FAMILY FOCUS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY OF EVANSTON

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

For

Adaptive Use and Rehabilitation of 2010 Dewey Avenue
Known Historically as Foster Elementary School

July 21, 2026

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: 2:00 PM Friday October 2, 2026

ELECTRONIC SUBMITTAL:
Responses will only be accepted electronically
via E-Mail to csterling@cityofevanston.org

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REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

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Adaptive Use and Rehabilitation of 2010 Dewey Avenue
Historically Known as Foster Elementary School
REI Reference Number: 26-FS

Family Focus, with assistance from the City of Evanston, is seeking expressions of serious interest in the adaptive use and rehabilitation of the Family Focus owned historic Foster Elementary School located in the heart of the Fifth Ward at 2010 Dewey Avenue (the property). The property is a highly adaptable and currently underleveraged privately-owned asset. Family Focus and the City believe that a rehabilitation model that capitalizes on the property's location and unique historic and social value has the potential to create a one-of-a-kind amenity capable of catalyzing long-term and community-wide benefits for the city and its residents while mutually achieving private redevelopment and equity goals.

Parties interested in submitting this Request for Expression of Interest may receive a copy of the REI on the projects website at: https://www.family-focus.org/fy2027-evanston-property/

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1.0 General Information

1.1 Purpose

This Request for Expression of Interest (REI) is issued for the purposes of gaining information on the property's development potential from interested parties with historic preservation, affordable housing, rehabilitation, or other re-development expertise. Respondents should be prepared to demonstrate their ability to secure the financial resources necessary to achieve a successful rehabilitation and adaptive use model. This may or may not include outside financial incentives made available by the property's historic significance and location in a qualifying census tract.

This request should not be construed as an offer or promise to enter into an agreement. The responses to this REI are intended to be used to determine and support an appropriate structure and next steps for the current property owner, Family Focus. Family Focus may choose to make these responses public or to engage with the community to solicit feedback on the responses following the close of this REI. The City believes the sharing of ideas and both small and large-scale proposals for a portion or all of the building will lead to more viable solutions and partnerships previously unknown.

1.2 Key Elements

Family Focus is seeking all available interest for adaptive use and rehabilitation of the property, either in its entirety or a portion thereof. Respondents, individuals, organizations, or partnerships, must demonstrate the expertise and capacity to develop and implement a financially viable adaptive use and rehabilitation strategy with the following key considerations:

a) **Ownership models:** Outright sale of the property is the only method of conveyance considered at this time

b) **Active and income-producing uses:** Active and income-producing uses in partnership with appropriately scaled non-profit or local community uses are encouraged. Non-income-producing uses will also be considered, provided that they can demonstrate financial and programmatic viability.

c) **Use of available financial incentives and tax-credit programs:** Financial proposals that are capable of accessing available incentives and tax credits, including but not limited to the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit, Illinois Historic Preservation Tax Credit, Cook County Class L incentive, New Markets Tax Credit, Low Income Housing Tax Credit, and the use of other grant or financial opportunities, are encouraged. The City of Evanston will not provide subsidies or other financial assistance and has no financial or other stake in the outcome of this REI.

d) **Social and cultural significance:** Responses to this REI should acknowledge and, in some way, communicate, celebrate, or continue the property's historic legacy of public and social service to the surrounding neighborhood. The property was designated a local landmark for its cultural and social significance to the Black community and Fifth Ward. The property has significant associations

with individuals and provides a tangible link to a period of Evanston's history marked by racial segregation, segregated schools, and racially motivated lending practices. After use as a school, the property continued to serve its surrounding community as one of Evanston's premier social service providers. Although it is not expected that similar services would continue as the sole operator of the property, proposals that propose a partnership with reasonably scaled non-profit or community uses will be prioritized.

e) **East playground and grounds excluded:** The existing property contains a playground and open space between the primary structure and the City's Fleetwood Jourdain Community Center, south of Dewey Avenue, and north of Foster Street. Responses to this RFP must acknowledge and anticipate subdivision of these portions of the property and eventual conveyance to the City of Evanston. Therefore, any assumptions related to the value of the existing property may reasonably exclude these portions. The City is open to proposals that propose a similar conveyance as part of the proposed financing for purposes of tax advantage.

1.3 Property Location and Existing Improvements

Located at 2010 Dewey Avenue in the heart of the city's Fifth Ward, the property is a registered Evanston Landmark that is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under local significance. The property is located just west of the City's Fleetwood Jourdain Community Center, designed by notable architect Larry Perkins in 1956. The center is the oldest in Evanston and is identified as eligible for the National Register. The property is immediately south and west of School District #65's new Foster Elementary School, slated to open in 2027 and serve grades K through 5. The property is a five minute walk to Green Bay Road with bus service to the Howard CTA Station, and is a 15 minute walk to the CTA Purple Line Foster Station. Nearby amenities can be found in the Hill Arts District on Simpson Street and Ashland Avenue to the north. The property is a 15 minute walk or 5 minute bike ride to Evanston Township High School.

The property, excluding the portion to be conveyed to the City, is approximately 65,000 square feet. The building is a three-story, approximately 51,000 square-foot structure that was constructed in phases starting in 1908, with additions in 1928, 1932, 1959, and circa 2010. A surface parking lot is located to the west and north of the structure.

1.4 Property Condition

A 2023/2024 Conditions Assessment for the property, prepared by Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, indicates the building is in serviceable condition. This report identified immediate capital improvements for the facility, particularly the roof and masonry on portions of the structure dating from 1928/1932. Remediation and repair of the structure is feasible, and it should generally be considered in fair condition.

A 2023 hazardous conditions assessment was undertaken. The survey identified asbestos-containing materials and lead-based paint, but otherwise did not identify materials not common for the structures age and years of construction. Remediation is possible. Similar radon testing and testing for lead in the water supply were conducted. The property contains radon levels within the normal range. Lead service

lines should be replaced as part of any future remediation, although the testing largely found normal levels throughout the building with limited exceptions. All reports are included.

1.5 Zoning and Potential Uses

Any potential use or combination of uses may be proposed. The property is currently located in the R4 General Residential zoning district. Respondents are encouraged to propose any viable and market-driven use or combination of uses under the City's Unique Adaptive Use Code. This provision allows for uses not listed as an administrative, special, or permitted use in the zoning district to be developed, predominantly within an existing structure or structures, where the applicant has demonstrated adaptive use as the principal means to preserve and assure the continued existence of said structure(s). Proposals that propose partial demolition or substantial new construction should consult with the City to ensure qualification with the Unique Adaptive Use intent and definition. Due to the lot size, any redevelopment is expected to trigger a Planned Development.

Unique adaptive use applications follow the City's Special Use process, and are exempt from off-street parking, loading, and residential density requirements.

1.6 Historic Preservation Review

Any exterior work visible from a public way (alley, sidewalk, street or other thoroughfare appropriated for public use), and which requires a building permit, requires preservation review and issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Preservation Commission. Routine maintenance, including repair or replacement where there is no change in design, materiality, or general appearance of the structure or grounds, and when a building permit is not required, does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Although the property was designated an Evanston landmark for its cultural and social significance, it is essential that any future alterations or new construction ensure the property continues its ability to communicate and illustrate the sense of past time and place in which it was significant. This period of significance generally extends from the 1920s to the 1960s during its use as a public school. The property is likely capable of absorbing a higher degree of change while still retaining adequate integrity, especially within the 1960s addition. The 2000's addition is not significant and has not acquired significance over time.

Proposals that seek the use of State or Federal incentive programs will require a separate review process through the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office.

1.7 Property History

The significance of a historic property can be judged and explained only when it is evaluated within its historic context. The original 1905 structure was designed by Ernest Woodyatt, an Evanston resident. A 1926 addition by architects Childs & Smith added more classrooms, a theater, and a gymnasium. The school stood until a fire gutted the structure in 1958. The 1961 addition by Ganster & Hennighausen replaced the original 1905 structure.

As a community school, Foster School had produced hundreds of successful graduates who have made their place in local, national, and global communities. To name a few: Junior Mance- Jazz musician inducted into hall of fame in 1997; Dorothy Bayen – her part in the Ethiopian/Italian war during the 1930s and 40s; Fred Hutcherson – Aviator who trained Tuskegee Airmen; William Logan – Evanston's first Black Police Chief; Sanders Hicks – Evanston's first Black Fire Chief (and Olympian speed skater Shani Davis' first coach); Iva Caruthers – Work in faith based leadership and equity; Joseph Hill – Evanston First Black school superintendent; Tina Lifford – professional actress since 1970s and main character on the TV drama "Queen Sugar."

By the end of 1930, most Black residents resided in the Fifth Ward of Evanston, and Foster School was centrally located in that ward. Although the majority of the students who attended Foster School before World War I were White, by 1928, 85% of the students were Black. By 1945, Foster had a 99% Black student body.

The historical setting of the Family Focus Building, formerly Foster School, illustrates the important cultural, social aspects, and events within the city of Evanston as it interacted with issues of racial equity, segregation, and racially motivated housing and lending practices. The building is a tangible recall to these histories and embodies historic and cultural themes reflecting Evanston's early Black history.

In 1958, when the Foster School burned, black students were bused for the first time to other elementary schools in addition to the 1956 Fleetwood Jourdain Community Center. These students were not incorporated into the existing classrooms or integrated with other non-Black students. Instead, they held class in gyms, libraries, and auditoriums when they weren't otherwise in use. These students would return to a newly constructed Foster School in 1961.

These practices predicated later desegregation efforts that would see many Black students return to schools outside of the Fifth Ward, first as part of a voluntary transfer program to alleviate overcrowding at Foster and Dewey Schools in 1963 and later under a formal desegregation plan adopted in 1964. Under this plan, Foster School would close as a neighborhood school but remain open as a magnet school for another decade. As a second part of the desegregation plan, all the children who had previously attended Foster School and a majority of the children who had previously attended Dewey School were reassigned to one of seven predominantly white schools. Approximately 450 Black children per year were bused to school under this plan. Over the next five decades, the neighborhood surrounding the former Foster School would play a significant role in the District's planned desegregation.

Founded in 1976 in Evanston, Illinois, by Bernice Weissbourd, Irving Harris, and Delores Holmes, Family Focus began as a pioneering drop-in center designed to support parents of young children and promote early childhood development. It aimed to reduce isolation and build community, eventually expanding to multiple centers across Chicago and the surrounding areas. In 1982, Family Focus would begin leasing the Foster School property. Eventually, the building was purchased and donated to Family Focus by the Weissbourds. For the next five decades, Family Focus would play an important role in the community and provide an additional layer of social and cultural significance to the property.

2.0 REI Submittal Instructions

Hard copy paper submittals for any solicitation will not be accepted. Responses will only be accepted electronically via E-Mail

ANY SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED AFTER THE SUBMITTAL DEADLINE, WILL BE NOT BE ACCEPTED. It is the sole responsibility of the proposer to ensure that his or her submission is delivered by the stated time.

2.1 REI Inquiries

All questions related to this REI should be submitted in writing to Preservation Planner Cade W. Sterling: csterling@cityofevanston.org.

Contact with City Personnel
All Proposers are prohibited from making any contact with the City Manager, City Council, or any other official or employee of the City with regard to the Project, other than in the manner and to the person(s) designated herein.

2.2 Schedule of REI Events

REI Published	July 21, 2026
Last Questions Due	August 21, 2026
Final Addendum	September 4, 2026
REI Response Due date	October 2, 2026
Response Evaluations	TBD

The City reserves the right to deviate from the schedule.

2.3 Site Visit and Building Walkthrough Schedule

Prospective buyers and interested parties are invited to tour the facility. To schedule a walkthrough, please contact Maria Arellano at maria.watts@family-focus.org and include the following details in your inquiry:

- Your first and last name
- Your organization, firm, or agency name
- Your schedule availability for a tour
- Any specific questions regarding the property or purchasing process

3.0 Submission Requirements

3.1 Letter of Interest

The letter of interest should briefly describe the proponent's interest in the property and general intentions concerning the proposed use(s). This letter shall also contain the name, address, telephone, and email of the main contact for the interested party, and the required information contained in subsections 1-4 below.

1. **Proposed adaptive use**
   All submissions for interest should include a detailed vision statement or narrative that describes the proposed project, intended use or uses for the property and buildings, anticipated programming for the property and intended users, identification of a preferred ownership model (lease of the property, purchase of the property, etc), any anticipated alterations to the buildings or grounds, and responses to the purpose and objectives identified within this document.

2. **Potential Partners**
   Include a list of identified planning, architectural, funding, or use partners and briefly describe their role and overall level of commitment at this time.

3. **Funding sources and strategies**
   Briefly identify and describe potential funding sources and strategies that would be sought and employed to pay for rehabilitation, maintenance, and operational costs. As mentioned within this document, the property is eligible for various tax credits and other incentives. Include any assumptions made or contingencies related to the project.

4. **Relevant Experience**
   Examples of similar projects involving historic rehab, adaptive reuse, tax credits, affordable housing, nonprofit partnerships, or community facilities.

5. **Plans and design concept renderings (optional)**
   Floor plans identifying the proposed use of various rooms and buildings, proposed elevation drawings, and/or and interior or exterior renderings that visually communicate the proposed use or uses are highly desirable.

4.0 Links to Additional Information and Documentation

Links to additional information are available on the project website including:

1. Evanston Landmark Report and Statement of Significance
2. 2023/2024 Conditions Assessment
3. Plat of Survey
4. Existing Floor Plans
5. 2023 Hazardous Conditions Assessment
6. 2023 Radon Assessment
7. 2023 Lead Drinking Water Assessment
8. 2023 Community Engagement Summary
9. Previous Concept Designs