensation insurance and employer's liability insurance as required under the laws of the State of North Dakota. The City of Bismarck must be listed as co-insured on these policies. Any and all sub-consultants must be similarly covered, either under their own or the general consultant's liability insurance policy. This will need to be provided by the time of contract approval.
9. **Conflict of Interest.** Describe any relationships involving the City of Bismarck, its employees, and/or the BHPC with a statement explaining why the relationship does not constitute a conflict of interest relative to rendering services as requested.

10. **Suggested Modifications or Additional Information (Optional).** The consultant may wish to provide recommendations as to potential changes to the scope of the project that would improve upon the final product, or the consultant may wish to provide additional information that would be useful to the selection committee. This is not required.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used as a standard to evaluate all proposals fairly. The evaluation will be conducted by a selection committee consisting of City officials and staff, and a recommendation will be presented to the Board of City Commissioners.

The following criteria, and their associated percentage of the total scoring, will be used:

1. **Firm Qualifications (20%).** The qualifications and experience of the firm, demonstrated through previous performance and achievements with similar projects and clients. Any sub-consulting firms will also be considered in relation to their proposed role in the project.
2. **Grasp of Project (25%).** The proposal of the firm is aligned with the purpose of this RFP and is consistent with the purposes and goals outlined in the Historic Preservation Commission Ordinance (see [Resources Section](#)).
3. **Project Approach (25%).** The ideas and methods proposed by the firm to complete the scope of services, as contained herein, demonstrate a clear understanding of the issues, creativity, and problem-solving ability. The planning and scheduling techniques ensure quality performance. It highlights the consultant's familiarity with the community and potential partners, pertinent local cultural resources, and historic preservation principles and methodology including all National Register Bulletins.
4. **Project Team (10%).** The qualifications, experience, and availability of the principal consulting staff proposed to work on the project, including the variety of relevant disciplines evident on the team, as well as the availability and qualifications of sub-consulting staff, if any. The principal investigator is qualified according to the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards per 36 CFR 61 and is permitted as an architectural historian per NDCC 55-03-01 and NDAC 40-02-02. Project personnel have the technical capability, educational background, pertinent work experience, and the knowledge and familiarity with research sources and techniques needed to adequately complete the project.
5. **Firm Reliability (15%).** The firm has demonstrated the ability to complete the project within the stated timeline and budget and the quality of work done on similar projects meets the State Historical Society of North Dakota standards.

6. **Project Cost (5%).** Proposed cost to complete project. Identifies the ability to provide the best final product within the limitations of a set budget.

Other Information

Modifications to the Request

The City of Bismarck reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, make counter proposals and/or engage in negotiations with any or all firms or individuals, waive any requirements or otherwise amend this RFP, or cancel the RFP in order to achieve the City's goals and objectives. Any changes in the status of the RFP will be brought to the attention of all parties that provide contact information for updates. The information contained in this RFP represent the City's best information at the time of the release of the RFP and the City reserves the right to modify any term or condition contained herein.

If no agreement is reached during contract negotiations in a reasonable timeframe, the City of Bismarck reserves the right to cancel the RFP or select the next most-qualified firm, according to the same procedures.

Eligibility

The City of Bismarck requires that any chosen firm needs to be registered with the North Dakota Secretary of State's office to do business in North Dakota prior to contract approval.

Responsibility for Proposal Preparation

Except as otherwise specifically agreed to in writing by the City, all firms submitting proposals shall provide and pay for all materials, labor, transportation, charges, levies, taxes, fees or expenses incurred, including all costs to prepare a response to this RFP, travel and presentation costs, and all other services and facilities of every nature whatsoever necessary for the preparation of the RFP.

It is neither the City's responsibility nor practice to acknowledge receipt of any proposals as a result of the RFP process. It is the proposer's responsibility to ensure that a proposal is delivered and received in a timely manner.

Civil Rights

Title VI assures that no person or group of persons may, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any and all programs or activities administered by the City of Bismarck.

The City of Bismarck will consider every request for reasonable accommodation to provide:

- An accessible meeting facility or other accommodation for people with disabilities,
- Language interpretation for people with limited English proficiency (LEP), and
- Translations of written material necessary to access City of Bismarck programs and information.

Appropriate provisions will be considered when the City of Bismarck is notified at least 10 days prior to the meeting date or the date the written material translation is needed.

To request accommodations, contact the City of Bismarck Title VI and ADA Coordinator, at 701-355-1336. TTY users may use Relay North Dakota at 711 or 1-800-366-6888.

No Conflict of Interest

No member of the Board of City Commissioners, Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission, member of the selection committee for this RFP, and any other officer, employee or agent of the City of Bismarck who exercises any functions or responsibilities in the selection of a proposal, shall have any personal interest, direct or indirect, in the project, unless said conflict is disclosed prior to any discussion and the member is recused from participation in selection of a firm.

Open Records/Proprietary Information

The City of Bismarck recognizes that in responding to this RFP, the proposer may desire to provide proprietary information in order to clarify and enhance their response. To the extent permitted by law, the City of Bismarck will keep confidential such information provided that:

1. The information submitted is arguably proprietary, and
2. The proprietary information is submitted in a separate file or section that is clearly identified as containing proprietary information.

Only information that is credibly proprietary may be included in the sealed portions of the submittal. Inclusion of non-proprietary significant information in the sealed portions may render a submittal ineligible.

Responders should note that the City of Bismarck is a municipality, and as such its files are available for public review pursuant to the North Dakota Constitution Article XI, Section 6 and NDCC Chapter 44-04-18 unless otherwise exempt.

Ownership of Project Materials

Any and all deliverables, meeting notes, data, illustrations, and other materials created as final work products through an awarded project will be the property of the State Historical Society of North Dakota as a public record, unless otherwise noted.

This program receives federal funds from the National Park Service through the State Historical Society of North Dakota. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental

Federally Assisted Programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or disability. Any person who believes she or he has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127.

