



DATE: November 15, 2023
TO: Interested Bidders
FROM: Nancy Scarlato, Ardmore Initiative
RE: RFP for Strategic Planning Consultant

Ardmore Initiative (AI) is seeking proposals from individuals or agencies with experience in commercial corridor revitalization and the Four Point Main Street Approach to serve in an advisory capacity to facilitate and create a 5-year strategic plan for the Ardmore Business District. The strategic plan for Ardmore Business District should have defined goals and objectives, evaluate and increase organizational capacity, and identify existing and potential resources for implementation by AI.

AI will award a limited term contract with an estimated budget of no more than \$29,000. Respondents should submit proposals on or before December 15, 2023 by email to nancy@ardmoreinitiative.org.

Background

AI was founded as Ardmore Main Street Program in 1988 and has been a Business District Authority for 30 years since designation by Lower Merion Township in 1993. AI follows the Four Point Main Street Approach – Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring – to manage and revitalize Ardmore Business District. The district includes approximately 300 businesses located along Lancaster Avenue and on perpendicular streets south of Ardmore Station.

Current Situation

Ardmore's historic business district is situated in the Main Line, Philadelphia's affluent western suburbs. Among the Main Line communities, Ardmore is distinct in that it is the most socio-economically and culturally diverse. As a reflection of this unique identity, Ardmore is home to an ethnically diverse mix of businesses and restaurants.

The previous Strategic Plan (2018 to 2023) concluded in 2023 with Ardmore Initiative having successfully executed the goals contained in that plan. The 2024 to 2029 Strategic Plan will create

an action plan with measurable outcomes and annual work plans following the Four Point Main Street Approach. The Ardmore Initiative as a business district authority will implement this Strategic Plan in the subsequent five years.

Times have changed since the last Strategic Plan. Notwithstanding the impact that Covid-19 has had on the businesses in the district, Ardmore has experienced transformative mixed-use development in the past five years. Two mixed-use multifamily buildings have been completed in the past three years with a combined almost 200 new apartments, around 600 new residents, and over 20,000 square feet of retail space. Another development is scheduled to begin construction later this year with 279 apartments and almost 60,000 square feet of retail space. In addition to the mixed-use development taking place, the Ardmore SEPTA/Amtrak station has been under construction for the past few years. The chosen vendor will need to craft a strategic plan that considers the influx of wealthier residents in Ardmore, while respecting the socioeconomic diversity that gives Ardmore its unique character. The finished plan should include a section that identifies categories of businesses that would be successful in the district based on data collected. Lower Merion Township Commissioners recently accepted an Ardmore Master Plan that was completed in early 2023 which may be considered as supplemental information for the Ardmore Initiative Strategic Plan.

Purpose/Objectives

The stated goals of this plan include articulating a vision forward for Ardmore Initiative as it enters its 36th year as an organization. The consultant is expected to create a strategic plan that is specific to the business improvement district; emphasizing revitalization priorities, as well as attracting a diverse mix of businesses that appreciate Ardmore's unique character.

Scope of Work

The chosen vendor will be expected to complete the following activities:

- Meet with AI board members and Township staff to gauge AI's capacity to effect change using the Four Point Main Street Approach and to establish understanding of the Ardmore Initiative and Downtown Ardmore
- Review documents identified by AI staff, including: current and prior 5 year plans, organizational documents, Ardmore Master Plan, other relevant documents/plans,
- Execute a meeting, at which the consultant will guide key stakeholders through a SWOT analysis exercise,
- Facilitate a second meeting at which key stakeholders will be led through a visioning and goal setting exercise,
- Write the strategic plan with revisions, including expansion of the goals identified through the SWOT analysis process
- Create a business recruitment plan:

- Running psychographic analysis of 15-minute drive time trade area by utilizing data-driven marketing and GIS software.
- Obtaining and analyzing trends in age, ethnicity, household income, family composition, employment status, and educational attainment data for the target audience through Census Bureau Data.
- Interviewing a sampling of business owners, store managers, and employees

Based on the aforementioned activities, 1) create a 5-year strategic plan document for Ardmore Business District containing a vision statement, SWOT analysis, goals and objectives, and annual work plans, and 2) create a business recruitment plan to attract a diverse mix of businesses.

Projected Milestone Dates:

- Proposals due December 15, 2023
- Contract executed on or before December 31, 2023
- Service completed on or before December 31, 2024

Proposal Submission

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

1. Company name
2. Principal names and titles
3. Contact Information: email, phone, address
4. Brief description of your firm including history, ownership, principals' bios and services provided
5. Description of project team which will manage and work on this assignment. Please identify who will serve as the project lead and account manager.
6. Statement of understanding, describing how you will complete the activities outlined in Purpose/Objectives
7. Three examples of recent strategic planning engagements, including contact information, services provided and dates of service, highlighting any contracts or experience with BIDs or Main Street Programs
8. A total project budget, with deliverables and actions itemized and hourly rates for all professional services identified

AI reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all proposals and grant final acceptance to the proposal that best meets its needs. AI will be the sole judge of whether a proposal meets the required criteria. AI may request in-person presentations and reserves the right to accept a proposal without prior discussions.

Deadline

Interested parties are asked to provide this information on or before December 15, 2023 by email to nancy@ardmoreinitiative.org. Submissions should be made as a single PDF file with the subject line of "Response to Strategic Plan RFP."

Questions

Please refer all questions to Nancy Scarlato, Executive Director, Ardmore Initiative, by e-mail at nancy@ardmoreinitiative.org. Please note that phone calls will not be accepted.