

REQUEST **FOR** PROPOSALS

CHELSEA NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY IN MEMPHIS, TN



**Submission Deadline:
December 19, 2025**

Jordan McKenzie,
Director of Community and Economic Revitalization
jordan.mckenzie@cramemphis.org

Published September 19, 2025



Greenlaw neighborhood

The Uptown Community comprises several neighborhoods in North Memphis, each with a rich history and a bright future.

Over the last twenty years, significant redevelopment and new housing construction have taken place, mainly in the Greenlaw neighborhood, which is located immediately adjacent to Downtown Memphis.

Directed by the Uptown Community Plan, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is working with residents, property owners, institutions, businesses, and the City to support and facilitate community revitalization. To further community goals related to promoting the development of vibrant anchors that serve as gathering spaces and protecting housing affordability, the CRA is pleased to offer this RFP for a mixed-use development at a key site in the Uptown area.



The CRA envisions every neighborhood in the City of Memphis and Shelby County providing its residents with a healthy and safe environment, economic opportunity, affordable housing and excellent quality of life.

850 N. Manassas St. | Memphis, TN 38107
www.cramemphis.org

INDEX

I. **Reinvesting in North Memphis**

The Uptown Redevelopment Area consists of different neighborhoods on the northern edge of downtown Memphis.

II. **Opportunity**

The Uptown Plan recommends to redevelop the Brick Church, activate the garage and provide affordable housing.

III. **History**

The Brick Church dates back to the Civil War era.

IV. **Neighborhood Vision**

An open house was held August 15 to receive neighborhood input.

V. **Project Goals**

Developer must preserve community identity while strengthening connections to downtown.

VI. **Property/Site Details**

The project site includes eight contiguous parcels covering 1.52 acres, two of which have structures including the Brick Church and a vacant auto body shop.

VII. **Financial Assumptions**

The selected developer(s) will be expected to identify and secure all necessary pre-development financing.

VIII. **Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be reviewed and ranked based on quality of concept, project feasibility, experience, and economic inclusion.

IV. **Submission Requirements**

A successful proposal will include as much detail as practical.

V. **Submission Process**

Submit questions and proposals to Jordan McKenzie.

VI. **Other Requirements**

Each proposal must meet the CRA's local small business goals.

VII. **Timeline and Key Deadlines**

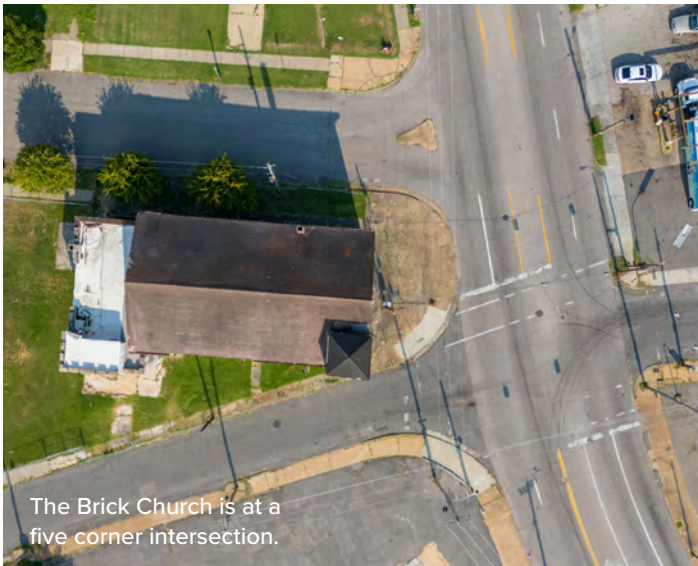
All proposals must be submitted by December 19, 2025.

I. REINVESTING IN NORTH MEMPHIS

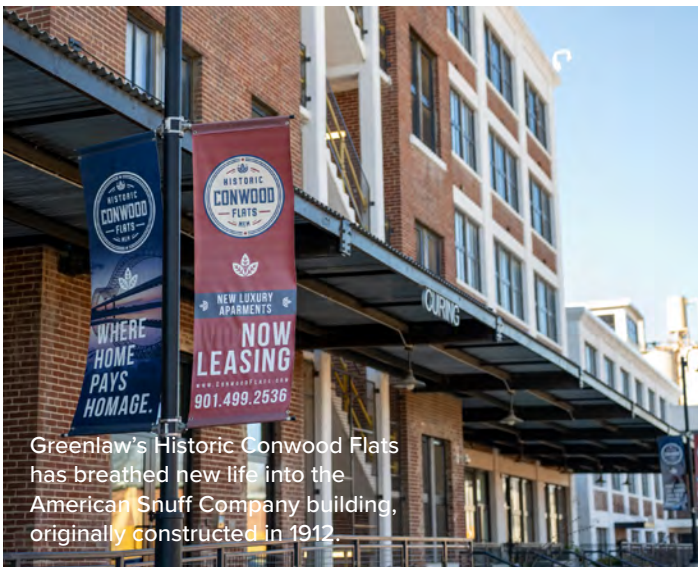
The Uptown Redevelopment Area is located immediately adjacent to the northern edge of Downtown Memphis and encompasses several neighborhoods in North Memphis, including, Bearwater, Bickford, Greenlaw, the Medical District, Mud Island, New Chicago, Scutterfield, Smokey City, and Uptown.

The purpose of the Uptown Redevelopment Area is to fund affordable housing construction, building rehabilitation, site preparation, and infrastructure improvements that will create and ensure the continued economic vitality of these neighborhoods. Over the last 20 years, the Memphis & Shelby County Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) has been instrumental in the ongoing revitalization of the Uptown area, with 850 homes and apartments built and 26,000 linear feet of sidewalks built/repaired.

The CRA's work is guided by the [Uptown Community Plan](#). This plan provides a shared vision for the district and outlines areas of focus, community priorities, and recommended projects. A major recommendation of the plan is to strengthen community anchors in order to have the greatest impact on stabilization, revitalization, and community pride. The subject site for this RFP is included in the Chelsea Neighborhood Center anchor, which envisions preservation of the Brick Church, pedestrian improvements and a mixture of residential uses.



The Brick Church is at a five corner intersection.



Greenlaw's Historic Conwood Flats has breathed new life into the American Snuff Company building, originally constructed in 1912.



Edgeview at Legends Park, a 99-unit affordable living center, opened in North Memphis in 2025.

II. OPPORTUNITY

The Memphis and Shelby County Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is seeking qualified and experienced respondents to submit a proposal to act as the developer for a site in the Uptown Redevelopment Area—largely bounded by Chelsea Avenue to the North with one additional parcel on the north side of the street, with Brick Church bounded by Sixth and Seventh Street on the West and East sides respectively, with additional parcels further west bounded by Muster Alley on the West Side. The CRA will convey the property to the selected developer subject to the terms of a redevelopment agreement. The CRA purchased this assemblage of properties at various times from 2020-2022.

This site forms the heart of the Chelsea Neighborhood Center Community anchor, as outlined in the [Uptown Community Plan](#). It is located along a state route (Chelsea Avenue) and is steps away from the newly built Fire Station, multifamily housing developments and newly constructed Veterans housing along Seventh Street. Additionally, Habitat for Humanity has a subdivision development a quarter mile west of this site, and the CRA has awarded a development opportunity for the site at Second Street and Chelsea.

The Uptown Community Plan recommends higher residential density at the intersections, transitioning to single-family homes further from the center core. The CRA has received significant direction from the Uptown, Greenlaw, and Bearwater community, opining that the preservation of the Brick Church reflect primarily performing arts and theater uses in conjunction with potential community hub spaces integrated into the building as well.

The site includes eight contiguous parcels covering 1.52 acres. Two of the parcels have structures, including the Brick Church and a vacant auto body shop. Although the CRA does not own the convenience store to the northeast, there may be opportunities to work with the owners to incorporate these properties into a larger redevelopment project.



KEY LINKS:

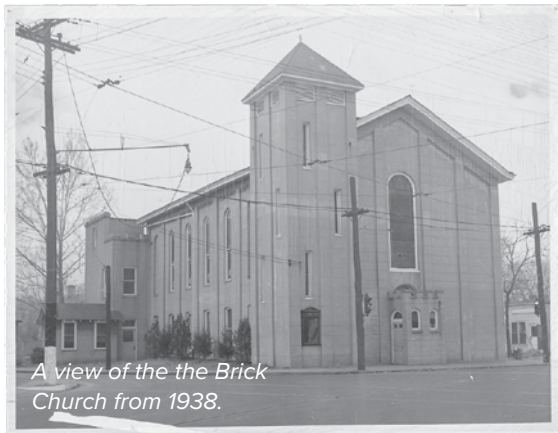
- » [Environmental Remediation Summary](#)
- » [Contextual Design Examples](#)
- » [Greenlaw Historic District Contributing Structure \(page 44\)](#)
- » [Historic Religious Resources of Memphis](#)



INTERESTED TENANTS

LET US KNOW BY FILLING OUT THE FORM ONLINE:
CRAMEMPHIS.ORG/CHELSEA-NEIGHBORHOOD-RFP

III. HISTORY



A view of the the Brick Church from 1938.



Approx. 1960

299 Chelsea Avenue, has a multifaceted history that dates back to the Civil War era and reflects the evolving social, religious, and cultural fabric of the city. During the Civil War, the area around North Memphis, including Chelsea Avenue, played a strategic role due to its proximity to the Mississippi River and transportation routes. Memphis itself was a significant battleground in the Western Theater of the Civil War, and the church was occupied by Union forces in 1862, even being used as a hospital and stable for General Grant's infantry. Following the war, the region saw rapid development, and North Memphis grew into a thriving industrial and residential district.

Before the Civil War, the Third Presbyterian Church was established at 299 Chelsea Avenue, serving as a religious and community center for a white congregation. Third Presbyterian was part of a broader wave of Protestant church-building that marked the post-Civil War expansion in Memphis.

As the neighborhood demographics evolved in the 20th century, many residents moved to other parts of the city, leading to a decline in the church's attendance. This shift paved the way for a change in ownership, and eventually, the property became the home of Mount Olive Cathedral C.M.E. Church, a significant African American congregation. Mount Olive Cathedral became a spiritual and cultural hub for the African American community in North Memphis, hosting worship services, community gatherings, and civil rights activities during a time when the church played a pivotal role in social justice movements.

Later, the building was also associated with Centennial Baptist Church, reflecting another chapter in its religious history. Like its predecessors, Centennial Baptist Church contributed to the spiritual life of the neighborhood, continuing the legacy of religious service and community involvement at 299 Chelsea Avenue. The site's journey from a Presbyterian church to an African American Methodist Episcopal church and then a Baptist congregation illustrates the broader social and cultural transitions in Memphis, highlighting shifts in population, racial integration, and the central role of churches in supporting the community.

IV. NEIGHBORHOOD VISION

The CRA held an open house at the Brick Church on Friday, August 15, 2025. During the event, community members had the opportunity to tour the space and provide direction on potential uses for the church, Sixth Street, and the surrounding parcels. Results show that the community remains hopeful about converting the church into a performing arts center and is advocating for improved pedestrian access around this site.



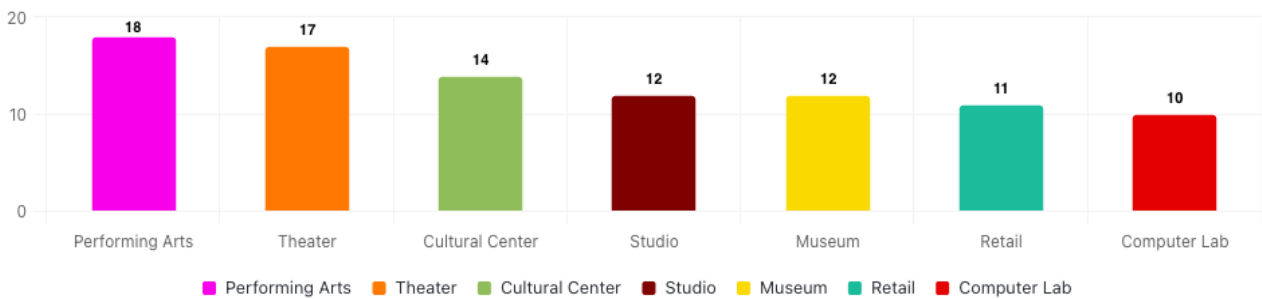
“Transform the Brick Church into a community hub with a heritage exhibit, flexible hall for events and classes and outdoor green space for gatherings.”

-Anonymous

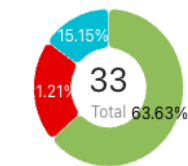


Church Reuse

Tasks

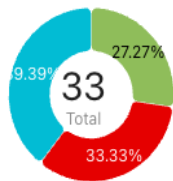


Develop Housing



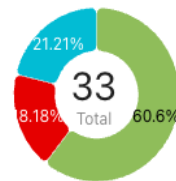
Yes No Maybe

Close Sixth Street



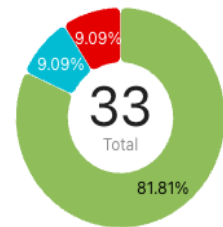
Yes No Maybe

Raised Crosswalk



Yes No Maybe

Painted Crosswalk



Yes Maybe No



Housing proposed for the site may be tailored to different income levels, but developers are strongly encouraged to provide a robust level of quality, affordable housing for the project. The CRA prioritizes affordable housing for low-income households whose income does not exceed 80% of the Memphis MSA's median income based on family size:

FAMILY SIZE	1	2	3	4	5	6
ANNUAL INCOME LIMITS	\$51,050	\$58,350	\$65,650	\$72,900	\$78,750	\$84,600

Housing designed for moderate-income households, up to 120% AMI, is also encouraged.

Through this RFP, the CRA seeks proposals from qualified developers that:

- Possess experience developing infill mixed-use projects in an urban context and working collaboratively with the community.
- Propose a realistic strategy for starting construction within 12-18 months from the date of the executed development agreement.
- Demonstrate the ability to obtain and work efficiently with private and public financing.
- Present a development concept that meets the goals of this RFP and the Uptown Community Plan.

Developers must demonstrate their capacity and experience developing well-designed, commercial, mixed-use properties in urban areas. The ideal respondents will have the financial and organizational capacity to complete the project within 36-48 months of the executed development agreement. Proof of financing and equity will ultimately be required before any transfer of property from the CRA to a private developer.



The Brick Church anchors the Chelsea Neighborhood Center.

V. PROJECT GOALS

The CRA seeks proposals from qualified developers who support and can fulfill the following project goals:

- Redevelop and preserve historic Brick Church and surrounding parcels.
- Activate garage site at 588 Chelsea.
- Provide quality, affordable housing and maintain affordability over the long-term within the TIF district.
- Honor and preserve community identity.
- Create a land use pattern that promotes the development of vibrant anchors that are gathering places for the community.
- Create a development with high-quality urban and architectural design that supports a more walkable, pedestrian-scale environment that reflects the scale and character of the neighborhood.
- Strengthen connections to Downtown.

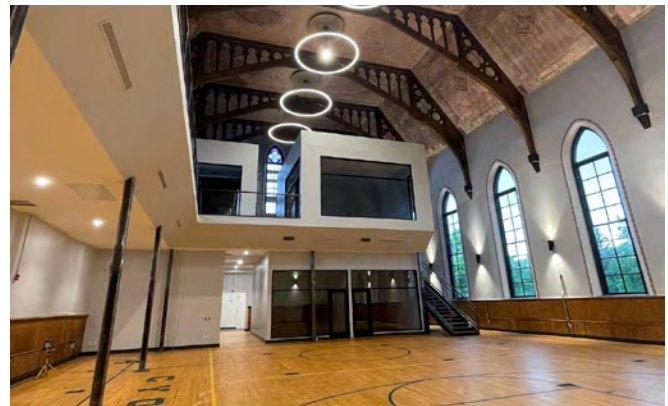
CONTEXTUAL DESIGN EXAMPLES



Springville Arts



Kaos Temple



Gateway at Lowertown

VI. PROPERTY/SITE DETAILS

The project site includes eight parcels covering 1.52 acres, two of which have structures including the Brick Church and vacant auto body shop.

The site and building are being offered in as-is condition. The CRA makes no representation, guarantee, or warranty concerning any property conditions. **The CRA is currently working with a project manager and team to restore and preserve the Brick Church.**

	PARCEL ID	ADDRESS	LAND AREA (ACRES/SQ FT)	ZONING	ACQUISITION METHOD
A	022030 00001C	299 Chelsea Ave	0.49/21,700	Split-zoned: Uptown District, Mixed Use w/ Neighborhood Center Overlay (MU-NC) and Uptown District, Moderate-Density Residential (MDR)	Purchased - private transaction
B	022031 00001C	595 Chelsea Ave	0.48/21,000	Uptown District, Mixed Use w/ Neighborhood Center Overlay (MU-NC)	Purchased - private transaction
C	022029 00014	Chelsea/6th St SE Corner	0.34/14,850	Split-zoned: Uptown District, Mixed Use w/ Neighborhood Center Overlay (MU-NC) and Uptown District, Moderate-Density Residential (MDR)	Purchased - private transaction
D	022029 00011	268 Bethel Ave	0.12/5,180	Uptown District, Mixed Use w/ Neighborhood Center Overlay (MU-NC)	Purchased from City of Memphis
E	022032 00030	588 Chelsea Ave	0.16/7,140	Uptown District, Mixed Use w/ Neighborhood Center Overlay (MU-NC)	Purchased - private transaction

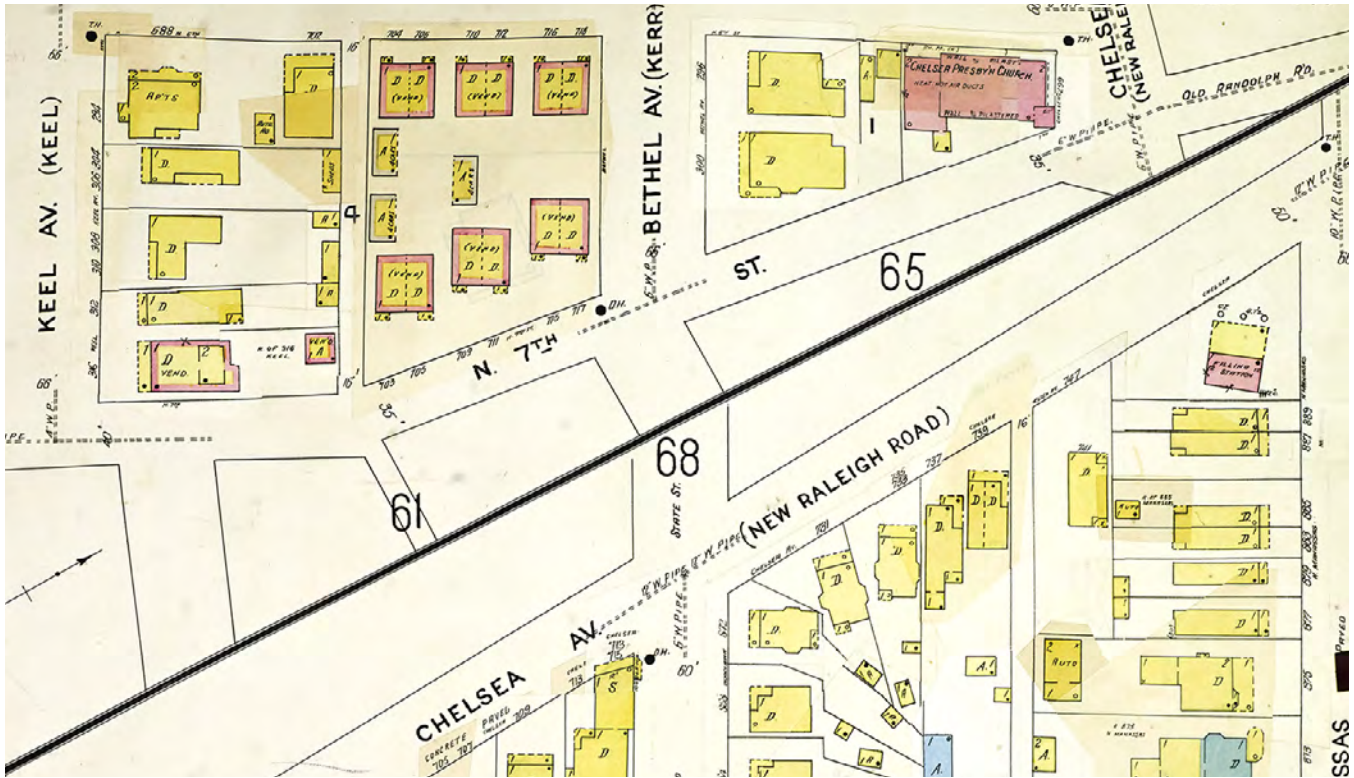
SITE MAP



PROJECT AREA



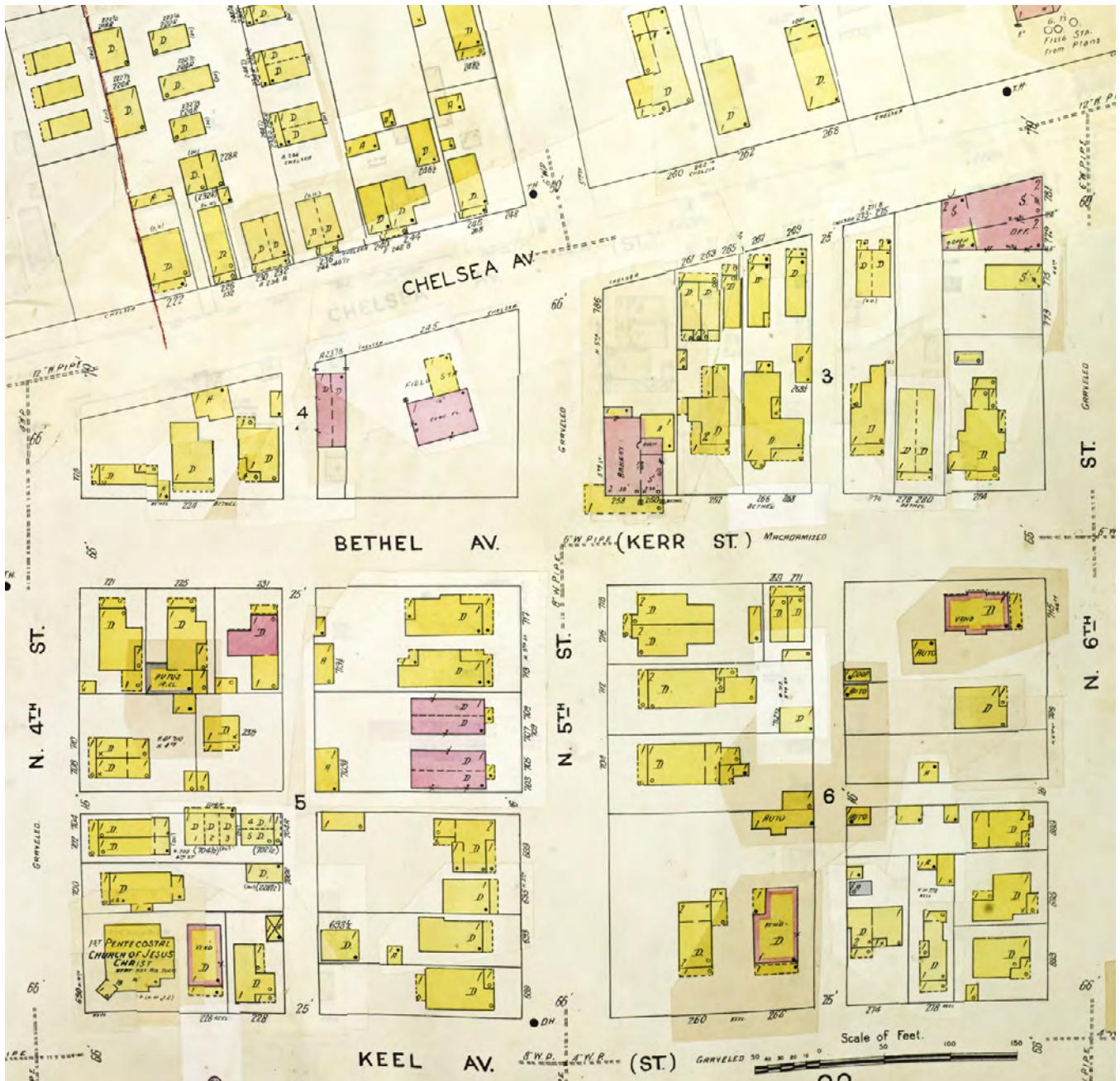
CHURCH PARCEL | 1950 SANDBORN MAP



EASTERN PARCELS | 1950 SANDBORN MAP



WESTERN PARCELS | 1950 SANDBORN MAP





A broken window with debris scattered on the basement level.

VII. FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS

The selected developer(s) will be expected to identify and secure all necessary pre-development financing.

The selected developer(s) will be required to provide financial analysis and a plan for the likely costs required to undertake the proposed project, including the potential sources and uses for the development budget. The financing plan must demonstrate a sensitivity and an approach to use public funds and resources efficiently.

If public funding or incentives are required to fill a demonstrated financing gap, the CRA may be able to provide funding for the project.

VIII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed and ranked based on a 100-point scale.

Criteria used in evaluation of proposals include, but are not limited to, the following:

Development Proposal must reflect a theater/performing arts component in the project proposal

(40 points)

1. Proposal meets the project/community goals and requirements outlined in this RFP.
2. Overall scope and quality of the proposed development.
3. Quality of the design of the proposed development, as well as its compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.

Project feasibility

(20 points)

1. Project is economically sound and supported by realistic assumptions.
2. Proposed capital stack and financing strategy.
3. Project may be accomplished in a timely manner.
4. Project does not face insurmountable regulatory hurdles or constraints.

Developer capacity and experience

(20 points)

1. Developer has a track record of delivering high-quality mixed-use infill projects of a similar scale and level of complexity.
2. Proven ability to obtain sufficient financial resources for similar projects.

Economic and community inclusion

(20 points)

1. Proposal provides a plan that outlines locally owned small business (LOSB) participation in the proposed site development, including a preliminary list of LOSB consultants, financial institutions, and employees who will be asked to participate.
2. Proposal provides a plan that outlines community engagement throughout the design and implementation process and that demonstrates an understanding of the collaborative nature of this project and the need for strong community partnership.



Additional Points for Prioritization:

- 10 Points**
Tenant letters of interest for any renovated or newly proposed spaces
- 10 points**
Green building (LEED, etc.) best practices are exhibited in the design proposal

IV. RFP SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The submitted proposal should articulate the vision for the property and explain how the project will meet the evaluation criteria set forth in this RFP. It is understood that the preparation of exact budgets and detailed architectural drawings is not possible or necessary at this point in the process. A successful proposal will include as much detail as practical, with the understanding that architectural drawings will be conceptual and budgets will be subject to further revisions.

Please include the following components:



Cover Letter

The cover letter should explain your interest in the opportunity, outline the main elements of your development concept, and identify the primary contact person (name, address, phone number and email address).



Development Team Details

This section should provide information on all members of your team and relevant experience, expertise, and capacity. Identify the development entity's name and contact information, and specify the legal form of the organization (e.g. corporation, partnership, joint venture, other).

Provide relevant experience and qualifications for each team member – including architects, engineers, contractors, financial and equity partners, lenders, or any other consultants or entities. This section should include a resume, a description of previous projects, and the team members' role in the cited project and proposed project. Provide information on whether any of these team members are a locally-owned small business.



Development Experience and Qualifications

Provide descriptions for completed projects similar to the proposed project and their respective locations. Include project timelines, showing all pertinent dates of the project development. Include all funding sources utilized for the project. Provide the names and telephone numbers of project references (private and/or public sector) for each project described.



Initial Design Concept, Timeline, and Financial Feasibility

1. Provide a narrative of the proposed development concept and how it addresses the project goals. Identify your team's vision for this project and how it would fit into your overall business strategy. Proposals should illustrate the team's understanding of Memphis, the Uptown TIF district neighborhoods, and the importance of a successful project. Include any conceptual site plans, building elevations, floor plans, or renderings as needed to communicate the concept and design. Applicants shall comply with local development and construction codes. The proposal should illustrate that the developer understands legal requirements and property disposition restrictions.
2. Provide an estimated budget indicating the likely costs of the project. This budget should include the purchase offer (can be nominal) that will be made by the developer to the CRA as well as the estimated hard and soft costs. Provide a summary of the assumptions on which these estimates are based, such as previous comparable projects or estimates provided by contractors.
3. Explain the proposed capital stack and financing strategy. If possible, provide a Sources and Uses Statement estimating the amount of debt and equity by source.
4. Provide a clear overview of identified/ desired CRA funding, if needed, in order to make the project viable.
5. Provide a project timeline with key milestones listed. Explain any project phasing, if planned.



Financial Capacity of Developer

Provide information that demonstrates the team has the financial capacity and willingness to carry out the proposed project and to initiate construction within 12-18 months of completing the development agreement. Submittals should include the following information:

1. Identify the team’s capacity to secure the equity and financing required to construct, market, and sell the proposed development. Include the developer or related entities’ financials and holdings.
2. Provide a basic pro forma and identify the potential amount of gap financing required and the gap financing resources related to underwriting the cost of development and operations. Define the team’s experience with securing sources of gap financing that may be used for the project. The CRA may be able to provide funding for financial gaps identified in the pro forma.



Commitment to Community Inclusion

Applicants should include as part of their proposal a plan for engagement of the community and use of locally-owned small businesses (LOSB). The CRA will monitor its projects, requiring contractors to submit regular reports, and reviewing the goals on an annual basis.

Upon approval, the Applicant will be responsible for implementation and for filing with the CRA staff quarterly reports that reflect the names of the firms involved, the amount of money received by such firms and the total amount spent.

Respondents should also outline their experience and commitment to community collaboration and provide a plan for community engagement throughout the redevelopment process.

V. RFP SUBMISSION PROCESS

QUESTIONS

Submit questions in writing to Jordan McKenzie via email at jordan.mckenzie@cramemphis.org using the subject line “Chelsea Neighborhood Center RFP.” Responses to questions will be posted on the CRA website as they are received.

SUBMISSION DUE DATE

All proposals to this RFP must be submitted to the CRA by 5:00 PM CST on Friday, December 19, 2025. Respondents must submit a digital PDF of the entire submission via email to jordan.mckenzie@cramemphis.org (subject line should read “Chelsea Neighborhood Center RFP”) prior to the deadline described above. Please format the document to fit 8.5 x 11 size. A maximum length of 20 pages is preferred.

VI. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The CRA is an equal opportunity employer and will select a development proposal without regard to age, disability, religion, creed or belief, political affiliation, race, sex, or ethnicity.

CRA’S COMMUNITY INCLUSION GOALS

The CRA requires that a best-faith effort is made to proactively avail any potential contracting or subcontracting opportunities to locally owned small businesses. Please reference the Commitment to Community Inclusion section on page 20 for additional details.

RIGHT TO REVISE OR REISSUE RFP

The CRA may need to request additional information from the respondents as part of the selection process once finalist firms have been identified. The CRA reserves the right to not select a proposal as a result of this process. In that event, the CRA may, or may not, elect to reissue the RFP if deemed necessary to solicit additional interest in the property.

VII. TIMELINE AND KEY DEADLINES

RFP Published

September 19, 2025

Informational Meeting

October 3, 2025

Open Houses

October 24, 2025; November 14, 2025

RFP Submittals Due

December 19, 2025 by 5:00 PM CST

Selection Committee Review:

January 2026

Development Agreement:

April 2026

Start of Construction:

Fall 2026

Please send questions to:

Jordan McKenzie, Director of Community and Economic Revitalization
jordan.mckenzie@cramemphis.org