

Nate Wildfire

March 30, 2025

RE: BOARDMAN RFQ

Dear Nate,

I wanted this letter to you, and intended as well for the folks in Boardman, to hear from me directly about the pending opportunity. First, I am honored by our collaboration. At this stage of my career, like you, I am focused on delivering dignified and thoughtful places to live for our workforce populations.

As I was revisiting my resume a couple of days ago, a couple of things stood out. One, I've had a lot of fun and satisfaction doing master plans, urban design and architecture over many years, much of it as very large projects far from home. Two, a resume doesn't communicate the priceless connections made with a particular community and the people who live there. The shared humanity in these places became my fuel for only wanting to get down where people lived, and to have a chance to improve their living condition, whether it has been in China or Dubai or Minot, North Dakota or McMinnville, Oregon. My discovery has been, at a most basic level, we all want the same thing. We want to be close to our friends, in a place of safety and dignity. And when you understand that, and you design as if you are going to live there, great places happen. And the ultimate gift is given in the form of lifelong friendships.

Back in the years 2010-2018 North Dakota was experiencing a huge oil boom in the Bakken Oil Region of western North Dakota. Some small towns were doubling in size in less than a year. I was invited into this supercharged place to help solve some of their housing crisis. I was working on the ground there, for half of my time between 2012-2016, in small towns of less than 25,000 population. I was invited to work with the people of Dickinson, North Dakota on a revitalization plan for their city and it brought me into frequent contact with private citizens and public officials, especially the city manager and city council. I was there enough to be greeted all over town and developed a number of friendships. One of those was a city council member, Carson Steiner. We developed a lasting friendship. Carson is retired now, living at the lake, but every year, out of the blue, I'll get a call from him, to ask "How am I doing".

My affection for working in small towns is real. I trace that back to my upbringing in Baker, Oregon. I love the sustaining virtues of a village. Even when I've been master planning very large projects, in my mind, I break it down to many smaller parts, so that each of the parts become personalized for the eventual user.

I've seen a lot, and unfortunately one of the things I see, is that most communities just grew.....untethered to any thoughtful framework or comprehensive masterplan. A city, ultimately, "gets what they want, or gets what they get". I'm encouraged that Boardman will get the City of Boardman they want.

All My Best

Gary