DOWNTOWN
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

Request For Qualifications
Downtown Neighborhood Seeks Community Garden Facilitators

Deadline to respond: December 1, 2024

Deliver to:
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.
Attention: Lauren Suidgeest
29 Pearl St. NW, Suite 1
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
or
lsuidgeest@downtowngr.org

Downtown Neighborhood Seeks Community Garden Facilitators

Inquiries and submittals should be sent to Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. attn: Lauren Suidgeest, lsuidgeest@downtowngr.org.

Request for Qualifications
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) seeks a community partner or partners to provide programming for the Downtown Community Garden – a 55 plot community garden on the westside of Downtown Grand Rapids located at 250 Seward Ave. NW. The Downtown Community Garden opened for its first growing season in June 2024.

The purpose of this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is to identify a partner who can create, expand and cultivate a diverse community of garden users to grow their own food, pollinator plants and community-centric place.

Background
In 2015 DGRI and the City of Grand Rapids adopted GR Forward, a 10-year master plan for Downtown that was informed by significant community input and industry expertise. Goal 2 of this plan focuses on improving the quality of life for Downtown neighbors. Chief among the priorities is expanding access to fresh food and promoting green building and sustainable site design principles.

Fresh food access remains a top goal that would greatly improve the quality of living experience in Downtown Grand Rapids. Priority will be given to submittals that meet the following community-informed recommendations:

- Sustain regular in-person programming at the garden location
    - Varied hours to provide greater access to neighbors at different times of day/evening is a bonus
- Provide a variety of fresh, local fruit, vegetable and pollinator plant or seed options
    - Ethnically diverse plants to meet a variety of audiences
    - Organic materials only
- Partner with diverse array of local farms and/or food providers

Requirements
To be considered, please provide detailed qualifications of how your organization can fulfill the following aspirations for community garden programming in the 2025 growing season and post-season. We are open to partnerships and encourage innovative ideas to meet the priorities set by Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

Qualifications must include detailed information about the following categories.
Please be clear, concise and thorough in your response.

1. **Concept**
    - Describe your idea for robust community garden programming to build community, create a worthwhile experience and help neighbors produce food within a community garden.
    - Describe education efforts you can provide related to use of produce grown in the garden. What opportunities can you provide for ideas such as canning, fermenting, preserving, etc.?

- Describe the implementation plan and timeline for your concept.

2. **Operational Details**
   - **Qualifications**: A detailed description of your or your organization's experience with programming community gardens or growing food in a diverse urban setting.
   - **Approach**: An overview of your proposed programming model for this location to meet the priorities of neighbors. Please indicate your planned operation hours and required staffing.
   - **Product Sourcing**: Share the products - specifically seeds, starter plants or supplies - that you can source and intend to provide in this location.
   - **Estimated Rates or Fees**: Explain the costs that will need to be covered for your idea to come to life. If you have other parties who can share costs, please include.

3. **Additional Questions**
   - What barriers do you foresee in programming a community garden in the Downtown area? How do you plan to address them?
   - What additional resources might you require to program a community garden in Downtown Grand Rapids?
   - Would you consider the possibility of partnership with other community entities that address food accessibility and/or justice?

Evaluation Factors

Qualifications will be evaluated by a committee of DGRI staff. A rubric will be used to evaluate qualifications based on the following criteria:

- Clarity, conciseness and thoroughness
- Project understanding and approach for achieving objectives
- Alignment with Community goals
- Diversity of project team, producers and partners
- Rates and fees to deliver programming
- Proposed timeline

Timeline

- October 30, 2024: RFQ issued
- November 15, 2024: RFQ questions and clarifications due no later than 5 PM ET
- November 22, 2024: Responses to RFQs questions issued
- **December 1, 2024: Deadline to submit RFQ is 5 PM ET**
  - Please email a digital copy to lsuidgeest@downtowngr.org or drop off a hard copy at Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., 29 Pearl St. NW, Suite #1
- December 16, 2024: Notification of RFQ selection