

Request for Artist Qualifications (RFQ)

Public Art for the St. Michael Historical Society: St. Michael, MN

Project Objective

The St. Michael Historical Society is seeking the credentials of an artist who will create a sculpture to be placed permanently in the city park. The sculpture would honor the memory of the pioneer founders while also connecting them to the people who now call St. Michael their home. The pioneers were hard-working, sturdy people with a deep religious faith. In some ways they clung to their German heritage, but in many other ways they simply wanted to prosper and be very American. They were not unlike many immigrants today. Our hope is that the art will invoke understanding and/or respect for the city's founding settlers while giving present and future generations a way to connect to their home.

Overall Project Timeline

Funding for this first phase, the selection of an artist and design, comes from a grant from the Central Minnesota Arts Board. We are also hoping for additional grant monies, along with local fundraising, to pay for the production and erection of the sculpture. Since funding for the second phase is not yet secured and is dependent on grant application timelines, the selected artist must be able to be flexible with a timeline which could take 1-3 years for completion.

Eligibility

The RFQ is open to all professional artists residing in the U.S. although we are especially interested in Minnesota/regional artists. Artists with a track record of previous public art projects are preferred, but emerging artists may also apply.

Selection Timeline

- Qualifications must be received by 11:59 PM on Saturday, March 9, 2024.
- By March 30, 2024 all applicants will be notified. Up to seven (7) finalists will receive \$1,000 after the submission of proposals.
- Finalists will have until May 11, 2024 to submit proposals.
- Possible in-person or virtual interviews to take place in May
- A jury of community members will make the final artist selection in early June 2024

Process

Qualifications will be accepted only through the St. Michael Historical Society website via our Projects page: <https://www.saintmichaelhistory.org/projects>

Click on the artists "apply here" link, complete the short form and upload the following:

- A letter of interest of no more than two pages in length. Within the letter please address the following:
 - Your approach to public art and your thoughts on expressing our theme.
 - What mediums are you most comfortable using and what are your initial thoughts on a medium for our project?

- What is the price range of past projects that might be similar to what you would like to create for us?
- Please include up to seven (7) images of sculptures you have done, especially for other public art projects.
- Please include a resume of at least three past projects with names, email addresses, and phone numbers of the lead person with whom you worked with on those past projects. Emerging artists may include references to professors or other artists familiar with your talent.

Project Funding

It is the intent of the historical society to apply for another grant to complete the project with additional funding coming from the community. The artist should consider a project with a final cost of under \$25,000 including transporting the sculpture to the site. The sculpture's platform and immediate surroundings (slab, viewing area etc.) will be considered a separate project.

Site for Sculpture

In 2010 the City of St. Michael established a new city center with a building complex that includes city hall, library, historical society, and senior citizens center. A large central park has also recently been added nearby which now includes athletic courts, childrens' play area, and a picnic pavilion. The sculpture would be placed within the park in a prominent location. The final site within the park will be selected by the sculpture committee based on the final design, artist input, and other considerations related to proper maintenance and protection of the art.

Style

The St. Michael Historical Society is not set on a particular vision for this artwork; however, something very abstract is less desirable.

Medium

The medium that the artist uses is also not specific. Stone, brass, bronze, aluminum, steel, concrete (other mediums?) are all possibilities based on the artist's recommendation and vision. A combination of mediums could also be considered.

Longevity, Maintenance, Safety

- Longevity of the sculpture will be one of the considerations, but it is understood that a piece with greater permanence may have an added cost.
- Another consideration in the final selection will be the amount of maintenance that may be required. Although zero-maintenance is not expected, the lower the maintenance, the better.
- Because this art will be along a walking path and close to a childrens' play area, another consideration will be any potential safety risks.

Questions?

Questions about the project can be sent via email to info@saintmichaelhistory.org Please put "sculpture" in the subject line.

Community History

St. Michael, Minnesota is located about 35 miles northwest of Minneapolis. Prior to permanent settlement, the area was part of the traditional territory of the Dakota people who occupied much of the southern half of Minnesota. In 1851 the Treaty of Traverse de Sioux ceded most Dakota lands to the US Government. For a brief time between 1853 and 1855 the Winnebago, or Ho-Chunk people, were forced into the region that was to become St. Michael before they were forced south. Permanent settlers, nearly all German Catholics, began to arrive in 1855. Most of the land was claimed for settlement within five years.

In 1856, before the settlement had a name, the German Catholic settlers erected a log church near the Crow River and named it in honor of St. Michael, the Archangel. No significant commercial development took place until after the congregation relocated the church two miles west on land they purchased. Parish leaders dedicated half of their newly acquired land for commercial development and reserved the other half for parish use. The community of St. Michael developed very slowly over the next 100 years. It remained a quiet village centered on the Catholic church and a handful of businesses that served the area farmers. The 1970 census still showed a population of just over 1,000 people living in the village with another 950 people, nearly all living on farms, scattered about the surrounding township of Frankfort. Most of the population, both in and around the village, were the descendants of the original German Catholic settlers and so the ties among the citizens were truly generational.

Around 1974, after the completion of Interstate-94 which runs just two miles northeast of St. Michael, new housing developments were started. Although the difficult economic times of the late 70s and early 80s impeded progress, from the 1990s onward, the entire character of the St. Michael community changed rapidly as farmers sold their farmland to developers with ready cash, eager to provide homes to those looking for an easy commute to the Twin Cities. In 1996 the City of St. Michael annexed most of the surrounding Frankfort Township which was also being developed into housing. The increased traffic through the business section forced the city to widen the main thoroughfares resulting in the demolition of nearly every old structure in town to accommodate turning lanes and new commercial development.

The most significant architectural feature in the community remains the historic, 1892-completed St. Michael Catholic Church with its tall steeple and lit clock face. While the congregation now uses a larger church completed in 2004, the old church is still the building most identifiable with the community as the steeple can be seen from over a mile away.

Today, St. Michael has a population of over 18,000 and very little remains of the sleepy little farm village that existed just 40 years ago. While many descendants of the original settlers still live in the community, most of the current population are people whose connection to the community stretches back less than 30 years, and they are of many different religious faiths and cultural backgrounds; but everyone is connected by the history of the place.