Request for Proposal
2019

Shakespeare & Company
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Shakespeare & Company, a nonprofit performing arts organization in Lenox, Massachusetts, invites qualified entities (such as real estate or other business and property development firms and non-profits) to propose ideas to further develop The Company’s 33-acre campus at 70 Kemble Street in Lenox, Massachusetts with the goal of monetizing the property in a way that is advantageous to both the interested entity and the Company. This project represents a rare and unique opportunity to collaborate directly with one of the premiere cultural attractions of Berkshire County, and a globally recognized landmark for theatrical performance, arts education, and professional training.

Qualified Entities are initially asked to provide a statement of interest. Entities providing a successful statement of interest will subsequently be invited to prepare and submit a full proposal demonstrating how the campus, located within walking distance of the town of Lenox’s historic center, can be activated as a shared-use property that addresses the Company’s ongoing mission and priorities, and maximizes the use of any available, undeveloped, and usable land, to enhance the ways in which Shakespeare & Company can further contribute to the region’s growth.
HISTORY OF SHAKESPEARE & COMPANY

Founded in 1978 in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts by Tina Packer and a talented team of fellow artists, Shakespeare & Company is one of the foremost theatre festivals of the world, specializing in the work of William Shakespeare and contemporary playwrights, and recognized internationally for its innovative contributions to arts education as well as professional actor training. During its main performance season between May and October, the Company presents at least three Shakespeare plays as well as multiple contemporary works portraying themes of social and political importance.

For the first 22 years of its existence, the Company was in full-time residence at The Mount, Edith Wharton’s Home. To serve a rapidly growing audience as well as accommodate considerably more activity in education and training, the Company purchased its current home at 70 Kemble Street in 2000. Today, in addition to welcoming more than 40,000 patrons to the campus year-round for performances and other public events, the Company brings the work of Shakespeare to thousands of students and teachers in ways that are personally meaningful, educationally inspiring, and theatrically compelling. Several of the Company’s current education programs, including the nationally renowned Fall Festival of Shakespeare and Shakespeare in the Courts, are held up as models for replication in schools and arts centers nationwide and abroad. The Company’s actor training program, offered throughout the year on campus and in cities across the country, is one of the world’s most comprehensive.

As a performing arts organization of global standing, Shakespeare & Company plays a prominent role in the region’s robust creative economy. The Company partners closely and extensively with elected officials, town and county representatives, business owners, regional educational leaders, and other stakeholders to identify ways to reach and support the community, not only during the spring and summer when the Company’s principal artistic activities take place, but also throughout the year. Countywide businesses recognize the value of partnering with Shakespeare & Company. Through local sponsorship and other support, the Company raises more than $1.5 million annually for its activities.

In short, Shakespeare & Company has developed into an indispensable asset for cultural enrichment, economic advancement, and civic engagement in a thriving region of the Commonwealth. Through this request, the Company is now expressing a formal desire to expand its role in the community and enhance the ways it engages an increasingly diverse constituency. The central tenet of this objective is to more fully activate the campus into a thriving, year-round destination that serves multiple interests at the intersection of performance, education, and training detailed in the Company’s recent strategic plan (appended); as well as open the door to the creation of new revenue streams that will help sustain Company operations in the future.
SITE OVERVIEW

Shakespeare & Company purchased a nearly 63 acre property, comprising three parcels at 10 through 70 Kemble Street, from The National Music Foundation on April 10, 2000 for $4.1 million. In July 2005, the Company sold parcels 2, 2a, and 3 at 10 through 40 Kemble Street for $3.9 million. Originally several farms and estates, the properties were merged in the 1930’s as The Lenox School for Boys, which ceased operations in 1971. Besides The National Music Foundation (1993–2000), the property has also been the former home of The Bible Speaks School (1970–1987).

Located less than half a mile from the historic and bustling town center of Lenox, between the world renowned Tanglewood Music Festival and Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, and virtually equidistant from Boston and New York City, the current campus comprises 17 buildings on approximately 33 acres on parcel 1. The campus and parking areas support four performance spaces, as well as other buildings that house administrative offices, technical shops, classroom space, company housing, and facility support.

St. Martin’s Hall is the centerpiece and most historically significant building on the property. Built in the 1930’s, it was designed by McKim, Mead and White (architects of New York City’s Grand Central Station and the New York City Public Library). The major entrance to the property is organized around the axis that bisects St. Martin’s. In 2014, an award from the Cultural Facilities Fund of the Massachusetts Cultural Council enabled the Company to assess the existence of asbestos and lead paint, board up damaged or leaking windows, repair the roof, and conduct other structural improvements to the 33,000 square foot building.

Constructed in 1954, Lawrence Hall is the largest residential building on campus. A 24,000 square foot, two-story building with an exposed basement in the rear and four attached apartments, Lawrence Hall is Shakespeare & Company’s year-round dormitory, for visiting teaching artists, students, faculty, and actors. It contains 61 beds in 37 rooms, a dining hall, a full institutional kitchen, classrooms, and common areas for gathering.

Pre-dating the construction of St. Martin’s, Monk’s Hall and Nursery, the Field House, the Farm House and Farm House Shed were derelict before Shakespeare & Company acquired the property, and are condemned by the Town of Lenox. Other houses on the property are currently used to house artists.
SIGNIFICANT PAST DEVELOPMENTS TO THE PROPERTY

During its nearly 20 years on the campus, the Company has invested more than $15 million in several major building renovations and property upgrades.

In 2001, the Company converted a former basketball arena into a two-level, 400-seat thrust style theatre. The Tina Packer Playhouse in the Founders Theatre is wheelchair accessible and equipped with assisted listening devices. It also houses Josie’s Place Café, a bar and concession area.

A $10 million campaign to refurbish what is now known as the Elayne P. Bernstein Center for the Performing Arts was completed in 2008. In addition to the 200-seat black box theatre, the Center houses multiple studio and rehearsal spaces, as well as the Company’s costume and set design shops, as well as Mike’s Place, an indoor bar/concession area. Approximately 23,000 square feet of the building, currently used as additional storage space for scenery, remains unfinished.

Upon its acquisition of the property, the Company also repurposed the building located just inside the campus entrance from its prior use as a school library into what is now known as the Miller Building, providing space for administrative offices and Company records.

In Lawrence Hall, the Company has replaced all 114 of the building’s windows, as well as installed WiFi and fiber optics, painted interiors, and added both a laundry room and a supplemental kitchen.

The Company’s newest performance venue, the outdoor Roman Garden Theatre in the Shakespeare Garden behind St. Martin’s Hall, opened in 2017.

Most recently in 2018, the Company repaired aging HVAC equipment, converted the remainder of the property to natural gas, designed and installed new wayfinding signage, repaved parking areas, and added a connecting driveway.
OVERVIEW OF SITE USE

The property is in an R-1A zoning district, which allows for single-family residential use on a minimum lot size of one acre, including the construction of affordable housing. Under a friendly 40B provision for nonprofit organizations that fulfill their mission, in part, through educational activities, Shakespeare & Company is exempt from meeting specific setback restrictions and density requirements.

Office, retail and industrial use is prohibited in R1-A zoning areas, however the Company has begun to explore the feasibility of obtaining a 40R designation that would allow for both residential and mixed-used development within a smart growth zoning district. A 40R designation would increase the amount of land zoned for dense housing, and require the inclusion of affordable units in most private projects. The property’s proximity to the historic town center, as well as to major roadways potentially makes it a desirable candidate for 40R status.

POTENTIAL SITE DEVELOPMENT

Potential partners are asked to conceptualize a plan under both the existing R1-A and 40R zoning guidelines that would fulfill the needs of the Town of Lenox, which must meet a state-mandated 10% affordable housing minimum to qualify for federal housing funding, and the needs of the Company with respect to the ongoing performance, education, and training activities conducted on site.

All qualified proposals, including those that fall outside of the R1-A and 40R guidelines (for example, the construction of market-rate housing or a hotel), will be subject to approval by the Town of Lenox and zoning board.

Prospective developers must also detail how any project will address the administrative, performance, education, and training goals identified in the Company’s recent strategic plan (appended). Priority will be given to proposals that identify ways to enhance the capacity of buildings already in use for Company activity as well as any other available usable space that allow for programmatic expansion and creation.
SCHEDULE AND DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

Tuesday, September 10, 2019 – Request for statements of interest released

Wednesday, October 2 and/or Monday, October 21, 2019 – Mandatory site visit. Additional (or alternative) site visit dates available upon request. Statements of interest will not be reviewed without a site visit by the applicant.

Thursday, November 14, 2019 – Statement of interest submission deadline by email. Applicants will be notified the following week about whether Shakespeare & Company will request a full proposal

Thursday, January 23, 2020 – Full proposal deadline by email.

Monday, January 27 and Friday, January 31, 2020 – Presentations by applicants

Week of March 9, 2020 – Selection of winning proposal, if any.

ELIGIBILITY AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY

All prospective applicants must show experience with large-scale development projects, and a history of successful project management. In addition, prospective applicants must demonstrate the ability to raise the funds or secure the financing necessary to undertake a project of this potential magnitude.

Qualified prospective applicants may include, but are not limited to real estate development firms, hoteliers, and other nonprofits. Statements of interest must reference existing R1-A or potential 40R zoning guidelines. Statements also should precisely describe the scope of a proposed project. An affordable housing description, for example, would include the number of residential units. A hotel description would include the number of rooms.
REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Statements of interest should be no longer than three pages. All statements will be reviewed by Shakespeare & Company’s Property Committee. The successful application will be chosen by the Property Committee with the participation of additional members of the Company’s Board of Trustees and senior leadership. Shakespeare & Company reserves the right to reject any and all proposals at its sole and absolute discretion. In addition the initiation of any project from the winning proposal will be subject to further discussion.

HOW TO APPLY

Completed applications should be submitted to rfp@shakespeare.org. To RSVP to either of the two site visits, write to the same address. The time of the site visit will be provided in a reply.

QUESTIONS

Questions about the statement of interest submission process can be directed to Adam Davis, Managing Director, at (413) 637-1199, x199 or adavis@shakespeare.org

Information

Shakespeare & Company
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Lenox, Massachusetts 01240
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Since it became Shakespeare & Company’s permanent home nearly 20 years ago, the 70 Kemble Street campus has been home to countless groundbreaking innovations in performance, education, and training. Now, in the final stages of a comprehensive strategic planning process, a desire to create even more meaningful and immersive experiences in the arts for a growing and increasingly diverse audience, and a chance to strengthen the Company’s future through any potential property monetization, the Board of Trustees and staff of Company are excited to identify a partner to envision a more fully activated property in a vibrant and desirable section of the Berkshires. We look forward to receiving and reviewing the most effective ideas towards this effort.

APPENDIX

2019–2022 Strategic Plan

Map of currently owned property

Additional information about the property will be distributed at the October 2 and October 21 site visits.