



January 2, 2025

City of Nome, Alaska  
Attn: City Clerk Daniel Grimmer  
Via email at: [DGrimmer@nomealaska.org](mailto:DGrimmer@nomealaska.org)

Subject: Proposal for Economic Development Consulting Services

Dear Mr. Grimmer:

I am happy to share the attached proposal in response to the City of Nome's solicitation for consulting services to develop an economic development strategy. I understand you are seeking a professional with economic development and municipal finance experience, to work with the Administration and City Council in establishing a set of actionable and practical strategies to promote a more thriving local economy. I have significant experience in these areas, have demonstrated my ability to deliver good outcomes at the local government level, and would welcome the opportunity to partner on this project.

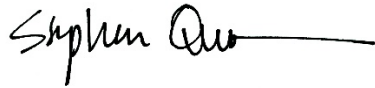
In my former roles as Soldotna City Manager and Director of Economic Development and Planning, I led successful teams and implemented projects of real impact in the community. Economic Development was a specific focus of many of these initiatives, including: developing a façade improvement program for businesses; partnering with the Chamber of Commerce for a summertime live music series and weekly market; assisting entrepreneurs with relocation and expansion plans; and engaging directly with the business community (through surveys, events, and one-on-one discussions) to ensure the City was meeting their needs. I have hands-on experience budgeting for and constructing municipal infrastructure projects which support and promote economic and community growth, and understand a city's role in partnering with community organizations and stakeholders to work together toward a shared vision and outcomes.

After 15+ years working in local government, I founded Stephanie Queen Consulting LLC (SQC) in January 2024 to provide professional planning and consulting services to communities and critical projects around the state. I enjoy working with municipal leaders who are striving to make positive and lasting impacts, and through our work together you can expect informed, thoughtful, and actionable guidance responsive to your community's needs and goals. I have a sincere interest in seeing Alaskan communities thrive, and am committed to ensuring my clients meet their objectives.

The attached proposal further expands on my professional background and experience, and my approach to this project. I have a proven record of planning, financing, and implementing economic development strategies and projects at the local government level, and am excited to bring these skills and experiences to support the City of Nome in your goals.

As the owner of Stephanie Queen Consulting LLC, I am authorized to make representations on behalf of the firm and agree to provide the services requested in the Request for Proposals. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Queen", followed by a horizontal line.

Stephanie Queen  
Owner / Principal Consultant

Contact Info: Stephanie Queen Consulting LLC  
335 Crows Nest Ct.  
Soldotna, AK 99669  
Phone: 1-907-953-7701  
Fax: N/A  
Alaska Business License: #2190867

Enclosures: Proposal Narrative  
Fee Proposal  
Professional Resume

City of Nome, Alaska  
Proposal to Provide Economic Development Consulting Services

A. PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

As owner and principal consultant of Stephanie Queen Consulting LLC (SQC), I would be the City's single point of contact for the duration of our engagement.

My career in local government began in 2008, when I was hired as the Soldotna City Planner to lead the city's planning and land use department. My first major project was overseeing the development and implementation of the City's new comprehensive plan, which established priorities and provided the foundation for much of the work we accomplished in the following years. In 2011 my position was reclassified as the 'Director of Economic Development and Planning,' and while I continued to oversee the City's zoning, GIS, and land use functions, my primary focus was in establishing programs and identifying projects which promoted economic growth and community development.

In 2018 I was appointed Soldotna City Manager, a role I served in for more than five years. As City Manager I was responsible for planning, organizing, and directing all municipal operations for the city which has some similarities to Nome<sup>1</sup>, including that both act as regional hubs for good and services. In this position I gained valuable experience in municipal budgeting (for both operating and capital) and finance, and delivering large and complex projects. I am familiar with a variety of state, federal, and private foundation funding sources, and have successfully worked to apply for and receive outside funds for various municipal priorities, including:

- Green Infrastructure demonstration project (\$108,307 federal pass-through funding from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation);
- Riverfront Redevelopment Planning (\$360,000 from the US Dept. of Commerce, Economic Development Agency);
- Improvements to the Soldotna Wastewater Treatment Plant (\$1.96 million in Congressionally Directed Spending through the Interior and Environment Federal Appropriations Bill);
- Soldotna Community Connections and ADA Improvements (\$1,211,579 from the Alaska DOT+PF, TAP funds); and
- The Soldotna Field House (\$15 million voter-approved General Obligation Bond, \$450,000 Tier 2 Grant from the Rasmuson Foundation, \$1 million in Congressionally Directed Spending through the USDA).

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<sup>1</sup> Like Nome, Soldotna was a first class city under Title 29 of the Alaska Statutes for most of its history, until voters approved a citizens initiative for a Home Rule charter in 2016.

I decided to launch a consulting firm in early 2024 so I would have the opportunity to partner with communities around the state, working to overcome challenges and seize opportunities. I have significant experience working with the public, and developing and nurturing effective partnerships with key stakeholders and local organizations. And I understand and respect the role of the city Administration in supporting the Mayor and Council in identifying their shared vision and policy goals, then bringing forward recommendations and implementation strategies to achieve them.

Though my bachelor and master's degrees are in Civil and Environmental Engineering, I have spent the majority of my career in land use planning, economic development, and city administration. I have been certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) since 2012, pledging to uphold high standards of practice, ethics, and professional conduct, and to keep my skills sharp and up to date by continuously pursuing advanced professional education. And as a member of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) from 2013-2018, I have participated in several trainings and seminars on topics including: Business Retention & Expansion; Real Estate Development & Reuse; revitalizing vacant spaces; partnering with local healthcare providers for economic development; and tourism resources and strategies.

I have the resources and capacity to commit to this project, and am excited about the opportunity. Additional details about my background, education, and professional recognition are available on the attached Resume.

## B. RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

In both my former municipal roles, I was directly involved in identifying opportunities, developing plans and strategies, and executing projects and programs that promoted economic development. Specific project experience related to the scope of work outlined in the RFP is detailed below:

Downtown Improvements. One of the City of Soldotna's longstanding goals during my tenure was to improve the streetscape of the Sterling Highway and support a more thriving downtown. As Planning Director, I oversaw development and implementation of the city's downtown improvement efforts including:

- creating and administering Soldotna's Storefront Improvement Program, a municipal matching grant for façade improvements that was the first such program in the state;
- implementing new streetscape landscaping and decorative light pole banners; and
- design and construction of highway gateway signage and new park signage.

Through these efforts I learned that physical improvements to the City's 'Main Street' and downtown commercial district – whether in the public right-of-way or through promoting redevelopment of adjacent private property – can be an effective strategy in encouraging continued development and growth. Other communities have taken notice, and Soldotna's storefront improvement program has since been replicated and implemented by the City of Kenai and the City of Kodiak.

Park Programming and Partnerships. Another successful economic development strategy can be to energize city parks and public spaces with arts, music, and culture.

In Soldotna we partnered with Vision Soldotna, a 501(c)(3) related to the Greater Soldotna Area Chamber of Commerce, to provide free live music in Soldotna Creek Park every Wednesday in June, July, and August. The popular event has been running for several years, and is supported in part by the

Mortimer and Mimi Levitt Foundation, a national entity that partners with non-profits to activate underused outdoor spaces and bring people together through the power of free, live music.

The Soldotna Wednesday Market is a private business which runs a weekly vendor market in conjunction with the Levitt Amp concerts. Over the years, the city has supported and provided a location for the market which has grown from just five vendors its first year, to more than 60 food, craft, and service vendors who now attend the market each Wednesday during the summer. Several of these vendors eventually went on to open their own permanent ('brick and mortar') businesses within the City, demonstrating the importance of supporting small, seasonal start-ups who can grow into year-round businesses.

Whether partnering with a local non-profit or for-profit businesses, the City of Nome may consider similar ways to engage community spaces in ways that bring people together, promote arts and culture, and support small locally-owned businesses and entrepreneurs.

Riverfront Redevelopment. The City's early 'downtown improvement' efforts focused on the built environment, but the community had a more ambitious vision of transforming the city's commercial waterfront to create a more walkable, thriving downtown where residents and visitors can gather year-round. As City Manager, I worked with several key staff and oversaw development of the City's successful grant application to the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Agency (EDA), providing \$360,000 for development of a Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. The completed plan was adopted in February 2024, and in July 2024 Stephanie Queen Consulting was contracted by the City to oversee implementation of the plan's high-priority projects and concepts.

While competition for grant funding is high and success is not guaranteed, as part of our engagement I would work with the City Administration to identify potential outside funding sources (like the EDA and private foundations) to support the projects and activities identified in the economic development strategy.

Business Retention and Expansion. To ensure existing Soldotna Businesses had what they needed to grow and thrive, while at the City I developed a 'business climate' survey which identified key issues and opportunities. The survey itself was administered in partnership with the local chamber of commerce, and its results helped inform the City's overall approach to business retention including working to update municipal codes that no longer served the city's policy goals; helping business owners identify property for future expansion needs; and connecting people to existing small business support resources in the community.

In addition to face-to-face meetings, a survey is one way to engage the public early on, in identifying potential focus areas.

Infrastructure to support Economic Development. One additional element of promoting economic development at the local level, is ensuring public infrastructure supports the needs of the community. This includes the municipal assets which promote private development (such as streets, utilities, and public safety), but also quality-of-life amenities such as parks, cultural, and recreational facilities which build community bonds and encourage others to visit and stay.

I have experience planning for, funding, and implementing large capital projects such as the 40,000 square foot Soldotna Field House (currently under construction with a target of opening in August 2026); large playgrounds and regional parks, and trail and pedestrian infrastructure. Part of our engagement in developing an economic development strategy for Nome, will be to assess the City's capacity to fund

capital projects which support its economic development goals, and where possible, identify potential outside funding sources.

**Municipal Finance.** As a city department head, I was responsible for managing individual projects, administering the annual department budget for Economic Development and Planning, and advising the City Manager on projects and programs which furthered the city's goals and policy objectives. As City Manager, I gained broader experience in public finance as the chief administrative officer responsible for the day-to-day operations of the municipality, developing and presenting the operating and capital budgets, and securing and administering grant funds.

During my tenure, we successfully transitioned the City from an annual to a biennial budget process, resulting in better efficiency in staff resources devoted to preparing for and building the city's operating budget. We also were effective in planning for capital investment through the annual update of the City's 5-year Capital improvement Plan, which allowed the city to prioritize and fund new infrastructure projects but also maintenance and replacement of existing assets.

As previously mentioned, I have experience developing funding strategies for large infrastructure projects that rely on a mix of municipal and outside funding sources. And through previous service on various state-wide boards (including serving as the Vice President of the Alaska Remote Seller Sales Tax Commission from the commission's inception until my departure from local government in 2023), I gained a valuable network of local government finance contacts around the state.

Overall, I feel my background uniquely positions me to advise and support other Alaskan municipal leaders, because I have been in your shoes and understand how to successfully navigate the challenges and opportunities you face. I am a lifelong Alaskan who is passionate about promoting good outcomes in communities, and I believe my skills and experience align well with those sought in the City's RFP. If selected, I would work hard to ensure the City of Nome has a solid plan and set of strategies to guide its economic development activities in the coming years.

## C. REFERENCES

The following individuals are familiar with my work in economic development and municipal government, and are available as references:

**Cassidi Cameron**

Executive Director, Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD)  
(907) 283-3335 ext. 3

**Shanon Davis**

Former Executive Director, Greater Soldotna Area Chamber of Commerce (2018-2023)  
(907) 394-0466

**Steve Manley**

Soldotna Downtown Improvement Plan and  
Soldotna Riverfront Redevelopment Plan Advisory Committee Member  
(907) 953-7735

## D. PROJECT UNDERSTANDING AND APPROACH

As the most populated City in the Bering Strait region and with significant opportunities afforded by its port, harbor, and airport, Nome is well positioned to build on its current status as a supply, service, and transportation hub. I understand the City is seeking a consultant to work collaboratively with the Assistant City Manager, Mayor, and Council to develop a set of strategies that are actionable and practical, leading to improved economic outcomes for the community.

My general approach to this project would be to:

- Review existing data, plans, and policy documents to establish a solid foundation and ensure strategies are relevant, supported, and informed by existing policy;
- Meet with the City Administration, Mayor, and Council to establish and build consensus around a shared vision and set of desired outcomes;
- Engage directly with key stakeholders and organizational partners in the community to gather additional information about opportunities and potential challenges;
- Identify a set of priority focus areas, based on the City's goals and the community's feedback; and
- Build out a short- and medium-term action plan with tasks the City can initiate and accomplish over the next several years, to move the community towards its economic development goals.

I believe that successful economic development – particularly in small communities – is only possible when the local government works collaboratively with community partners including: tribal entities, non-profits, the private sector (land owners, business owners, and developers), and others. I would work with the City to identify and build on existing partnerships for this project, which likely include:

- the Nome Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau;
- Kawerak, Incorporated;
- Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation;
- Norton Sound Health Corporation;
- the University of Alaska and local K-12 schools;
- statewide entities such as RuralCAP and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; and
- the Alaska Small Business Development Center

Once the Mayor and Council have refined their vision and goals for the project, I would engage with community stakeholders to identify opportunities for programs, projects, or initiatives for the new economic development strategy. Focus areas may include topics such as:

- Tourism marketing and attraction;
- Business retention and expansion;
- Workforce development;
- Downtown 'Main Street' revitalization;
- Entrepreneurial and small business development;
- Municipal infrastructure to promote real estate development and re-use;
- Reviewing City code and procedures related to development; and
- Municipal Infrastructure planning to promote community and private development.

Once individual opportunities are identified, I would work closely with the Assistant City Manager to prioritize, and create specific action plans. The action plans would identify who was primarily responsible for next steps, any operational or potential funding partners, and desired outcomes. Where

budgets can be estimated, this information would also be included to aid the City in planning for new programs and projects in the future.

## E. PROPOSED SCOPE OF WORK AND SCHEDULE

### *C.1 Project Kick-Off and Planning (February 2025)*

At the start of the project I would schedule a series of kick-off meetings with the Assistant City Manager to discuss general project management tasks, and also to discuss and verify some key assumptions about the project, schedule, and approach.

We would also begin building out a list of key stakeholder, potential partners, and public involvement opportunities. Depending on the City's preference, this could include a small working group to assist in the development of the plan, the use of a community or business survey, and strategies for engaging people one-on-one.

*Deliverable: Public involvement strategy and project schedule/deliverables memo*

### *C.2 Existing Policy / Resource Review (March 2025)*

Rather than devote significant budget and resources to data gathering and analysis as part of this scope of work, my plan would be to rely on existing resources and plans to help inform the new economic development strategy. I believe this approach would maximize the value to the City, by focusing our time on identifying opportunities and developing pragmatic, actionable steps the City can take over the next 1-3 years.

Examples of documents and studies to be reviewed at this step include:

- the Bering Strait Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2019-2024 (Kawerak, Inc.);
- Bering Strait Community Needs Assessment (Kawerak, March 2022);
- City of Nome Comprehensive Plan; and
- Other plans or studies identified during the project kick-off phase (C.1).

*Deliverable: Summary of existing plan policy goals and objectives*

### *C.3 In-person Site Visit 1 (April 2025)*

In April (or on a timeline agreed to with the Assistant City Manager), I would plan my first three-day in-person visit. During this visit, I would meet and continue coordinating with the City Administration, engage with community stakeholders 1-on-1, and conduct a vision and goal-setting work session with Mayor and Council.

*Deliverables: Mayor and Council work session presentation and notes, public involvement summary, and draft vision and goals for the Economic Development Strategy*

### *C.4 Develop and Refine Focus Areas and Implementation Strategies (May-June 2025)*

In May and June, I would correspond remotely (via email, phone, and videochat) with the Assistant City Manager to refine the focus areas and draft the economic development strategy. Each action item in the



plan will contain sufficient detail so the administration has a clear set of steps to take, ideas about potential funding sources and partners, and how to measure progress of desired outcomes. I can return to Nome for a second in-person visit during this phase of the project, to continue engaging with the Assistant City Manager and key stakeholders as opportunities are identified and the draft plan comes together.

Deliverable: First draft of Economic Development Strategy action plan

### *C.5 Finalize and Present Plan (July)*

After incorporating additional public feedback and direction provided by the Assistant City Manager, I would produce the finished Economic Development Strategy. In July, I would present the final plan and highlight key strategies and recommendations to the Mayor, Council, and community members in another public work session.

Deliverables: work session presentation materials, and final Economic Development Strategy (electronic format: PDF or Microsoft Word)

## FEE STRUCTURE AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES

To ensure I am able to provide responsive, timely attention to my clients, I have decided to limit the number of engagements and projects at any given time. Currently, I have capacity to deliver the services described in the RFP and can commit to achieving the scope of work within the desired 6-month timeline.

My fee structure for is based on an hourly rate of: \$150 per hour. Based on the scope of work described in Section E., I propose to perform the requested services for an hourly basis, not-to-exceed \$37,650 (plus reimbursable expenses). This fee proposal is based on the following time estimates for project milestones and deliverables:

Task	Hours	Cost
C.1 Project Kick-Off and Initial Planning	20	\$3,000
C.2 Existing Policy / Resource Review	15	\$2,250
C.3 In-person Site Visit 1	44	\$6,600
C.4 Develop Focus Areas and Implementation Strategies	60	\$9,000
C.5 Finalize and Present Plan	112	\$16,800
Total	251	\$37,650

In addition to the fees outlined above, I would request reimbursement for reasonable and normal travel expenses associated with three in-person visits during the project. Those expenses would be reimbursed at cost (as approved by the City Manager or Assistant City Manager), and are estimated below.

	Each	Total (3 trips)
Roundtrip airfare Kenai-Anchorage	\$300	\$900
Roundtrip airfare Anchorage-Nome	\$400	\$1,200
Lodging in Nome (2 nights)	\$400	\$1,200
Estimate		\$3,300



# Stephanie Queen, AICP

Email: StephanieQueenConsulting@gmail.com

Web: www.StephanieQueenConsulting.com

Cell: 1.907.953.7701

## EDUCATION

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### **Cornell University | Ithaca, New York**

- Master of Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering (2006)
- Bachelor of Science, Civil and Environmental Engineering (2004)

### **Fulbright Scholar | Istanbul, Turkey**

- Studying the economics of earthquake risk mitigation (2007)

## PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

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### **Alaska Municipal League**

- Excellence in Local Government, Economic + Work Environment (Soldotna Recruitment + Retention Strategies, 2023)
- Emerging Municipal Leader of the Year (2022)

### **Greater Soldotna Area Chamber of Commerce**

- Excellence in Profession Award (2022)
- Government and Civic Affairs Award (2017)

### **Alaska Chapter of the American Planning Association**

- Comprehensive Plan of the Year ('Envision Soldotna 2030', 2013)
- Best Practices Award (Soldotna Storefront Improvement Program, 2012)

## WORK EXPERIENCE

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### **Principal / Owner** (Jan. 2024 to present)

Stephanie Queen Consulting | Soldotna, Alaska

Providing strategic support to Alaskan municipalities and critical infrastructure projects. Specializing in Public Engagement, Local Government Administration, Project Planning and Coordination, Land Use, and Economic Development.

### **City Manager** (2018-2023)

City of Soldotna | Soldotna, Alaska

Chief Administrative officer, responsible for planning, organizing, and directing all municipal operations for the City of Soldotna. Directly managed 10 Department Directors, with a city staff that varied seasonally from approximately 70 to 100 employees. Responsible for tracking and implementing annual operating and capital budget exceeding \$18 million (FY23).

### **Director of Economic Development + Planning Dept.** (2008-2018)

City of Soldotna | Soldotna, Alaska

Managed all functions of the Planning/Economic Development Department, including: permitting, geographic information systems (GIS), short- and long-range planning, code enforcement and updates, municipal land management, and economic development.

### **Civil Engineering Planner** (2007-2008)

DOWL Engineers | Anchorage, Alaska

Prepared applications and obtained entitlements from the Municipality of Anchorage for a range of commercial and institutional development projects.