Request for Qualifications

Branding & Marketing Services
Grand River Corridor Revitalization Initiative
Grand Rapids/Kent County, MI

Deadline:
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. will receive proposals until 4:00 PM on March 30, 2022

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

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) seeks the services of qualified professionals to help develop a brand identity and marketing strategy for a new nonprofit entity.

The new nonprofit entity will help lead execution of the community's vision for a revitalized Grand River corridor that strengthens Grand Rapids' position as vibrant place to live, work and play.

The new nonprofit will work to unite community voices for the river, serving as the backbone of a network of river revitalization partners that includes but is certainly not limited to the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc, Grand Rapids Whitewater, Grand Rapids Public Museum and many others.

The nonprofit also will work to build, promote and sustain this public Grand River greenway as it flows thru Kent County's urban core. DGRI is currently incubating the nonprofit entity.

Scope of Work & Deliverables

With this Request for Qualifications, DGRI seeks responses from interested and qualified firms, organizations or individuals to help execute the following scope of work.

- Visual identity. Develop an original name and logo for the organization, complete with a recommended font system and color palette.
- Style guide. Develop detailed brand standards and usage guidelines.
- Messaging. Collaborate with the project communications team to review and potentially refine draft core message statements identifying the organization and its mission, vision, values and purpose to develop a tagline(s), talking points and/or call to action(s) that summarize what the brand is all about.
- Tools. Prepare templates for common uses including but not limited to:
    - Letterhead
    - PowerPoint Master
    - E-Newsletter
    - Fact sheet
- Marketing strategy. Recommend short- and longer-term implementation tactics and estimated budget required to introduce and establish the new brand and the new organization.

Desired Brand Qualities

The primary objectives of the visual branding initiative include but are not limited to:

- Authenticity. The visual brand must be original, authentic and resonate with citizens, businesses and community groups to help earn the broadest possible support in Grand Rapids and Kent County.
- Community pride and identity. The brand must embody the spirt of innovation, progress and inclusion commensurate with the community's ambitious vision for the Grand River.
- Community promotion. The brand must communicate the organization and its work represents a fresh form of public-private-community partnership intentionally developed to promote river corridor revitalization and the far-reaching economic, social, environmental and recreational benefits associated with it.
- Flexibility. The brand must be flexible enough to evolve as the organization grows and its portfolio of work evolves.

Instructions for Preparing Qualifications

Provide one (1) electronic copy. Responses to this request for qualifications should be no longer than 10 pages.

Submittals should contain the following information:

- A summary of project understanding including any observations on particular project expectations, opportunities or challenges.
- A firm overview and identification of proposed project team members.
- A description of experience in completing this type or related work within the last five years, including specific examples, project references and key personnel involved.
    - Specifically include the respondent's experience working in the service of diverse audiences and community groups in the development of similar projects.
- A description of your project management philosophy and approach towards completing this work.
- A summary of hourly rates and/or professional fees to perform the requested services. A full budget proposal is not required at this time.
- 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:

- Understanding of the Grand River corridor revitalization initiative and its significance to the Grand Rapids/Kent County/West Michigan community.
- Design and marketing qualifications, demonstrated with experience and portfolio of similar projects.
- Project approach, detail of proposed discovery period and proven ability to produce deliverables.
- Demonstrated experience genuinely ensuring that commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion are key and genuine brand values.
- Proven cultural competency and demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with diverse teams and individuals.
- Demonstrated ability to develop a clean, fresh finished product that genuinely communicates to and connects with a diverse audience across multiple media platforms.
- Professional excellence.
- Quality of communication.

Project Schedule

- March 2, 2022 – RFQ Issued
- March 30, 2022 – Qualifications Due from Interested Applicants
- April 15, 2022 – Notice of Award
- April 18, 2022 – Commence Project
- July 1, 2022 – Submit Key Deliverables

Background Information

The greater Grand Rapids community has worked for more than a decade to define an ambitious vision for the future of the Grand River corridor as it runs through Kent County's urban core. The full vision 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, and aims to "break ground" in 2022 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. The intent is for these waterway elements to be done in a way that does not allow for the spread of invasive species, particularly the noxious sea lamprey.

- 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.

  The new nonprofit organization will play a leadership role marshalling the community's capacity to implement this vision and sustain the improvements over time.

  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 2022 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 will be significant and occur over the next decade.

Grand Rapidians envision this restored and revitalized run of the Grand River 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 partners estimate the construction of in-channel improvements, riverfront parks and trail connections will generate significant economic benefits and, in the initial phases, create some 1,500 one-time jobs. The revitalized river corridor also will generate permanent annual jobs through the stewardship and management of the amenities and, perhaps most excitingly, yet-to-be-determined economic opportunity as the outdoor recreation economy grows around the waterway.

Indeed the revitalization of the Grand River corridor promises to help drive the region's next generation of growth and prosperity.

For additional background on the community's vision for the future of the Grand River please see the following river-related assets:

- River for All (2018)
- GR Forward (2015)
- Grand Rapids Whitewater Plan for River Restoration
- Green Grand Rapids (2012)