verdeaux

OUR WEDDING PLANNING BINDER

Alex & Sam

Saturday, June 12, 2027

LAKESIDE PAVILION, CHICAGO · 120 GUESTS

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1 · OUR PLAN AT A GLANCE

June 12, 2027, on the lake

A lawn ceremony at Lakeside Pavilion in Chicago, cocktails on the terrace, then dinner and dancing in the pavilion. Sage, ivory and soft gold; semi-formal garden.

GUESTS	BUDGET	VENDORS BOOKED	DAYS TO GO
120	$55,000	17	21
15 tables	set March 2026	all signed	from May 22, 2027

The day

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
10:30 am	Hair and makeup begins	The Wrenfield, getting-ready suite
3:00 pm	First shuttles leave the hotel	The Wrenfield
4:30 pm	Ceremony	The lakeside lawn
5:00 pm	Cocktail hour	Lakeside terrace
5:30 pm	Dinner and dancing	The pavilion
11:00 pm	Send-off; last shuttles back	The pavilion

Our team

FOR	WHO	CONTACT	ON THE DAY
Venue	Lakeside Pavilion	Renee	11:00 am
Day-of coordinator	Evergreen Events	Dana	10:00 am
Caterer	Harvest Table Catering	Omar	1:00 pm
Photographer	Willow Lane Photography	Jenna	1:00 pm
Video	Reel Moments Films	Luca	2:00 pm
Flowers	Wild Fern Florals	Ivy	1:00 pm
DJ & music	Northside Sound	Andre	3:00 pm
Hair & makeup	Glow Beauty Studio	Simone	10:30 am
Cake	Sugar & Sage Bakery	Noor	3:30 pm
Officiant	Celebrations by Jordan	Jordan	3:45 pm
Shuttles	Lakeshore Coach	Marco	2:45 pm
Hotel	The Wrenfield Hotel	Grace	Fri check-in
Stationery	Paper Lantern Press	Hana	delivered
Favors	Sweet Something Favors	Mia	picked up

2 · BUDGET & PAYMENTS

Where the money goes

We set $55,000 in March 2026. Everything is booked now, and most balances are due May 29, two weeks before the day.

OUR BUDGET	ESTIMATED TOTAL	BOOKED	PAID SO FAR
$55,000	$54,450	$52,510	$34,785
set March 2026	$550 under budget	15 of 15 categories	$17,725 still to pay

CATEGORY	BOOKED WITH	ESTIMATE	CONTRACT	PAID	STILL TO PAY
Venue	Lakeside Pavilion	$12,000	$12,000	$12,000	$0
Catering & bar	Harvest Table Catering	$16,500	$16,250	$10,000	$6,250
Day-of coordinator	Evergreen Events	$1,650	$1,650	$500	$1,150
Photography	Willow Lane Photography	$4,500	$4,200	$2,100	$2,100
Videography	Reel Moments Films	$3,000	$2,900	$1,450	$1,450
Flowers & decor	Wild Fern Florals	$3,500	$3,250	$1,000	$2,250
Music	Northside Sound	$2,000	$1,900	$500	$1,400
Attire & beauty	Ivory & Lace Bridal Tailor & Thread Glow Beauty Studio	$3,600	$3,200	$2,325	$875
Cake	Sugar & Sage Bakery	$900	$900	$300	$600
Stationery	Paper Lantern Press	$1,200	$1,100	$1,100	$0
Shuttles	Lakeshore Coach	$1,600	$1,500	$500	$1,000
Officiant & license	Celebrations by Jordan Cook County Clerk	$550	$510	$210	$300
Wedding bands	Lumen Jewelers	$2,500	$2,380	$2,380	$0
Favors	Sweet Something Favors	$600	$420	$420	$0
Getting-ready suite	The Wrenfield Hotel	$350	$350	$0	$350
Total		**$54,450**	**$52,510**	**$34,785**	**$17,725**

Every payment

DUE	TO	FOR	AMOUNT	PAID
Apr 10, 2026	Lakeside Pavilion	Retainer	$3,000	✓ Apr 10
May 8, 2026	Harvest Table Catering	Deposit	$4,000	✓ May 8
Sep 14, 2026	Willow Lane Photography	Deposit (25%)	$1,050	✓ Sep 14
Sep 20, 2026	Evergreen Events	Retainer	$500	✓ Sep 20

EVERY PAYMENT · CONTINUED

DUE	TO	FOR	AMOUNT	PAID
Oct 3, 2026	Reel Moments Films	Deposit (50%)	$1,450	✓ Oct 3
Oct 17, 2026	Ivory & Lace Bridal	Deposit (50%)	$725	✓ Oct 17
Nov 7, 2026	Northside Sound	Deposit	$500	✓ Nov 7
Nov 14, 2026	Paper Lantern Press	Deposit	$550	✓ Nov 14
Jan 16, 2027	Wild Fern Florals	Retainer	$1,000	✓ Jan 16
Jan 23, 2027	Sugar & Sage Bakery	Deposit	$300	✓ Jan 23
Feb 6, 2027	Celebrations by Jordan	Retainer	$150	✓ Feb 6
Feb 13, 2027	Lumen Jewelers	Deposit (50%)	$1,190	✓ Feb 13
Feb 20, 2027	Glow Beauty Studio	Deposit (50%)	$550	✓ Feb 20
Mar 1, 2027	Willow Lane Photography	Second payment (25%)	$1,050	✓ Feb 26
Mar 6, 2027	Tailor & Thread	Deposit (50%)	$325	✓ Mar 6
Mar 13, 2027	Lakeshore Coach	Deposit	$500	✓ Mar 13
Mar 14, 2027	Lakeside Pavilion	Balance	$9,000	✓ Mar 10
Mar 14, 2027	Harvest Table Catering	Second payment	$6,000	✓ Mar 12
Mar 15, 2027	Ivory & Lace Bridal	Balance when the dress arrived	$725	✓ Mar 18
Mar 20, 2027	Paper Lantern Press	Balance at final proof	$550	✓ Mar 19
Apr 3, 2027	Sweet Something Favors	Deposit	$210	✓ Apr 3
Apr 17, 2027	Lumen Jewelers	Balance at pickup	$1,190	✓ Apr 17
May 14, 2027	Cook County Clerk	Marriage license	$60	✓ May 14
May 15, 2027	Sweet Something Favors	Balance at pickup	$210	✓ May 14
May 29, 2027	Harvest Table Catering	Balance	$6,250	☐
May 29, 2027	Willow Lane Photography	Balance	$2,100	☐
May 29, 2027	Evergreen Events	Balance	$1,150	☐
May 29, 2027	Reel Moments Films	Balance	$1,450	☐
May 29, 2027	Northside Sound	Balance	$1,400	☐
May 29, 2027	Wild Fern Florals	Balance	$2,250	☐
May 29, 2027	Sugar & Sage Bakery	Balance	$600	☐
May 29, 2027	Celebrations by Jordan	Balance	$300	☐
May 29, 2027	Glow Beauty Studio	Balance	$550	☐
May 29, 2027	Lakeshore Coach	Balance	$1,000	☐
Jun 1, 2027	Tailor & Thread	Balance at final fitting	$325	☐
Jun 12, 2027	The Wrenfield Hotel	Getting-ready suite, at check-in	$350	☐

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Who we talked to, and who we chose

For each vendor we looked at, with the questions from our Verdeaux guides: every answer side by side, then what we thought and who we chose. Each vendor's pages are numbered on their own, so they can be printed when they are booked.

VENDOR	WE CHOSE	PAGES
Day-of coordinator	Evergreen Events	2
Venue	Lakeside Pavilion	3
Photographer	Willow Lane Photography	3
Caterer	Harvest Table Catering	3
Attire: the dress	Ivory & Lace Bridal	2
Wedding bands	Lumen Jewelers	2
DJ & music	Northside Sound	2
Flowers & decor	Wild Fern Florals	2
Hotel room block	The Wrenfield Hotel	2
Officiant	Celebrations by Jordan	2
Hair & makeup	Glow Beauty Studio	2
Shuttles	Lakeshore Coach	3
Favors	Sweet Something Favors	2
Attire: the suit	Tailor & Thread	2
Stationery	Paper Lantern Press	2

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Day-of coordinator

We interviewed 3 vendors between Sep 12 and September 17, 2026, with the questions from our Planner guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	EVERGREEN EVENTS Sep 12 · Dana OUR CHOICE	LAKE & LOOP PLANNING Sep 15 · Reese	GOLDEN HOUR COORDINATION Sep 17 · Kit
PLANNER INFORMATION			
Services offered (full, partial, day-of)?	Day-of coordination; partial and full planning also offered	Partial planning from 6 months out; full planning too	Day-of coordination only
Is our date available? ●	Yes, June 12 is open	Yes, June 12 is open	Yes, June 12 is open
PRICING & HIDDEN COSTS			
Pricing structure (flat fee, % of budget, hourly)? ●	Flat fee, $1,650 day-of package	Flat $4,200 partial; full planning 12% of budget	Flat $1,200 for six hours on the day
What's included in each package? ●	Starts 8 weeks out: two meetings, timeline, vendor confirmations, rehearsal, 10 hours day-of, one assistant.	Vendor sourcing, budget tracking, design board, six meetings, rehearsal, 12 hours day-of, two assistants.	One video meeting, timeline template, six hours on site; no assistant.
How many planning meetings included? ●	Two meetings plus a final venue walkthrough	Six meetings plus a venue walkthrough	One meeting, by video
Charge for communication between meetings? ●	No, unlimited email from 8 weeks out	No, unlimited email and calls	Email free; calls $50 per half hour
Payment schedule and cancellation policy? ●	$500 retainer at signing, $1,150 two weeks before; retainer nonrefundable.	50% at signing, 50% 30 days before; nonrefundable once signed.	Paid in full at signing; nonrefundable.
Travel fees if venue outside certain radius? ●	None within 50 miles; Lakeside qualifies	None in Chicago; $0.70/mile past 40 miles	None for Lakeside; $75 beyond 25 miles
Rehearsal attendance charged extra? ●	No, rehearsal included	No, rehearsal included	Yes, $200 to attend rehearsal
Fees for vendor research / recommendations?	No, recommendations are free	Included in partial package	Not offered
Overtime fees if wedding runs long? ●	$100 per hour past 10 hours	$150 per hour past 12 hours	$125 per hour past six hours
Fees for additional assistants day-of? ●	One assistant included; second assistant $250	Two included; third assistant $300	$200 per assistant
Gratuity or service charge added? ●	No; tipping optional	No; tips optional	No; 10% tip suggested
What services cost extra beyond package? ●	Decor setup past 2 hours $75/hour; extra meetings $100 each.	Guest RSVP management, welcome bags and after-party coordination billed separately.	Rehearsal, assistant, overtime and vendor confirmations all cost extra.

DAY-OF COORDINATOR · CONTINUED

QUESTION	EVERGREEN EVENTS Sep 12 · Dana OUR CHOICE	LAKE & LOOP PLANNING Sep 15 · Reese	GOLDEN HOUR COORDINATION Sep 17 · Kit
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$1,650 flat, day-of package**	$4,200 partial planning package	$1,200 flat, six hours
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Evergreen Events

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Dana asked sharp questions about our rain plan and already knew the Lakeside Pavilion staff.

PROS

Rehearsal, 10 on-site hours and an assistant are all in one flat fee.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

They only start 8 weeks out, so earlier vendor booking is on us.

Lake & Loop Planning

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Reese was organized and full of design ideas for our sage and gold palette.

PROS

Six months of hands-on help with vendor sourcing and budget tracking.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

At $4,200 it costs over twice the day-of options for help we mostly no longer need.

Golden Hour Coordination

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Kit was friendly and quick, but the call felt rushed and generic.

PROS

Lowest base price of the three.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Six hours will not cover 4:30 to 11 pm, so overtime and rehearsal push it past $1,650.

Who we chose, and why

Evergreen Events · $1,650 flat, day-of package

We chose Evergreen Events because Dana's $1,650 day-of package covers the rehearsal, 10 hours on site and an assistant with no add-ons. We signed on September 20, 2026.

Follow-up

- [x] Send venue contract and floor plan to Dana
- [x] Book first planning meeting for mid-April 2027
- [x] Share full vendor contact list by April 17
- [ ] Pay $1,150 balance by May 29, 2027
- [ ] Confirm June 11 rehearsal time with venue and officiant

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Venue

We interviewed 3 vendors between Mar 21 and April 2, 2026, with the questions from our Venue guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	LAKESIDE PAVILION Mar 21 · Renee OUR CHOICE	THE FOUNDRY LOFT Mar 28 · Theo	PRAIRIE GARDEN HOUSE Apr 2 · Lena
VENUE INFORMATION			
Is our date available? ●	Yes, June 12, 2027 held for us	Yes, June 12 is open	Yes, last open Saturday in June
Venue rental fee? ●	$12,000 Saturday flat rate, lawn plus pavilion	$9,500 Saturday rental	$14,800 site fee, garden plus carriage house
Guest capacity? ●	150 seated in pavilion; 200 on the lawn	140 seated; tight at 120 with a dance floor	180 seated in garden tent; 100 indoors
What's included (tables, chairs, linens)? ●	Tables, chairs, lawn ceremony chairs, dance floor, basic sound system; linens not included.	Farm tables and cross-back chairs only; no linens, no decor, bare brick walls.	Tables, chairs, linens, china, glassware, garden ceremony setup and tent all included.
How many hours included? ●	12 hours, 11 am to 11 pm	8 hours, 2 pm to 10 pm	10 hours, 2 pm to midnight
Preferred or exclusive vendor requirements? ●	Caterer from approved list of six; all other vendors our choice; licensed bartenders only.	In-house bar required at $38 per guest; caterer is our choice.	In-house catering required, from $135 per guest; florists from preferred list.
Local curfew rules that limit party hours/noise? ●	Outdoor amplified sound off by 10 pm; indoors until 11	Residential block; music off by 10 pm curfew	Garden music off by 10 pm; indoors until midnight
Changing / ready rooms for wedding party?	Yes, two ready rooms, included	No, only a small office upstairs	Yes, bridal suite and lounge, both included
Onsite staff required (sound / day-of coord)? ●	Venue manager on site, included; we bring a day-of coordinator	Yes, venue manager $400 and sound tech $300 required	Venue coordinator and day-of captain included
Setup and breakdown time included? ●	Yes, setup from 11 am; vendor load-out until midnight	Only within the 8 hours; no early access	Yes, venue staff set and clear all rentals
TENT RENTAL (IF OUTDOOR)			
Cost for tent rental (size, style)? ●	Not needed — pavilion is the rain plan	Not offered — no outdoor space	Sailcloth tent for 150 included in site fee
What's included (setup, takedown, flooring, sidewalls)? ●	Not needed — no tent	Not applicable — no outdoor space	Setup, takedown, wood flooring, sidewalls and café lights all included.
Delivery and pickup fees? ●	Not needed — same site	Not applicable — no outdoor space	None — tent stays up all season
Costs for tables, chairs, linens, place settings? ●	Tables and chairs included in $12,000; linens rented separately	Tables and chairs included; linens about $900 extra	Included; gold chargers $4 each extra
Backup equipment charges?	Not needed — no tent	Not applicable	Heaters or fans $350 if needed

VENUE · CONTINUED

QUESTION	LAKESIDE PAVILION Mar 21 · Renee OUR CHOICE	THE FOUNDRY LOFT Mar 28 · Theo	PRAIRIE GARDEN HOUSE Apr 2 · Lena
Damage / loss policies and fees?	Not needed — no tent	Damage taken from $1,500 deposit	Billed at cost from $2,500 deposit
HIDDEN COSTS			
Service charge or venue fee percentage?	None — rental only; caterer sets their own	20% service charge on in-house bar	22% service charge on catering
Gratuity included in service charge, or added separately?	Not applicable; tipping venue staff is optional	Separate; 18% bartender tip suggested	Included in the service charge
Tax-on-top: is sales tax applied to the service charge itself?	No, no service charge; rental quoted tax-inclusive	Yes, 10.25% tax on bar and service charge	Yes, 10.25% tax on service charge too
Overtime charges if event runs late?	None — 11 pm is a hard stop	None — hard 10 pm curfew, no extensions	$1,200 per extra hour, one hour max
Security deposit amount? Refundable how?	No separate deposit; $3,000 retainer at signing, credited	$1,500, refunded within 30 days	$2,500, refunded within 21 days
Damage / breakage replacement reserve?	None held; any damage billed at replacement cost	Broken glassware billed per piece from deposit	$500 china reserve held from deposit
Parking, coat check, security staff fees?	Free 90-space lot; no coat check; one guard included	Street parking only; coat check $250; security $45/hour	Valet $1,100 for 120 guests; coat check included
Cake cutting, corkage, outside food/beverage fees?	No cake-cutting or corkage fees; approved caterer only	Cake cutting $2 per guest; no outside alcohol	No outside food; cake cutting $3 per guest
Charges for specific spaces (bridal suite, cocktail area)?	None — ready rooms and lakeside terrace included	Ground-floor lounge for cocktails, $750	Bridal suite included; cocktail terrace $1,000
Items rented separately (linens, furniture, lighting)?	Linens, uplighting and string lights rented separately; furniture included.	Linens, lighting, lounge furniture and ceremony arch all rented separately.	Nothing — linens, furniture and lighting all included.
Cleanup, breakdown, or trash-removal fees?	None; caterer hauls trash, venue does final clean	$500 cleaning fee plus $150 trash removal	None; covered by the service charge
Vendor-list lock-in: must we use their preferred vendors?	Yes, caterer only — six on the approved list	No, except the in-house bar	Yes, caterer and bar exclusive; florists preferred
Event insurance required? What coverage minimums?	Yes, $1M liability policy naming the venue	Yes, $1M liability plus liquor liability	Yes, $2M liability required
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$12,000 flat, lawn plus pavilion**	$9,500 plus required in-house bar	$14,800 plus in-house catering
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★☆☆	★★★★☆

What we thought

Lakeside Pavilion

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Renee walked us from the lawn to the pavilion in five minutes and had a clear rain plan.

PROS

Ceremony, cocktails and reception on one site with tables, chairs and an 11 pm end included.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

We must pick from six approved caterers and rent linens and lighting ourselves.

The Foundry Loft

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Theo was relaxed and the brick-and-beam room photographs well, but it felt cramped at 120.

PROS

Lowest rental fee and a striking industrial look.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

No outdoor ceremony, a 10 pm curfew and required bar, staff and cleaning fees erase the savings.

Prairie Garden House

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Lena gave us a polished tour and the garden tent was stunning in sage and ivory.

PROS

Everything from tent to china is included, with a coordinator and party until midnight.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Required in-house catering plus 22% service charge and valet push it well past our budget.

Who we chose, and why

Lakeside Pavilion · $12,000 flat, lawn plus pavilion

We chose Lakeside Pavilion because the lawn ceremony and indoor reception keep everything on one site until 11 pm. At $12,000 flat with tables and chairs, it fits our budget. We signed on April 10, 2026.

Follow-up

- [x] Pay $9,000 balance by March 14, 2027
- [x] Choose a caterer from the approved list of six
- [x] Buy $1M liability policy naming the venue
- [x] Book linens and string lights with a rental company
- [ ] Confirm rain-call deadline with Renee

A note to remember

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Photographer

We interviewed 3 vendors between Aug 28 and September 9, 2026, with the questions from our Photo & Video guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	WILLOW LANE PHOTOGRAPHY Aug 28 · Jenna OUR CHOICE	HARBOR & PINE STUDIO Sep 2 · Marcus	MAPLE STREET PHOTO Sep 9 · Priya
PHOTOGRAPHER BASICS			
Available on our date? ●	Yes	Yes	Yes, holding it 7 days
Packages offered and what's included? ●	Signature: 8 hrs, 2 shooters, online gallery, engagement session	Classic: 6 hrs, 1 shooter, gallery; album extra	Full Day: 10 hrs, 2 shooters, 10×10 album
Hours of coverage included? ●	8	6	10
Provide both photo and video? ●	No, photo only	No, photo only	No, photo only
How many photographers present? ●	2	1 (second $650)	2
Final deliverables (photos, video, album)? ●	600+ edited photos, print release	400+ edited photos	700+ photos and the album
Turnaround time for delivery? ●	8 weeks; sneak peek in 1 week	12 weeks	10 weeks
HIDDEN COSTS			
Travel fees beyond a certain radius? ●	None within 50 miles	$1/mile past 30 miles	None
Overtime charges per hour, billed in what increment? ●	$350/hr, half hours	$300/hr, full hours	$400/hr, full hours
Fee for engagement photo session?	Included in the Signature package	$350 for a 1-hour session	$450 add-on, 90 minutes
Cost for additional hours or second photographer? ●	$350/hr; second shooter already included	$300/hr extra; second shooter $650	$400/hr; second shooter already included
Prints, albums, physical products included or extra? ●	Extra; albums from $850, prints at cost	Albums from $700; prints extra	10×10 album included; parent albums $450 each
Rush editing or expedited delivery fees?	No rush option; sneak peek covers it	$400 for 6-week delivery	Not offered
Charges for drone / photo booth / special equipment? ●	No drone or photo booth	Drone photos $300; no photo booth	Photo booth $900; no drone
Raw/unedited files available? Cost? ●	Not offered	$750	Not offered

PHOTOGRAPHER · CONTINUED

QUESTION	WILLOW LANE PHOTOGRAPHY Aug 28 · Jenna OUR CHOICE	HARBOR & PINE STUDIO Sep 2 · Marcus	MAPLE STREET PHOTO Sep 9 · Priya
Image rights: yours, photographer's, or shared? ●	Personal use; they may share a few	Personal use only	Shared; they use them for ads
Online gallery hosting / download time limit?	Gallery hosted 1 year; unlimited downloads	Gallery 90 days, then $75/year	Gallery hosted 2 years; free downloads
Additional video edits / highlight reels charges?	Not offered — no video	Not offered — no video	Not offered — no video
Payment schedule and cancellation policy? ●	25% to book, 25% in March, rest 2 weeks before; deposit non-refundable	50% to book, 50% at the wedding	$1,500 to book, rest 30 days before
VIDEOGRAPHER (IF NEEDED)			
Video packages and what's included? ●	No video; recommends Reel Moments Films	No video; we're using Reel Moments Films	No video; we're using Reel Moments Films
Video hours of coverage? ●	Not offered — no video	Not offered — no video	Not offered — no video
Highlight reel length + turnaround? ●	Not offered — no video	Not offered — no video	Not offered — no video
Drone footage available?	No — no video	No footage; drone stills only, $300	No — no video
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$4,200**	$3,400 + $650 second shooter	$5,600
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Willow Lane Photography

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Warm and calm. Jenna asked more about us than about the schedule.

PROS

Two shooters all day; a sneak peek in a week; natural light, no heavy edits.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

No raw files. Deposit is non-refundable.

Harbor & Pine Studio

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Great portfolio, but felt rushed on the call.

PROS

Lowest base price; raw files available.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

One shooter unless we pay $650 more; 12-week wait; mileage past 30 miles.

Maple Street Photo

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Lovely albums. The most expensive by far.

PROS

10 hours and an album included.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

They keep the right to use our photos in their ads.

Who we chose, and why

Willow Lane Photography · $4,200

Two photographers for eight hours at $1,400 less than Maple Street, with photos that look like us. We signed on September 14, 2026.

Follow-up

- [x] Sign the contract and pay the deposit
- [x] Book the engagement session: Saturday, October 17, Lincoln Park
- [x] Send the shot list and family groupings by May 1, 2027
- [x] Second payment of $1,050 by March 1, 2027
- [ ] Give the day-of timeline to Jenna by May 29, 2027

A note to remember

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Caterer

We interviewed 3 vendors between Apr 24 and May 1, 2026, with the questions from our Caterers guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	HARVEST TABLE CATERING Apr 24 · Omar OUR CHOICE	COPPER POT KITCHEN Apr 27 · Bea	NORTHBROOK CATERING CO. May 1 · Ray
CATERER INFORMATION			
Available on our wedding date? ●	Yes, holding June 12 for two weeks	Yes, June 12 open as of today	Yes, but only two June Saturdays left
Pricing structure (per person, buffet vs plated)? ●	Plated, choice of two entrées; $16,250 all-in, about $135/guest	Plated only, about $124/guest; $14,900 for food, service and tax	All-inclusive $18,700, about $156/guest; plated or duet
Can you accommodate dietary restrictions and allergies? ●	Yes, vegan, gluten-free, nut-free; allergies flagged on escort cards	Yes, but the kitchen isn't nut-free	Yes, all major allergies; separate prep area
Do you provide a tasting? Is there a fee?	Yes, free tasting for two after signing; $45 per extra person	Yes, $150 tasting for four, credited if booked	Yes, free private tasting for four
What beverages are included (water, soft drinks, coffee)?	Water, iced tea, lemonade, coffee and hot tea included; soft drinks come with the bar package	Water and coffee only; iced tea +$2/guest; sodas come from the bar company	Water, sodas, iced tea, juice, coffee and an espresso bar all included
Do you provide bar services and bartenders? ●	Yes, 3 BASSET-certified bartenders; 5-hour beer and wine, 5–10 pm	No — separate licensed bar company, about $2,400 for us	Yes, 5-hour full bar with premium liquor, 3 bartenders
CAKE & DESSERT			
Price per slice or per tier? ●	Not offered — no in-house cakes; outside baker welcome	In-house buttercream cakes, $6.50 per slice	Included — three-tier cake from in-house pastry chef
Tasting fee?	Not applicable — no cake tasting	$40 cake tasting, credited if booked	None; cake tasting is part of the menu tasting
Delivery and setup fees? ●	Not applicable — outside baker handles delivery	$75 cake delivery and setup	Included in the all-inclusive price
Extra for complex designs, fresh flowers, specialty flavors?	Not applicable — cake comes from outside baker	Fresh flowers +$100; fondant +$1.50 per slice	Sugar flowers +$200; specialty flavors no charge
Cutting fee if purchased from outside baker? ●	None — they cut, plate and serve it free	$2.50 per slice for outside cakes	$3 per slice if we bring our own
HIDDEN COSTS			
Service charge or administrative fee? ●	22% service charge, built into the $16,250 total	20% service charge, included in the $14,900	24% service charge, included in the $18,700
Gratuity included or added separately? ●	Included — service charge covers staff gratuity	Not included; suggested $25 tip per server	Included in the service charge

CATERER · CONTINUED

QUESTION	HARVEST TABLE CATERING Apr 24 · Omar OUR CHOICE	COPPER POT KITCHEN Apr 27 · Bea	NORTHBROOK CATERING CO. May 1 · Ray
Tax applied to the service charge itself? ●	Yes, but tax is already in the $16,250 total	Yes, tax on food plus service charge	Yes, tax applies; already in the $18,700
Final-count cutoff date and over/under-guarantee policy? ●	Final count 14 days out; billed for guarantee, no refunds below	Final count 10 days out; no reductions after that	Final count 21 days out; $18,000 Saturday minimum applies regardless
Rental charges (plates, silverware, glassware, linens)? ●	Included — china, flatware, glassware, ivory linens; venue has tables	China and flatware included; no linens — rent separately, about $900	Included — china, glassware, chargers, linens in three colors
Servers, bartenders, chef fees charged separately? ●	Included — captain, 10 servers, 3 bartenders, chef on site	Servers and chef included; bartenders come from bar company	Included — captain, servers, bartenders, chef
Overtime charges for extended service?	$400 per extra hour for staff and bar	$45 per server per extra hour	$600 per extra hour
Delivery, setup, or cleanup fees? ●	Included; they clear and haul trash, venue does final clean	Setup included; trash removal $150 extra	Included, full cleanup and trash removal
Per-guest charge for children, vendors, photographers? ●	Six vendor meals included; kids under 10 are $40	Vendor meals $45 each; kids under 12 are $30	Vendor meals $55 each; kids under 12 are $45
Appetizer, late-night snack, additional course costs?	Passed apps $9/guest, late-night snack $7/guest; neither booked	Passed apps $11/guest; late-night snack $8/guest	Four passed apps included; late-night snack $10/guest
Corkage fees if we provide our own alcohol?	$15 per bottle; not needed with bar package	No corkage, but bar company and liquor liability required	Not allowed — full bar package required
Bar setup, mixers, garnishes charged separately?	Included — ice, soft drinks, garnishes in bar package	Not offered — bar company supplies everything	Included in the full bar package
Payment schedule + what happens if guest count changes? ●	$4,000 deposit at signing, $6,000 Mar 14, $6,250 May 29; about $135 per guest until final count	50% deposit at signing, balance 10 days out; about $124 per guest added or dropped	25% deposit, 50% at 60 days, balance 21 days out; can't drop below $18,000
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$16,250 all-in, 120 guests**	$14,900, food only	$18,700 all-inclusive, $18,000 minimum
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★☆☆	★★★★☆

What we thought

Harvest Table Catering

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Omar was organized and answered every hidden-cost question without hedging.

PROS

One all-in price covers dinner, the beer-and-wine bar, staff, service charge and tax.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Beer and wine only, so no cocktails unless we upgrade the bar later.

Copper Pot Kitchen

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Bea was warm and the menu sounded great, but a lot of pieces were left to us.

PROS

Lowest food price, and in-house cakes would save hiring a separate baker.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Bar, linens, tips and trash removal push the real total past $18,500.

Northbrook Catering Co.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Ray gave a polished pitch and everything was included, at a premium price.

PROS

Full bar, cake, passed apps and linens all come in one price.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

It costs $2,450 more than Harvest Table, and the $18,000 minimum leaves no room if our count drops.

Who we chose, and why

Harvest Table Catering · $16,250 all-in, 120 guests

We chose Harvest Table Catering because one $16,250 price covers dinner, the beer-and-wine bar, staff, service charge and tax. Omar was the clearest about costs, and we saved $2,450 compared with Northbrook. We signed on May 8, 2026.

Follow-up

- [x] Schedule the free tasting for two
- [x] Pick our two entrées after the tasting
- [x] Pay the $6,000 installment by March 14, 2027
- [ ] Send final guest count by May 29, 2027
- [ ] Share the outside baker's delivery time with Omar

A note to remember

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Attire: the dress

We interviewed 3 vendors between Oct 10 and October 12, 2026, with the questions from our Attire (Dresses) guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	IVORY & LACE BRIDAL Oct 10 · Celeste OUR CHOICE	THE WHITE DOOR BOUTIQUE Oct 11 · Margot	SECOND LOOK BRIDAL Oct 12 · Pia
SHOP INFORMATION			
Appointment required? Fee?	Yes, required; free 90-minute appointment	Yes; $50 fee, credited toward purchase	Walk-ins weekdays; free Saturday appointments
Typical price range for dresses? ●	$1,100–$3,200; most brides spend about $1,600	$1,800–$6,500; designer lines only	Samples $500–$1,400; up to 70% off retail
How far in advance to order? ●	Order 8–10 months before the wedding	10–12 months recommended	Off the rack — buy any time
Ordering and delivery timeline? ●	Ships in 16–20 weeks; ours due mid-March 2027	20–24 weeks; tight for June but doable	Take home same day, as-is condition
HIDDEN COSTS			
Alterations included in price? ●	No, quoted separately — about $350 for ours	No, but bustle included; other work $300–$500	No, they refer you to an outside tailor
Typical alteration cost range? ●	$250–$600; ours is hem, bustle, take-in: ~$350	$300–$700 at their in-house atelier	Outside tailors quote $300–$600; samples often need more
Pressing / steaming fee? ●	$85, separate; steamed the week of pickup	Included; pressed the day before pickup	Not offered; dry cleaner charges about $75
Fees for customizations? (sleeves, straps)	Added straps $120; sleeves from $250	Designer changes $200–$500 each	Not offered — samples sold as is
Dress preservation / cleaning after wedding?	Partner cleaner, about $275; not included	Preservation box offered, $350	Not offered
Rush order or expedited delivery fee?	$200 rush if ordered under 6 months out	$350 rush, only if designer allows	Not needed — dresses in stock
Cancellation and return policy? ●	No returns once ordered; deposit nonrefundable	All sales final; deposit nonrefundable	Final sale; no returns or exchanges
Additional accessory costs? (veil, belt, jewelry)	Veils $180–$450; belts from $95	Veils $250–$800; 10% off with gown	Few accessories; veils $60–$150
Deposit amount and final payment due date? ●	50% ($725) at order; $725 balance when gown arrives	60% ($1,380) at order; $920 at first fitting	Paid in full at purchase: $900
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$1,450 dress; alterations separate**	$2,300 designer gown	$900 sample, final sale
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Ivory & Lace Bridal

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Calm, unhurried appointment, and Celeste listened to what Alex actually wanted.

PROS

Gown in budget, realistic March delivery, and alterations done in-house.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Steaming, preservation and accessories are all extra, and nothing is returnable.

The White Door Boutique

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Beautiful boutique with a champagne-and-mirrors feel, but it felt a little rushed.

PROS

Stunning designer gowns, free pressing and an in-house atelier.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

$850 over our dress budget, and the 24-week lead time cuts it close.

Second Look Bridal

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Fun, no-pressure sample sale, but the racks were picked over in Alex's size.

PROS

Cheapest option by far, and no waiting on delivery.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Final sale, visible wear on samples, and alterations go to an outside tailor.

Who we chose, and why

Ivory & Lace Bridal · $1,450 dress; alterations separate

We chose Ivory & Lace Bridal because Celeste found Alex a lace gown for $1,450 with a safe ship date and clear alteration pricing. It looked like our garden wedding. We signed on October 17, 2026.

Follow-up

- [x] Pay $725 balance when gown arrives (mid-March)
- [x] Book first alteration fitting for April 2027
- [x] Bring wedding shoes to the first fitting
- [ ] Confirm $85 steaming the week of pickup
- [ ] Pick up gown by June 5, 2027

A note to remember

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Wedding bands

We interviewed 3 vendors between Feb 6 and February 8, 2027, with the questions from our Jewelry & Bands guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	LUMEN JEWELERS Feb 6 · Felix OUR CHOICE	GOLDSMITH ROW STUDIO Feb 7 · Ines	BANDWIDTH RINGS ONLINE Feb 8 · Support
SHOP INFORMATION			
Appointment required? Fee?	Recommended; free, walk-ins welcome weekdays	Yes; $75 design consult, credited to order	No — online only; free sizing kit mailed
Typical price range for bands? ●	$700–$2,500 per band; recycled gold only	$1,200–$2,200 per band, handmade	$500–$1,200 per band
Lead time for sizing, engraving, custom work? ●	4–6 weeks; engraving adds 1 week	8–10 weeks for handmade bands	3 weeks; engraved rings ship 5 days later
HIDDEN COSTS			
Resizing included, or charged separately? ●	Yes, free resizing for the first year	Yes, free resizing for life	No, $75 per ring plus shipping
Engraving cost?	Included — up to 20 characters per band	Hand engraving $60 per band	$35 per band, laser engraving
Appraisal fee (needed to insure the rings)? ●	Free written appraisal with purchase	Included, with photos and certificate	Not offered; local appraiser about $100
Warranty or lifetime care plan included?	Lifetime cleaning and polishing included	Lifetime warranty on craftsmanship	1-year warranty; care plan $89 extra
Deposit amount and final payment due date? ●	50% ($1,190) to order; balance at pickup	$1,550 deposit; balance at final approval	Paid in full at checkout
Return / exchange policy (especially custom)? ●	Engraved bands final; unengraved stock bands 30 days	No returns on custom; one free remake	30-day returns; engraved rings final sale
Rush fee for expedited orders?	$150 for 2-week turnaround	Not offered — handmade can't be rushed	$50 expedited shipping
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$2,380 for two bands**	$3,100 handmade pair	$1,650, online sizing kit
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Lumen Jewelers

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Felix was patient and explained exactly where the recycled gold comes from.

PROS

Ethical metal, with engraving, appraisal and lifetime care all included.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Engraved rings can't be returned, so we need our sizes right first.

Goldsmith Row Studio

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Lovely working studio; Ines sketched ideas for us right at the bench.

PROS

One-of-a-kind rings, lifetime resizing and a craftsmanship warranty.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

$720 more than Lumen, and no rush option if anything slips.

Bandwidth Rings Online

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Quick chat with support; helpful, but we never saw or held the rings.

PROS

Lowest price and a fast turnaround with free sizing kits.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Resizing, appraisal and care plan all cost extra, and no in-person help.

Who we chose, and why

Lumen Jewelers · $2,380 for two bands

We chose Lumen Jewelers because Felix showed us matching recycled-gold bands for $2,380, with engraving, resizing and lifetime care included. We signed on February 13, 2027.

Follow-up

- [x] Confirm both ring sizes by late February
- [x] Send engraving text for both bands
- [x] Pay $1,190 balance at pickup
- [x] Pick up rings by mid-April
- [x] Add rings to renters insurance with appraisal

A note to remember

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

DJ & music

We interviewed 3 vendors between Oct 30 and November 3, 2026, with the questions from our Entertainment guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	NORTHSIDE SOUND Oct 30 · Andre OUR CHOICE	VELVET GROOVE BAND Nov 2 · Nina	SPIN CITY DJS Nov 3 · Taj
PERFORMANCE DETAILS			
Available on our date? ●	Yes	Yes, holding it 2 weeks	Yes; DJ assigned a month before
Pricing structure, what's included? ●	Base $1,450: DJ/MC, reception sound, dance lights; ceremony sound $200; 12 uplights $250	6-piece band, four 45-min sets, PA, playlist between sets	Reception package: 5 hrs, speakers, dance lights, basic MC
Hours of performance included? ●	Up to 7 hrs, 4–11 pm	4 hrs of sets, 7–11 pm	5 hrs; extra time $250/hr
Sound equipment and lighting provided? ●	Two sound systems, wireless mics, dance lights, 12 uplights	Band PA included; lighting extra	One speaker set, dance lights; no uplighting
Serve as MC and make announcements? ●	Yes, MC and all announcements	Yes, the bandleader handles announcements	Yes, basic announcements only
HIDDEN COSTS			
Travel fees? ●	None within Chicago	$200 load-in and parking fee	$75 downtown parking fee
Overtime charges? ●	$200/hr, billed in half hours	$1,100/hr, billed in half hours	$250/hr, full hours only
Charge for ceremony music or cocktail hour? ●	Ceremony sound $200; cocktail hour included	Ceremony string trio $950; cocktail duo $650	No ceremony sound; cocktail hour $150/hr
Fee for learning special songs / custom arrangements?	Requests free; custom song edits $40 each	$300 per new song arrangement	Requests free; no custom edits
Additional musicians or vocalists charges?	Not offered — DJ only	Horn section adds $1,200	Not offered
Equipment setup and breakdown time fees? ●	No fee; arrives 2 pm to set up both spaces	Included; needs 2 hrs load-in	Free up to 1 hr; $75 after
Special equipment fees (wireless mics, uplighting, monogram)? ●	12 uplights $250; mics included; monogram $175, we passed	Uplighting $450 through a partner; mics included	Wireless mic $75; no uplighting or monogram
Meal required for band/DJ? Who covers? ●	One vendor meal; we cover it	7 meals (band and tech); we cover them	One meal; we cover it
Payment schedule and cancellation policy? ●	$500 non-refundable deposit to book; $1,400 balance 2 weeks before	50% to book, rest 2 weeks before; deposit non-refundable	$400 non-refundable deposit; balance due at the event

DJ & MUSIC · CONTINUED

QUESTION	NORTHSIDE SOUND Oct 30 · Andre OUR CHOICE	VELVET GROOVE BAND Nov 2 · Nina	SPIN CITY DJS Nov 3 · Taj
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$1,900**	$6,800, live 6-piece band	$1,400, no ceremony sound
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Northside Sound

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Relaxed and organized; Andre already had ideas for the lawn ceremony.

PROS

One vendor for ceremony, cocktails and reception, with MC and sage uplighting.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Overtime is $200/hr, and monogram projection costs extra.

Velvet Groove Band

OVERALL IMPRESSION

An amazing live show; the dance floor would be packed all night.

PROS

Real live music, a bandleader who MCs, and a horn option.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

$6,800 before ceremony music, uplighting and seven meals; well over our budget.

Spin City DJs

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Friendly and cheap, but it felt like a package off a shelf.

PROS

Lowest price, and requests are free.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

No ceremony sound, 5 hours won't cover our night, and we'd meet our DJ late.

Who we chose, and why

Northside Sound · $1,900

We chose Northside Sound: Andre MCs and covers ceremony sound and uplighting for $1,900, $4,900 less than the band. We signed on November 7, 2026.

Follow-up

- [x] Sign the contract and pay the $500 deposit
- [x] Fill in the music planning form by March 1, 2027
- [x] Pick processional, recessional and first-dance songs
- [x] Send must-play and do-not-play lists by May 1, 2027
- [ ] Pay the $1,400 balance by May 29, 2027

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Flowers & decor

We interviewed 3 vendors between Jan 9 and January 12, 2027, with the questions from our Flowers & Decor guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	WILD FERN FLORALS Jan 9 · Ivy OUR CHOICE	BLOOM & BRANCH STUDIO Jan 11 · Rowan	MARKET STEMS Jan 12 · Ash
SERVICE OVERVIEW			
Available on our date? ●	Yes, June 12 open; two weddings max that day	Yes, June 12 available	Yes, pickup slots open Friday, June 11
Services provided (floral design, rentals, full decor)? ●	Personal flowers, ceremony arch, centerpieces; vase and arch-frame rentals; no linens or lighting	Full decor: florals, arch, aisle pieces, candles, plus linen and lighting rentals	Floral design only; arch garland but no frame, no rentals, delivery or setup
Pricing model (itemized vs packages)? ●	Itemized per piece; our proposal totals $3,250	Packages; ours is the $4,100 Garden package	Itemized, cash-and-carry pricing
Typical cost range for bridal bouquets and arrangements? ●	Bridal $250, attendants $85, boutonnieres $20, centerpieces $110	Bridal $325–400; centerpieces $140–175	Bridal $180–225; centerpieces $70–90
HIDDEN COSTS			
Consultation or design fee? ●	None; consult and one revised proposal free	$150 design fee, credited toward the package	No fee; consult by phone only
Delivery, setup, breakdown charges? ●	$200 flat for delivery, setup and 11 pm breakdown	Included in package, breakdown too	Not offered — pickup at shop Friday afternoon
Additional fees for multiple venue locations? ●	None — lawn and pavilion are the same site	None — same site	Not applicable — pickup only
Charges for seasonal or rare flowers?	Peonies at market rate; garden roses swapped in if pricey	Garden roses and peonies included, no surcharge	Peonies +$6 per stem in June
Rental fees for vases, arches, decor items? ●	Arch $650 includes frame rental; vases included with centerpieces	Candles, votives, arch and vases included in package	Not offered; we'd supply our own vases and arch
What happens if rented items damaged? ●	Replacement cost for missing or broken vases, about $12 each	$250 refundable damage deposit	Not applicable — no rentals
Service charge or coordination fee? ●	No coordination fee	No separate fee; on-site lead included	None
Charge to maintain/refresh flowers during event?	Not offered; not needed for one evening	Yes, designer stays through cocktail hour, included	Not offered
Overtime for extended setup?	$75/hour if setup runs past 3 hours	None — package includes a 4-hour setup window	Not applicable — no setup
Payment schedule and cancellation policy? ●	$1,000 nonrefundable retainer at signing; $2,250 due May 29; cancel 30+ days out, owe nothing more	50% at signing, 50% 30 days out; cancel within 90 days, deposit forfeited	Paid in full 30 days before; no refunds after payment

FLOWERS & DECOR · CONTINUED

QUESTION	WILD FERN FLORALS Jan 9 · Ivy OUR CHOICE	BLOOM & BRANCH STUDIO Jan 11 · Rowan	MARKET STEMS Jan 12 · Ash
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$3,250, delivery and setup included**	$4,100 Garden package, all-in	$2,600, pick-up only
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Wild Fern Florals

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Ivy got our garden style immediately and sketched the arch while we talked.

PROS

Clear itemized pricing, with delivery, setup and breakdown for a flat $200.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Peonies are priced at market rate, so the final flower mix may shift.

Bloom & Branch Studio

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Rowan's portfolio was the most stunning, and the package felt truly full-service.

PROS

Candles, aisle arrangements and peonies are all included with no surcharges.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

It costs $850 more than Wild Fern, plus a $250 damage deposit.

Market Stems

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Ash's flowers were lovely and affordable, but everything after pickup would be on us.

PROS

Cheapest by $650, with fresh, simple arrangements.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

We'd have to haul and set up 15 centerpieces and the arch ourselves.

Who we chose, and why

Wild Fern Florals · $3,250, delivery and setup included

We chose Wild Fern Florals because their $3,250 itemized proposal covers everything we asked for, including delivery and setup. Ivy understood our sage, ivory and soft-gold garden look right away. We signed on January 16, 2027.

Follow-up

- [x] Send Ivy our sage, ivory and soft-gold palette photos
- [x] Confirm 1 pm setup access with Lakeside Pavilion
- [x] Approve the final flower mix by May 1, 2027
- [ ] Pay the $2,250 balance by May 29, 2027

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Hotel room block

We interviewed 3 vendors between Oct 16 and October 19, 2026, with the questions from our Hotel Room Blocks guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	THE WRENFIELD HOTEL Oct 16 · Grace OUR CHOICE	CARROW SUITES CHICAGO Oct 18 · Paul	THE LINDEN ARMS HOTEL Oct 19 · Vera
BOOKING INFORMATION			
Group rates or room blocks for weddings? ●	Yes, courtesy blocks for weddings	Yes, contracted group blocks only	Yes, courtesy blocks up to 15 rooms
Discounted room rate? ●	$219/night, Fri June 11 and Sat June 12	$189/night, Fri and Sat	$259/night, about 15% off standard rate
Rooms reservable in the block? ●	20 rooms both nights; can add more if available	15 to 25 rooms per night	15 rooms Saturday, 10 Friday
Deadline for guests to book at group rate? ●	May 12, 2027; unbooked rooms then released	21 days before arrival, May 21, 2027	Four weeks out, May 14, 2027
Complimentary room for the couple?	No, but suite upgrade for us at block rate	Yes, one comp night if block fills	Yes, comp suite Saturday if 12+ rooms booked
Amenities (breakfast, parking, Wi-Fi, shuttle)? ●	Free Wi-Fi; breakfast $18 per person; valet only; no shuttle, we'd hire one; 2 miles to venue	Free hot breakfast and Wi-Fi; self-park $35/night; airport shuttle only; 30 min drive to venue	Free Wi-Fi; rooftop bar; breakfast $26; valet only; no shuttle; walkable to nightlife, 4 miles out
HIDDEN COSTS			
Minimum rooms we must guarantee? ●	None, courtesy block with no guarantee	15 rooms per night, signed contract	None, courtesy block
Attrition fees if we don't meet the minimum? ●	None; unbooked rooms just go back to hotel	Must fill 80%; we pay $189 per unsold room-night	None; unbooked rooms released four weeks out
Resort fees or destination fees? ●	No resort fee; about 17% city hotel tax added	No resort fee, but $12/night amenity fee per room	Yes, $28/night urban fee, includes drink credit
Parking fees? ●	Valet $62/night; public garage next door about $40	Self-park $35/night	Valet only, $74/night
Early check-in or late checkout charges?	Early check-in $50 if ready; late checkout free to 1 pm	Early check-in $40; late checkout $50 after noon	Guaranteed early check-in $75; late checkout $40/hour
Fee for hospitality suite?	Getting-ready suite $350 for Saturday daytime	Not offered; meeting room rental $500	Hospitality suite $650 for Saturday
Cancellation policy for the room block? ●	Block cancels free before May 12; guests cancel free until 72 hours out, then one night	$500 to cancel block 90+ days out, then full attrition owed; guests free until 48 hours	No block penalty; guests cancel free until 72 hours before, then one night charged

HOTEL ROOM BLOCK · CONTINUED

QUESTION	THE WRENFIELD HOTEL Oct 16 · Grace OUR CHOICE	CARROW SUITES CHICAGO Oct 18 · Paul	THE LINDEN ARMS HOTEL Oct 19 · Vera
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$219/night, 20-room courtesy block**	$189/night, 80% attrition clause	$259/night, 15-room courtesy block
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★☆☆	★★★★☆

What we thought

The Wrenfield Hotel

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Grace was organised and upfront, and the block terms were the simplest we heard.

PROS

No attrition or minimum, fair rate, and only 2 miles from the pavilion.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Valet parking is $62/night, breakfast isn't included, and there's no hotel shuttle.

Carrow Suites Chicago

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Paul was friendly, but the contract puts the risk of empty rooms on us.

PROS

Cheapest rate, with free breakfast included for guests.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

The 80% attrition clause could cost us hundreds, and it's a 30-minute drive.

The Linden Arms Hotel

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Vera gave a great tour, and the hotel felt like a fun weekend base.

PROS

Walkable to bars and restaurants, rooftop bar, and a comp suite for us.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

With the $28 urban fee and $74 valet, it's pricey, and only 10 rooms Friday.

Who we chose, and why

The Wrenfield Hotel · $219/night, 20-room courtesy block

We chose The Wrenfield Hotel: a 20-room courtesy block at $219/night with no attrition, so we never pay for empty rooms, and it's just 2 miles from the venue. We signed on October 24, 2026.

Follow-up

- [x] Sign block agreement and return to Grace
- [x] Put booking link and May 12 cut-off on our website
- [x] Check pickup count mid-April; ask to add rooms if full
- [x] Book the Saturday getting-ready suite
- [x] Ask Grace where a shuttle can load at the entrance

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Officiant

We interviewed 3 vendors between Jan 27 and February 1, 2027, with the questions from our Officiant guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	CELEBRATIONS BY JORDAN Jan 30 · Jordan OUR CHOICE	HEARTFELT CEREMONIES Jan 27 · Morgan	CHICAGO CIVIL CEREMONIES Feb 1 · Casey
BASIC INFORMATION			
Fee for ceremony? ●	$450 flat fee	$600 flat fee	$300 flat fee
What does your fee include (meetings, customization, rehearsal)? ●	Two meetings, custom non-denominational script, rehearsal attendance, license signing and filing.	Three meetings, fully custom ceremony, rehearsal, unity ritual and a keepsake copy of the script.	One phone call; fixed civil script with names swapped in; no rehearsal.
Travel fees? ●	None within Chicago	None in the city; $1/mile beyond 30 miles	None — Lakeside is inside city limits
Other fees (filing marriage license, etc.)? ●	None; license filing included	None; license filing included	License filing $25 extra
HIDDEN COSTS			
Security deposit? Refundable? ●	$150 nonrefundable retainer, credited to the fee	$200 nonrefundable deposit, credited to the fee	Paid in full at booking; refundable until 60 days out
Charge for rehearsal time? ●	No, rehearsal included	No, rehearsal included	Yes, $100 to attend rehearsal
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$450 flat, rehearsal included**	$600 flat, three meetings	$300 base, fixed script
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Celebrations by Jordan

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Jordan was warm, funny and already had ideas for including both families.

PROS

Fully custom ceremony with rehearsal and license filing at a mid-range price.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Only two meetings, so we need to send our story in writing.

Heartfelt Ceremonies

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Morgan was thoughtful and polished, with a lovely sample ceremony.

PROS

Most meetings of the three, plus a unity ritual and keepsake script.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

At $600 it costs more for extras we do not really need.

Chicago Civil Ceremonies

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Casey was efficient and professional but the ceremony felt one-size-fits-all.

PROS

Cheapest option and very straightforward.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Fixed script with no personal touches, and rehearsal and filing add $125.

Who we chose, and why

Celebrations by Jordan · $450 flat, rehearsal included

We chose Jordan because they write a custom non-denominational ceremony around our story and come to the rehearsal, all for $450. We signed on February 6, 2027.

Follow-up

- [x] Fill out Jordan's couple questionnaire by March 1
- [x] Book first meeting for March 2027
- [x] Pick up marriage license in May 2027
- [ ] Pay $300 balance by May 29, 2027
- [ ] Confirm June 11 rehearsal time with Dana

A note to remember

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Hair & makeup

We interviewed 3 vendors between Feb 13 and February 15, 2027, with the questions from our Hair & Beauty guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	GLOW BEAUTY STUDIO Feb 13 · Simone OUR CHOICE	POLISHED BRIDAL BEAUTY Feb 14 · Kim	STUDIO LUX SALON Feb 15 · Bree
SERVICE DETAILS			
Available on our date? ●	Yes, June 12 held once deposit paid	Yes, two artists still open	Yes, Saturday morning open
Offer both hair and makeup, or just one? ●	Both — Simone does makeup, a second artist does hair	Both, full team; airbrush makeup available	Both, but one makeup artist only
Pricing per person? ●	Alex hair + makeup $275; attendants $175 each	Alex $375; attendants $225 each	Alex $250; attendants $150 each
Require a trial session? Cost? ●	Required for Alex, $150; booking for April	Required, $175 for hair and makeup trial	Required, $150 at the salon
Will you come to our location, or come to you? ●	Comes to us — getting-ready suite at the pavilion	On-site only; they come to the pavilion	In-salon only — 25 minutes from the venue
How many people can you accommodate, in what timeframe? ●	Up to 6 with two artists; done by 2:30 pm	Up to 10 with three artists in 4 hours	4 people between 9 am and 1 pm
HIDDEN COSTS			
Travel fee for on-site services? ●	$150 on-site fee, in package; covers parking	$225 travel fee, flat within Chicago	Not offered — no on-site service
Charge more for early morning start? ●	Only before 7 am, $50 per artist; not needed	Before 8 am, $75 per artist	Salon opens 8 am; earlier not possible
Minimum number of people required? ●	4-person minimum for on-site service	$900 minimum for on-site bookings	No minimum
Charges for special styling (updos, extensions, false lashes)? ●	Lashes included; extensions $75 if wanted	Lashes included; extensions $100; airbrush $40 extra	Updos included; lashes $20; extensions not offered
Charge for touch-ups throughout the day?	Touch-up kit included; artist stays $75/hour	Artist stays through photos — included	Not offered — we'd leave before touch-ups
Gratuity expected? Included in pricing? ●	Not included; 15–20% suggested, optional	Included in pricing — no tip expected	Not included; 20% customary
Deposit required? Cancellation policy? ●	$550 deposit (50%) to book, nonrefundable; balance due 2 weeks before; one free date change.	$500 deposit, nonrefundable; balance due 30 days before; cancel within 90 days owes full fee.	$200 deposit, refundable up to 60 days before; balance paid day-of.
Fees for additional assistants if needed?	Third artist $125 if party grows	Extra assistant $150 if over 6 people	Not offered — salon staff only

HAIR & MAKEUP · CONTINUED

QUESTION	GLOW BEAUTY STUDIO Feb 13 · Simone OUR CHOICE	POLISHED BRIDAL BEAUTY Feb 14 · Kim	STUDIO LUX SALON Feb 15 · Bree
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$1,100 hair & makeup, four people**	$1,450, on-site, tip included	$850, in-salon only
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Glow Beauty Studio

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Simone was warm and organized, and their portfolio had the soft, natural looks we wanted.

PROS

On-site service, trial included, and the price covers all four of us.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Gratuity is on top, and staying for touch-ups costs extra.

Polished Bridal Beauty

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Very polished and professional; Kim walked us through a minute-by-minute timeline.

PROS

Touch-ups through photos and gratuity built in, so no surprises on the day.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

$350 over budget, and the cancellation terms are strict.

Studio Lux Salon

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Bright, busy salon with good stylists, but it felt like a regular Saturday appointment.

PROS

Cheapest option, flexible deposit and no minimum.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Everyone has to drive to the salon and back, with no touch-ups on-site.

Who we chose, and why

Glow Beauty Studio · $1,100 hair & makeup, four people

We chose Glow Beauty Studio because Simone's team comes to the pavilion and covers Alex, all three attendants and a trial for $1,100. We signed on February 20, 2027.

Follow-up

- [x] Book Alex's trial for April 2027
- [x] Send attendant names and look photos
- [ ] Confirm 10:30 am start in getting-ready suite
- [ ] Pay $550 balance by May 29
- [ ] Budget tip for both artists

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Shuttles

We interviewed 3 vendors between Mar 6 and March 8, 2027, with the questions from our Transportation guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	LAKESHORE COACH Mar 6 · Marco OUR CHOICE	CITY LIMO GROUP Mar 7 · Dani	PRAIRIE TROLLEY CO. Mar 8 · Hal
SERVICE INFORMATION			
Available on our date? ●	Yes, both shuttles held for June 12	Yes, limo and one party bus open	Yes, one trolley still open June 12
Vehicle types offered? ●	14-seat sprinters, 30-passenger shuttles, 56-seat coaches; we want two 30-passenger shuttles	Sedans, SUVs, 10-seat stretch limos, 40-passenger party buses; quoted one limo plus one bus	Vintage-style trolleys only, open windows, no air conditioning; just one free that day
Passenger capacity per vehicle? ●	30 seated per shuttle, 60 per loop	Limo 10, party bus 40	25 seated, no standing
Hourly rate or package pricing? ●	$125/hour per shuttle; $1,500 package with 20% gratuity	$2,250 package: limo 4 hours, bus 5 hours, 18% gratuity in	$270/hour; 5-hour package $1,350
Minimum rental time? ●	5 hours per shuttle; split service allowed	Saturdays: limo 4 hours, bus 5 hours	4 hours on June Saturdays
Transportation for both ceremony and reception? ●	Yes, same site, so hotel loops cover both	Yes; limo for us, bus loops guests	Yes, but 25 seats means 4+ loops each way
Where will our vehicles start the day from? (the yard or lot they leave from, not the office) ●	Their yard on the South Side, about 20 minutes away	Garage by the airport, 40+ minutes away	Barn in the west suburbs, about 45 minutes out
If a vehicle fails that morning, what is your backup? ●	Spare 30-seater kept on standby at the yard	Sub from a partner company; no spare bus of their own	No spare; would try to rent a coach, no guarantee
On a shuttle loop, how long does a full load take to board and get off? ●	About 4 minutes to board 30, 3 to unload	About 8 minutes; 40 people through one door	About 6 minutes; narrow rear steps slow boarding
HIDDEN COSTS			
Gratuity included or separate? ●	Included, 20% ($250) built into $1,500	Included, 18% built into package	Separate; 18% suggested, about $243
Fuel surcharges or mileage fees? ●	None within 25 miles of the yard	None in package; $3/mile beyond 30 miles	$95 garage-to-garage travel fee
Wait time between locations charged? ●	No; gap between 4:30 and 8 pm not billed	Yes, limo waits during ceremony, billed hourly	No, but hours billed continuously
Overtime charges? ●	$150/hour per shuttle, in 30-minute blocks	Bus $225/hour, limo $175/hour, full hours only	$295/hour, in 30-minute blocks

SHUTTLES · CONTINUED

QUESTION	LAKESHORE COACH Mar 6 · Marco OUR CHOICE	CITY LIMO GROUP Mar 7 · Dani	PRAIRIE TROLLEY CO. Mar 8 · Hal
Fees for decorating the vehicle?	No charge for a welcome sign in the window	Ribbons and sign $75	Free; garland and bows welcome, no tape
Tolls, parking, permits charged?	None; venue loading zone needs no permit	Tolls and parking billed at cost after	Venue parking passed through; none expected
Cleaning fee or damage deposit? ●	No deposit; $250 cleaning fee only for a major mess	$300 damage deposit; $250 cleaning fee for spills	$200 refundable damage deposit
Payment schedule and cancellation policy? ●	$500 nonrefundable deposit at signing; $1,000 balance due May 29; full refund of balance 30+ days out	50% deposit ($1,125) nonrefundable; balance 30 days before; no refunds inside 30 days	$400 nonrefundable deposit at booking; balance 7 days before; no refunds within 60 days
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$1,500 incl. gratuity, two shuttles**	$2,250, limo plus one bus	$1,350, one 25-seat trolley
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★☆☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Lakeshore Coach

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Marco knew the hotel-to-pavilion route and had a clear plan for split service.

PROS

Enough seats to move everyone at once, a standby spare, and gratuity built in.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Overtime is $150/hour per shuttle if the reception runs past 11.

City Limo Group

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Dani was polished, but the package is built around a party, not moving guests.

PROS

A limo for us and the wedding party is a fun extra.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

$750 more than Lakeshore, one bus means extra loops, and no backup bus.

Prairie Trolley Co.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Hal was charming and the trolley would look great in photos.

PROS

Lowest base price and very on-theme for a garden wedding.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Only 25 seats, no backup, no AC, and tip plus travel fee push it past $1,650.

Who we chose, and why

Lakeshore Coach · $1,500 incl. gratuity, two shuttles

We chose Lakeshore Coach: two 30-passenger shuttles move all our hotel guests in one loop, and $1,500 with gratuity included has no add-on surprises. We signed on March 13, 2027.

Follow-up

- [ ] Pay $1,000 balance by May 29
- [ ] Send Marco final loop times: 3–4:30 pm and 8–11:30 pm
- [x] Confirm hotel pickup spot with Grace at The Wrenfield
- [x] Add shuttle schedule to our website and welcome bags

A note to remember

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Favors

We interviewed 3 vendors between Mar 27 and March 30, 2027, with the questions from our Gifts & Favors guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	SWEET SOMETHING FAVORS Mar 27 · Mia OUR CHOICE	LITTLE THANKS CO. Mar 29 · Jo	KEEPSAKE CANDLE CO. Mar 30 · Eli
SERVICE OVERVIEW			
Types of custom gifts you create? ●	Honey jars, jam jars, cookies and candy tins; local wildflower honey	Boxed shortbread cookies, honey jars, seed packets; all gift-boxed with ribbon	Soy candle tins and mini jar candles with custom labels
Pricing model (per item, per hour, flat rate)? ●	Per item; 2 oz honey jar $3.50 each	Per item; $4.50 each, boxed	Per item; $4 each for 2 oz tins
Production timeline? ●	3 weeks; ready for pickup by May 15	4 weeks from proof approval	6 weeks minimum lead time
Personalization or customization offered? ●	Custom tags with our names and date; sage twine	Printed boxes, custom ribbon color, name sticker	Custom labels; scent from 8 options
Minimum order quantity? ●	50 jars minimum	100 pieces minimum	75 candles minimum
HIDDEN COSTS			
Design or consultation fee? ●	None	None	None
Extra for custom designs or special requests? ●	Custom tag shapes +$0.25 each; we kept standard	Custom box print included in the $4.50	Custom scent blend +$0.50 each
Revision or design-change fees?	Two proofs free, then $15 per round	Unlimited proofs before approval, free	One proof free, $20 per change after
Costs for premium materials or finishes? ●	Gold lids standard; foil tags +$0.40 each, skipped	Gold foil stamp included	Gold tins +$0.35 each
Engraving, monogramming, personalization fees? ●	Tag printing included in the $3.50	Names and date printing included	Label printing included
Packaging or gift-wrapping fees?	Included — twine and tag tied on	Included — gift box and sage ribbon	Organza bag +$0.30 each
Shipping or delivery charges? ●	Free pickup; local delivery $25, not needed	Free delivery to Lakeside Pavilion	Ships free over $400; no local pickup
Rush fee for expedited production? ●	$50 if under 3 weeks; not needed	$75 rush if under 3 weeks	Not offered — 6 weeks firm
Payment schedule and return/exchange policy? ●	$210 deposit at signing, $210 at pickup; no returns on custom items	Paid in full at order; exchanges only for damaged items	Paid in full at order; no returns; ships about 6 weeks later

FAVORS · CONTINUED

QUESTION	SWEET SOMETHING FAVORS Mar 27 · Mia OUR CHOICE	LITTLE THANKS CO. Mar 29 · Jo	KEEPSAKE CANDLE CO. Mar 30 · Eli
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$420, 120 honey jars**	$540, 120 boxed favors	$480, 120 candle tins
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Sweet Something Favors

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Mia was quick, friendly and had a sample tag mocked up before the call ended.

PROS

Gold lids and sage twine fit our colors at the lowest price.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

We have to pick the jars up ourselves.

Little Thanks Co.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Jo was polished and the foil-stamped boxes looked high-end.

PROS

Free venue delivery and gift boxes made it the most finished option.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

It costs $120 more than Sweet Something for a similar effect.

Keepsake Candle Co.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Eli's candles smelled great, but the timeline made us nervous.

PROS

A useful keepsake guests would actually keep.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

The firm 6-week lead time leaves little buffer, and gold tins cost extra.

Who we chose, and why

Sweet Something Favors · $420, 120 honey jars

We chose Sweet Something Favors because $420 gets us 120 honey jars with gold lids and custom tags that match our colors. Pickup is free and the jars are ready by mid-May. We signed on April 3, 2027.

Follow-up

- [x] Approve the tag proof by April 17, 2027
- [x] Pick up jars by May 15, 2027
- [x] Pay the $210 balance at pickup
- [ ] Ask someone to set a jar at each place setting

A note to remember

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Attire: the suit

We interviewed 3 vendors between Feb 27 and March 1, 2027, with the questions from our Attire (Suits) guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	TAILOR & THREAD Feb 27 · Leo OUR CHOICE	CLASSIC FORMALWEAR RENTALS Feb 28 · Dee	KINGSLEY MENSWEAR Mar 1 · Arlo
DECISIONS & PRICING			
Total cost to rent vs buy per person? ●	Buy only: custom suit $650; no rentals	Rent $210 for the full look; buy from $450	Buy only: made to measure $1,100; no rentals
Package deals or group discounts? ●	10% off additional suits; shirt bundle $95	Groom rents free with 5 paid rentals	15% off for 4+ suits; free tie
Deposit required, and final payment due date? ●	50% ($325) at order; $325 at final fitting	$50 deposit to reserve; balance 2 weeks before	$550 at order; $550 at final fitting
FIT & ALTERATIONS			
How far in advance to order/reserve for proper fitting? ●	Order 10–12 weeks out; ready by late May	Reserve 3–4 months out; measure 6 weeks before	12–14 weeks; we'd be cutting it close
Alterations included, or charged separately? ●	Included — two fittings and adjustments in price	Basic adjustments included; rentals not fully tailored	Included — fittings until it's right
What if someone gains/loses weight before the wedding? ●	One free re-fit up to 2 weeks before	Free re-measure; size swaps up to 10 days before	Free adjustments up to wedding week
HIDDEN COSTS			
Fees (alterations, cleaning, late returns, damage)? ●	No cleaning or damage fees; extra fittings beyond two $40 each; rush $100.	$25 damage waiver; late returns $25/day; lost pieces charged at retail; cleaning included.	No hidden fees; first pressing included; rush production $200 if under 12 weeks.
Fitting appointments + fee per fitting?	Measuring plus two fittings included; extras $40	One fitting at pickup, no fee	Three fittings included; no per-fitting fee
Grace period for returns, or steep late fees? ●	Not applicable — purchase, not rental	Due Monday after; $25 per late day	Not applicable — purchase only
Warranty or return policy (purchases)?	Custom, so no returns; free seam repair 1 year	Purchases: exchange within 14 days, unworn	Lifetime fit alterations; no returns
Damage/stain policy and associated costs (rentals)? ●	Not applicable — not a rental	Small stains covered by waiver; tears up to $150	Not applicable — no rentals
LOGISTICS			
When rentals need to be picked up and returned? ●	Not a rental; pick up at final fitting	Pick up Thursday before; return by Monday noon	Not a rental; collect at final fitting
Out-of-town groomsmen fit at other locations? ●	In-person only; just Sam being fitted	Yes, any partner shop nationwide	Yes, measurement kit by mail, $50

ATTIRE: THE SUIT · CONTINUED

QUESTION	TAILOR & THREAD Feb 27 · Leo OUR CHOICE	CLASSIC FORMALWEAR RENTALS Feb 28 · Dee	KINGSLEY MENSWEAR Mar 1 · Arlo
Shipping options for purchases/rentals?	Ships for $25; we'll pick up in person	Ships rentals to out-of-towners for $20	Free shipping on purchases
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$650 custom suit**	$210 rental, full look	$1,100 made to measure
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★☆☆	★★★★☆

What we thought

Tailor & Thread

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Small, meticulous shop, and Leo took twenty minutes of measurements without rushing.

PROS

Real custom fit for less than made-to-measure, and alterations are built in.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

No returns, and only in-person fittings, so Sam must make every appointment.

Classic Formalwear Rentals

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Efficient chain-store visit; Dee was friendly but clearly running through a script.

PROS

Cheapest by far, with easy logistics and nationwide fittings.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Rental fit is only so-so, late fees add up, and Sam gives the suit back.

Kingsley Menswear

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Polished showroom with gorgeous Italian wools; Arlo knew fabric inside out.

PROS

Premium fabrics, three fittings and lifetime alterations included.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

$450 more than Tailor & Thread, and the timeline might need the $200 rush.

Who we chose, and why

Tailor & Thread · $650 custom suit

We chose Tailor & Thread because Leo will make Sam a true custom suit for $650 with two fittings included, and Sam keeps it after the wedding. We signed on March 6, 2027.

Follow-up

- [ ] Pay $325 balance at final fitting
- [x] Book first fitting for early April
- [x] Bring dress shoes and belt to fittings
- [x] Match sage pocket square to fabric swatch
- [ ] Pick up suit by June 5

3 · VENDORS & INTERVIEWS

Stationery

We interviewed 3 vendors between Nov 6 and November 9, 2026, with the questions from our Stationery guide (● marks a must-ask). Their answers, as we wrote them down:

QUESTION	PAPER LANTERN PRESS Nov 6 · Hana OUR CHOICE	INKWELL & CO. Nov 8 · Remy	PRINTPERFECT ONLINE Nov 9 · Support
SERVICE DETAILS			
Stationery services offered (save-the-dates, invitations, programs, menus)? ●	Save the dates, invitations with RSVP cards, menus, place cards, signs; programs too	Letterpress save the dates and invitations; day-of paper digitally printed	Templates for save the dates, invitations, RSVP cards, menus, place cards
Wedding website design offered?	No, but sends matching artwork for our site	No	Yes, free template website with an order
Pricing (per piece, per suite, flat fee)? ●	Per piece: $2.40 save the date, $8 suite; $320 day-of set	Per piece: $3 save the date, $15 letterpress suite; $400 day-of	Per piece: $1.20 save the date, $4 invite with RSVP; $130 day-of
Typical turnaround time? ●	First proof in 1 week; printing 2 weeks after approval	6–8 weeks after proof approval	Prints in 5 business days, plus shipping
Design revisions included? ●	Two rounds per piece	One round per piece	None; we edit the templates ourselves
HIDDEN COSTS			
Design or consultation fee? ●	None; consult and design included	$150 consult, credited if we book	None; no designer to consult
Charge for additional design revisions? ●	$50 per extra round	$75 per extra round	Not applicable — we edit templates ourselves
Fees for specialty printing (foil, letterpress, embossing)? ●	Gold foil $1.25 per piece; no letterpress	Letterpress included; foil adds $2 per piece	Foil $0.80 per card; no letterpress
Costs for custom illustrations or calligraphy? ●	Venue sketch $200; no calligraphy	Custom illustration $350; calligraphy addressing $3.50 each	Not offered
Charges for envelopes, liners, addressing? ●	Envelopes included; liners $0.80, addressing $1 each	Envelopes included; liners $1.20 each	White envelopes included; printed addressing $0.45 each
Shipping or delivery charges?	Free pickup in Chicago; postage not included	Free studio pickup; shipping $40	$29 per shipment
Rush fee for expedited orders? ●	25% for orders under 1 week	No rush on letterpress	$45 for 2-day production
Charges for assembly (belly bands, wax seals, ribbons)?	Belly bands and wax seals $1.50 per suite	Included, with wax seals	Not offered; ships flat
Minimums for ordering? ●	25 per piece	50 letterpress suites	No minimum; price breaks at 100

STATIONERY · CONTINUED

QUESTION	PAPER LANTERN PRESS Nov 6 · Hana OUR CHOICE	INKWELL & CO. Nov 8 · Remy	PRINTPERFECT ONLINE Nov 9 · Support
Payment schedule, what if we need to reorder? ●	50% to book, 50% at final proof; reprints at the same per-piece price	50% to book, 50% before press; reorders need a $200 plate fee	Paid in full at checkout; reorders at the current price
PRICE AND RATING			
Quoted price	**$1,100**	$1,750, letterpress	$520, templates only
Our rating	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆

What we thought

Paper Lantern Press

OUR CHOICE

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Organized and warm; Hana had sage-and-gold samples ready for us.

PROS

One designer for every piece, with two rounds of edits included.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

Postage is on us, and foil costs extra.

Inkwell & Co.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Gorgeous letterpress samples; Remy really knows paper.

PROS

Deep letterpress, with assembly and wax seals included.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

$650 more than Paper Lantern, a long press time and only one revision round.

PrintPerfect Online

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Fast and cheap, but we'd be designing it all ourselves.

PROS

Lowest price by far, plus a free template website.

CONS / WATCH-OUTS

No design help or proof review, and shipping and rush fees add up.

Who we chose, and why

Paper Lantern Press · $1,100

We chose Paper Lantern Press: Hana designs every piece, from save the dates to place cards, in sage and gold for $1,100. We signed on November 14, 2026.

Follow-up

- ☑ Sign the contract and pay the $550 deposit
- ☑ Send all 75 mailing addresses by December 1, 2026
- ☑ Approve the proof and mail save the dates by December 15, 2026
- ☑ Mail invitations by April 10, 2027
- ☑ Send final seating for place cards by May 21, 2027

4 · CONTRACTS

What we signed

Every contract, with the money and the dates in it, and the terms we promised ourselves we would remember.

VENDOR	SIGNED	TOTAL	BALANCE DUE	IF WE CANCEL
Lakeside Pavilion Venue: lawn ceremony and pavilion reception	Apr 10, 2026	$12,000	Mar 14, 2027	$3,000 retainer kept
Harvest Table Catering Dinner, beer-and-wine bar, staff	May 8, 2026	$16,250	May 29, 2027	Deposit kept; installments refunded 90+ days out
Evergreen Events Day-of coordination	Sep 20, 2026	$1,650	May 29, 2027	$500 retainer kept
Willow Lane Photography Photography: 8 hours, two photographers	Sep 14, 2026	$4,200	May 29, 2027	Deposit non-refundable
Reel Moments Films Video: 8 hours and a highlight film	Oct 3, 2026	$2,900	May 29, 2027	50% deposit kept
Ivory & Lace Bridal The dress	Oct 17, 2026	$1,450	Mar 15, 2027	No returns once ordered
The Wrenfield Hotel 20-room courtesy block; getting-ready suite	Oct 24, 2026	$350	Jun 12, 2027	Block cancels free before May 12
Northside Sound DJ and MC, ceremony sound, 12 uplights	Nov 7, 2026	$1,900	May 29, 2027	$500 deposit kept
Paper Lantern Press Save the dates, invitations, day-of paper	Nov 14, 2026	$1,100	Mar 20, 2027	Deposit kept once design starts
Wild Fern Florals Flowers, ceremony arch, setup	Jan 16, 2027	$3,250	May 29, 2027	Owe nothing more 30+ days out
Sugar & Sage Bakery Three-tier cake	Jan 23, 2027	$900	May 29, 2027	$300 deposit kept
Celebrations by Jordan Ceremony, rehearsal, license filing	Feb 6, 2027	$450	May 29, 2027	$150 retainer kept
Lumen Jewelers Two recycled-gold bands	Feb 13, 2027	$2,380	Apr 17, 2027	Deposit kept on custom work
Glow Beauty Studio Hair and makeup for four, with a trial	Feb 20, 2027	$1,100	May 29, 2027	$550 deposit kept; one free date change
Tailor & Thread Custom suit, two fittings	Mar 6, 2027	$650	Jun 1, 2027	Deposit kept once cut

WHAT WE SIGNED · CONTINUED

VENDOR	SIGNED	TOTAL	BALANCE DUE	IF WE CANCEL
Lakeshore Coach Two 30-passenger shuttles, 5 hours	Mar 13, 2027	$1,500	May 29, 2027	Balance refunded 30+ days out
Sweet Something Favors 120 honey jars with tags	Apr 3, 2027	$420	May 15, 2027	No returns on custom items

Terms to remember

VENDOR	WHAT THE CONTRACT SAYS
Lakeside Pavilion	11 pm hard stop; outdoor amplified sound off by 10 pm. $1M liability policy naming the venue. Caterer from their approved list.
Harvest Table Catering	Final count 14 days out, then billed for the guarantee. Overtime $400 an hour.
Evergreen Events	10 hours on the day, then $100 an hour. One assistant included.
Willow Lane Photography	Overtime $350 an hour, in half hours. No raw files; gallery hosted for a year.
Reel Moments Films	Highlight film in 12 weeks; full ceremony edit included.
Ivory & Lace Bridal	Alterations quoted separately, about $350; steaming $85.
The Wrenfield Hotel	No minimum and no attrition. Suite is Saturday daytime, paid at check-in.
Northside Sound	Up to 7 hours, 4 to 11 pm; overtime $200 an hour in half hours.
Paper Lantern Press	Postage not included. Extra proof rounds $50 each.
Wild Fern Florals	$1,000 retainer non-refundable. Broken or missing vases about $12 each.
Sugar & Sage Bakery	Delivered at 3:30 pm; Harvest Table cuts and serves it free.
Celebrations by Jordan	Two meetings and the rehearsal; Jordan files the license.
Lumen Jewelers	Engraving, resizing and lifetime care included.
Glow Beauty Studio	Tip not included: 15 to 20%.
Tailor & Thread	Fittings beyond two are $40 each.
Lakeshore Coach	Gratuity included. Overtime $150 an hour per shuttle, in 30-minute blocks.
Sweet Something Favors	Two proofs free, then $15 a round.

5 · TRANSPORTATION

Getting everyone there

Two 30-passenger shuttles from Lakeshore Coach loop between The Wrenfield Hotel and Lakeside Pavilion, 2 miles apart: before the ceremony and after dinner.

SHUTTLES	BEFORE	AFTER	ALL IN
2	3–4:30 pm	8–11:30 pm	$1,500
30 seats each	hotel to the lawn	pavilion to the hotel	gratuity included

Trip by trip

LEAVE BY	FROM	TO	VEHICLE	RIDERS
3:00 pm	The Wrenfield	Lakeside Pavilion	Shuttle 1	14
3:15 pm	The Wrenfield	Lakeside Pavilion	Shuttle 2	30
3:45 pm	The Wrenfield	Lakeside Pavilion	Shuttle 1	30
4:05 pm	The Wrenfield	Lakeside Pavilion	Shuttle 2	last call
8:00 pm	Lakeside Pavilion	The Wrenfield	Shuttle 1	as needed
9:00 pm	Lakeside Pavilion	The Wrenfield	Shuttle 2	as needed
10:00 pm	Lakeside Pavilion	The Wrenfield	Shuttles 1 and 2	as needed
11:00 pm	Lakeside Pavilion	The Wrenfield	Shuttles 1 and 2	up to 60
11:20 pm	Lakeside Pavilion	The Wrenfield	Shuttle 1	last run

For the driver

- [ ] First run carries Alex, the attendants and family for photos on the lawn
- [ ] Hotel pickup at The Wrenfield's main entrance; Grace has cleared it with the front desk
- [ ] Pavilion drop-off in the north lot loading zone; no permit needed
- [ ] Welcome sign in the window of each shuttle
- [ ] A spare 30-seater waits at the yard; Marco calls Dana if it is needed
- [ ] Our contact on the day is Dana from Evergreen Events

6 · HOTEL ROOM BLOCKS

Where our guests are staying

One courtesy block, with no minimum and no attrition: we never pay for an empty room. The block closed on May 12 with 17 rooms taken on Friday and 20 on Saturday.

HOTEL	RATE	ROOMS HELD	BOOKED	CUT-OFF	HOW TO BOOK
The Wrenfield Hotel 2 miles from the venue; shuttles both ways	$219 a night	20 a night	17 Fri · 20 Sat	May 12, 2027	Link on our wedding website, or call and ask for the Alex & Sam block

What we agreed

- ☑ Fri June 11 and Sat June 12 at $219 a night, plus city hotel tax of about 17%
- ☑ No minimum and no attrition; unbooked rooms went back to the hotel on May 12
- ☑ Guests cancel free until 72 hours before; after that, one night
- ☑ Late checkout free until 1 pm; early check-in $50 if a room is ready
- ☑ A suite upgrade for us at the block rate; the getting-ready suite on Saturday for $350
- ☑ Valet $62 a night, or the public garage next door for about $40

Who is staying

GUESTS	HOTEL	NIGHTS	WELCOME BAG
Rosa & Arturo Moreno	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐
Daniel, Lucia, Mateo & Sofia Moreno	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐
June Whitaker	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sat	☐
Paul, Karen & Owen Whitaker	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐
Grace & Henry Bennett	The Wrenfield	Sat	☐
Ana & Luis Castillo	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐
Hanna & Erik Fischer	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sat	☐
Kirsten & Lars Jensen	The Wrenfield	Sat	☐
Ingrid Larsen	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sat	☐
Siobhan & Liam Murphy	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐
Maeve & Connor O'Brien	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐
Ada & Chidi Okafor	The Wrenfield	Sat	☐
Greta & Karl Schmidt	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐
Yuki & Ken Tanaka	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sat	☐

WHO IS STAYING · CONTINUED

GUESTS	HOTEL	NIGHTS	WELCOME BAG
Anja & Felix Weber	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐
Mei & Wei Zhang	The Wrenfield	Sat	☐
Ewa & Piotr Kowalski	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sat	☐
Jun & Sora Park	The Wrenfield	Sat	☐
Ruth & Alan Ellis	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐
Quinn Whitaker & Devon Ellis	The Wrenfield	Fri–Sun	☐

Notes

7 · SEATING

Who sits where

15 tables, 120 seats. Seats are lettered from the top of each table, going clockwise.

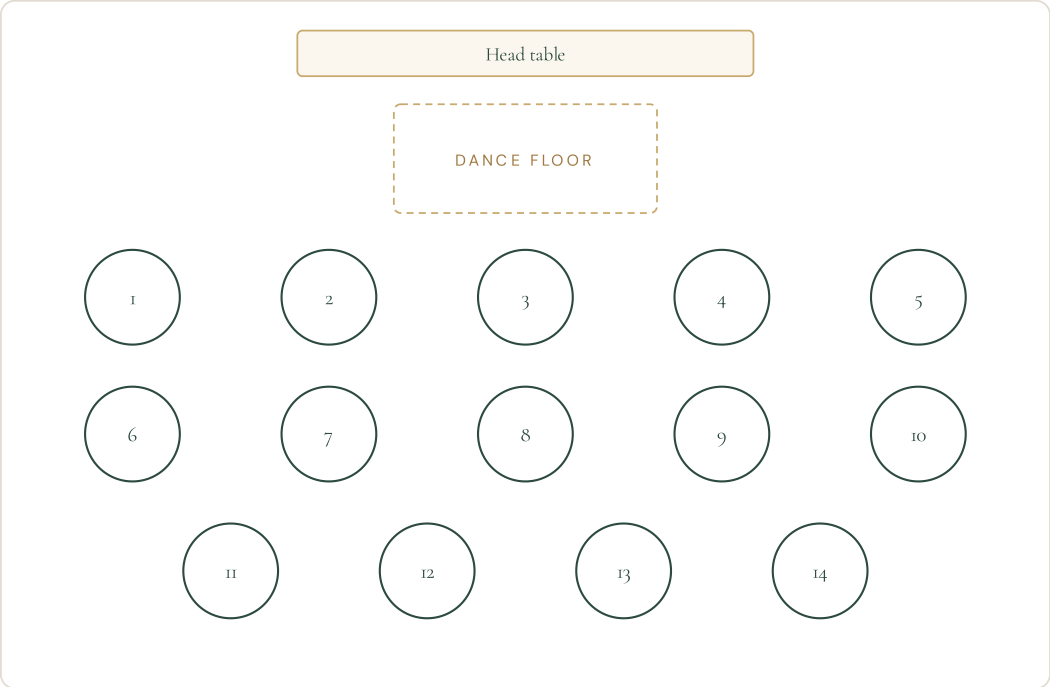


Table by table

Head table

A Alex Moreno
B Sam Whitaker
C Jamie Moreno
D Riley Chen
E Taylor Brooks
F Quinn Whitaker
G Devon Ellis
H Avery Patel

Table 1

A Daniel Moreno
B Lucia Moreno
C Mateo Moreno
D Sofia Moreno
E Ana Castillo
F Luis Castillo
G Gabriel Castillo
H Isabel Castillo

Table 2

A Maeve O'Brien
B Connor O'Brien
C Aoife O'Brien
D Rory O'Brien
E Paul Whitaker
F Karen Whitaker
G Owen Whitaker
H June Whitaker

Table 3

A Laura Hughes
B Peter Hughes
C Ellie Hughes
D Teresa Lopez
E Miguel Lopez
F Diego Lopez
G Elena Moreno
H Victor Moreno

Table 4

A Priya Shah
B Nikhil Shah
C Asha Shah
D Anja Weber
E Felix Weber
F Leni Weber
G Rosa Moreno
H Arturo Moreno

Table 5

A Inés Vargas
B Hugo Vargas
C Paloma Vargas
D Helen Whitaker
E Robert Whitaker
F Marisol Alvarez
G Tomas Alvarez
H Mónica Garcia

Table 6

A Grace Bennett
B Henry Bennett
C Claire Dawson
D Mark Dawson
E Hanna Fischer
F Erik Fischer
G Carmen Ibarra
H Raúl Ibarra

Table 7

A Kirsten Jensen
B Lars Jensen
C Soo-jin Kim
D David Kim
E Siobhan Murphy
F Liam Murphy
G Linh Nguyen
H Bao Nguyen

TABLE BY TABLE · CONTINUED

Table 8

A Petra Novak
B Jan Novak
C Ada Okafor
D Chidi Okafor
E Beth Quinlan
F Sean Quinlan
G Lucía Ramos
H Andrés Ramos

Table 9

A Greta Schmidt
B Karl Schmidt
C Kate Sullivan
D Brian Sullivan
E Yuki Tanaka
F Ken Tanaka
G Valeria Torres
H Iván Torres

Table 10

A Nora Walsh
B Declan Walsh
C Hazel Young
D Simon Young
E Mei Zhang
F Wei Zhang
G Lena Abbott
H Chris Abbott

Table 11

A Diane Brooks
B Gary Brooks
C Lily Chen
D Michael Chen
E Ruth Ellis
F Alan Ellis
G Meera Patel
H Raj Patel

Table 12

A Olivia Grant
B Nate Grant
C Tess Irwin
D Max Irwin
E Ewa Kowalski
F Piotr Kowalski
G Rita Mendez
H Joel Mendez

Table 13

A Jun Park
B Sora Park
C Maya Stone
D Ben Stone
E Sadie Turner
F Cole Turner
G Fiona Wright
H Callum Wright

Table 14

A Rhea Yates
B Milo Yates
C Ingrid Larsen
D Naomi Price
E Pilar Vasquez
F Amy Foster
G Jess Hale
H Elisa Reyes

Escort cards, A to Z

Chris Abbott	T10 · H	Hanna Fischer	T6 · E	Teresa Lopez	T3 · D
Lena Abbott	T10 · G	Amy Foster	T14 · F	Joel Mendez	T12 · H
Marisol Alvarez	T5 · F	Mónica Garcia	T5 · H	Rita Mendez	T12 · G
Tomas Alvarez	T5 · G	Nate Grant	T12 · B	Alex Moreno	Head table · A
Grace Bennett	T6 · A	Olivia Grant	T12 · A	Arturo Moreno	T4 · H
Henry Bennett	T6 · B	Jess Hale	T14 · G	Daniel Moreno	T1 · A
Diane Brooks	T11 · A	Ellie Hughes	T3 · C	Elena Moreno	T3 · G
Gary Brooks	T11 · B	Laura Hughes	T3 · A	Jamie Moreno	Head table · C
Taylor Brooks	Head table · E	Peter Hughes	T3 · B	Lucia Moreno	T1 · B
Ana Castillo	T1 · E	Carmen Ibarra	T6 · G	Mateo Moreno	T1 · C
Gabriel Castillo	T1 · G	Raúl Ibarra	T6 · H	Rosa Moreno	T4 · G
Isabel Castillo	T1 · H	Max Irwin	T12 · D	Sofia Moreno	T1 · D
Luis Castillo	T1 · F	Tess Irwin	T12 · C	Victor Moreno	T3 · H
Lily Chen	T11 · C	Kirsten Jensen	T7 · A	Liam Murphy	T7 · F
Michael Chen	T11 · D	Lars Jensen	T7 · B	Siobhan Murphy	T7 · E
Riley Chen	Head table · D	David Kim	T7 · D	Bao Nguyen	T7 · H
Claire Dawson	T6 · C	Soo-jin Kim	T7 · C	Linh Nguyen	T7 · G
Mark Dawson	T6 · D	Ewa Kowalski	T12 · E	Jan Novak	T8 · B
Alan Ellis	T11 · F	Piotr Kowalski	T12 · F	Petra Novak	T8 · A
Devon Ellis	Head table · G	Ingrid Larsen	T14 · C	Aoife O'Brien	T2 · C
Ruth Ellis	T11 · E	Diego Lopez	T3 · F	Connor O'Brien	T2 · B
Erik Fischer	T6 · F	Miguel Lopez	T3 · E	Maeve O'Brien	T2 · A

ESCORT CARDS · CONTINUED

Rory O'Brien	T2 · D
Ada Okafor	T8 · C
Chidi Okafor	T8 · D
Jun Park	T13 · A
Sora Park	T13 · B
Avery Patel	Head table · H
Meera Patel	T11 · G
Raj Patel	T11 · H
Naomi Price	T14 · D
Beth Quinlan	T8 · E
Sean Quinlan	T8 · F
Andrés Ramos	T8 · H
Lucía Ramos	T8 · G
Elisa Reyes	T14 · H
Greta Schmidt	T9 · A
Karl Schmidt	T9 · B
Asha Shah	T4 · C
Nikhil Shah	T4 · B
Priya Shah	T4 · A
Ben Stone	T13 · D
Maya Stone	T13 · C
Brian Sullivan	T9 · D
Kate Sullivan	T9 · C
Ken Tanaka	T9 · F
Yuki Tanaka	T9 · E
Iván Torres	T9 · H
Valeria Torres	T9 · G
Cole Turner	T13 · F
Sadie Turner	T13 · E
Hugo Vargas	T5 · B
Inés Vargas	T5 · A
Paloma Vargas	T5 · C
Pilar Vasquez	T14 · E
Declan Walsh	T10 · B
Nora Walsh	T10 · A
Anja Weber	T4 · D
Felix Weber	T4 · E
Leni Weber	T4 · F
Helen Whitaker	T5 · D
June Whitaker	T2 · H
Karen Whitaker	T2 · F
Owen Whitaker	T2 · G
Paul Whitaker	T2 · E
Quinn Whitaker	Head table · F
Robert Whitaker	T5 · E
Sam Whitaker	Head table · B
Callum Wright	T13 · H
Fiona Wright	T13 · G
Milo Yates	T14 · B
Rhea Yates	T14 · A
Hazel Young	T10 · C
Simon Young	T10 · D
Mei Zhang	T10 · E
Wei Zhang	T10 · F

8 · THE DAY ITSELF

The day, minute by minute

Sunset is about 8:30 pm. If it rains, the ceremony moves into the pavilion; Renee makes the call that morning.

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	WHERE	WHO
8:00 am	Breakfast together	The Wrenfield	Alex & Sam
10:00 am	Dana arrives and walks through the day with us	The Wrenfield	Dana
10:30 am	Hair and makeup: attendants first	Getting-ready suite	Simone and one artist
11:00 am	Pavilion opens for setup	Lakeside Pavilion	Renee
1:00 pm	Flowers, arch and tables set; caterer arrives	Lawn and pavilion	Ivy, Omar
1:00 pm	Details and getting-ready photos	Getting-ready suite	Jenna
1:30 pm	Alex's hair and makeup	Getting-ready suite	Simone
2:00 pm	Sam gets ready; video crew arrives	Pavilion ready room	Sam, Luca
2:30 pm	Alex dresses	Getting-ready suite	Alex, attendants
3:00 pm	First shuttle leaves the hotel	The Wrenfield	Marco
3:15 pm	First look and portraits	The lakeside lawn	Jenna, Luca
3:30 pm	Cake delivered and set	The pavilion	Sugar & Sage
3:45 pm	Wedding party photos; Jordan arrives	The lawn	Jenna, Jordan
4:00 pm	Ceremony music; guests seated	The lawn	Andre
4:30 pm	Ceremony	The lawn	Jordan
4:55 pm	Sign the license with two witnesses	Pavilion ready room	Jordan
5:00 pm	Cocktail hour; family photos	Lakeside terrace	Jenna
5:30 pm	Grand entrance	The pavilion	Andre
5:45 pm	Welcome from our parents	The pavilion	Elena & Helen
6:00 pm	Dinner is served	The pavilion	Omar
7:00 pm	Toasts	The pavilion	Jamie, Quinn
7:30 pm	First dance; dancing opens	Dance floor	Andre
8:00 pm	Return shuttles begin	Pavilion entrance	Marco
8:15 pm	Sunset photos by the lake	The lakeshore	Jenna
8:45 pm	Cake cutting	The pavilion	Omar's team serves
10:00 pm	Bar closes; late coffee	The pavilion	Omar
10:45 pm	Last dance	Dance floor	Andre

THE DAY, MINUTE BY MINUTE · CONTINUED

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	WHERE	WHO
11:00 pm	Send-off; last shuttles	Pavilion entrance	Dana, Marco
11:00 pm	Vendors load out until midnight	The pavilion	Dana, Ivy

What to bring

- ☐ Marriage license
- ☐ Both rings (to Quinn at the rehearsal)
- ☐ Our vows, printed
- ☐ Tip envelopes for each vendor
- ☐ Escort cards, place cards, table numbers
- ☐ Guest book and pens
- ☐ Card box
- ☐ Welcome sign and easel
- ☐ Cake knife and server
- ☐ Honey jars for every place setting
- ☐ Shoes to dance in
- ☐ Phone chargers
- ☐ Emergency kit: pins, stain pen, tape
- ☐ Snacks and water for the suite

Our marriage license

From the Cook County Clerk, $60. We picked it up together on May 14, 2027. It takes effect the next day and is good for 60 days, so June 12 is well inside.

WE ASKED THE CLERK	THEY TOLD US
Current fee amount?	$60, card or cash
Online pre-application available?	Yes, start online; we both still go in person
In-person appointment needed, or walk-in?	Walk-in at the downtown clerk's office
What ID do we bring?	A government photo ID each, and our Social Security numbers
Waiting period before license is valid?	None; it takes effect the day after it's issued
How long until license expires?	60 days after it takes effect
Who can officiate?	Clergy, judges, or a registered officiant; Jordan qualifies
Witnesses at application? At ceremony?	None to apply; two adults sign at the ceremony
Proof of previous marriage ending required?	Only if divorced in the last 6 months

- ☑ Started the application online (April 30)
- ☑ Picked up the license together at the clerk's office (May 14)
- ☐ Give the license to Jordan at the rehearsal on June 11
- ☐ Sign after the ceremony with Jordan and two witnesses
- ☐ Jordan files it with the clerk within 10 days
- ☐ Order two certified copies for name changes

9 · KEEPSAKES & NOTES

To remember

The pages we keep filling in, before the day and after it.

Thank-you notes

FROM	FOR	SENT
Elena & Victor Moreno	Hosting our engagement party	☐
Helen & Robert Whitaker	The rehearsal dinner	☐
Rosa & Arturo Moreno	Grandma's lace for the bouquet wrap	☐
June Whitaker	Stand mixer from our registry	☐
Jamie Moreno	Planning the shower	☐
Quinn Whitaker	Address labels for 75 invitations	☐
Riley Chen	Shower gift: linen napkins	☐
Taylor Brooks	Shower gift: cast-iron pan	☐
Devon Ellis	Shower gift: picnic set	☐
Avery Patel	Shower gift: framed map of the lake	☐
Grace & Henry Bennett	Engagement gift: champagne flutes	☐
Ana & Luis Castillo	Engagement gift: cookbook	☐
Laura & Peter Hughes	Shower gift: towels	☐
Naomi Price	Shower gift: plant and pot	☐
Priya & Nikhil Shah	Engagement gift: serving board	☐
Kate & Brian Sullivan	Lending their garden for photos	☐
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THANK-YOU NOTES · CONTINUED

FROM	FOR	SENT
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Our vows

The day, in our own words

What we want to remember

A · CHECKLIST

What to do, and by when

Counted back from our wedding on Saturday, June 12, 2027. 55 of 74 done.

May 2026

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☑	Price your wedding for your town before you fall for a venue	May 12, 2026
☑	Agree on the three things that matter most to you both	May 12, 2026
☑	Rough out your guest count. It sets the size of almost everything	May 12, 2026

June 2026

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☑	Decide which vendors you'll hire and which you can skip	Jun 12, 2026
☑	Tell family and close friends before you post the news	Jun 12, 2026
☑	Tour and book your reception venue	by June 2026
☑	Book a ceremony site, if it won't be at the venue	by June 2026
☑	Find and book your photographer	by June 2026
☑	Decide on a planner or a day-of coordinator	by June 2026

July 2026

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☑	Pick a wedding website service	Jul 12, 2026

August 2026

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☑	Order save-the-dates	by August 2026
☑	Collect photos of looks you love to show vendors	Aug 12, 2026
☑	Ask the people you want standing beside you	Aug 12, 2026

September 2026

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☑	Taste and book your caterer	by September 2026
☑	Book your DJ or band	by September 2026
☑	Find your wedding attire	by September 2026
☑	Decide whether you want a videographer	by September 2026

SEPTEMBER 2026 · CONTINUED

WHAT TO DO	BY
☑ Gather mailing addresses for everyone you'll invite	Sep 12, 2026
☑ Start a registry and link it from your website	Sep 12, 2026
☑ Plan engagement photos with your photographer	Sep 12, 2026

October 2026

WHAT TO DO	BY
☑ Choose your florist	by October 2026
☑ Mail your save-the-dates	Oct 12, 2026

November 2026

WHAT TO DO	BY
☑ Send guests your website link	Nov 12, 2026
☑ Reserve your own room for the wedding night	Nov 12, 2026

December 2026

WHAT TO DO	BY
☑ Decide on the bar: hosted, beer and wine, or none	by December 2026
☑ Book hair and makeup	by December 2026
☑ Hold a block of hotel rooms for out-of-town guests	by December 2026
☑ Ask or book your officiant	by December 2026
☑ Choose where you'll go on your honeymoon	Dec 12, 2026

January 2027

WHAT TO DO	BY
☑ Settle what the wedding party will wear	Jan 12, 2027
☑ Choose the music for your ceremony	Jan 12, 2027

February 2027

WHAT TO DO	BY
☑ Plan decor and lighting	by February 2027
☑ Order rentals: tables, chairs, linens	by February 2027
☑ Plan rides for your guests	by February 2027

FEBRUARY 2027 · CONTINUED

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☑	Order invitations	Feb 12, 2027
☑	Book your honeymoon	Feb 12, 2027

March 2027

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☑	Taste and order your cake	by March 2027
☑	Choose your wedding rings	by March 2027
☑	Order suits or tuxes	by March 2027
☑	Book your fittings	Mar 12, 2027
☑	List the small things to buy: guest book, card box, signs	Mar 12, 2027

April 2027

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☑	Post hotel and shuttle details on your website	Apr 3, 2027
☑	Plan your send-off at the end of the night	Apr 10, 2027
☑	Address invitations and buy postage	Apr 10, 2027
☑	Book the rehearsal dinner	by April 2027
☑	Choose favors, if you want them	by April 2027
☑	Mail your invitations	Apr 17, 2027
☑	Turn on RSVPs on your website	Apr 17, 2027

May 2027

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☑	Send thank-you notes for shower gifts	May 8, 2027
☑	Invite guests to the rehearsal dinner	May 8, 2027
☑	Settle your menu with your caterer	May 8, 2027
☑	Write your ceremony with your officiant	May 8, 2027
☑	Apply for your marriage license	by May 2027
☑	Choose gifts for your parents and wedding party	May 15, 2027
☑	Seat your guests	May 15, 2027
☐	Follow up with guests who haven't replied	May 22, 2027
☐	Order escort cards, place cards and table numbers	May 22, 2027

MAY 2027 · CONTINUED

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☐	Order programs and menus	May 22, 2027
☐	Decide how you'll share a change of plans	May 22, 2027
☐	Share the day's timeline with vendors and the wedding party	May 29, 2027
☐	Send your DJ the must-play and do-not-play songs	May 29, 2027
☐	Give your photographer the photos you can't miss	May 29, 2027
☐	Confirm who's giving toasts, and for how long	May 29, 2027
☐	Pack a day-of kit: safety pins, stain remover, snacks	May 29, 2027

June 2027

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☐	Give your final guest count to the venue and caterer	Jun 2, 2027
☐	Settle final payments with your vendors	Jun 5, 2027
☐	Put each vendor's tip in a labeled envelope	Jun 5, 2027
☐	Confirm arrival times with every vendor	Jun 5, 2027
☐	Pack for the honeymoon	Jun 5, 2027
☐	Take a night off together	Jun 10, 2027
☐	Get married!	Jun 12, 2027
☐	Review the vendors who made your day	Jun 26, 2027

July 2027

	WHAT TO DO	BY
☐	Send thank-you notes	Jul 3, 2027
☐	Print your planning binder to keep	Jul 10, 2027