

Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program

OVERVIEW

The Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program promotes the highest level of design in the development of future public buildings and spaces in Arkansas' Benton and Washington counties. The program is intended to elevate the quality of architectural and landscape design in the Northwest Arkansas region.

The establishment of a design excellence program in Northwest Arkansas was driven by the Walton Family Foundation's effort to preserve the region's sense of place. Over the last 25 years, the population in Northwest Arkansas has more than doubled, creating opportunities and challenges in planning and design. The Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence program will encourage quality design of public spaces, while complementing the rich architectural history of the region's urban fabric.

Through this program, the Walton Family Foundation will provide financial support to entities such as school districts; county, state or local municipalities; and nonprofit organizations that intend to design and develop space for public purposes. Funds will be earmarked for all phases of design work.

The Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program was inspired by a similar enterprise in Columbus, Indiana by the Cummins Foundation.

PRINCIPLES

The purpose of the Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence program is to ensure that the design of public purpose buildings and spaces in Northwest Arkansas is worthy of the rich architectural history of the region and elevates the experience of the public realm for residents and visitors alike. As such, sustainability and appeal to the human scale are the core values that are embedded in each of the guiding principles. Sustainability implies attention to the life cycle of the building, prioritization of infill and adaptive reuse projects, and energy efficiency. Appeal to the human scale means that projects will invite pedestrians and have superior accessibility to all members of the public—from children to the elderly.

Guiding Design Principles

- Projects shall pay special attention to the present and planned ensemble of streets and adjacent buildings and spaces, so that the projects engage and improve the overall neighborhood fabric and its ecological context and function.

- Designs shall adhere to sound construction practice and utilize materials, methods, and equipment of proven dependability resulting in a long life cycle with possibilities for adaptive reuse.
- Specific attention shall be paid to the possibilities of incorporating design qualities that reflect and reinvigorate the architectural traditions of the region.

Relevant Work in Northwest Arkansas

Please visit www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design for samples of relevant work.

Recent Media Coverage about Northwest Arkansas

Please visit www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design for a compilation of media coverage Northwest Arkansas has received.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process will be open starting **July 29** through **September 16**. Architects and landscape architects interested in the program should submit a **statement of intent** by email to **design@wffmail.com** by **August 31**. The email should include:

- Name of the Firm/Designer
- Mailing Address
- Point of Contact for Application Process
- Contact Information

Applicants will receive instructions on how to submit materials for review by **September 4**.

Selection Process

Materials submitted will be reviewed by a distinguished panel of professionals. Interested designers must be prepared to submit the following:

- A letter of interest
- Designer/firm overview
- Team member bios (principals and key team members)
- A statement of the firm's/designer's technical approach to work, including philosophy for a team-based project approach
- A statement of no more than 250 words stating the following:
 - Describe the firm's sensibility when it comes to creating a sense of place
 - Describe how an aggregation of projects adds to a sense of place
 - Describe the firm's project that best demonstrates this sensibility
- Five examples of completed projects as team lead. The samples should showcase projects that demonstrate the guiding principles of the NWA Design Excellence Program. Please include:
 - Project description outlining issues and approach used to solve these challenges
 - Visual examples
 - Awards, if any, won for examples of work

- References: Please include a reference from the following sources:
 - Two former or current clients
 - A contractor responsible for the construction of one of the firm's designs

Materials should be provided in a PDF format.

Interested parties will be able to submit questions before the application deadline closes by emailing design@wffmail.com. Questions must be submitted by **August 21, 2015**. Answers to the questions will be emailed and posted to the website by **August 28, 2015**.

The Q&A process will be the ONLY communication allowed between interested applicants and the Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program. Walton Family Foundation board members, staff and selection committee members should NOT be contacted directly.

Applications will not be returned.

After review by the committee, approved architects and landscape architects will be entered into a pool of designers whose body of work reflects the values and principles of the program. Designers will remain part of the pool for up to five years or until the firm is selected for a project. Selection for the pool of designers does not guarantee selection for an interview or for a project, nor does it guarantee that any project will ultimately be approved. The Walton Family Foundation reserves the right to cancel this program in whole or in part at any time. In no event shall any person or organization have any claim or cause of action against the Walton Family Foundation or any of its members, officers, employees, agents or affiliates arising out of, relating to, or in any way connected with this program. Submission of an application shall constitute unconditional agreement to each and every term and condition hereof.

As projects are announced, the committee will review the design needs and subsequently choose a core group of designers from the pool of pre-qualified applicants. The core group will be presented to the selected organization for final approval. Final decisions on the designer and design will be made by the selected organization.

For approved projects, the program will reimburse each interviewed designer's transportation and interview presentation expenses. The reimbursement will be limited to the travel expenses of the principal designer and one other member of the firm.

This selection process is designed to accommodate firms of all sizes, including nationally recognized designers, smaller firms and young designers who may not yet be discovered.

The program is expected to generate meaningful partnerships between in-state and out-of-state firms. However, partnership agreements are not needed during the initial review process and should only be considered after a designer has been selected as a finalist for a specific project.

Applicants selected for the pool of designers for the Design Excellence Program will be notified by **October 31, 2015**.

KEY DATES

- July 29, 2015 : Application Process Opens
- August 21, 2015: Submit Questions on Application Process by 5 p.m.
- August 28, 2015: Response to Questions Published
- August 31, 2015: Submit Statement of Intent
- September 4, 2015: Applicants Receive Instructions for Materials Upload
- September 16, 2015: Submit Materials for Review in PDF Format by 5 p.m.
- October 31, 2015: Notification of Selection

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Firms are encouraged to visit www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design to gain access to important documents such as the program announcement and public responses to questions submitted.