Request for Qualifications

Community Engagement Services
Grand River Corridor Revitalization Initiative
Grand Rapids, MI

Deadline:
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. will receive proposals until January 29, 2021

Deliver to:
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.
Attention: Andy Guy
aguy@downtowngr.org

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. seeks a qualified consultant to help establish and initiate a thoughtful and proactive community engagement program that emphasizes diversity, equity and inclusion. The program will guide the startup work of an independent nonprofit entity currently organizing to help lead execution of the community's vision for a revitalized Grand River Corridor from Riverside to Millennium Parks.

The forthcoming nonprofit entity will serve as the backbone of a network of river revitalization partners and stakeholders that includes but is certainly not limited to the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County, Grand Rapids Whitewater, Grand Rapids Public Museum and many others.

The purpose of the community engagement program is to develop an effective practice that:

- Genuinely connects the nonprofit and its work to community and stakeholders, especially communities of color and historically marginalized neighborhoods,
- Establishes open and ongoing communications channels with partners and interested parties,
- Purposely and deliberately shares with community relevant information about river corridor revitalization opportunities and decisions,
- Ensures a diversity of lived experience actively informs corridor revitalization organizing work,
- Proactively elicits and responds to diverse, actionable community input,
- Identifies common goals and points of collaboration, with special emphasis on community needs/wants related to education, workforce development, transportation and other place-based conditions that contribute to healthy, vibrant community, and
- Helps cultivate an informed and diverse network of partners and partnerships to advance river corridor revitalization, programming and long-term sustainability.

One overarching goal is to ensure the nonprofit, its future work and, by extension, the substantial collaborative effort required to revitalize the Grand River corridor from Riverside to Millennium Parks is people-centered and place-based and reflects the "River for All" commitment to equity and inclusion.

Grand Rapidians envision a restored and revitalized Grand River corridor as a signature public amenity that's a welcoming, safe and accessible place for all, especially historically disconnected neighborhoods and communities adjacent to the river.

Corridor revitalization is viewed in a class with such ambitious 21st century city-building projects as Atlanta's BeltLine, the High Line in New York City and the waterfront revitalization initiatives underway in Toronto, Chicago and Detroit. This transformative project offers enormous potential to serve the needs and desires of various local stakeholders, constituents and communities – particularly underinvested neighborhoods and those affected by generations of racial and ethnic segregation, unequal growth and poverty. Indeed, the project promises to help drive the region's next generation of growth and prosperity in a fundamentally more equitable way.

With this RFQ, the project partners seek consultant services to develop and begin to execute an inclusive and equitable community engagement strategy that informs and supports future river revitalization organizing and implementation efforts.

Scope of Work

The consultant scope of work for this project includes:

- Lead the development and initiation of a comprehensive community engagement strategy focused on diversity, equity and inclusion that advances the nonprofit's vision to be an active and responsive civic connector around river corridor revitalization and activation.

- Identify and establish positive relationships with a wide range of diverse community stakeholders, including but not limited to local residents, neighborhood groups and community-based organizations,
- Develop a database of key, diverse cultural and community service organizations/persons and their program offerings that present potential partnerships around building a welcoming and inclusive Grand River corridor.
- Share information with, and elicit input from, diverse community stakeholders on organizational priorities and engagement opportunities.
- Establish ongoing community feedback mechanisms to promote responsiveness to stakeholders needs and ideas and build trust.
- Develop assessment tools, systems and metrics to track the impact of community engagement activities, especially those focused on diverse and historically marginalized groups.
- Help plan and execute organizational convenings, webinars and other related events to support the launch and early organizing work of the new nonprofit.
- Brief key leadership bodies as the project progresses.

Background Information

This engagement effort will build on extensive community outreach efforts done to date in support of defining and planning the Grand River corridor revitalization opportunity. This effort also will coordinate and collaborate closely with the ongoing portfolio of "River for All" related work led by the City of Grand Rapids Office of Equity and Engagement.

The community has worked for several years on various aspects of this multi-faceted and complex community building project. This section includes relevant background on the extensive planning, design and other work that informs the next steps for advancing a uniquely inclusive community engagement effort.

Direct River-Related Assets

- Framework for Equitable Engagement, 2020
- River for All, 2018
- City of Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Master Plan, 2017
- GR Forward, 2015
- Grand Rapids Whitewater Plan for River Restoration
- Grand Rapids Whitewater Economic Impact Analysis, 2014
- Green Grand Rapids, 2012

Other Related Community Tools & Plans

- Equitable Economic Development & Mobility Strategic Plan, 2020
- South Division-Grandville Development Plan, 2019
- North Quarter TIF & Development Plan, 2019
- Grand Rapids Destination Assets Study, 2017
- Rose Center Fellowship Report, 2017
- Grandville Avenue Area Specific Plan, 2017
- Southtown TIF & Development Plan, 2016
- Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority Development and TIF Plan, 2016
- Michigan Street Plan, 2015
- Report of the Downtown Improvement District Board, 2015
- Westside TIF & Development Plan, 2014
- Westside Area Specific Plan, 2014
- John Ball Area Neighbors/South West Area Neighbors Area Specific Plan, 2012
- Belknap Lookout Area Specific Plan, 2010

- Monroe North Business District Plan, 2010
- North Monroe Tax Increment Finance Plan, 2008

Proposal Submission

Responses to this request for qualifications should be no longer than 10 pages. The proposal should include the following information:

- A summary of project understanding including any observations on particular project expectations, opportunities or challenges.
- Identification and overview of the proposed project leader and/or team members. Briefly overview the responding firm, as applicable.
- A description of experience in completing this type or related work, including specific examples and project references.
- A description of your approach to, and examples of, community engagement work that centers diversity, equity and inclusion.
- A description of your project management philosophy and approach towards completing this work.
- Additional information. Please present any relevant data or information which you consider pertinent to the project and selection process.

Consultant Selection

Project partners will evaluate all responses to this opportunity and may conduct interviews with short-listed facilitators and/or firms. The basis for evaluation will include:

- Connection with/knowledge of community/neighborhood dynamics in Grand Rapids/Kent County, particularly Neighborhoods of Focus and key river-adjacent neighborhoods.
- Proven ability to identify, connect with and facilitate diverse groups of people.
- Professional excellence.
- Facilitation experience/approach fit.
- Quality of communication skills.
- Demonstrated dedication to the community and the work.

Project Schedule

- January 11, 2021 – RFQ Issued
- January 29, 2021 – Qualifications Due from Interested Applicants
- February 5, 2021 – Notice of Award
- March 2021 – Commence Project

Interested respondents should direct inquiries and submission to Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. Chief Outcomes Officer Andy Guy (aguy@downtowngr.org).