

**Request for Information (RFI) for
Salisbury Southern Railroad Passenger Depot
215 Depot Street
Salisbury NC 28144**



Salisbury station, 1920s



Submitted by: Historic Salisbury Foundation, Inc.

Date Submitted: June 7, 2023



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I. Executive Summary

Historic Salisbury Foundation, Inc. (“HSF”) is issuing a request for information in how an interested party could improve, purchase, repurpose and/or redevelop the **Salisbury Southern Railroad Passenger Depot** (collectively referred to as “the Property”) located at 215 Depot St., Salisbury NC 28144 to include 15,107 square feet located on a 2.23-acre parcel (97,139 SF). The property includes the original covered Southern Railroad Company passenger platform and concourse (10,752 square feet) and the south gardens associated with the property (Rowan County Parcel ID # 0104340001), that property described in deed book 627, page 577 recorded in the Rowan County Register of Deeds. The Property contains over 20 rooms, 40 dedicated parking spaces, and currently houses two (2) tenants: Amtrak’s ticketing office and waiting room (see *Lease, Amtrak*) and a photography tenant doing business as Studio 35 (see *Lease, Studio 35*).

II. Historic Salisbury Foundation’s Objectives for RFI

- a. Identify market interest and opportunities to improve, purchase, reuse, and/or redevelop the Property,
- b. Explore ownership structures (e.g., retention, sale, ground lease, etc.)

HSF seeks to evaluate redevelopment plans which will ensure a use that will:

- a. Preserve the historic appearance of the Property;
- b. Preserve Protective Covenants on the Property (see *Station Covenants attachment*);
- c. Integrate seamlessly into Historic Downtown Salisbury;
- d. Stimulate other desirable economic, social, and cultural development in Downtown Salisbury; and
- e. Be received by residents as an asset to Historic Downtown and the community and county as a whole.

This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes. HSF is not at this time seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals. Respondents are advised that HSF will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this RFI; all costs associated with responding to this RFI will be solely at the interested party’s expense. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future Request for Proposal (RFP), if any is issued.

III. Overview of Location and Property

a. Location



Salisbury is the county seat of Rowan County and offers an ideal location at the population center of the growing state of North Carolina. Nearly 4 million persons live within 60 miles of Rowan County. We are conveniently centered within one day's drive of 60% of the US population. With a city population of 35,540 and county population of 146,875, our location along the I-85 corridor makes accessibility one of Salisbury's greatest strengths, with Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and High Point all less than one (1) hour away by major highway.

Rowan County's central location has been a draw for people and commerce since the early 1700s when German and Scotch-Irish settlers traveled the Great Wagon Road to settle here. In 1896, J.P. Morgan chose the area as the site of the Southern Railway Company's steam locomotive servicing facility because of its location midway between Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, Ga.

The historic project site (Depot Street) is located less than a mile from exit 76, the premier I-85 exit for Salisbury, where traffic volumes average 29,500 vehicles per day.

b. Community Profile

Many factors combine to make Salisbury a unique and vibrant community in which to invest:

- Location & Accessibility: Proximity to Major Highway Network, Rail and Freight Network, Airport Network, Sea Port Network
- Large downtown district comprised of more than twenty (20) city blocks of restaurants, breweries, museums, shops, entertainment venues, services, offices, and governmental centers for City of Salisbury and Rowan County; Salisbury has been an accredited Main Street community since 1980



- Thriving historic preservation community and culture, boasting ten (10) National Register historic districts, five (5) of which are located in Salisbury city limits, with two local organizations devoted to preservation, Historic Salisbury Foundation and Rowan Museum
- Three downtown theaters: The Norvell Theater, the Meroney Theater, and Lee Street Theatre
- Home to the Salisbury Symphony Orchestra, a professional orchestra dating back to 1967
- Five colleges: Catawba College, Livingstone College, Rowan Cabarrus Community College, Hood Theological Seminary, and a Campbell University teaching hospital at Novant Health, Rowan Medical Center
- Cheerwine Festival, bringing an estimated 100,000 visitors to downtown annually
- N.C. Transportation Museum in nearby Spencer, bringing 144,000 visitors annually for visitation and events to include 26-night Polar Express and Day Out with Thomas
- Vibrant downtown living with hundreds of downtown apartments, with 12 units coming online in 2023 at The Salisbury and 7 units at the Bell Block Building
- 13-million-dollar downtown park, Bell Tower Green (completed in 2021) to include downtown open air amphitheater and summer concert series
- Redevelopment of historic downtown Empire Hotel (100,000 square feet on Main Street) to include 38 additional apartments/Airbnb units, 5 historic rowhomes, a boutique hotel (25 rooms), restaurant and historic hotel bar, spa, retail and complete restoration of 2,646 square foot ballroom (expected to break ground in 4th quarter, 2023)
- Salisbury Southern Railroad Passenger Depot, circa 1908, historically renovated and used as an events venue and by Amtrak for passenger train service – located in downtown’s Railwalk Arts District
- NC selected in 2022 as the state having the best business climate
- Rowan County labor force of estimated 1.4 million
- Annual visitor spending of \$187 million in Rowan County; 200,000 overnight guests per year; current hotel market occupancy of over 70%



c. The Building

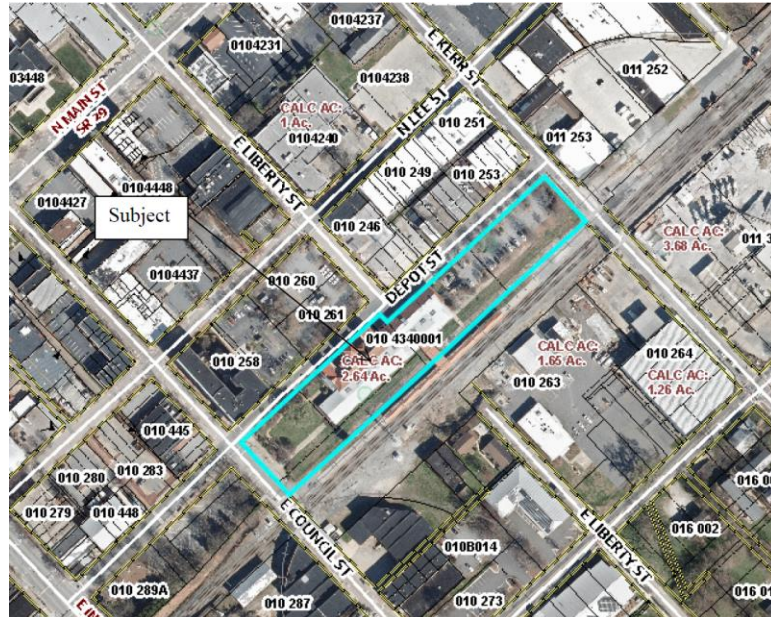
i. *Physical Description/History*

Built in the Spanish Mission style in 1908 by prolific American architect Frank P. Milburn, the Salisbury Southern Railroad Passenger Depot was a mainline station between Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, GA and served as one of the region's major thoroughfares. According to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, the Salisbury Southern Railroad Passenger Depot "is an important example in North Carolina of Milburn's eclectic style design for public architecture" and is "one of the most ambitious railroad depots surviving in the state."

A replica of a portion of the Salisbury Southern Railroad Passenger Station can be seen at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. The display honors the Station's importance in the Salisbury, North Carolina community. It also showcases the iconic architectural design of that time period. <https://americanhistory.si.edu/visitor-guides/america-move/lives-railroad>.

On August 25, 1986 Historic Salisbury Foundation, Inc. purchased the property from the Southern Railway Company. HSF spent over 3.1 million dollars to restore the Property, performing the restoration in three phases completed in 1990, 1993, and 1996.

HSF restored the original floor, original doors and windows, original brick walls, ceiling arches, wooden moldings, clock surrounds, accurately reproduced ticket booth, the historically correct replacement lighting fixtures, lunch room window, and the replacement fireplace mantels in the ladies' and men's parlors in the south block waiting room; the original doors, windows, wooden moldings, and hardwood floors, original interior brick walls and the fireplace in the dining room in the old lunch room, station master's office, and the dining room/Historic Salisbury Foundation board room in the south block; and the original covered passenger platform concourse and the truss system.



IV. Site Historic Designation

In 1975, the importance of the Salisbury Southern Railroad Passenger Depot was recognized by individual inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

On April 16, 2019, the property was designated as a historic landmark by action of the Salisbury Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and Salisbury City Council. The ordinance identifies the property as a pivotal resource in the district nomination, and it lies in the Salisbury Railroad Corridor Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places and thereby restricts any changes to the interior or exterior features of the building unless and until a Certificate of Appropriateness is obtained from Salisbury Historic Preservation Commission.

The Salisbury Southern Railroad Passenger Depot is designated as a historic landmark by the City of Salisbury, providing for a 50% property tax deferment to be applied for annually to the tax assessor’s office so long as the property maintains its landmark status.

V. Request for Information

a. Requirements/Questions

Please address the following information requests and questions:

- i. Provide firm name, brief firm overview and main point of contact (name, email, phone);



- ii. Provide your firm’s role and vision for the property, including detailing how needed parking will be achieved;
- iii. Describe how your proposed vision fits into current market demand in the local, state, or regional context;
- iv. Provide a brief written narrative of your preliminary concept and site plan;
- v. Provide whether your proposed development plan will include a destination-use such as restaurant, distillery, merchant store, etc.;
- vi. Propose viable and creative uses that are allowed under HPC (Historic Preservation Committee) and Salisbury/Rowan County zoning ordinances and the Property’s covenants;
- vii. Provide a proposed purchase price for the property; *(Please note that HSF has received a broker opinion for the reasonable value of the Station in the amount of \$3.1 million, with an optimistic sales price of \$4.1 million, and a 2021 appraisal in the amount of \$4.8 million. Please detail whether proposed purchase price is or is not negotiable.)*
- viii. Provide a detailed plan for the long-term preservation of the property to include how firm intends to fund and accomplish short-term and long-term maintenance.
- ix. Briefly describe your firm’s experience in this type of project (i.e., use and historic in nature, etc.);
- x. Identify any challenges that you see or anticipate in repurposing or the redevelopment of the Property;
- xi. Explain how your proposed plan would benefit Salisbury and Rowan County, and more specifically, reinforce the economic importance of:
 1. Economic Development
 2. Tourism
 3. Job Creation
 4. Vitality/Increased Foot Traffic
 5. Community development;
- xii. Provide a response as to whether you/your firm would respond to an RFP for redevelopment of the Property;
- xiii. Provide your thoughts as to a deal structure (i.e., sale, ground lease, etc.) for the reuse of the Property, i.e. are you/your firm interested in a ground



lease structure where HSF retains ownership and leases the ground for the repurpose or redevelopment of the Property; and

- xiv. Provide any thoughts or concerns as to HSF acting on the Property individually (i.e., sell or ground lease one of the Property to one party and another one of the Property to another unrelated party, etc.).

b. Submission Instructions

Electronic submissions shall be provided in PDF form. Please submit responses by Friday, July 28, 2023 at 4 p.m. EST. The subject line of the email shall state: “Salisbury Southern Railroad Passenger Depot RFI- [Firm’s Name]”. The RFI responses shall be submitted to HSF (director@historicsalisbury.org) with both Whitney Williams (wwallace@wallacegraham.com) and Adrian Easley (aeasley@us.mufg.jp) on copy.

VI. Miscellaneous

This document is not an offer to enter into an agreement with any party.

The information in the RFI is deemed to be accurate; however, it is the responsibility of the respondent to confirm all relevant information and facts provided in the RFI

VII. Expected Next Steps

HSF thanks you for your interest and response to this RFI. HSF’s assessment team will review the submitted information and provide the HSF Board recommendations for future actions. Possible follow-up steps could include the release of a formal RFP for the sale and redevelopment of the Property, release of a formal RFP for the ground lease and repurposing of the Property, a second round of questions seeking further input from stakeholders, or no further action.