

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**  
**Educational Exhibit Design For Proposed Aztalan State Park Visitor Center**  
**For**  
**The Friends of Aztalan State Park**  
**Lake Mills, Wisconsin**  
**DRAFT**

**Aztalan State Park**

Located along the banks of Crawfish River near Lake Mills, Wisconsin, Aztalan State Park is the site of a large town that thrived between A.D. 1050 and 1200: the northern outpost of the great Mississippian Native American civilization with its capital city at Cahokia in southern Illinois. Called Aztalan by early settlers, the ancient town is one of Wisconsin's most important archaeological sites and has been designated as a National Historic Landmark. The highly organized settlement, enclosed by a heavy fortified log and clay stockade, included large, flat-topped platform mounds that served as bases for special buildings, a residential area, a communal food storage area, and a large central plaza for religious ceremonies and other public events. Agricultural fields for growing corn and other crops were located outside of the town wall.

Today, visual remnants of the ancient town include include two platform mounds, a large circular or oblong mound, and a line of conical mounds overlooking the settlement. Remnants of a rock structure used to trap fish are visible in Crawfish River at low stage. Portions of the stockade that once enclosed the town have been reconstructed. Continuous archaeological work dating back almost 100 years has revealed numerous other features associated with the town and yielded thousands of important artifacts detailed in numerous publications and curated by various institutions. Neither the state park nor the WDNR curate artifacts. Thousands of visitors tour the park annually and large classes of school children come to the park to learn about Wisconsin Native American history.

**The Project**

The Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources (WDNR) long-range plan for the park identified the need for a visitor center and the planning and the construction of such a facility has been a focus of major fund raising by the Friends of Aztalan State Park, a non-profit organization devoted to promoting the park and assisting the Wisconsin State Parks with its operation and maintenance with funding and volunteer services. In cooperation with the WDNR, the Friends of Aztalan State Park contracted with Dimension IV architect firm of Madison to provide an architectural design for the visitor center at the park and this was completed in 2015. The design describes a modest 3,155 sq. ft. building with a central lobby and exhibit area, a gift shop area, an office, a multipurpose room with a movable divider so that it can be adapted for various temporary uses, and indoor restrooms that are currently lacking at the park. The location of the facility will be on the western side of the park adjacent to a new entrance where it will not impact archaeological features or deposits or greatly impinge on the visual qualities of the ancient town.

The Friends of Aztalan State in now soliciting proposals for for a state of art exhibit design for the interior of the structure that will introduce the visitor to the nature of the site and people who lived there as background for touring the site. It is anticipated that the exhibits will be highly visual and will provide information suitable for the general audience, including school children, and that some displays will be interactive. For security reasons, few artifacts recovered from the site will be displayed except for short term special exhibits, but replicas will be in order. Space for exhibits will be largely limited to

the 790 sq. foot lobby and display area, but some permanent displays can occupy the walls of the flexible and divisible 990 sq. ft. multipurpose room that is also anticipated to be used for continuous viewing of the introductory video *Aztalan: National Historical Landmark*, as well as occasional short-term special exhibits. The incorporation of the video viewing area for small numbers of people at time will be a part of the overall exhibit design plan.

The Friends of Aztalan State Park is the client for this project but will generally follow the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration Policies & Procedures and Wisconsin State Park exhibit guidelines.

### **Scope of Services**

The Project (and Proposal) shall include necessary CONSULTANT services to complete the following major phases including; Pre-Design, Preliminary Design and Final Design. The scope of the project **will not include construction and installation of exhibits.**

The CONSULTANT shall provide the following:

- Pre-Design: the consultant will first develop themes for the guiding the educational exhibits. Given the small space available it will not be possible to cover all aspects of the site. The themes will be developed with input from the Friends of Aztalan State Park, Department of Natural Resources, the general public, representatives of Native American Nations, and a committee of archaeological professionals intimately familiar with the site. Two input meetings will be arranged by the Friends of Aztalan State Park.
- Preliminary Design: the consultant will then develop a detailed exhibit design including drawings and specifications, and estimates for the costs of materials and installation. Alternatives to costly displays will be appropriate.
- Final Design: exhibit design with any modifications based on comments by the Friends of Aztalan Park and the Department of Natural Resources.
- Monthly progress reports and periodic pay requests.

### **Project Schedule**

Consultant selection is anticipated before July 30 2017. A preliminary Design Report is due on October 30, 2017 for review and a final design submitted 30 days after receipt of comments.

### **Selection Criteria and Submittal Requirements**

The Friends of Aztalan State Park is using a **Qualification Based Selection Process**. The criteria for selection include: qualifications of the assigned staff, experience with similar projects, professional competence, project approach, unique ideas/concepts, ability to meet the schedule, available resources and quality assurance initiatives. **The Friends of Aztalan State Park has allocated \$10,000 for the project.**

### **Written proposals (limit of 10 pages) must include:**

- One page statement of interest and qualifications, including completion of similar projects
- Written description of purpose and scope of project
- Proposed project approach (Org. chart, list of key individuals, project responsibilities by discipline/individual, methods to monitor schedule and budget)
- Proposed schedule
- Statement/articulation of a design concept
- One page resumes of team members
- List of deliverables

- Preliminary fee proposal

Interested exhibit design teams are to submit their qualifications and proposal by June 30, 2017 to:

Randy Radtke, President  
Friends of Aztalan State Park  
P.O Box 855  
Lake Mills, WI 53551

Proposals will be evaluated by the Selection Committee. After review of proposals, the Friends of Aztalan State Park may select one to three firms to interview. Interviews will be 45 minutes in length. The Exhibit team shall illustrate their project approach and articulate an initial design concept. A 15 minute question and answer session will follow. Selection of the contractor will be made by the committee following the interviews and the design effort will begin with a kickoff meeting within two weeks.

Questions concerning this Request for Proposal can be addressed to Friends of Aztalan Executive Director Robert Birmingham at [birni@sbcglobal.net](mailto:birni@sbcglobal.net) or 608-516-3421. Jim Gersich of the Dimension IV architectural firm will also be available for consultation regarding the architectural design during the proposal solicitation period and throughout the course of the project at (608) 829-4453 or [jgersich@dimensionivmadison.com](mailto:jgersich@dimensionivmadison.com). General information about Aztalan can be found in the book *Aztalan: Mysteries of Ancient Town* (Wisconsin Historical Society Press) and the online video *Aztalan: National Historical Landmark* <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/aztalan>

**Exhibits to accompany this letter will be**

**Color Photo of main mound at Aztalan**  
**Architectural drawings of Visitor Center**  
**Floor plan of Visitor Center**  
**Floor Plan of Visitor Center with electrical plan**

