



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) - Old City Master Plan

DATE: January 28th, 2015
TO: Interested Bidders
FROM: Old City District Economic Development Committee

BACKGROUND

Old City District and the Old City Community Fund (collectively "OCD") are partnering to seek proposals from firms with experience in urban planning in downtown commercial corridors/districts to develop a comprehensive planning document for Old City. This **Old City Master Plan** will supplement the Central District area plan portion of the Philadelphia 2035 plan by focusing on Old City District's 22 square block area at the neighborhood level.

WHO WE ARE

Old City includes a diverse mix of historic and cultural institutions, offices, galleries, retailers, restaurants and bars, and residences.

Old City District is a 15-year-old Business Improvement District, a municipal authority created to supplement municipal services in the Old City neighborhood of Philadelphia. OCD was organized to fund and pursue projects that will improve the safety, appearance and economic viability of Old City, including the goals of maintaining a clean & safe environment, improving streetscapes, supporting economic development in Old City, and marketing the district as a destination to live, work & play.

The OCD Service Area is 22 square blocks bounded by Walnut St. and Florist Streets to the South and North, and Front and Sixth Streets to the East and West. Additional information is available at www.oldcitydistrict.org.

HISTORY

Old City has changed and evolved many times over the course of its history, from its beginnings as a colonial port, to a center of manufacturing and craft work during the height of the industrial revolution, through the urban decay and abandonment of the postwar period and its subsequent rediscovery by artists, restaurateurs and residents in recent decades. Old City today is a modern urban mixed-use district comprised of a wide variety of uses and users.

CURRENT SITUATION

In the wake of the nation-wide recession starting in 2008, the pace of new construction and new development in Old City slowed to a standstill. Despite its relatively stable and affluent population, the district was plagued with chronically blighted properties and

high vacancy rates. Within the past few years, the economic recovery has spurred a boom in new construction and redevelopment of inactive and underutilized properties.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

With the pace of construction in Old City seemingly still increasing, the neighborhood lacks a comprehensive and coherent set of goals, design standards and desired outcomes to guide new construction and other development in Old City.

Being a mixed-use district, Old City's buildings contain a multitude of different uses, often in the same building. All of these uses may not be apparent from the outside, and it is often difficult to determine the extent to which a building is being utilized. While many buildings in Old City have active first-floor businesses, many upper floors remain vacant or under-used.

Old City is comprised of a diverse set of stakeholders with different and sometimes competing priorities, needs, goals, and vision for the neighborhood. These groups include residents, office & tech workers, retailers, restaurant & bar operators, gallery owners, cultural institutions & historic sites. This diverse community is an asset that sets Old City apart from other neighborhoods in the city, and balancing the different needs of these groups is critical to ensuring the ongoing vitality of the neighborhood.

OBJECTIVES

The OCD Board seeks professional consulting services to develop a comprehensive planning document for the neighborhood which outlines a specific, implementation – oriented agenda for future improvement and investment in Old City.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

1. The **Old City Master Plan** should establish a broad vision for a future Old City, describing the optimal mix of uses and levels of occupancy to ensure its continued growth and viability as a dynamic urban neighborhood. The plan should define and evaluate specific sub-districts and corridors and identify highest and best uses for each.
2. A clear, consistent, and objective civic "checklist" to assist the consideration of any number of proposed developments. The checklist should be built around agreed-to principles, neighborhood values, and desired long term outcomes.
3. High-level assessment of public space including streetscape, pathways, walking corridors, traffic flow, and wayfinding. Assessment should also include opportunities for shared, communal and/or recreational public spaces. Recommend attainable short-term solutions and improvements, both hardscape and programmatic.

4. Design and development responses to the north, east, and west side “borders” formed by the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, Independence Mall, I-95, and the ongoing evolution of Penn’s landing.
5. Identify specific infill opportunities, obstacles to rehabilitating existing buildings, and unoccupied upper floors, including an inventory thereof. The **Old City Master Plan** should advise as to how to develop new strategies and incentives that leverage private investment to repair some key gaps in street life.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROPOSALS

Please provide a written response to this request including the following:

1. Company Name.
2. Principal Name(s), Title(s).
3. Contact Information (address, email, phone).
4. A brief description of your firm’s history, leadership structure, ownership, area served and services provided.
5. Proposed project team who will manage and work on this assignment.
6. A minimum of three recent (2010-2014) examples of success in providing urban planning consulting services at the neighborhood level in an urban commercial district or corridor for municipal, for-profit or non-profit entities. Please provide contact information, the dates of service, and the services provided for those clients.
7. A description of your proposed research methodology, which may include analyses of existing conditions and available data sets as well as community outreach and interviews with key stakeholders.
8. City of Philadelphia Commercial Activity License number (formerly Business Privilege License).
9. Statement of understanding, reiterating what we have requested and how you plan to achieve stated objectives and deliverables.
10. A total project budget for providing the services described above, with individual deliverables and actions itemized with hourly rates for all professional services included.

OCD reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all proposals, and grant final acceptance to the proposal that best meets its needs and interests. OCD may require oral presentations for clarification or proposal but reserves the right to accept a



proposal without prior discussions. OCD will be the sole judge of whether a proposal meets the required criteria.

DEADLINE

Respondents are asked to provide this information on or before **Wednesday, February 18th, 2015** by e-mail to greg.diehl@oldcitydistrict.org.

NEXT STEPS

Responding firms must agree to keep their proposed project budget and the other terms of their engagement open for at least ninety (90) days past the submission deadline.

Once a firm is selected, OCD and the selected firm must execute a written contract prior to the selected firm commencing services. Should OCD and the selected firm be unable to agree on terms of a contract within a reasonable time (at OCD's discretion), OCD reserves the right to suspend or terminate negotiations without advance notice, and to pursue negotiations with another firm to provide the requested services. Any suspension or termination of negotiations shall be without liability to the selected firm(s). Alternatively, OCD may terminate this process (in its discretion), and either discontinue this project, or issue a new RFP for the requested services. Each respondent shall assume all fees and costs (including but not limited to legal fees) incurred in responding to this RFP and negotiating a contract with the OCD.

QUESTIONS

Questions about this RFP should be directed to Gregory Diehl, Economic Development Coordinator, Old City District by e-mail greg.diehl@oldcitydistrict.org. Please note that phone calls will not be accepted. All questions will be made available to all potential RFP respondents upon request.

IMPORTANT

In the interest of fairness, we kindly ask that you do not directly contact any Board members of the Old City District, or those who may otherwise have an affiliation with the District. Candidates who do not abide by these guidelines may be disqualified from the RFP process.