

Project Gateway: Designing an Iconic Connection between Downtown Erie and the Waterfront

Pilot Project Grant Program

Jefferson Educational Society

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LOI Form

Question Group

Project Name*

Project Gateway: Designing an Iconic Connection between Downtown Erie and the Waterfront

Name of organization*

Jefferson Educational Society of Erie as Lead Partner

Brief description of the organization*

Please include your mission statement, a brief history of the organization, and how the project is part of your mission.

The Jefferson Educational Society of Erie is a non-profit institution founded to promote civic enlightenment and community progress for the Erie Region through the study, research, and discussion of those ideas and events that have influenced the human condition. We offer courses, discussions, and lectures which explain the central ideas which have formed the past, assist in exploring the present, and offer guidance to enhance the civic future of the Erie Region.

Brief project or program description*

What are you trying to accomplish?

The goal of "Project Gateway: Designing an Iconic Connection between Downtown Erie and the Waterfront" is to hold a "charrette," an intense three-day planning exercise intended to solicit input from a broad cross-section of neighborhood residents and stakeholders, and generate ideas for neighborhood connections to the Bayfront. The work of the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative of Kent State University will generate a report that will include short-term and long-term recommendations.

The CUDC is the outreach division for the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at Kent State University. Based in downtown Cleveland, the professional staff of the CUDC works with communities on a wide range of urban design and planning projects. About 30 to 35 students and staff will produce a series of analytical drawings, diagrams, renderings, design guidelines, and other planning and urban design graphics to be presented to the community. Some of their recent work includes projects related to the revitalization of Toledo's Junction Neighborhood; the removal and redevelopment of a section of the Akron Innerbelt; and public space and transportation improvements in Downtown Youngstown.

Prior to the charrette, the CUDC will work with City of Erie and Erie County staff to identify the study area, define possible outcomes, and collect background information and base data for the neighborhoods. The event will begin with a tour of the waterfront, downtown, and east and west Erie neighborhoods on Thursday, Oct. 17, followed by a series of community meetings and stakeholder interviews to identify strengths, needs, and priorities along the Bayfront Parkway, primarily between Sassafras and Holland streets.

The faculty visited Erie in September after the Jefferson's application was selected in the CUDC's competition and met with key stakeholders to discuss a strategy for community engagement. While in Erie, CUDC were given relevant documents that faculty will incorporate into the student's courses so that when they arrive in town, they will have a keen understanding of the infrastructure challenge. These documents

are: Emerge 2040 – the County Master Plan, Erie Refocused – Erie’s recent Comprehensive Plan, PennDOT’s Bayfront Plan, The Port Authorities past two Master Waterfront Plans, the Downtown Partnership Plan, and a series of projected plans from Civic Center Authority and Harbor Place, as well as a host of articles from the Erie Times-News over the past five years. The design team will spend time in the urban core district, neighborhoods, documenting existing conditions, analyzing opportunities and constraints, and speaking directly with residents about their hopes and concerns for the Bayfront Parkway.

Once in Erie, CUDC will be engaged with community activities starting at 8 a.m. and running until 10 p.m. These activities will include site visits, community meetings, team sessions, stakeholder reflection sessions with PennDOT and other Bayfront Stakeholders. CUDC will draft a series of illustrations based on community input and hold a public presentation most likely at the Erie County Library. Feedback from the public is critical to shape the final version of the plan which will be worked on over a series of weeks. A date will be selected to return to Erie for the unveiling of the Charrette project.

Using this information, the CUDC will develop a series of preliminary design recommendations and review them with the community at a public forum held on Saturday night, October 19.

The overarching goal through the charrettes project is to define what Erie Refocused has charged: build an “Iconic” connection between Erie’s Waterfront and its Downtown that promotes pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety. This “iconic connection” can be a great public space, designed to contribute both to downtown and to the Bayfront and become an economic development generator in its own right. While PennDOT’s proposed Bayfront Plan addresses future automobile congestion concerns, it falls short of addressing the connection between the waterfront and downtown. CUDC will work with PennDOT and their preferred plans to find alternative ways to address the vital connection.

Why is this Pilot Project needed?*

Describe why the project is needed in the community. Are there other funding sources including your organization that could fund your project?

The Pilot Project for “Project Gateway: Designing an Iconic Connection between Downtown Erie and the Waterfront” is needed to augment currently proposed plans for Erie’s Bayfront development. While those plans address critical issues, this project supplements them by focusing specifically on the connective elements between the downtown and the waterfront, taking into critical consideration the interplay between pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic.

As stressed in Erie Refocused, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure must be a priority for future Bayfront development. Having the CUDC charrette occur will ensure this concern is addressed.

As for the funding sources, the Jefferson will cover \$5,000 – or half – of the anticipated budget, but as this was not an initiative accounted for during the planning of the organization’s last fiscal year, it is an unanticipated operational cost but is vital to driving community progress and is in line with the Jefferson’s mission.

Project Timeline

When will the project begin? Can this project be completed withing 12 months of a grant award?

CUDC officials visited Erie in September and will return for a day-long session with stakeholders October 8. The CUDC team and students will conduct a three-day-long charrette from Thursday, Oct. 17 to Saturday, Oct. 19. A preliminary public presentation will be made Saturday, Oct. 19. A final report with public presentation will be issued to the community tentatively in November.

What is the amount of your grant request?*

\$5,000.00

What is the total project budget?*

\$10,000.00

Will there be a 1:1 cash match?*

Yes

What is the source of the cash match?

Jefferson Educational Society

Is the match secured or committed?*

N/A

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

No files were uploaded