

# Request for Proposals

## Downtown Revitalization Plan for the City of Watertown, New York



City of Watertown  
Request for Proposals

## **INTRODUCTION**

The City of Watertown is requesting proposals from qualified consultants to prepare a Downtown Revitalization Plan. The City was awarded a Strategic Planning and Feasibility Studies grant from the New York State Department of State, which will be used to pay for the plan. Watertown is fortunate to have a historic downtown that generates jobs and provides opportunities for entertainment and families. This has not always been the case. Watertown's downtown faced decades of decline throughout the 1980s and 1990s as a result of residents and businesses leaving the area as well as a lack of community involvement.

Seeing a dire need to stimulate growth and vitality and reverse the decline of the downtown area, the City of Watertown has been working diligently in recent years to initiate a revitalization of its core. Many historic buildings have recently undergone rehabilitation and the area is seeing many positive changes. This has created new places to live and allowed new businesses to open their doors. In order to sustain the positive momentum, a revitalization plan is necessary to provide direction and guidance for future revitalization efforts.

## **HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN WATERTOWN**

Originally settled in 1800 and incorporated as a City in 1869, the City of Watertown (population 27,000) is located in northern New York State. Watertown is approximately 65 miles north of Syracuse, and approximately 35 miles south of the St. Lawrence River and the international boundary with Canada. It is the political and commercial hub of Jefferson County.

Downtown Watertown begins with, and radiates out from Public Square. Watertown's first landowners donated the land now known as Public Square in 1805, and fashioned the area as a New England-style commons to cultivate a central business district. Public Square contains a significant amount of 19<sup>th</sup> Century commercial architecture, including many Italianate style facades and wide cornices. Victorian-era street lights, in lieu of modern cobras, also help maintain a historical ambiance.

The Black River's mighty rapids powered a strong manufacturing history in Watertown that dates back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century and once led Watertown to have the most millionaires per capita in the United States. The manufacturing sector declined in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the military became the City's new economic engine. In 1984, the U.S. Army stationed the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division at Fort Drum, which is an 8-mile drive from Public Square by car.

## **RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS**

The City of Watertown has not engaged in any formal downtown planning efforts in a quarter-century. However, since the Public Square street reconstruction and streetscape project a decade ago, there have been many revitalization efforts completed throughout the downtown area. Four previous plans/studies were produced between 1983 and 1992. They include:

- **Market and Development Opportunities for Public Square Sites (1983):** This report focused on three sites, the Brighton Building, Lincoln Building and the site of the former Woodruff Hotel. It examined the physical condition of the Public Square area and of each of the three sites in particular, and specified opportunities and limitations for each site.
- **Master Plan for the City Center Area (1986):** This plan divided downtown into nine different sectors, examined what were then the existing conditions and identified emerging trends for each sector. The recommendations section consisted of a City Center Land Use Plan that divided downtown into seven “target zones” and established a vision for each, and recommended creating a more complete Downtown Master Plan.
- **The City of Watertown Main Street Program (1988):** The City retained the National Main Street Center to evaluate the state of Downtown Watertown. The final products of this included a Downtown Market Assessment, a Handbook for Watertown Retailers and a Report on the Public Relations Strategy Workshop for Downtown Watertown.
- **City Center Streetscape Plan (1992):** This plan focused on creating uniform design standards for Downtown Watertown’s curbs, sidewalks, streetlights and other elements of the public realm. It made specific recommendations for each segment of sidewalk in the downtown area, and presented a specific vision for Public Square Island as a more inviting public space and a suitable venue for small gatherings.

## **SPECIFIC ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED**

The City has identified the following issues that the consultant must address in the development of the Downtown Revitalization Plan:

- **Business Attraction, Retention and Downtown Housing:** With the recent increase in residents occupying the downtown area, these residents have created a demand for retail and services that attract commercial investment. This represents an opportunity for new growth, and the City hopes to create a retail hub within the downtown area not only to service the residents that live there, but also to attract foot traffic during and after business hours, as well as on the weekends.
- **Parking Management:** Convenient parking is necessary to support patronage of downtown businesses. While there is ample parking in the downtown, there is a perception that parking is limited and not easily accessible. Further, new downtown housing projects and commercial ventures have created new demands for parking that have not existed before. A parking inventory and strategy is necessary to provide a guide to ensure the appropriate use of existing parking and address any potential areas that may lack available spaces.
- **Downtown Identity:** Throughout this planning effort, the City would like to identify a way to brand our downtown as a destination for entertainment, families and commerce. The branding’s intention is to create a more pedestrian-focused experience and create a place that attracts residents and visitors year round.

- **Placemaking:** Contrary to its intended origins, many residents view Public Square as an arterial street rather than seeing it as a great public space to spend time. Design plans should focus on creating an attractive and strong “sense of place” in Public Square and the rest of the city center that reinforces the downtown identity described above.

## SCOPE OF WORK

The Downtown Revitalization Plan must clearly articulate an exciting yet realistic vision for downtown Watertown. The plan must outline specific recommendations to guide and catalyze further investment in the downtown. A well-developed implementation strategy is vital to successfully revitalizing our downtown. It should identify priorities, timelines, policies and tactics to market and implement the elements of the Downtown Revitalization Plan successfully.

The Scope of Work is divided into the following tasks, which should be incorporated as separate sections within the plan:

- A. **Boundaries** – Identify and define what the boundaries are/should be for “Downtown Watertown.”
- B. **Existing Conditions Analysis** - Develop an inventory and assessment of present conditions, strengths, weaknesses, and special issues facing downtown as a means of establishing a baseline for recommendations. This analysis will focus on collecting data in the study area regarding a variety of topics relevant to future development.

The City expects that the consultant will work closely with City staff and other infrastructure-related entities to identify conditions and concerns. The consultant shall conduct a walking tour of the study area with City staff and other stakeholders as a component of the Existing Conditions Analysis. In addition, the consultant should review and become familiar with related planning documents.

- *Land Use and Building Inventory* – Catalog and map existing uses throughout the downtown. Create an inventory of vacant and occupied retail and residential spaces in the downtown, and categorize those spaces into specific retail and residential types.
- *Connectivity* – Evaluate current accessibility to, and mobility within, downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. This evaluation should include variables such as traffic and parking, and should consider all transportation modes, including pedestrians, bicycles and transit.
- *Demographics* – Understanding the characteristics of the current population is important to determine future growth and development and provide insight on the feasibility of introducing certain services to the downtown. This section should compare demographics at the Downtown, Citywide and Countywide levels.

- *Stakeholder and Community Engagement* – Work with staff to create an innovative public engagement plan utilizing traditional and non-traditional outreach methods to encourage participation from a diverse population and build consensus in the planning process. Examples include community surveys, online forums, social media, charrettes, focus groups, or other innovative approaches. In addition to general citizenry, stakeholders (downtown residents, business owners, visitors and others) will be involved in all phases of the planning process to discuss project elements, identify preferred outcomes as well as points of consensus and conflict.
- *SWOT Analysis* – Drawing upon the other facets of the Existing Conditions Analysis, identify present and future Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This section should analyze both the retail and residential markets in Downtown Watertown as well as Downtown’s sense of place.

### **C. Revitalization Plan and Implementation Strategy**

- Overall Vision for Improving Downtown – Prepare a Downtown Revitalization Plan that incorporates the above listed analysis and ideas generated by public outreach efforts. The Plan should establish a strategic approach and methodology to guide future development and investment in the downtown.
- Clearly articulate an exciting yet realistic vision for improving downtown – Identify redevelopment opportunities and strategies to complete catalytic projects successfully.
- Propose project phasing by prioritizing short, middle and long-term public investment for the next 10-15 years.
- Parking Strategy –Analyze the City’s parking facilities and determine whether improvements are necessary.
- Urban Design Recommendations – Create specific design guidelines that will foster a strong “sense of place” without diminishing the historic architectural styles that characterize downtown. Develop a placemaking strategy that focuses on programming public spaces to encourage pedestrian activity within downtown.
- Regulatory Tools and Policy Recommendations – Identify City policy areas that need improvement and review City regulations that may conflict with the goals and objectives of the Downtown Revitalization Plan. Offer recommendations that accommodate, reinforce and encourage the type of renaissance envisioned in the plan.
- Identify financial resources and mechanisms to fund public and private redevelopment projects, including TIF funds and other incentive approaches.
- Conceptual Plans for what Downtown could look like – Create a series of visual renderings using SketchUp or similar software that illustrate this plan’s vision and show what Downtown Watertown could look like after the plan is implemented.
- Land Use and Signage Recommendations- Analyze the current City Zoning Ordinance and Sign Laws and recommend amendments that the City should make to ensure the Downtown District’s land uses and signage are compatible with the visions and recommendations of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.

In addition to the sections identified above, the final plan document shall also include an Executive Summary and Introduction.

## **STAFF AND LOCAL RESOURCES**

City of Watertown Planning Staff will be available to assist with meetings needed to accomplish this project, compiling past information and previous plans, provide zoning information and assist with any other needs if possible.

City of Watertown GIS Staff will be available to supply maps for research purposes, but the consultant will be responsible for preparing its own GIS maps for use in the final plan document.

## **PROJECT DELIVERABLES**

All materials printed, constructed, and/or produced must acknowledge the contributions of the New York State Department of State to the project. The materials must include the Department of State logo and the following acknowledgment:

*"This (document, report, map, etc.) was prepared with funding provided by the New York State Department of State under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund."*

All required products must be clearly labeled with the NYS Comptroller's Contract # as indicated on the Face Page of the contract. The consultant shall submit:

- Draft products: two paper copies of each product. In addition, all draft products must be submitted as an electronic copy in Word and Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format –PDF (created using 300 dpi scanning resolution).
- Final products: two paper copies of each product. In addition, all final products (including reports, designs, maps, drawings, and plans) must be submitted as an electronic copy in Microsoft Word and Adobe® Acrobat® Portable Document Format - PDF (created using 300 dpi scanning resolution) and be submitted on a labeled CD-R type CD. The CD must be labeled with the consultant name, the Departments contract #, and project title.
- Electronic data for all Geographic Information System-based mapping products must be included in either ArcGIS format, or similar product acceptable to the Department, and comply with the requirements for Contract GIS Products.
- Electronic data for all designs, drawings, and plans must be submitted in the original software that they were created (such as CAD format or other similar product acceptable to the Department) as well as in JPEG or GIF format.

- Pictures and photographs must be dated and captioned with the location and a brief description of the activity being documented. Electronic data for all pictures and photographs must be submitted in JPG or GIF format or other similar product acceptable to the Department.

The contributions of the Department of State must also be acknowledged in community press releases and other notices issued for the project, including web site postings and other forms of digital distribution. Project press releases and other notices shall be submitted to the Department of State for review and approval prior to release, to ensure appropriate attribution.

## **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Interested firms shall submit their qualifications, which should include the following:

- A full description of how the Scope of Work will be completed along with a schedule detailing when the items will be completed. This shall include an estimated timeframe for delivering a final document, which shall be no more than 12 months from the project start date.
- Narrative explaining the firm's qualifications for the project;
- Summary of firm's recent experience in similar projects;
- A description of each staff member or sub-consultant who will be involved with this project and a description of his or her role in the project.
- Ability to integrate this project into the firm's present workload;
- References: names and contact information of previous clients with a detailed description of the type of project completed;
- A budget, including a cost for each task and a lump sum cost for the entire project. This should be completed for both the lead consultant and any sub-consultants, if they are utilized for the project. In addition, a timeline for the completion of the project by task should be included.
- A statement of the respondent's effort to comply with the State's Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) goals of 15% Minority-owned Business Enterprise ("MBE") participation and 15% Women-owned Business ("WBE") participation (based on the current availability of MBEs and WBEs).
- The successful firm will be required to provide proof of General Liability Insurance in the amount of not less than \$1,000,000.00 for each occurrence and in an amount not less than \$2,000,000.00 general aggregate.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES**

- Quality and completeness of the response: The City will evaluate proposals based on their quality, clarity, and demonstrated understanding of the project objectives. The proposal must include a plan outlining how each item in the Scope of Work will be addressed.

- Implementation Schedule: The City will also evaluate proposals based on their ability to complete the project within the timeframe the firm describes in its submission. The proposal must include an implementation schedule that lists all milestones for the development and implementation of project deliverables.
- Cost-effectiveness of the proposal: A Cost proposal outline must accompany the submission. It should break down each task in the Scope of Work and show the ability to complete all project tasks within the allotted budget.
- Qualifications and relevant experience with respect to the tasks to be performed: The proposer must provide a list of all person(s) who will be assigned work pursuant to this RFP (including subcontractors), as well as their resumes showing qualifications, educational background, training and experience.
- Reputation among previous clients and previous experience: The proposer must submit five references from projects of similar scope and nature. The City encourages submission of sample reports or products from previous projects. Each reference should include a contact person and phone number along with a statement describing the project.
- Ability to satisfy MWBE requirements.

## **SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

Expressions of interest are due by **4:00PM, Friday, September 8, 2017**. Responses shall include three (3) paper copies and by email in PDF format. All files must be less than 10 megabytes. Dividing the response into multiple emails to exceed the 10 megabyte per email limit total is not acceptable.

Responses must be sent to:

Amy Pastuf  
Purchasing Manager  
245 Washington Street, Suite 205  
Watertown, NY 13601  
[planning@watertown-ny.gov](mailto:planning@watertown-ny.gov)

For Questions, please contact:

- Michael Lumbis, City of Watertown Planning and Community Development Director:  
[mlumbis@watertown-ny.gov](mailto:mlumbis@watertown-ny.gov), (315) 785-7734
- Barbara Kendall, NYS Department of State, Office of Planning and Development  
[barbara.kendall@dos.ny.gov](mailto:barbara.kendall@dos.ny.gov), (518) 473-8928



## **PRESENTATION BY RESPONDENTS**

The City may require qualified finalists to give presentations. If held, the City will notify finalists of the time, date and location. Presentations will provide an opportunity for the Project Advisory Committee to obtain an understanding of:

- The extent of the firm's depth of knowledge of the subject matter;
- Whether the methods and resources that will be used by the firm in performing services to achieve the project goals and objectives are appropriate, and cost effective;
- The firm's ability to draw together specialists and professionals with the necessary skills and experience to contribute to the overall project;
- The primary features and benefits of their proposal;
- The public presentation skills of the proposers; and
- The ability of the consultant to enhance and not replace the extensive work already completed.

Presentation format will be at the discretion of the proposers. Presentations will be limited to a one-hour period per respondent, which includes questions. All key managerial personnel, as well as key personnel working on the project, must attend the proposal presentation.

## **NOTIFICATION OF AWARD**

The City will notify the successful respondent by phone, followed by written confirmation. Each respondent whose proposal is not accepted will receive notification by mail.

The City of Watertown will authorize the award of a contract to the successful respondent. In the event that a contract cannot be finalized within thirty (30) days of the award, the City reserves the right to enter into negotiations with another respondent.