



# REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

City of Galax, Virginia  
Downtown Strategic Plan

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**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS:**

**CITY OF GALAX COMPREHENSIVE DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

The City of Galax, Virginia will receive sealed proposals from qualified firms for services in the City Manager's Office, 111 East Grayson Street, Galax, Virginia until **January 12, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.** The City is seeking the services of a firm, partnership, joint venture or team to produce a Downtown Development Strategic Plan to begin in 2024 for the City of Galax, Virginia.

Any questions and/or misunderstandings that may arise from this proposal should be submitted, in writing, and forwarded to all to the following parties: Jolena Young, Grants Administrator, at [jyoung@galaxva.com](mailto:jyoung@galaxva.com); and Chris Pollins, Galax Downtown Association Board Member, at [cpollins@chestnutcreekarts.org](mailto:cpollins@chestnutcreekarts.org). Answers to such questions that materially change the conditions and specifications of this request for proposal will be posted to the City of Galax's website as an addendum.

The City of Galax anticipates making a single award for this strategic plan within 60 days of proposal deadline. A qualifications-based selection process will be used. Evaluation of proposals will be based on the following criteria in order of importance:

1. Project approach and projected deliverables: 25 Points
2. Capacity to complete the project based upon education, training and experience: 25 Points
3. Capacity to complete the project in a timely manner based upon staffing, training and experience: 20 Points
4. Evaluation of references from other clients, especially local governments or Main Street organizations, for which similar projects have been completed: 20 Points
5. Understanding of the project and proper completion of RFP materials, which may also include an additional request for in-person presentation: 10 Points

Submittal of a proposal indicates acceptance of the conditions contained in the RFP. All proposals are public records to the extent required by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The City of Galax reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, or modify scope of work or services to be provided.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

The City of Galax is currently accepting proposals for a Comprehensive Downtown Strategic Plan. The plan should, by way of a community listening process, establish a shared community mission, values, goals and objectives, define the community identity, develop a business/building inventory, propose funding and implementation strategies to guide asset-based transformative community improvement projects, and include a Master Plan for the revitalization or redevelopment within the existing historic downtown district. It must seek to establish cohesive connections to the proposed Creekside Small Area Plan, New River Trail State Park, and Felts Park. The plan must seek to achieve measurable outcomes demonstrating increased downtown social and economic viability, increased tourism, creating “sense of place” and enhanced quality of life for City residents. The City of Galax and Main Street organization intend to use the plan to guide future public, private, and public-private development / project implementation for a minimum five-year period beginning in 2024. The plan must be sustainable, smart, creative, and futuristic (linking past with present and future).

The City of Galax has been working with Virginia Main Street and has several documents to contribute to the analysis including an Asset Map, Business Inventory, Building Inventory (under development); and Galax Downtown Association: Market Analysis Report. The market analysis includes local survey results from 484 respondents, Trade Area Map, Demographic Summary, Psychographic Summary, and Market Strategy Recommendations.

## **DELIVERABLES:**

1. A qualified consultant shall deliver a Comprehensive **Downtown Strategic Plan** that includes the following processes, analysis, or finished product:

### **PROJECT SUBSET 1**

2. Staff and necessary materials for planning and executing **a process for public participation** and comment to guide strategic plan community visioning. Desired methodology includes, but is not limited to, launch of the newly organized Main Street 501(c)3, meetings with governing body, stakeholders, key staff members and civic groups, surveys, and joint Main Street-Consultant outreach efforts to increase public engagement.

3. Formalize the identity of the 501(c)3 including mission, vision and brand to align and reinforce the community identity.

4. Finalize a building inventory complete with contact information to establish working relationships with downtown businesses and building owners.

5. Identify and develop an overall **community transformation strategy** with associated goals, inputs, objectives, and outcomes influenced by the visioning process, considering but not limited to the following identified needs:

- a. Local social and economic vitality, tourism and resilience – consider market inputs and identify unrealized market potential in the City/region to drive existing downtown infill or redevelopment planning. Consider the opportunity for a boutique hotel in the district.

- b. Beautification, design, historic preservation and place-making – enhance downtown aesthetic qualities through architecture and landscape design, foster community “sense of place” and identity, increase local resident enjoyment and tourism resulting in greater commercial viability. Seek cohesive architectural and engineering concepts across new and existing downtown areas, including historical influence whether literal or symbolic to establish distinctive aesthetic and cultural identity.
- c. Transportation and pedestrian experience – create a more walkable downtown experience involving pedestrian-scale design, hardscape, lighting, safety measures consider greenways; focus on connectivity between New River Trail, Felts Park and new and existing downtown areas including associated infrastructure. Address mixed use parking needs, especially in relation to the existing historic downtown, allowing for safe and walkable proximity for residents, tourists and workers.
- d. Quality of life – Focus on identifying desired public spaces in downtown redevelopment: prioritize opportunities for entertainment, public engagement, public art, health and wellness, or heritage preservation.
- e. Any other issues which the consultant identifies as a strength, opportunity, weakness, or threat needing attention in order to benefit the commercial downtown historic district.

## PROJECT SUBSET 2

6. **A Master Plan** to guide revitalization of the mixed use commercial historic downtown area, reflecting the community transformation strategies determined through the strategic planning public participation process, market data, and which is desired to include the following materials (See Attachment A for a list of possible elements to be included in the plan):

- a. An illustrative vision for the Historic Commercial District.
- b. Recommended standards and criteria by which development and redevelopment of existing properties can proceed, how historic resources will be conserved, and community identity can be enhanced.
- c. Early design guidelines for a façade improvement grant program.
- d. A program of recommended implementation measures including estimated project costs, regulations, policies, public works projects, and financing measures needed to carry out the plan.
- e. Other subjects necessary or desirable to implement the plan.

7. Provide a **proposed implementation plan** including a short-term and long-term work program consisting of plans, specific projects, policy changes, organizational changes, ordinance creation and/or changes, or other activities recommended by the consultant to achieve community improvement strategies; prioritized in order of greatest achievable impact toward plan goals.

8. **Analysis and recommendation** for the creation of any new zone, district, or changes to the boundaries of existing districts to facilitate proper plan implementation (for example a redevelopment district, or rural zone): examine any issues with overlapping districts that may have competing interests, and how these should be addressed.

9. Recommendations for **communication strategies** and specified platforms by which to inform community members, promote projects, encourage volunteers, gain support, encourage public engagement, promote special events, promote local business, and market vacant and underutilized buildings and vacant lots to potential developers: such as the creation of specific web-pages, social media, etc.
10. Provide additional analysis including **proposed funding strategies** tied to work program items.
11. The final **Comprehensive Downtown Strategic Plan document** should be a culmination of the deliverables specified above, in full or summary form as determined appropriate by the consultant, and all working documents.
12. Interim or final deliverables may also include records, narratives, or other **documentation necessary for reporting purposes** pursuant to Department of Housing and Community Development grant administration and performance reporting requirements.
13. **Final project deliverables may be negotiable** based on City staff or selected consultant recommendation to customize the process as needed, pending City approval.
14. All final project deliverables must be **complete within 7 months of award date** due to grant timeline restrictions.

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Intent: It is intended that these Instructions and the Schedules and Specifications shall define and describe the complete services to be provided.
2. Examination: Firms are advised to examine all documents and current descriptions of the services in order to become fully informed as to their conditions. This includes conformity with specific standards and the character, quality and quantity of the services provided. Failure to examine these areas will not relieve the consultant of its obligation to furnish all products and services necessary to carry out the provisions of the contract.
  - Selection of Consultant: The contract will be awarded to the firm or team that, in the City's opinion, is the most responsive and responsible according to the criteria provided in this RFP.
  - Responsiveness: The City will consider the degree to which each firm has submitted a complete proposal without irregularities, exclusions, special conditions, or alternative proposals for any item unless specifically requested in the RFP.
  - Submission of Proposals: It is the firm's responsibility to have its proposal at the City Manager's Office by the deadline for submission. Proposals received after the deadline will remain unopened and will not be considered. The following address should be used on the outside of the envelope containing the proposals:  
  
Office of the City Manager  
City of Galax  
111 East Grayson Street  
Galax, VA 24333  
  
Request for Proposals  
Comprehensive Downtown Strategic Plan
  - Proposals: An original copy of the proposal shall be submitted in paper format with one flash drive containing digital copies of the proposal in Microsoft Word and PDF file formats. Proposals should be bound in an 8 1/2" x 11" format. All submitted materials will become property of the City.

## **CONTACTS**

Should a consultant have any questions, please submit them in writing and forward to the following parties: Jolena Young, Grants Administrator, at [jyoung@galaxva.com](mailto:jyoung@galaxva.com); and Chris Pollins, Galax Downtown Association Board Member, at [cpollins@chestnutcreekarts.org](mailto:cpollins@chestnutcreekarts.org).

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## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL SCHEDULE**

- Evaluation Period
    - Questions may be submitted in writing to each of the following parties: Jolena Young, Grants Administrator, at [jyoung@galaxva.com](mailto:jyoung@galaxva.com); and Chris Pollins, Galax Downtown Association Board Member, at [cpollins@chestnutcreekarts.org](mailto:cpollins@chestnutcreekarts.org) until **4:00 p.m. on December 29, 2023.**
    - Answers to such questions that materially change the conditions and specifications of this request for proposal will be posted to the City of Galax’s website as an addendum with the final posting no later than January 5, 2024 at 4 pm.
  - Submission Deadline: **January 12, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.**
  - Short-list posted and interviews scheduled: January 19, 2024
  - Anticipated Award Date: **February 13th, 2024.**
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## **EVALUATION FACTORS**

The City Main Street Task Force will evaluate the proposals based on the matters identified earlier in the RFP based on the weighting as indicated. It is the intent of the City to choose the firm whose proposal provides the best value to the City. The City reserves the right to waive any irregularities, technicalities, reject any and/or all proposals, in whole or in part, when, in the City's opinion, such rejection is in the best interests of the City.

Evaluation Method: An evaluation team will review each proposal. Its review and evaluation will be based on the factors described:

Oral Presentations and Interviews: Following the evaluation of the proposals, the Evaluation Team may request a limited number of firms to make oral presentations and/or be interviewed. If a determination is made that presentations are necessary, the presentations will take place in the City of Galax at a mutually acceptable date and time.

Negotiations: Following presentations, the finalist shall be asked to provide an agreement. The City may negotiate with the firm. If a mutual agreement cannot be reached, the City will proceed to the next highest scoring firm. The City reserves the right to reject all offers and end the process without executing a contract.

Agreement: If the negotiation produces mutual agreement, an agreement shall be completed and forwarded to the firm for execution.

Reservations: Submittal of a proposal indicates acceptance of the conditions contained in this request. The City of Galax reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted. All proposals are public record to the extent required by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

The City of Galax reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals. The City of Galax reserves the right to waive informalities, technicalities, and negotiate changes in the scope of work or services to be provided and to otherwise waive any technicalities.

## **PROPOSAL FORMAT**

### INTRODUCTION

Overview: Firms shall provide detailed information so as to demonstrate its understanding of the services requested.

Documents: Proposals should be in an 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" x 11" format. An original copy of the proposal shall be submitted. Please also submit proposals in Microsoft Word and PDF file formats on a flash drive. Proposals shall include the forms provided in the RFP.

### QUALIFICATIONS

Firms responding to this RFP must have been engaged in urban and regional planning, engineering and/or design, fiscal impact, or project management services for at least five years.

References: Firms shall provide references from similar assignments especially for other local governments within the past ten years.

Insurance: Firms shall carry a minimum of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) professional liability policy to protect the City in case of negligent errors, acts or/and omissions of the firm.

### TECHNICAL APPROACH

Methodology: Explain the methodology you propose to successfully perform the services outlined in the scope of works giving special attention to public participation and data collection.

Schedule: Include in your proposal a project schedule indicating key milestones related to the firm's methodology.

### FIRM EXPERIENCE

Projects: In this section, the firm shall provide a detailed description of similar assignments, on behalf of local governments or similar clients.

- Client name
- Contact person
- Telephone and fax numbers, email address
- Brief description of the projects, their costs and services provided on each.
- Describe in detail whether project was/was not completed on time, within budget, and adopted by the client.
- Copy or working web link to plan

Company Capabilities: The firm shall provide a description of its limitations relative to facilities, staff personnel, on-going projects/contracts, etc. Specifically, what priority it intends to place on this project and how it intends to "staff up" if necessary, should it be chosen as the consultant.

Company Primary Business: Provide the firm's primary business interest and/or operations including organization and affiliations.

Company Information: Provide the following:

- List firm name, address, telephone number, fax number, and email address.
- Name of firm's primary contact person(s) and telephone number(s).
- List firm's total number of employees, by discipline.
- List year firm was established.
- List amount of professional liability (errors & omissions) insurance carried.

## PERSONNEL EXPERIENCE

### Project Team Information

Organizational Chart: Show an organizational chart for this project.

Personnel: Include resumes of proposed personnel showing education, qualifications, and experience.

## SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Provide a statement explaining any exceptions taken to this RFP. In every case, the City will assume compliance unless a specific exception is taken.

### Claims and Lawsuits:

1. Is your firm involved in any pending claims or lawsuits? If so, please describe.
2. Has your firm been involved in any lawsuits with a governmental entity in the last five years?

## ASSURANCES

### EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO)

The firm will ensure equal employment opportunity applies to all terms and conditions of employment, personnel actions, and firm-sponsored programs. Every effort shall be made to ensure that employment decisions, programs and personnel actions are nondiscriminatory. That these decisions are administered on the basis of an evaluation of an employee's eligibility, performance, ability, skill and experience.

Statement of Assurance. The firm herein assures the City that it is in compliance with Title VI & VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as amended, in that it does not on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, handicap, or veteran status, discriminate in any form or manner against employees or employers or applicants for employment and is in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**AFFIDAVIT (must be included with all proposals)**

This proposal is submitted to the City of Galax, Virginia (the City) by the undersigned who is an authorized officer of the firm and said firm is licensed to do business in Virginia. Further, the undersigned is authorized to make these assurances and certifies their validity. The firm recognizes that all assurances and representations herein are binding on the firm and failure to adhere to any of these commitments, at the City's option, may result in a revocation of the agreement.

Consent is hereby given to the City to contact any person or organization in order to make inquiries into legal, character, technical, financial, and other qualifications of the firm.

The firm understands that, at such time as the City decides to review this proposal, additional information may be requested. Failure to supply any request for information within a reasonable time may result in the rejection of the firm's proposal with no re-submittal rights.

The firm understands that the City, after considering the legal, financial, technical, and character qualifications of the firm, as well as what in the City's judgment may best serve the public interest of its citizens and employees, may grant a contract.

The firm understands that this proposal is made without prior understanding, agreement, or connection with any corporation, firm or person submitting a proposal for the same, and is in all respects fair and without collusion or fraud. It understands that collusive bidding is a violation of state and federal law and can result in fines, prison sentences, and civil damage awards.

Any agreement issued will be on the basis of the firm's service and financial plans and arrangements are feasible and adequate to fulfill the conditions set forth in this project and the firm's response.

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax/email: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ATTACHMENT A - Potential Elements of Master Plan**

- Growth potential
  - o Market and Housing Assessment
- Physical Plan
  - o Land Use
    - Retail/services
    - Office
    - Lodging/meeting facilities
    - Housing
    - Institutional
    - Entertainment/culture
  - o Urban design
    - Vision for downtown
    - Focal points/key intersections
    - Intervening spaces
    - Buildings
      - Front facades
      - Rear facades
      - Setbacks, height, and scale
      - Materials
      - Outdoor dining
      - Signage
    - Illustrative / master plan
    - Zoning
      - Review of existing zoning
      - New or revamped zoning to facilitate downtown expansion / redevelopment
      -
    - Historic Preservation
    - Redevelopment
      - Façade program
      - Redevelopment areas
      - Parking
  - o Parking system management
    - Short, medium, and long-term
    - Parking meters
    - Enforcement
  - o On-street parking
    - Current and future supply
    - Locations
    - Design
  - o Off-street parking
    - Public
      - Current and future supply
      - Surface vs. structured
    - Private
      - Current and future supply
      - Joint use
  - o Loading areas

## **ATTACHMENT A - Potential Elements of Master Plan (continued)**

- Transportation Alternatives
  - Transit
  - Pedestrian
  - Bicycle
- Public Realm
  - Pedestrian facilities
  - Bicycle facilities
  - Street trees
  - Landscaping
  - Lighting
  - Power
  - Traffic controls
  - Street furniture
  - Medians
  - Crosswalks
  - Trash Receptacles
  - Connectivity
    - New street connections
    - New pedestrian connections
  - Public space
    - Event space
    - New park / public space opportunities
    - Public art
  - Wayfinding
    - Gateways
    - Vehicular (leading to downtown)
    - Vehicular (in downtown)
    - Pedestrian
- Financial
  - Grant funding
  - Funding sources
  - Project cost estimates
- Implementation
  - Public sector initiatives
  - Private sector initiatives
  - Partnerships
  - Goals, objectives, policies