



**DATE:** July 17, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Letter of Clarification

**RE:** Architectural Services RFQ

**TO:** All Prospective Respondents

Houston First Corporation (“HFC”) issues this Letter of Clarification regarding the referenced Architectural Services RFQ to answer questions timely received in the manner set forth below:

**Question 1:** When will this project go to bid for contractors?

Answer: HFC intends to use the construction manager-at-risk method, as noted in the RFQ. The schedule for construction trade bids will be developed once the architect and construction manager have been engaged.

**Question 2:** What is the expected start date for construction?

Answer: The construction phase is expected to be 18 months to achieve substantial completion; the start date will be developed once the architect and construction manager have been engaged.

**Question 3:** What is the project budget?

Answer: While a more precise budget will be developed commensurate with the scope of the design, HFC estimates the project will cost 8-12 million, inclusive of design fees and construction of the venue, landscaping, and parking.

**Question 4:** Where is the project site?

Answer: HFC has identified a city block in the Convention District of downtown Houston, Texas, formerly used for surface parking, for this project.

**Question 5:** Will this project be a new ground-up facility, exterior and interior renovation, or just interior tenant improvements?

Answer: This is a ground-up construction project.

**Question 6:** Will surface and/or garage parking be a part of the project scope?

Answer: Some surface parking for restaurant patrons will likely be part of the approved design. HFC does not expect a parking garage will be necessary.

**Question 7:** Will FF&E selection services be required?

Answer: The manner and extent to which furniture, fixtures, and equipment selection services will be required cannot be determined at this stage of the selection process.

**Question 8:** Will naming or branding services be required?

Answer: HFC does not anticipate that naming or branding services will be required.

**Question 9:** Is there a chef or food concept established and, if not, will it be prior to the start of the project?

Answer: HFC envisions a casual, welcoming restaurant and entertainment venue. Further details can be provided at the proposal stage and will be refined with assistance from the selected architect.

**Question 10:** What would the detailed 18-month project schedule be?

Answer: A detailed construction schedule will be developed in conjunction with the architect and construction manager selected as a result of this process.

**Question 11:** Will there be an entertainment partner or consultant on board?

Answer: HFC does not envision that an entertainment partner/consultant will be required for this project.

**Question 12:** What are the primary goals of the project (e.g., guest experience, brand alignment, revenue performance)?

Answer: As noted in the RFQ, HFC seeks to enhance the destination appeal of George R. Brown Convention Center by creating an engaging and vibrant Convention District. An integral part of that initiative includes forward-thinking projects to expand or otherwise create opportunities for, and infrastructure for, entertainment venues and mixed-use developments, as well as improving facilities for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

**Question 13:** Should the entertainment and restaurant functions carry equal weight, or is one considered primary?

Answer: While no distinction in scoring has been established in the RFQ, HFC envisions that the tenant will be a restaurant operator.

**Question 14:** Would experience with hybrid dining and performance venues be more relevant than typical restaurant or theater work?

Answer: Yes.

**Question 15:** Is there an existing business model or operator in place, or is the concept still evolving?

Answer: HFC envisions that the tenant will be a restaurant operator. Further detail may be provided at the RFP of the selection process.

**Question 16:** Will the venue be owner-operated or leased to a third-party?

Answer: HFC expects that the completed project site will be leased to a restaurant operator.

**Question 17:** Are there key design priorities or specific disciplines/roles you would like to see emphasized in the SOQs?

Answer: Only to the extent requested in the RFQ or suggested in this Letter of Clarification.

**Question 18:** Are there any local or partner diversity business participation goals we should address?

Answer: Please refer to the Diversity Participation section of the RFQ. HFC has established a 30% diversity goal for this Project, and subcontractors must have been certified under the HFC Diversity Program, which is linked in the RFQ and available on the HFC website.

**Question 19:** Is Houston-based experience or a local office weighted in the evaluation?

Answer: No. This RFQ is open to all respondents.

**Question 20:** Should our qualifications reflect full architectural scope only, or also include guest strategy, programming, entertainment, or FF&E coordination?

Answer: While HFC will evaluate SOQs, in part, based on the essential personnel introduced by respondents – as noted in the RFQ – HFC does not expect that respondents will have or need to provide a full array or subconsultants for minor services.

**Question 21:** Will early-stage feasibility or pre-design services be part of the scope?

Answer: HFC expects preliminary consulting/pre-design services will be required.

**Question 22:** Are there defined goals around sustainability, accessibility, or permitting that should be addressed?

Answer: Not at this stage of the selection process.

**Question 23:** How is construction expected to be procured?

Answer: HFC intends to use the construction manager-at-risk method, as noted in the RFQ.

**Question 24:** What is the timeline for architectural team selection?

Answer: SOQs are due July 24, 2025, to be followed by the RFP in August. Depending on the volume of responses received and the time required to negotiate an agreement with the top-ranked respondent, pre-design consulting services could begin in late August or September.

**Question 25:** Have key milestones been set for design phases or construction start?

Answer: Milestones will be developed in cooperation with the design team selected as a result on this process.

**Question 26:** Will shortlisted teams be asked to submit additional materials (e.g., design concepts) or participate in interviews?

Answer: Interviews may be scheduled with top-ranked Respondents, as noted in the RFQ. HFC does not anticipate requiring submittal of conceptual designs as part of the interview process.

**Question 27:** Are references limited to built work, or are relevant unbuilt projects acceptable?

Answer: References should be ongoing or recently completed projects, as noted in the RFQ.

**Question 28:** Is there a preferred format for submission (e.g., file size, naming convention, single PDF/booklet)?

Answer: The only SOQ requirements are as provided in the RFQ. Respondents are asked to review the instructions carefully, as paper and an electronic copy of their SOQ must be delivered. (SOQs cannot be accepted by email.)

**Question 29:** Has this project has already been awarded to a general contractor?

Answer: No.

**Question 30:** Would a narrative describing diversity efforts be sufficient, or are respondents required to complete specific HFC Diversity Program forms?

Answer: Respondents are asked only to indicate how they intend to make good-faith efforts to meet the 30% diversity goal noted in the RFQ in accordance with the HFC Diversity Program. Some respondents may find the diversity forms helpful, though they are not required at this stage of the selection process.

**Question 31:** Is the project scope likely to include interior build-out, or is it anticipated as a core and shell project?

Answer: Some interior build-out will likely be part of the project, though the extent is unknowable at this stage of the selection process.

**Question 32:** Should respondents include resume information for architecture only, or the full consultant team, including engineering and specialty consultants (e.g., acoustics, audio-visual, kitchen design, etc.)?

Answer: In the RFQ, respondents are asked only to introduce essential personnel, explain their respective functions, and include a summary of their qualifications. HFC does not expect respondents can or will provide comprehensive details for each potential subcontractor.

This Letter of Clarification becomes part of the referenced RFQ automatically upon issuance and shall supersede any previous specifications and/or provisions in conflict therewith. By submitting their SOQ, Respondents are deemed to have reviewed this Letter of Clarification and incorporated its content into their submission.