

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NH  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FOR  
ACTION PLAN FOR ISLINGTON STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS  
AND  
ARTS DISTRICT PLAN**

**Sealed Requests for Proposals, plainly marked “RFP #21-07, Professional Services for Action Plan for Islington Street Corridor Improvements and Arts District Plan” on the outside of the mailing envelope, addressed to the Finance/Purchasing Department, City Hall, 1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH 03801 will be accepted until 2:00 p.m. on Monday, June 11, 2007.**

The City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire (the City), acting through its Economic Development Commission, invites proposals from qualified firms or teams of firms for a review of existing streetscape improvement and transportation studies for the Islington Street Corridor and development of an action plan for corridor improvements and an Arts District Plan.

Request for Proposal forms may be obtained from the Finance/Purchasing Department on the third floor at the above address or by visiting the Finance/Purchasing Department section of the City of Portsmouth website at [www.cityofportsmouth.com](http://www.cityofportsmouth.com). **Continue below for the complete Request for Proposal.**

The City of Portsmouth reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive technical or legal deficiencies, and to accept any proposal that it may deem to be in the best interest of the City.

If you have any questions please contact the Finance/Purchasing Department at the following number: (603) 610-7227.

**RFP 21-07**  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NH**  
**ACTION PLAN FOR ISLINGTON STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS**  
**AND ARTS DISTRICT PLAN**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

The City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire (the City), acting through its Economic Development Commission, invites proposals from qualified firms or teams of firms for a review of existing streetscape improvement and transportation studies for the Islington Street Corridor and development of an action plan for corridor improvements and an Arts District Plan.

**PROJECT AREA**

For the purposes of this RFP, the Islington Street Corridor is defined as the area of Islington Street from Maplewood Avenue to Route One Bypass as depicted in Exhibit 1.

**BACKGROUND AND EXISTING CONDITIONS OF STUDY AREA**

Islington Street is a two-lane arterial road that connects Portsmouth's Central Business District (CBD) to the State Route 33 and the NH Turnpike (I-95). Its primary transportation function is to provide direct access to property within the corridor and to provide "through" vehicular movement between downtown Portsmouth and the State/Interstate Highway System. It also provides access via Bartlett Street to the Portsmouth Traffic Circle, U/S. Route 4 and 1 and I-95. Over its busiest sections Islington Street carries between 15,000- 19,000 cars per day.

There are six zoning districts within the project study area: Business, Industrial, Mixed Residential Business, Apartment, Municipal and Central Business B. Consequently, the existing development and the overall aesthetic appearance of the corridor is disjointed and does not reflect the city's and residents' desire for a more pedestrian-oriented and visually unified area.

Located midway along the street is Plaza 800, a major destination shopping center serving the surrounding residential neighborhoods and to some extent, the downtown workforce. Included in the plaza are a grocery store, two pharmacies, a dry cleaner, a bank, an independent restaurant, pizza restaurant, a state liquor store, a camera store, print shop and other establishments. Adjacent to the plaza are two properties with significant redevelopment potential. One parcel formerly served as the city's public works department and the other was a former brewery and hotdog manufacturing facility. Other businesses located along the corridor include banks, gas service stations, sandwich shops, independent retailers for plumbing, furniture and household supplies, professional offices and retail.

A small cluster of creative businesses has formed along Islington Street. Two former button manufacturing facilities offer affordable studio space for creative workers ranging from painters, writers, furniture makers, jewelry and fabric artists. Other art venues and creative businesses located along or directly off Islington Street include the West End Theatre, the Pearl, independent artist studios, web, design, architect offices and art galleries.

The City is interested in creating an Arts District within the corridor. The City's Cultural Commission (a/k/a Art-Speak) has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to conduct an arts district study to build on priorities articulated in the Citywide Cultural and Master Plans and the American for the Arts local Economic Impact Studies. The primary goal of the arts district study is to create an Islington Street Corridor Arts District that includes corridor branding, zoning standards, and opportunities for artist live/work spaces, galleries and small performance places. Also included in the analysis is a strategy to develop and incorporate a regulatory framework for the district so that it fits into the existing context of businesses, neighborhoods and the greater community.

## **KEY SITES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The City has identified the following areas as development opportunities or anchor sites in the corridor:

- Schultz Brewery
- Former DPW site
- Button Factory
- Plaza 800
- Islington/Bartlett intersection
- Eldredge Brewery (between Route 1 Bypass and Cate Street)
- Railroad ROW and bridge over Bartlett Street
- Businesses abutting Railroad ROW
- North Mill Pond bike and pedestrian trail
- Kearsarge Mill
- Former Public Library
- 501 Islington St.

## **PREVIOUS STUDIES**

The Islington Street Corridor has been the subject of several previous studies and analyses. The most significant is the *Islington Street Streetscape Study and Improvement Plan* conducted in 1998. This comprehensive study analyzed opportunities to improve the overall corridor aesthetic. Through a public process that considered a number of concepts and alternatives, the final plan suggests improvements that will forge a strong connection between this major artery and the downtown. In addition, it suggests regulatory strategies to provide incentives to encourage development, signage and other improvements that complement those found downtown. Some of the recommendations in the study such as the revitalization of Goodwin Park have been implemented, but many others recommendations have not been acted upon.

The City's 2005 Master Plan also analyzed the city's major corridors and sought public input on how to improve them. The Plan describes the role of these areas below:

...arteries (to the downtown) that ensure the community's overall health and livelihood by enabling the flow of the people and goods throughout" and which, "are important to the city's transportation agenda and overall character."

The Master Plan suggests that the city should create a vision for the corridors that includes a menu for physical and regulatory strategies for each corridor. The Master Plan also includes a goal to create and maintain an appropriate mix of commercial and residential growth and redevelopment. Another Master Plan objective for the Islington Street corridor is identification of location and conditions under which artist live/work units can be allowed.

Lastly, in 2000 the City's Transportation Department conducted a phased *Access Management and Corridor Improvement Plan* to preserve the efficiency and safety of Islington Street while simultaneously providing reasonable access to adjoining properties. The first phase of this plan included traffic mitigation through a traffic light at Cabot Street, Maplewood Avenue intersection improvements plus various pedestrian improvements.

## **PROJECT GOALS**

As mentioned above, much of the work desired in this RFP is intended to build upon and develop a prioritized action plan for corridor improvements based on the recommendations in previous studies. The corridor improvement implementation plan will include regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms for creation of a pedestrian-oriented and visually appealing and unified area consistent with the goals and objectives outlined in the *Islington Street Streetscape Plan*, the *Islington Street Access Management Plan* and City's Master Plan. Specific goals of the improvement action plan include:

- a) Improves the mix and compatibility of uses in the corridor.
- b) Improves the aesthetic appearance of the corridor streetscape as outlined in the *Islington Street Streetscape Plan*.
- c) Develops a model façade improvement program for businesses.
- d) Creates strategic connections to abutting neighborhoods, business areas and transportation routes.
- e) Enhances pedestrian and bicycle safety through sidewalks and cross-walk improvements, signage to inform drivers of the level of pedestrian activities, and way-finding.
- f) Enhances transportation flow and parking opportunities including shared parking.
- g) Creates a conceptual design for the Islington Street/Bartlett Street intersection commercial node that functions as a gateway to the West End from the Route 1 Bypass and Route 33.
- h) Recommends an Arts District and associated implementation strategy for appropriate sections of the corridor.

## SCOPE OF WORK

The following is a suggested scope of work of the tasks required to accomplish the goals and objectives of this project. Consultants are encouraged to modify the scope as deemed appropriate and provide suggestions for alternative methods for attaining project goals.

### **Task 1: Review of Previous Plans/Studies and Stakeholder Interviews**

*Objective:* Review existing corridor studies and plans and interview stakeholders

*Deliverable:* Summary report with graphics

- 1.1 Kick-off meeting with city staff including the Planning Director, the Public Works Director, City Traffic Engineer, Parking Manager, the Deputy City Manager, the Art-Speak (the city's Cultural Commission) Coordinator, Economic Development Manager and the City's zoning consultant (Taintor & Associates). The purpose of this meeting will be to clarify project goals, to obtain input on the study area, and to clarify project outcomes.
- 1.2 Review and analyze the relevancy of previous planning and transportation data/studies of the corridor. Validate information vis-a-vis current development trends and conditions in the corridor. The following studies/plans should be reviewed. Copies of the following reports and plans will be provided by the City:
  - City Master Plan (available on the city website and in City Planning Department and Library)
  - City Cultural Plan (available on the city website and in City Planning Department and Public Library)
  - Islington St. Streetscape Study (available in City Economic Development Department)
  - Islington Street Transportation Infrastructure Studies (available in City Economic Development Department)
  - Portsmouth Zoning Ordinance regulations and Zoning Ordinance Audit (available on the City of Portsmouth website)
  - North Mill Pond Pedestrian and Bike Trail (available in City Planning Department)
  - Corridor traffic counts (available at Rockingham Planning Commission).
  - Summary of Islington Street Art's District Study proposal (available from Art-Speak, the City of Portsmouth's Cultural Commission).
- 1.3 Review the inventory of key assets in the Islington Street Corridor. These assets include historic and cultural assets (public and private), economic and commercial assets, public infrastructure and other assets as identified. An inventory of these assets is included in the report entitled *Islington Street Improvement Study and Plan*. This report is available at Portsmouth City Hall as noted above.
- 1.4 Conduct interviews with key stakeholders in the corridor including, but not necessarily limited to representatives of the West End Business Association, the Neighborhood Associations (Islington Creek, McDonough, etc.), the Button Factory, the Schultz Brewery, the former Public Works complex, Plaza 800, independent businesses and other key parcels. The purpose of these interviews will be to obtain input and information that will help define the planning needs of the corridor.

1.5 Prepare a summary report of information gathered in tasks 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 above.

### **Task 2: Arts District Plan**

*Objective:* to define and brand an Arts District that includes the creative and cultural businesses and activities currently operating in the corridor and improves the long term viability of the same

*Deliverable:* Arts District Plan

2.1 Identify existing cultural anchors such as the West End Theater, the Button Factory, galleries, former public library and The Pearl for development of an arts district along the corridor.

2.2 Identify stakeholders and potential beneficiaries of an Islington Street Arts District and review existing impediments such as visibility, current zoning, transportation, physical branding etc.

2.3 Identify opportunities and locations for increasing the concentration of arts and arts-related activities and creative businesses in the corridor which do not create negative impacts on abutting residential communities. Also, identify areas where residential use and arts activity is compatible and appropriate.

2.4 Prepare an arts district plan based on information gathered from Master Plan, Cultural Plan, stakeholders, residents, city planning staff and Taintor and Associates. Plan should include strategies that engender community support for the district and to protect it from gentrification.

### **Task 3: Draft Corridor Improvement Action Plan and Presentation**

*Objective:* Prepare and present draft corridor improvement implementation plan

*Deliverable:* Draft plan with action table

3.1 Based on the findings of Tasks 1 through 2 above, develop a draft corridor improvement implementation plan that satisfies the goals identified in the Project Goals section above. Plan should identify priority order for action items as well as suggest appropriate city responsibility assignments for undertaking respective action items. Plan should also suggest appropriate funding mechanism for infrastructure improvements including grants, capital plan item, general revenues or new tools such as tax increment financing, public private partnerships, special assessment districts or impact fees.

3.2 Present draft plan at an internal meeting to city staff, Economic Development Commission Subcommittee, and other appropriate board members or stakeholders (“Corridor Subcommittee”) as deemed appropriate.

3.3 Incorporate suggestions from internal review into a revised draft plan and present it at facilitated public input meeting. It is anticipated that the public meeting will last no longer than two hours. City will make all meeting arrangements, prepare notices and press releases and shall compile meeting summary notes. Meeting may be televised and if so, there will be a video record.

#### **Task 4: Revised Corridor Improvement Action Plan and Presentation**

*Objective:* Prepare and present revised draft corridor improvement action plan

*Deliverable:* Revised Draft Corridor Improvement Action Plan with action table

- 4.1 Incorporate suggestions from first public meeting on draft corridor improvement action plan into a revised draft plan and present it to Corridor Subcommittee.
- 4.2 Incorporate suggestions from internal review by Corridor Subcommittee into a second revised draft plan and present it at a second facilitated public input meeting. It is anticipated that the public meeting will last no longer than two hours. City will make all meeting arrangements, prepare notices and press releases and shall compile meeting summary notes. Meeting may be televised and if so, there will be a video record.

#### **Task 5: Final Corridor Improvement Action Plan**

*Objective:* Prepare and present final corridor improvement action plan

*Deliverable:* Final Corridor Improvement Action Plan with action table

- 5.1 Based on input from the presentation of the second public meeting and after internal review, prepare final corridor improvement action plan.
- 5.2 Present final corridor plan at a public meeting to which members of the City Council, Economic Development Commission, Planning Board, stakeholders, and the public will be invited. It is anticipated that the public meeting will last no longer than two hours. City will make all meeting arrangements, prepare notices and press releases and shall compile meeting summary notes. Meeting may be televised and if so, there will be a video record.

#### **QUALIFICATIONS OF CONSULTANT SOUGHT**

The City of Portsmouth is seeking a multi-disciplinary firm or planning team for the preparation of the Islington Street Corridor Improvement Action Plan. Key areas of expertise include the following:

- Land use and urban planning
- Arts district development
- Landscape architecture
- Traffic and transportation infrastructure
- Economic/community development

Proposing firms or teams should have in-house multi-disciplinary staff and have successful track records working on similar projects either as an individual firm or as the lead firm with the same or similar team of firms. The City places significant emphasis on the quality of the visual material that can best convey to residents and stakeholders how this area can be improved, and the types of changes that are proposed in the Master Plan. Professionals with these skills should be an important part of the team.

#### **RFP SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

The following components shall be provided.

- Project approach containing an introduction and statement(s) respective of the consultant's understanding of project requirements including public participation.
- Detailed Scope of Work by element.
- Project schedule organized by work tasks.
- Project budget organized by task and including all direct and indirect reimbursable costs and total project cost stated as a firm fixed fee. Budget shall detail funds allocated for lead consultant and each subconsultant.
- Tasking and allocation of personnel by percent time to be spent on project including concise description of expertise/qualifications of key team members and identification of the Project Manager(s).
- Hourly fee schedule and reimbursable cost schedule for each firm in the team [only to be used in the event that additional tasks are added to the fixed fee contract].
- No more than three references for (from each firm on the team) similar projects. References must include current contact name and phone number.
- Fifteen copies of the proposal must be submitted.

Sealed proposals marked " Islington Street Corridor Improvement Action Plan, RFP # 21- 07" shall be returned to the Purchasing Agent, City Hall, 1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH 03802-0628 **no later than 2:00 p.m. June 11, 2007**. Upon review of all responsive proposals the City may select up to three (3) firms to interview.

## **WORK PRODUCTS**

The following are general requirements applying to work products.

- The consultant shall develop an Executive Summary for broad public distribution;
- Draft and Final Work Products will be made available by way of the City's website for public review and comment;
- All map and graphic products shall be compatible with the City's geographic information system [Shapefile or Geodatabase]; and,
- All draft and final work products shall be provided in both electronic and paper format. City currently is using Microsoft Office 1997.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Consultants will be evaluated according to the following.

1. Qualifications and previous related work of **key project personnel**, particularly with regard to working with municipalities of similar size, government structure, complexity and issues and the demonstrated ability of key project personnel to organize and lead effective, productive public meetings and in-house project meetings.
2. Qualifications and previous related work of **firm(s)**, particularly with regard to working with municipalities of similar size, government structure, complexity and issues, and including firm's experience in technical areas required to successfully complete all master plan elements.
3. Understanding of project goals, previous studies and local issues and needs.
4. Quality of sample materials and proposal package submitted.

5. Responsiveness to submission requirements.
6. Creativity or innovative project approach.
7. Proposal Price
8. Proposed schedule

**PROJECT SCHEDULE**

The selected consultant shall be expected to begin work within two weeks of contract signing and complete all project work in its entirety before November 2, 2007.

**SELECTION PROCESS**

The City will review submissions and prepare a short-list of finalist firms. The City anticipates conducting interviews of short-listed firms during the week of June 18, 2007. Upon completion of the interviews the City will attempt to negotiate a final Scope of Services and Price with the highest scoring firm. If the City is unable to reach agreement with the highest scoring firm, the City reserves the right to negotiate with the next highest firm until an agreement is reached.

**CONSULTANT SELECTION SCHEDULE**

<b>Proposals Due</b>	<b>June 11, 2007</b>
Selection Comm. Interviews Short Listed Consultants	Week of June 18, 2007
<b>Project Deadline</b>	<b>November 2, 2007</b>

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Requests for additional information should be directed to Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager at (603) 610-7220.

**RESERVATION OF RIGHTS**

By submitting a Proposal, consultant consents to the City undertaking such investigation as it deems necessary to investigate and verify consultant’s qualifications, reputation and experience. Consultant may be requested to execute releases. Failure to execute a release for information, if requested by the City, may result in disqualification.

The City of Portsmouth reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive technical or legal deficiencies, and to accept any proposal that it may deem to be in the best interest of the City.

