

Request for Proposals (RFP) – Public Realm Enhancement Plan

Stamford Downtown Special Services District – Stamford, CT

March 3, 2021

Purpose

The Stamford Downtown Special Services District (Stamford Downtown) seeks professional services to expand on our ongoing placemaking program to create a public realm enhancement and beautification plan covering the entirety of the business improvement district that identifies and prioritizes targeted improvements and recommends an implementation strategy to achieve results in the near term.

Background

Stamford Downtown serves as the sole business improvement district (BID) within the State of Connecticut's third (3rd) most populous municipality covering the city's urban core and the state's second largest employment district. The District is located within an approximately forty-five (45) minute train-ride or automobile drive from Midtown Manhattan. In its role as a BID, Stamford Downtown is focused on policy and planning, public realm and infrastructure, activation and marketing, and real estate and business development. The organization is a primary advocate for smart land use policy to continue to grow the neighborhood into a vibrant concentration of complementary land uses and activities. Stamford Downtown produces multiple signature events including an Annual Parade Spectacular, the Alive@Five Concert Series, and a renowned outdoor sculpture exhibit. Stamford Downtown works closely with building owners and tenants to activate ground floor spaces.

Before policy, events, and activation, though, the organization's primary role is to maintain and enhance the quality of the shared space between buildings. Stamford Downtown improves the physical environment through landscaping and environmental maintenance and further provides an inviting atmosphere with our Ambassador services. Stamford Downtown oversees a year-round landscape beautification program that includes more than two hundred (200) hanging baskets, approximately forty (40) ground planters, and fourteen (14) street-level gardens including spaces within three (3) public parks. Moving beyond the landscaping and maintenance activities, Stamford Downtown has also undertaken investments – through both capital projects and tactical urbanism – that add a layer of energy and interest to key public spaces that increase the quality of the daily experience and foster moments of surprise and engagement. Examples include the painting of tree grates and signal boxes, the commissioning of murals on blank walls, and the seasonal conversion of parking areas into expanded patios for outdoor dining and games.

The organization's Board recently formulated a new Public Realm + Infrastructure Committee to guide and oversee Stamford Downtown's public space investments and projects including this plan.

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Scope

The selected consultant shall create a Public Realm Enhancement Plan that identifies and prioritizes near-term opportunities to elevate key public spaces (including but not limited to sidewalks, traffic islands, plazas, parks, and passageways) from decent or high quality to exceptional. Building off of past plans by Stamford Downtown, the City, and/or the Urban Redevelopment Commission, this plan will determine those spaces that have the greatest potential to be catalytic for surrounding economic activity, provide the greatest value to the residential and office population, and support the activation and placemaking undertaken by Stamford Downtown and others.

The plan document must include a vision for the ideal Downtown public realm network, a proposed hierarchy of locations for future investment, improvement plans for three (3) prioritized locations, implementation steps to achieve the outcomes laid out in each improvement plan, any District-wide guidelines that emerge from the prior items regarding plant materials or amenities (such as street furniture) that could be replicated throughout downtown.

Wherever practical, the recommendations for public realm enhancements should utilize sustainable materials and landscape design including the use of recycled or upcycled products, drought tolerant and low-impact landscape design, and native plant materials.

The specific elements of the plan will include the following:

- 1) A photo summary of existing conditions,
- 2) Written and graphic hierarchy of public spaces and corridors to guide investments based on street infrastructure, multi-modal (i.e. pedestrian, vehicular and bicycle) patterns, built environment and context,
- 3) Public Realm Enhancement Plans for the three (3) locations given the highest priority within the hierarchy described above, and
- 4) The selected vendor shall provide a detailed inventory of street furniture (specifically, ground planters, benches and trash receptacles) and amenities for use throughout downtown including product specifications and suggested vendors.

The Public Realm Enhancement Plans noted in element #3, must include:

- 1) Schematic illustrations of the proposed plan,
- 2) A projected cost estimate,
- 3) A detailed listing of associated plant materials (if any) including specifications and quantities,
- 4) A detailed listing of site amenities (if any) including specification and quantities and

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5) Maintenance requirements.

Reference Documents

Stamford Downtown will provide the selected vendor with access to its existing, on-line mapping of street-level fixtures. This mapping includes, but is not limited to, lighting, trash receptacles, planters, public gardens and banners. The selected vendor’s design process should incorporate four (4) precedent documents created by the City of Stamford, Stamford Downtown, and/or the Stamford Urban Redevelopment Commission. These documents include the:

- Streetscape Guidelines (2003) – City of Stamford,
- Towards a Livable Neighborhood (Downtown Masterplan) (2010) – Regional Plan Association,
- Standards for Sidewalk Design (2014) – City of Stamford,
- Innovation District Connectivity and Wayfinding Plan (2018) – City of Stamford/Innovate Stamford and
- Draft Street Tree Manual (2020) – City of Stamford.

Submission Format

Stamford Downtown seeks submission of a detailed description of the prospective vendor’s project management team, related planning projects and fee structure. This description should include a:

1. Summary of firm history and leadership,
2. Project management and client support structure,
3. Summary of three (3) comprehensive urban landscape design plans,
4. Projected timeline,
5. References for three (3) clients and
6. Fee structure.

Note, applicants should itemize the fee structure to reflect each element as described in the **Scope** above. The fee structure should include an estimate of hours for each element, title and hourly cost for each related professional staff and breakdown of any additional costs.

Evaluation Process

Stamford Downtown will evaluate submissions according to a pre-determined, fifty (50) point criteria including:

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| 1. Firm background | 10 points |
| 2. Client support structure, | 10 points |
| 3. Review of related planning projects, | 10 points |
| 4. Feedback from references and | 10 points |
| 5. Fee structure. | 10 points |

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Stamford Downtown reserves the right to reject all responses and to re-start the procurement process.

Stamford Downtown may schedule interviews with prospective vendors. Interviews, if necessary, will take place during the work week of April 12 – 16, 2021.

Vendor selection is envisioned by the close of April 2021.

Submission Requirements

Prospective respondents should provide narrative responses by Noon on Friday, April 2, 2021. Respondents should send these responses in .pdf format via email to Michael Moore, Vice-President of Operations, at moore@stamford-downtown.com.

Please submit any questions to moore@stamford-downtown.com by Noon on Monday, March 15, 2021.