



DOWNTOWN
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

Request for Qualifications

Governance and Funding Options Analysis
Grand River Corridor Revitalization Initiative
Grand Rapids, MI

Deadline:

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. will receive proposals until June 10, 2019

Deliver to:

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.
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Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) invites all interested parties to submit their qualifications to help evaluate and recommend a long-term governance structure and funding strategy for developing, managing and sustaining the public assets associated with the future revitalized Grand River corridor, a collaboration between the [City of Grand Rapids](#), DGRI, [Grand Rapids Whitewater](#) (GRWW), [Kent County](#), local philanthropists, the state and federal government and numerous other community partners.

Opportunity Overview

The full vision for a revitalized run of the Grand River thru Downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan involves intimately intertwined restorative initiatives along the *waterway* and the *waterfront*:

- **Waterway.** The removal of obsolete low-head dams through the urban core to – among other far-reaching social, economic and environmental benefits – put the rapids back in the City of Grand Rapids. This \$45 million catalyst project recently entered the formal government permitting process, currently stands at 71 percent funded and will “break ground” in 2020 on a multi-year construction effort.

The project, spearheaded by the nonprofit Grand Rapids Whitewater, is a designated member of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership. The cultural significance of restoring the whitewater rapids cannot be overstated. The project literally restores the namesake of the City and with it the icon of the community’s natural heritage. The project also will transform the river channel from a divider of east and west into a central gathering place for the community.

- **Waterfront.** Transforming the east and west riverbanks into an approximately 9-mile multi-use trail and network of public amenities that loop around Downtown and link two major regional park assets – the City’s Riverside Park to the north and the County’s Millennium Park to the south.

While the full build-out of the trail and new public spaces will follow the work in the waterway, the project partners have already begun to advance on strategic improvements at the water’s edge. This includes substantial investment in community-based planning processes, the demonstration of new nature-based flood management measures, pop up community events to begin changing the community’s relationship with the river and the acquisition of waterfront property to facilitate key trail connections. The project partners also will begin major renovation of a central waterfront space – Lyon Square – in 2019 and have completed conceptual redevelopment plans for six other riverfront “opportunity sites.” Ultimately the community envisions developing some two dozen riverfront opportunity sites in the urban core.

The specific scope and schedule for these subsequent improvements remains in development but the total public and private investment is anticipated to leverage hundreds of millions of dollars and occur over the next decade.

Grand Rapidsians envision this restored and revitalized run of the Grand River (the Project) as a signature public amenity in a class with such ambitious civic projects as The High Line in New York City, Atlanta’s BeltLine and the waterfront revitalization initiatives underway in Toronto, Chicago and Detroit.

Put simply, 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.

The Project promises to help drive the region’s next generation of growth and prosperity. With this RFQ, the Project partners seek consultant services to support the essential work of defining a community-based

organizational structure – with a sustainable funding and revenue strategy – to see the vision fulfilled and the benefits enjoyed by all.

Background Information and Coordination with Other Initiatives

The community has worked for several years on various aspects of this multi-faceted and complex Project. This section includes relevant background on the extensive planning, design, financial projections and other work done to date that's useful to inform this governance and funding study.

Direct River-Related Assets

- [River for All](#), 2018
 - Includes Asset Management Plan with Operating Models & Management Strategies
- [City of Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Master Plan](#), 2017
 - Includes Funding Strategies Appendix
- [GR Forward](#), 2015
 - Includes [Organizational Models Work Group Report & Recommendations](#)
- [Grand Rapids Whitewater Plan for River Restoration](#)
- [Grand Rapids Whitewater Economic Impact Analysis](#), 2014
- [Green Grand Rapids](#), 2012

Other Community Tools & Plans

- [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
- South Division Corridor Plan, in process

Scope of Work

While the City and GRWW non-profit organization capably spearhead the catalytic work of restoring the waterway, the Project partners now aspire to define the long-term governance and management strategy best suited to advance a fully restored and revitalized Grand River corridor as a premier community asset.

The principal focus of this scope of work is to understand the local context, research best practices, evaluate options and recommend a governing framework that fits Grand Rapids' ambition.

Organizing to implement any successful recommendation(s) will be the focus of subsequent phases of work.

With this Request for Qualifications, DGRI and the project partners seek a qualified consultant or consultant partnerships to undertake a governance and funding study that includes the following:

- Review, affirm and, if necessary, refine the proposed organizational functions and tasks. (See Background above)
- Identify and assess existing local organizational and funding capacities.
- Identify and review relevant exemplary organizational models and possibilities.
- Evaluate the potential for advantageous partnerships.
- Assess and estimate the economic impacts of revitalizing the waterfront.
- Evaluate sustainable and diverse funding streams to support capital planning, operations, programming, maintenance, management and other organizational functions that may be identified.
- Determine options and provide recommendations.

DGRI serves as the lead project manager and – along with key partners - a co-convenor and facilitator of the requisite local conversations.

This scope of work represents the Project partners’ best assessment of the work required to accomplish the objectives of this project. The partners are open to alternative ideas and approaches that may deviate from this scope to better meet project objectives.

Robust and meaningful community engagement is vital to inform and build confidence in this process. To that end, DGRI will work with the successful candidate – and likely additional local assets – to define an effective public outreach and inclusion program. While ideas about and experience with community engagement are welcome in responses to this RFQ, they are not required.

Key Deliverables

The successful candidate is expected provide the following deliverables:

- Memo presenting a thorough analysis of governance options and rationale for a preferred alternative to realize the vision for a restored, revitalized and high-performing Grand River corridor.
- Memo detailing a proposed multi-year capital plan to implement the community’s River for All vision.
- Memo detailing a proposed funding plan to build, manage and maintain the new riverfront amenity.
- Memo assessing the estimated economic benefits of building the riverfront amenity.

Consultant Selection

Submission to this request should be no longer than 10 pages. DGRI and partners will evaluate responses to this opportunity based on the following criteria:

- Thoroughness, quality and conciseness of the submittal.
- Project understanding and approach for achieving the stated objectives.
- Related Project experience and demonstration of tangible results.
- Proven understanding of 21st century city building concerns, fundamentals and opportunities.

Project Schedule

- May 13, 2019 – RFQ Issued
- June 10, 2019 – Qualifications Due
- June 28, 2019 – Notice of Award
- July 15, 2109 – Commence Project
- December 20, 2019 – Submit Key Deliverables