

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS AND PROPOSALS

PREPARATION OF AN UPDATED DOWNTOWN PLAN GRAND RAPIDS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA

PURPOSE

The Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA) seeks the services of a qualified multi-discipline consultant or consultant team who will be responsible for providing services that result in an updated downtown master plan. The selected consultant team will have considerable experience in developing downtown plans, particularly for communities of a size and standing similar to Grand Rapids, and possess significant urban planning, civil engineering and public engagement capabilities. The consultant team should also possess a depth of experience in community and economic development as well as analysis of market conditions.

The consultant will develop and lead a planning process that features active public participation to combine local knowledge and leadership with professional expertise and guidance. GREDA's intent is to provide its residents, corporate citizens and new investors with a downtown plan that articulates a vision for the short and long-term improvements to the public and private realm that foster additional investment and enhances downtown Grand Rapids as a more livable, walkable and thriving urban center.

BACKGROUND

The City of Grand Rapids, a community of approximately 11,300 residents with a market draw of more than 50,000 people, is located at the region's retail trade, health care, education, governmental, and cultural center. Grand Rapids prides itself on its unique and progressive blend of small town character and hospitality with modern conveniences and abundant opportunities for cultural and recreational fulfillment.

Grand Rapids has seen the highest rate of population growth in the Northeast Arrowhead Region, and the highest per capita permitted development since 2010. Forest products, mining and tourism have historically been the dominant industry clusters driving the Grand Rapids area economy; however, Grand Rapids has made consistent progress toward diversifying its economic base with growth in machining/fabrication as well as health care services. Grand Rapids is home to UPM Blandin Paper Company, ASV/Yanmar Inc. (manufacturer of compact construction equipment), Minnesota Diversified Industries, Arrowhead Promotion and Fulfillment, Olympak Printing and Packaging and other industries.

In addition to its business, industrial and tourism assets, the City of Grand Rapids is the home to the Blandin Foundation and a number of amenities such as visual and performing arts centers, a civic center, a regional library, trails and recreational facilities and the Itasca County YMCA. Two new elementary schools as well as additions to the Itasca Community College campus are recent additions to the community.

Out of concern over declining investment and activity in the downtown, GREDA, together with the Downtown Business Association, Chamber of Commerce and others in 2006, led a community driven effort supported by a planning consultant to gather input and prepare a *Downtown Redevelopment Masterplan*.

The City Comprehensive Plan, updated in 2020, reflects the community's continued desire to strengthen the downtown as "the heart of the community". While the community has been reasonably successful in promoting and securing investment in the downtown since the *Downtown Redevelopment Masterplan* adoption, there is a strong desire to build upon those successes in light of the current state of and plans



for our community, changes in the retail environment, evolving consumer preferences, and increasing mobility options.

GREDA is seeking proposals from qualified professionals to aid them in the development of an updated downtown master plan that creates a defined vision for the downtown and identifies a specific plan of action directed towards attainment of that vision.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

The Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA) is on a schedule for consultant selection that should culminate in formal action to hire a consultant at the regular GREDA meeting on _____, 2022. The process to develop the Downtown Plan should begin in earnest shortly thereafter.

Intermediate milestones in the development of the Downtown Plan will be established after the successful consultant is selected. The project should be finalized no later than _____, 2022.

MINIMUM PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Several stakeholder groups should be given the opportunity to participate in the process of developing the Downtown Plan. Such groups include:

- The public at large
- The Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority
- All property owners within the plan area
- All residents within the plan area
- All business owners renting/leasing property within the plan area
- Grand Rapids Area Visitor and Convention Bureau
- The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
- City of Grand Rapids Community Development Department Staff
- Other City Departments as necessary and appropriate, such as:
 - Police
 - Public Works
 - Engineering

The public participation process proposed must promote meaningful participation that educates, offers participants opportunities to discuss and resolve issues, and creates a sense of ownership of the plan by the participants.

The consultant's role in the public participation process, at a minimum, will include:

- Organizing and scheduling meetings – with aid provided by the Community Development Department.
- Conducting/facilitating meetings/visioning sessions, walk audits, design charrettes, and surveys.
- Providing technical expertise/advice
- Recording public comments
- Identifying areas of consensus
- Translating the input received during the process into alternative visions
- Presentation of preliminary plan concepts to key stakeholders
- Presentation of final plan concepts to key stakeholders



The consultants suggested approach towards public participation should be included within the work plan, required under the proposal contents section. The consultant and GREDA will develop the precise method of optimizing public participation jointly after consultant selection, and early in the project schedule.

REQUIRED PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Hard copies of the final "Downtown Plan" document containing text and graphics should be in 8 ½" x 11" format. Larger graphics in the report could be folded 11" x 17" sheets. Twenty-five (25) copies of the final plan are required.

Two electronic copies of the downtown plan document, including graphics, shall be provided. One copy shall be provided in a MS Word format and the other shall be provided in an Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format.

DESIRED PROJECT OUTCOMES/STATEMENT OF WORK

The project consultant will prepare a comprehensive downtown plan that translates the priorities of the community into specific, attainable, development and redevelopment goals for the downtown that focus on establishing/strengthening the downtown as the physical and social heart of the community. The downtown plan will go beyond the concept stage to create redevelopment strategies tailored to the specific needs and conditions in Grand Rapids.

At a minimum, the plan development will include an assessment and specific recommendations in the following areas. Other deliverables may be added, at the discretion of GREDA, or by recommendation of the consulting firm.

REVIEW OF CURRENT PLANS

- The planning process should involve stakeholders in gaining an understanding of previous planning, synthesizing and joining the pertinent aspects of past plans to maintain continuity of vision without constricting new ideas and integrating new development influences and community desires. This review of previous planning shall include, but not be limited to:
 - Incorporate into the planning process applicable guidance provide by the [City Comprehensive Plan](#).
 - A review of the [2006 Downtown Redevelopment Masterplan](#) including, at a minimum, a revisit of the Guiding Principles, a review of accomplishments and possible revisions to the planning area boundary.
 - A review of the [2009 Riverfront Framework Plan](#), in particular areas of overlap with the *Downtown Redevelopment Masterplan* planning area.
 - A review of the strategies recommended within the City's arts and culture plan *GRMN Creates, an Arts and Culture Roadmap* and other [arts and culture guiding documents](#).
 - Other plans that should be reviewed by the consultant for any relevant guidance include: [2014 Grand Rapids Market Area Profile](#), [2019 City of Grand Rapids Housing Study](#),

LAND USE

- With stakeholder involvement, assess the assets and liabilities of the downtown to identify the highest opportunity places to create and enhance the network of destinations in the downtown.
- Map current land uses in the downtown and immediate surrounding area and consider unique aspects of downtown sub-areas or districts in the planning process.



- Inventory commercial and retail space vacancy levels and underutilization.
- Identify and prioritize specific sites for development and redevelopment and their preferred uses or adaptive reuses.
- Inventory the status and quality of transportation and circulation systems including automobile parking, pedestrian routes, bicycle parking and micromobility deployment/use.
- Identify cultural, recreational and institutional assets, such as museums, library, art studios, public art, parks, trails and government services and consider how they can be enhanced to better support the downtown as a community gathering space/destination.
- Determine whether and how existing land uses or physical characteristics help or hinder economic development efforts i.e.; parking lot locations, vacant parcels, railroad corridor, variety of businesses, etc.

TRANSPORTATION

- Through the planning process, embrace the perception of streets not only as conduits for automobiles but also, as places that are an opportunity to add value to the community by enhancing economic productivity and social engagement.
- Equitably consider all modes of mobility in downtown transportation planning.
- Consider the current and potential roles for public transit linkages to the downtown.
- Consider non-traffic solutions to traffic problems, such as increasing mixed-use development and high density housing opportunities in and near the downtown.
- Survey the community, and specifically downtown business owners, about traffic concerns, parking, and general accessibility.
- Determine if traffic speeds are appropriate for the downtown context and if calming measures are needed.
- Conduct field surveys to record the amount and location of on and off street parking in the downtown, calculate the parking requirements for existing and future land uses, identify deficiencies, and define short and long-term strategies for improvements to downtown parking, including accommodation of residential and hospitality uses that require longer term parking.
- Review the interaction of on street parking with traffic flow.
- Assess the pedestrians ease in crossing streets and provide recommendations for improvements that do not conflict with other design standards.

URBAN DESIGN IMPROVMENTS

- Affirm the identity of core downtown streets and critical street intersections.
- Catalog existing sidewalk and pathway conditions, and identify important linkages within and connecting to the downtown.
- Identify existing landscaping in the downtown and create a plan to maintain trees and plantings as part of the urban infrastructure.
- Review the existing streetscape elements (vintage lighting, street furnishings, plantings, and sidewalk and street pavement treatments) of the downtown and consider revisions to and/or expansions of it.
- Identify public space opportunities in the downtown and examine their full multi-use potential as a means to create a sense of place and attract and bring people together.
- Consider improvements to the plan/programs for building façade improvement in the downtown.



- Identify priorities for the improvement of on and off street public parking.
- Identify potential infill and new development opportunities in the downtown, prioritize those opportunities, and identify strategies for their implementation.
- Review design guidelines created by the Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority and consider whether similar design guidelines should be established as a universal requirement for the downtown.

MARKET ASSESSMENT, ECONOMIC NICHE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

- Utilizing available data sources, including access to geo-location data within the downtown and the broader community, as well as credit card data through the City's Datafy (See Source) subscription to profile who is currently visiting the downtown and whom we envision using the downtown.
- Define the downtown's economic niche to inform strategies for marketing, promotion and design/appearance.
- Provide recommendations for how the downtown can better serve these categories of users.
- Identify business categories that may be missing from the downtown that would serve the interests of the identified categories of visitor users and local users.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Define strategies, including financing options, for implementation of all aspects of a downtown plan that takes into consideration: need, feasibility, and consistency with the downtown vision.
- Assess the organizational capacity of community stakeholders to play a role in implementation.
- Strategies will identify sub-tasks and timelines where appropriate and assign roles and responsibilities for community stakeholders.

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

The consultant's proposal should include, but not be limited to the following information:

- 1) A summary of the consultant team and individuals that will work on the project.
- 2) A description of the consultant's philosophy regarding social, economic, human, environmental, and related values that provide the basis for the consultant's approach to the project.
- 3) A general restatement and/or enhancement of the desired project outcomes.
- 4) A work plan that will lead to the desired outcomes.
- 5) A description of the consultant's plan to optimize public participation.
- 6) A proposed project schedule.
- 7) A detailed description of the SINGLE past project that the consultant believes is most similar to this project.
- 8) A list of three other projects with references.
- 9) A statement of the consultant's ability to complete the project within the prescribed timeframe.
- 10) A statement regarding the level of effort and degree of detail that can be provided in the project, given the proposed fee.
- 11) In a separate, sealed envelope, a cost proposal for providing the requested consultant services. The cost proposal shall be in the form of an "hourly, not to exceed fee". The cost proposal shall include a listing of hourly rates for each position within the consultant team and an estimate of staff hours for each task within the proposed work plan.



PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL

Six copies of the proposal (with only one cost envelope) shall be submitted to:

Rob Mattei
Director of Community Development
420 N. Pokegama Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Proposals must be received by 4:00 p.m., March 31, 2022

Questions regarding the proposal process may be directed to Rob Mattei at (218) 326-7622 or at rmattei@ci.grand-rapids.mn.us

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