

# 2024 Call for Projects

Nature Sacred exists to inspire, inform and guide communities in the creation of public green spaces—called Sacred Places—designed to improve mental health, unify communities and engender peace. The Nature Sacred Design Process forges a partnership between a community leader and a landscape architect to guide community members through a visionary charrette process to achieve a welcoming Sacred Place. As each community imagines its own space, the design becomes a unique reflection of its culture, story and place—making it inherently sacred to them.

## Overview

### What is Nature Sacred?

Nature Sacred exists to inspire, inform and guide communities in the creation of public green spaces — called Sacred Places — designed to improve mental health, unify communities and engender peace. For 25 years, Nature Sacred has partnered with over 100 communities across the country to infuse nearby nature into places where healing is often needed most: distressed urban neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, prisons and more. Through a collaborative, community-led process and an evidence-based design model, each Sacred Place is bonded together by a common goal: to reconnect people with nature in ways that foster mindful reflection, restore mental health and strengthen communities. As each community imagines its own space, the design becomes a unique reflection of the community's culture, story and place — making it inherently sacred to them. Get to know our model, our approach and our network.

### What is the Nature Sacred difference?

- **Our design concept.** Nature Sacred applies 4 guiding principles and 4 design elements to each of our Sacred Places. The guiding principles ensure that all Sacred Places are welcoming to all and easily accessible to the communities they serve. Meanwhile, the 4 design elements provide a framework for imbuing a Sacred Place with a special sense of intentionality and peace, while retaining the flexibility to be intricately honed to each community's unique values and needs.
- **Our design process.** The Nature Sacred Design Process forges a partnership between a community leader — whom we call a Firesoul — and a landscape architect or designer — a Nature Sacred Design Advisor — to guide community members through a visionary charrette process to achieve a welcoming Sacred Place. Our process is as follows:
  - For each project, Nature Sacred works to designate a Design Advisor (DA), a Firesoul, and a Sacred Place Steering Committee (SPSC) to support the Firesoul during the design process.
  - Nature Sacred and the DA work with the Firesoul and the SPSC to solicit community participation

in the form of a survey and two visionary charrettes (interactive design workshops). Based on the feedback from the survey and charrettes, the DA will craft and refine a design for the site.

- At the end of the design process, this design now belongs to the community to implement.
- **Our investment.** During the design process, Nature Sacred invests approximately \$50,000 worth of design and community engagement services into your project. This includes an installation of the signature Nature Sacred bench at your site. And Nature Sacred stays with you beyond the design, too. If selected for this Call for Projects, you will also receive \$10,000 in funding to be used for the construction of the site..
- **The Nature Sacred Firesoul Network.** After your site is opened, Firesouls are oriented into the Nature Sacred Firesoul network, which exists to cultivate collaboration and alliance between Firesouls across cities and states. They have continual access to the benefits it offers, including eligibility for enhancement grants for your Sacred Place, educational programming, and networking sessions.

## About this Opportunity: The 2024 Call for Projects

**Join with your neighbors to dream and build a greener community.** We are seeking applications from communities interested in designing a Sacred Place in partnership with Nature Sacred. We invite neighborhoods who lack access to high-quality, nearby nature spaces to submit a site for consideration to become a Sacred Place.

Nature Sacred offers a collaborative design process through which we forge a partnership between a community leader — whom we call a Firesoul — and a landscape architect or designer — a Nature Sacred Design Advisor — to guide community members through envisioning and designing their space to be welcoming and sacred to them.

When they open, all Sacred Places are given access to the Nature Sacred Firesoul Network — which means, we will be with you for the long haul. Additionally, this program will provide funds for construction.

**What's unique about this opportunity?** Nature Sacred has spent 25 years connecting people with nature — often in places where nature is lacking. We work closely with communities, helping draw them together, guiding them through a collective visioning process for a shared green space, what we call a Sacred Place. The final result: Sacred Places that resonate with the communities in which they are nested.

### What selected projects receive:

- Nature Sacred's full scope of design services. This includes 4 community engagement sessions, which typically takes 4–7 months, and management of this process by Nature Sacred staff and Design Advisors.
- 5 projects will receive \$10,000 in construction funding to bring your green space — Sacred Place — dreams to life
- A signature Nature Sacred bench and journal
- Lifetime membership in our Firesoul Network, supporting community leaders and ongoing programming for years to come

## Timeline & How to Propose a Project

- Call for Projects opens: **1/3/2024**
- Deadline for submissions: **2/14/2024**
- Nature Sacred site evaluation process: **2/14/2024 – 5/1/2024**
- Selected projects notified: **5/1/2024**
- Selected projects submit partnership agreement: **5/31/2024**
- Selected projects begin design & engagement process: **Fall 2024 and beyond**
- To propose your project for consideration, fill in and submit [this questionnaire](#) by the deadline above. We recommend that you compile and polish your answers in a separate document before filling out the questionnaire online.
- Please note that throughout the selection process, Nature Sacred may request additional information about the proposed site, including but not limited to virtual meetings, site visits, and 1-2 minute walk-through videos of the site.

### To be considered, interested parties should:

- have a site in mind
- have ownership or other form of control over the proposed site
- have authority to make changes to the site and specific goals to achieve through the design of the Sacred Place

## Questionnaire preview

Please keep all responses to a maximum of 150 words.

### Tell us about you.

1. What's the name of your project or site? (A placeholder name is fine, too.)
2. What is your name?
3. What is your email address?
4. What is your phone number?
5. What organization do you represent?
6. What is your role at your organization?
7. What type of organization do you represent? If you don't see the appropriate type in the dropdown, select "Other" and write the organization type in the next question.

501(c)(3)

public agency

school

healthcare facility

tribal entity

other

8. Does your organization provide services to disinvested populations?
9. What were your organization's total expenses in the last year?
10. Does your organization have an endowment? If yes, what is the size? If no, enter 0. (Nature Sacred's

partners are not required to have an endowment. This will not affect whether your project is considered.)

11. Does your organization have a website? If yes, please include the link here.

**Tell us about your proposed site and why you want to create a Sacred Place!**

12. What is the address of your proposed site?

13. To what extent would this site be publicly accessible?

Yes, the site is open and accessible to all!

Yes, the site is gated but has a check-in.

Yes, the site is gated but has consistent open hours.

Yes, the site is gated but has a public component.

No, this site will not be publicly accessible.

14. Who in your community do you think would be the Firesoul(s) for this site? Tell us about them and their passion for your community. For reference on what a Firesoul does, see our [Firesoul directory](#).

15. Have you engaged others (individuals and organizations) in this process to date? If so, who? If not, who would you like to engage?

16. While Nature Sacred could provide our design services at no cost for designated Community Healing projects, we typically do not provide construction funding for the site to be realized.\* Do you have any construction funding already earmarked for this project?

17. What is your pathway to raising construction funding?

18. What is your capacity for maintenance of the site?

We have an existing maintenance crew and/or budget that will take care of this space.

We have a green team or similar volunteer groups that will take care of the space.

We have a maintenance budget that we will allocate to this.

We will develop a maintenance infrastructure to take care of this space.

We have no maintenance capacity for this space.

19. What inspired you to fill out this form? Please answer the following questions in your response: 1) How would a Sacred Place bring healing to your community? 2) To what extent is your community currently able to access high-quality greenspace?

20. Describe your site and design needs. Please answer the following questions in your response: 1) Would the Sacred Place occupy an existing garden or be a new space? Would it occupy the entirety of the proposed site or part of it? 2) Are there specific design elements (water feature, stage, community garden beds, basketball court, etc.) or other parameters that you have already determined you would like the space to include? 3) What do you like about the site right now? What don't you like?

\* This form is a standard form we use for all new projects. This Call for Projects does include construction funding.

21. To what extent do you have control or ownership over the land of your proposed site?

We own the site.

We have an easement on the site.

We do not own the site.

Other.

We have a long-term (10-year minimum) lease on the site.

We have an Adopt-A-Lot or similar agreement on the site.

22. What is the area of your site? Please enter along with the appropriate unit (square feet, acres, etc.)

23. Does the site have any of the following utilities? Select all that apply.

Water access

Electrical connection

Existing lighting

24. Does your site experience any of the following? Select all that apply.

Existing large (canopy) trees

No large (canopy) trees

Overhead utility lines

Septic system or drainage field

Existing hardscape (concrete, stone, etc.) that is in disrepair or may need removing

Significant slope to the ground

Issues with drainage or stormwater runoff

25. Has any design work for this site already occurred? If yes, please list the name of the designer and their firm (if applicable). You must also upload a copy of the latest design plan in the next question.

26. Please share photos, videos, or existing design plans of the site.

27. How did you hear about Nature Sacred?

Through a landscape architect

Came across the website

Existing relationship or project with Nature Sacred

Through a friend or professional connection

Through the book "Open Spaces, Sacred Places"

Other

## During the selection process

Throughout the evaluation process, Nature Sacred may request additional information about the proposed site, including but not limited to virtual meetings, site visits, and 1-2 minute walkthrough videos of the site.

## Selected projects

In order to move forward with a project, MOUs must be signed within 30 days of receipt. Once signed, we will reach out to establish a general design timeframe for your project. Please note that all selected projects will initiate their Nature Sacred design process only in fall of 2024 or later.

The Nature Sacred design process uses a series of 4 engagement sessions that typically takes between 4-7 months to complete. We work with our partners to set a timeline that works for you and your community.

5 sites selected in this Call for Projects will receive \$10,000 in grant funding to be used for construction. This grant funding is awarded only after the design and engagement process is concluded, and after Nature Sacred approves the final design

### Timeline:

- **2/14/2024-5/1/2024:** Nature Sacred evaluation process.
- **5/1/2024:** Nature Sacred will notify projects that have been selected. If you are selected, you will receive an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), which formalizes our partnership.

### Timeline:

- **5/31/2024:** MOUs must be completed and returned to Nature Sacred.
- **Fall of 2024 and beyond:** Project initiation
- **4-7 months after project initiation (varies):** Completion of design and engagement process; awarding of construction funding upon Nature Sacred approval of design.
- **6+ months after design completion (varies):** Completion of site implementation and integration of site into Nature Sacred Firesoul Network.

If you have questions about this form,  
please contact Neha Srinivasan at  
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Last updated December 2023

