



Request for Proposals

Catering for Main Library Opening Events

Issued September 1, 2026

**Proposals Will Be Received Until September 30, 2026
2:00 PM EST**

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Introduction

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (the “Library” or “CML”) is seeking an experienced catering firm to provide food and beverage service for two New Main Library opening events in spring 2027.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is ushering in a new era of improving lives and building a stronger community. This includes opening a new Main Library that will be an architecturally distinct information and technology hub, and a welcoming accessible destination for all. CML is committed to being a welcoming space for engagement and learning in all 21 of our locations. The Library supports information access, intellectual freedom, and cultural and civic growth in our community.

The successful firm will provide a comprehensive catering program for two New Main Library opening events. We are looking for an experienced partner who can meet the distinct needs of a 500-person staff celebration and a 1,000-person donor recognition event through thoughtful menu development, professional staffing, and polished food and beverage service. The selected firm should deliver reliable, high-quality service that supports each event’s purpose and enhances the guest experience.

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY

About

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is a diverse, innovative system that spans a county of 1.2 million residents. The Library is made up of:

- 21 stationary branch locations reflective of their diverse communities, including:
 - Main Library in the center of Uptown, scheduled to open in spring 2027;
 - ImaginOn, a nationally-recognized innovative children’s library and family destination;
- Two mobile libraries, MoLi (Mobile Library) and MiLa (Mobile Internet Lab); and
- More than 450 dedicated staff members serving as librarians, outreach coordinators, program associates and more.

Throughout the system, the Library provides free and open access to more than 800,000 items ranging from physical and electronic collections and information, as well as a range of programs and services for people of all ages. In FY2025, the Library had a total circulation of more than 9.5 million items, saw more than 2.6 million visitors, and hosted 26,061 programs with over 540,000 in-person attendees.

Mission, Vision, Values & More

Our mission is to improve lives and build a stronger community. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library envisions itself as the essential connector of a thriving community of readers, leaders and learners. We value learning, openness, respect, inclusion and leadership. Our brand promise is to be accessible and welcoming to all while celebrating and supporting the joy of reading and learning, fostering exploration and personal growth, and connecting individuals to each other, the community and the world.

We believe in intellectual freedom. The Library is committed to protecting the First Amendment’s guarantee of free and open access to information and ideas—a principle vital to our democracy and to each individual’s search for knowledge. We seek to provide our diverse community with a comprehensive collection of materials and programs providing a wide range of knowledge and perspectives.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library’s New Main Library

The new Main Library, anticipated to open in spring 2027, will be a free, open, and accessible hub of information and activities and a major regional destination in Uptown Charlotte. This 115,000 square foot, five-story facility within the city’s North Tryon Vision Plan and incorporates the historic Spirit Square space. As Charlotte Mecklenburg Library’s flagship

location, it will be an architecturally distinctive, state-of-the-art, technologically advanced knowledge center, and a free, open, and accessible hub of information and activities where everyone in the community can access the resources of a 21st century library. In addition to traditional Library programs and services, the new Main Library will introduce a new innovative model for Library services, offering a platform for programs created and delivered with community partners.

Location

The new Main Library is being built on the same site as the previous main library: the 300 block of North Tryon Street, also known as the corner of 6th & N. Tryon Streets. It is the same site where the original Carnegie Library – the first free library in Mecklenburg County – stood in 1903. Work on the new Main Library began August 2023 with the demolition of the old Uptown library.

The facility is designed to welcome and celebrate the Charlotte Mecklenburg community, and it will feature indoor/outdoor spaces over five themed floors spiraling up to a skylight.

Inside the New Main Library

The new facility, which will serve as the main branch of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library system, will include a variety of resources including: 15 meeting rooms; an event space; an immersive theater; a digital visualization lab with a 270-degree screen for creative projects and technology classes; a café, and a new Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room for history and genealogy research. The building will have five floors each tailored to a specific theme.

- **Level One - Community** (Knight Hall, the dynamic grand lobby; open air courtyard, forum for new, innovative programming; popular collection showcase including NYT bestsellers and latest releases; Morris Family immersive theater area for information sharing, digital art, and more; and the café.)
- **Level Two - Opportunity and Innovation**
Bank of America Opportunity Center; Katherine Belk Social Services Office, Gambrell innovation lab supports the conception and development of new ideas; Lowe's technology hub; Honeywell digital visualization lab provides resources and support for discovering, analyzing, and visualizing information; and a wrap-around outdoor terrace
- **Level Three - Reference and Research**
Collections; study carrels; Philip Van Every Foundation multi-purpose classroom; reference hub; Fleming Weisiger Reading Room community "living room" for open, salon-style conversations
- **Level Four - History and Genealogy**
Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room; one of the largest genealogy and N.C. history collections in the state, Schnall Family Reading Room

- **Level Five – Destination**

Dr. Joyce Davis Waddell Event Space; Sandra and Leon Levine Destination Reading Room; catering kitchen; Nucor Terrace)

Construction Partners

- Snøhetta (design architects)
- Clark Nexsen (architects of record)
- Rodgers I Leeper (construction)
- Mecklenburg County Asset and Facility Management (project management)

Scope

Project Overview

The New Main Library Grand Opening catering needs includes two events during the week of April 26, 2027. Dates, times, final attendance, service locations, and program elements are preliminary and may change as planning continues.

- Staff Celebration & Preview – April 26, 2027, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. (approximately 500 guests)
- Donor Recognition & Celebration Event – April 29, 2027, 5:00-8:00 p.m. (approximately 1,000 guests)

The successful firm will serve as the Library’s full-service catering partner for both events, providing menu development, food and beverage service, professional staffing, setup, replenishment, clearing, and strike. Drop-off catering will not meet the requirements of this RFP. Final menus, quantities, staffing, bar locations, and service details will be developed collaboratively after award, following site access and confirmation of the event programs.

This RFP is intended to support vendor selection; it is not a request for final guaranteed menus or a final staffing schedule. There is a possibility the events will be split between two caterers. The Library does not guarantee a minimum quantity of services, number of guests, event dates, event scope, or award of both events.

Scope of Services

The selected firm will be expected to:

- Participate in planning meetings with the event planner and site walk-throughs and recommend practical service locations, guest-flow strategies, and operating plans for each event.
- Develop event-appropriate menus and beverage programs, including vegetarian and vegan options and clear identification of common dietary accommodations and allergens.
- Provide, prepare, deliver, set up, serve, replenish, clear, and remove all food and beverages, together with the catering-specific supplies needed to execute the proposed menus in accordance with Mecklenburg County food-service requirements and applicable NC food safety regulations.
- Provide professional staffing appropriate to each event, including event leadership, culinary and back-of-house support, servers, bartenders where applicable, attendants, bussing, and strike personnel.
- Provide properly licensed and insured alcohol service for the donor event, including qualified bartenders and any required permits, controls, and compliance measures.
- Coordinate load-in, setup, service, cleaning, and strike with the Library and its event team. All work must protect the new building’s finished surfaces and preserve safe, accessible guest paths.

Event-Specific Requirements

Staff Celebration & Preview

A celebration for approximately 500 Library staff members and retirees to celebrate all they do for the library system while providing them a first look opportunity of the new facility.

Anticipated catering requirements include:

- Full-service buffet lunch on the fifth floor during two timed rotations: 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. and 12:30–1:30 p.m. Staggered attendance should be assumed.
- A polished, hot seasonal buffet featuring a protein entrée, vegetarian and vegan entrée options, vegetable, and sweets.
- Water, tea, and lemonade, plus a staffed, elevated mocktail bar featuring thoughtfully presented signature mocktails made without nonalcoholic spirits. No alcohol will be served at this event.
- A separate dessert service in the main lobby from 2:30–3:00 p.m., including setup, service, replenishment, clearing, and strike.
- Professional staffing sufficient for buffet service, mocktail service, guest assistance, replenishment, clearing, bussing, and transition between the lunch rotations and dessert service.

Donor Recognition & Celebration Event

An elegant, invitation-only evening event for approximately 1,000 donors, government officials, and other stakeholders who supported the campaign and the new building. The event will recognize philanthropic leadership and celebrate the successful completion of the New Main Library.

Anticipated catering requirements include:

- An elevated reception-style menu of hot and cold seasonal passed appetizers and stationed appetizer experiences, with vegetarian and vegan options, distributed in selected areas across all five floors.
- A tasting of the proposed donor-event menu for up to ten people before final menu approval.
- Elegant food and beverage presentation appropriate for a formal donor-recognition event. Creativity and theme tie-in is encouraged.
- Professionally staffed full bars and elevated mocktail beverage stations in key areas across all five floors. Mocktails should be made without nonalcoholic spirits. The proposer should recommend the preliminary number and distribution of service points.
- A service plan that accommodates guest movement throughout the building.
- Professional staffing sufficient for simultaneous service across all five floors, including overall event leadership, floor or area captains, culinary and back-of-house support, bartenders, servers, attendants, bussing, and strike personnel.

Selection-Stage Submittal Expectations

The Library intends for responses to be concise and practical. Existing materials may be used, and custom presentation design, final guaranteed menus, a final employee roster, and a minute-by-minute staffing schedule are not required at this stage. Proposers should provide representative menus, pricing, and a preliminary staffing model as described in the Proposal Format section.

Contract Term

Initial Term: December 1, 2026-May 2, 2027

Notice to Proposers

The successful Proposer must comply with all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and all rules and regulations promulgated thereunder. By submitting a proposal, the successful Proposer agrees to indemnify the Library from and against all claims, suits, damages, costs, losses, and expenses in any manner arising out of, or connected with, the failure of the Company, its subcontractors, agents, successors, assigns, officers, or employees to comply with the provisions of the ADA or the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder.

All proposals must be firm and not subject to increase, unless specified within the provisions of this Request for Proposals (RFP) and mutually agreed upon by the Library and the Proposer.

No special inducements will be considered that are not a part of the original proposal document.

Library Rights and Options

The Library, at its sole discretion, reserves the following rights:

- To supplement, amend, substitute, or otherwise modify this RFP at any time
- To cancel this RFP with or without the substitution of another RFP
- To take any action affecting this RFP, this RFP process, or the Services subject to this RFP that would be in the best interests of the Library
- To issue additional requests for information or clarification from Offerors or to allow corrections of errors or omissions
- To require one or more Service Providers to supplement, clarify, or provide additional information in order for the Library to evaluate the Responses submitted
- To negotiate an agreement with a Service Provider based on the information provided in response to this RFP.
- To award one or more contract(s).

Public Records

Any material submitted in response to this RFP will become a "public record" once the Proposer's document(s) is opened and the Proposer is determined to be a participant in the solicitation process and shall be subject to public disclosure consistent with Chapter 132, North Carolina Statutes. Proposers must claim any applicable exemptions to disclosure provided by law in their response to this RFP. Proposers must identify materials to be protected and must state the reasons why such exclusion from public disclosure is necessary and legal. The Library reserves the right to make all final determination(s) of the applicability of North Carolina General Statutes § 132-1.2, Confidential Information.

Trade Secrets/Confidentiality

Proposers must claim any material which qualifies as "trade secret" information under N.C.G.S. 66- 152(3) in their response to this RFP and must state the reasons why such exclusion from public disclosure is necessary and legal.

To properly designate material as trade secret under these circumstances, each Proposer must take the following precautions: (a) any trade secrets submitted by a Proposer should be submitted in a separate, sealed envelope marked "Trade Secret - Confidential and Proprietary Information - Do Not Disclose Except for the Purpose of Evaluating this Proposal," and (b) the same trade secret/confidentiality designation should be stamped on each page of the trade secret materials contained in the envelope.

Do not designate your entire proposal as a trade secret, and do not designate pricing information as a trade secret. Doing so may result in your proposal being disqualified.

In submitting a proposal, each Proposer agrees that the Library may reveal any trade secret materials contained in such response to all Library staff and Library officials involved in the selection process.

Familiarity with Laws and Ordinances

The submission of a proposal on the equipment and services requested herein shall be considered as a representation that the Proposer is familiar with all federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations which affect those engaged or employed in the provision of such services, or equipment used in the provision of such services, or which in any way affects the conduct of the provision of such services; and no plea of misunderstanding will be considered on account of ignorance thereof. If the Proposer discovers any provisions in the RFP documents that are contrary to or inconsistent with any law, ordinance, or regulation, it shall be reported to the Library in writing without delay.

E-Verify Compliance

Per N.C.G.S. 143-133.3 E-verify compliance. Provider shall comply with the requirements of Article 2 of Chapter 64 of the North Carolina General Statutes (verification of work authorization). Further, if the Provider utilizes a subcontractor, the Provider shall require the subcontractor to comply with the requirements of Article 2 of Chapter 64 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_143/GS_143-133.3.pdf

https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByArticle/Chapter_64/Article_2.html

Iran Divestment Act

Provider hereby certifies that it is not on the North Carolina State Treasurer's list of persons engaging in business activities in Iran, prepared pursuant to NCGS 147-86.58, nor will Provider utilize on this agreement any subcontractor on such list. This list, along with additional information about the Iran Divestment Act, is available on the Treasurer's Office site:

<https://www.nctreasurer.gov/iran-divestment-act>

Divestment from Companies that Boycott Israel

Contractor hereby certifies that it is not on the North Carolina State Treasurer's list of companies engaged in a boycott of Israel in violation of NCGS 147-86.80 et. seq. and that it will not utilize on this agreement any subcontractor on said list.

Contract Required

The successful proposer will be required to enter into a written contract with the Library, setting forth the conditions specified in this RFP, as well as other standard terms and conditions. The successful vendor shall be solely liable for compliance with all specifications contained herein.

Insurance Requirements

The successful Proposer shall maintain insurance coverage in the types and amounts required by the Library throughout the term of the contract. At a minimum, required coverage shall include commercial general liability, automobile liability, workers' compensation, and liquor liability coverage, as applicable to the services provided. The successful Proposer shall provide certificates of insurance and any required endorsements evidencing the required coverage prior to commencement of services. The Library may require additional insured status and other insurance requirements as specified in the final contract.

Proposal Duration

All proposals will remain in effect and shall be legally binding for at least one hundred twenty (120) days after the proposal submission due date.

Request for Proposal Process

Schedule

Date	Event
September 1, 2026	RFP Issue Date
2:00 PM EST September 9 2026	Optional Site Visit of Main Library
5:00 PM EST September 11, 2026	Deadline for Submission of Written Questions. Service Providers are permitted to submit to the Library written questions, but only for purposes of clarifying this RFP. All submissions shall be submitted as outlined herein.
September 15, 2026	Response to Written Questions via Addendum
2:00 PM EST September 30, 2026	Responses are due on this date and time.
October 2026	Library review and firm selection
November 6, 2026	Anticipated contract award

Proposer Questions and Inquiries

Proposer Questions and Inquiries relative to this RFP must be submitted electronically by 5:00 PM, September 11, to Walter Freeman, Library Procurement Analyst, at wfreeman@cmlibrary.org. The Library will provide written responses to all inquiries received by this date, and responses will be made available to all known recipients of this RFP and posted by September 15, 2026. Any oral responses made by any representative of the Library may not be relied upon. Any supplements or amendments to this RFP will be in writing and furnished to potential bidders.

Proposers are expressly forbidden from contacting any other Library employee or Charlotte Mecklenburg Library official regarding this Request for Proposals. Any such outside contact may result in disqualification from the request for proposal process.

Optional Site Visit of Main Library

The site visit is scheduled for September 9, 2026, at 2:00 pm. Please email foundation@cmlibrary.org to register. You will need to wear closed toes shoes and sign a release form in order to attend. We will provide a hard hat and vest for the walk through of the site. This is an active construction site, no more than two representatives from your company can attend.

Submission of Responses

Five (5) paper copies in a sealed envelope/package and one (1) electronic copy of the proposal by way of a USB drive, including all required forms (such as Proposal Authorization and Acknowledgement of Addenda forms), must be submitted to the attention of Walter Freeman, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, Library Administration Center, 510 Stitt Road, Charlotte, NC 28213 by 2:00pm EST on September 30, 2026. Emailed and faxed submissions will not be accepted. All risk of late arrival due to unanticipated delay – whether delivered by hand, US Postal Service, courier, or other delivery service is entirely on the submitting Proposer. It is the sole responsibility of the Proposer to have the proposal physically in the Library's office by the specified time and date. The time of delivery will be marked on each proposal when received, and any proposal received after the proposal submission deadline will be rejected.

The Library reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. The Library reserves the right to reproduce proposals for internal use in the evaluation process.

The Library will not be obligated for the expenses of any provider arising out of preparation and/or submittal of responses to this RFP. Any and all proposals to this RFP are to be prepared at the cost and expense of the respondents, with the express understanding that there may be no claims whatsoever for the reimbursement of any costs, damages, or expenses relating to this procurement from the Library or any other party for any reason (including the cancellation of this RFP).

Proposals must be made in the official name of the individual, firm, or corporation under which the business is conducted (showing official business address) and must be signed in ink by a person duly authorized to legally bind the business entity submitting the proposal.

All proposals should be complete and carefully worded and must convey all of the information requested by the Library. If errors or exceptions are found in the proposal, or if the proposal fails to conform to the requirements of the RFP, the Library will be the sole judge as to whether that variance is significant enough to reject the proposal. Proposals should be prepared simply and economically. All data, materials, and documentation shall be available in a clear, concise form.

Evaluation Criteria

All bids that are submitted in accordance with this RFP and which meet the requirements as outlined herein will be considered to be responsive bids. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, any and all bids may be rejected, and the Library may negotiate with any or all bidders. Proposals will be evaluated using a best-value approach. Each proposal will be reviewed and scored by an evaluation committee using the criteria below. While cost is a significant factor, the Library will award the contract to the proposer whose overall solution best meets the needs of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

- **Relevant Catering Experience and Qualifications – 40%**
Evaluates demonstrated experience providing full-service catering for events of similar size, complexity, service style, or setting, including comparable work and client references.
- **Menu, Service Approach, and Staffing – 30%**
Evaluates the quality and suitability of the representative menus and beverage concepts, the practicality of the proposed service approach, and whether the preliminary staffing model provides appropriate leadership and coverage for the staggered staff luncheon and simultaneous donor-event service across all five floors. Final guaranteed menus and a final staffing schedule are not required.
- **Cost Effectiveness – 20%**
Evaluates the reasonableness, transparency, and overall value to the Library. Award will not necessarily be made to the lowest-priced proposer.
- **Proposal Quality and Responsiveness – 10%**
Evaluates whether the proposal is clear, concise, complete, and responsive to the requested information. Existing materials, photographs, case studies, and links are acceptable; presentation length or production value will not receive additional consideration.

- **Interviews of prospective companies** -A short-list of firms may be invited to Stage 2 of the evaluation process, the Interview/Demonstration. Interview/demonstrations are an important aspect of the evaluation process that offers the Library an opportunity to see how the proposer's solution meets the critical components of the RFP. A committee will evaluate the responses and select the top proposal. The Library may elect to make a final selection without holding an interview/demonstration.

Award will be made at a later date pending evaluation of all proposals submitted and approval by the Library's Board of Trustees.

Rejection of the Proposal

The Library reserves the right to determine and evaluate the qualifications of the proposer and to reject any Final Proposals.

The Library retains the right to waive minor irregularities in the statement format.

Basis for rejection includes but is not limited to:

- Contains false or misleading statements.
- Not in the format described under Proposal Content.
- Unsigned proposal by authorized person
- Unsigned acknowledgement of addenda form
- Received after the due date.
- Restriction or limitation upon their use.

Proposal Format

Proposals should be concise and organized using the sections below. Existing company materials, case studies, photographs, menus, and links may be used. Custom presentation design, final guaranteed menus, full resumes, and a final staffing schedule are not required at this stage. There is no minimum page count; clear and direct responses are encouraged.

Section A: Firm Overview and Relevant Experience

Provide a brief overview of the firm and its experience providing full-service catering for events of similar size, complexity, service style, or setting.

Section B: Comparable Events

Provide two examples of comparable events. Existing case studies, photographs, sample menus, or links may be submitted.

Section C: Representative Menus and Service Approach

Provide one representative menu and a brief service approach for each event. For the staff event, include the hot buffet, salad bar, sweets, standard beverages, and elevated mocktail bar. For the donor event, provide a proposed menu for passed and stationed appetizers and the full-bar and mocktail experience across all five floors. Identify vegetarian and vegan selections and any important assumptions. A final customized or guaranteed menu is not required.

Section D: Staffing Plan

For each event, provide a staffing model showing approximate headcount by role, management and supervisory coverage, anticipated service hours, and how staff would be distributed by floor or service area. Include relevant roles such as the event lead, captains, culinary and back-of-house personnel, servers, bartenders, attendants, bussing, setup, and strike. A final names roster, full resumes, and a minute-by-minute schedule are not required.

Section E: References

Provide two client references or authorize the Library to contact clients identified in the comparable-event examples.

Section F: Pricing

Provide a **not-to-exceed total amount for each event and a combined not-to-exceed amount for both events**. Please include any economies of scale pricing changes should the guarantee fall below 1000, 800, 500. The donor-event estimate must correspond to the proposed menu and include one tasting for up to ten people. Separately identify, as applicable, food, nonalcoholic beverages and mocktails, alcohol and bar service, labor, delivery, setup and strike, administrative or service charges, taxes, gratuities, and any other fees. State key assumptions and exclusions.

Proposal Authorization and Signature

This proposal must be signed by a responsible official of the offering company. By signing below as an authorized representative, the Proposer agrees to be bound by the representations, terms and conditions contained in its proposal and agrees to enter into a contract based upon the terms, representations and conditions contained in the proposal with the Library if this proposal is approved and awarded by the Library.

Firm Name	Print name of signer
Date	Authorized Signature
Street Address	City, State and Zip Code
Telephone number	Email Address

Acknowledgement of Addenda

If issued, Proposer hereby acknowledges receipt of the Addenda issued. This form shall be signed by an authorized company representative and returned with the proposal response. Provide number of the Addendum you received, and the date received.

Addendum No. _____ Dated _____

Addendum No. _____ Dated _____

Company _____

Authorized Signature _____

Print Name _____

Email Address _____

Note: Please print clearly