



Request for Proposals for Community-Led Visioning and Strategic Planning Services

I. INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to the original North Central Plan (2000) the authors and neighborhood Steering Committee demonstrated their vision for the outcomes of community-led planning;

“One purpose of this North Central Plan is to describe the tangible and intangible elements which make the North Central neighborhoods places which their residents cherish. A second but equally important purpose is to establish a vision for improving other aspects of the area to make it a better place to live and work and to make possible a better future for its citizens.”

In this spirit and in partnership with North Central neighbors, Deaconess Foundation and the UCC Church Building and Loan Fund (CB&LF) are soliciting proposals for a Planning Firm or Team to guide and execute a highly transparent and new community-led visioning and strategic planning process in the North Central Plan footprint of St. Louis, Missouri.

The planning process is anticipated to build upon the North Central Plan completed in September 2000 (see Appendix A) and must include extensive, diverse and effective engagement of residents, businesses, and all other key stakeholders within the community. The planning process is intended to result in:

- (1) a community with stronger stakeholder relationships between residents, businesses, community organizations, faith-based organizations and government (elected and appointed officials, public health, public safety and public works departments schools, etc.);
- (2) a clear vision for redevelopment which addresses the need for inclusive housing and economic development policies;
- (3) a Vision Action Plan that provides a roadmap and timetable for the implementation of both short and long-term projects and policies, that will improve the lives of residents and businesses in the North Central Plan footprint;
- (4) the City of St. Louis’ adoption of a revised North Central Plan based on the Community’s Vision Action Plan; and
- (5) informed and engaged neighborhoods prepared to influence policy changes, access local, state, and federal funding and attract private investment.

The selected Planning Firm/Team will work closely with a Steering Committee, which will oversee the development of the Vision Action Plan and provide guidance and input regarding the community visioning and strategic planning process to the Planning Firm/Team. The Steering Committee, which will be supported by Deaconess Foundation and convened in March of 2020 will have the goal of to completing and disseminating a draft of the Vision Action Plan for public comment in the fall of 2020.

The overarching goal of this RFP process is to ensure a transparent process that includes feedback from a diverse set of community stakeholders, as is consistent with Deaconess’ commitment to financial stewardship and community leadership.

The goals of the planning process are:

1. Develop a vision action plan that captures the aspirations and needs of local community residents.
2. Detail an implementation strategy of short-term, intermediate and long-term objectives.
3. Design a process that is community driven, supported and informed by design experts, local government and other key stakeholders.
4. The adoption of the revised North Central Plan by the City of St. Louis.

II. BACKGROUND OF ORGANIZATIONS

Deaconess Foundation

Deaconess Foundation invests in the well-being of children, engages our region around the plight of youth, and advocates for change. A ministry of the United Church of Christ, Deaconess has invested more than \$80 million to improve the health of the St. Louis community since 1998 and believes healthy, hope-filled futures for children benefit the entire region. The Foundation's grantmaking footprint includes St. Louis City, St. Louis, Jefferson, St. Charles, and Franklin Counties in Missouri and Madison, St. Clair and Monroe Counties in Illinois.

Deaconess Foundation operates as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and as a Type I supporting organization under Section 509(a)(3) of the Code. Deaconess Foundation is a supporting organization of the Missouri Mid-South and Illinois South Conferences of the United Church of Christ. Additional information about the Foundation can be found on our website: www.deaconess.org.

Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being

Established by Deaconess Foundation, Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being is a community action tank. Its mission is to build power to advance child well-being in the St. Louis region by strengthening alliances for child-friendly public policy, increasing citizen contact with policy makers, positioning youth and organizers to move systems and engaging faith communities in child advocacy.

Deaconess Center is a qualified low-income community business (QALICB) under new market tax credit guidelines. It operates as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and as a supporting organization under Section 509(a)(3) of the Code. Additional information about the Center can be found on our website: www.deaconesscenter.org.

UCC Church Building & Loan Fund (CB&LF)

The Church Building & Loan Fund (CB&LF) is a 165-year old resource of the United Church of Christ dedicated to assisting new and renewing congregations with loan and programs and capital campaign services. The vision of the United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan Fund (CB&LF) is to reinvent the concept of "church" by equipping church leaders to advance the Gospel mission through innovative uses of buildings and space created through unique partnerships, inventive church operating models, revenue-generating, faith-driven enterprises and the application of impact-driven metrics. We seek to create a just world for all as we dramatically increase economic, social, environmental, and spiritual vitality, especially in neighborhoods across the United States where poverty obstructs abundant life for all people.

Redeem!, a program of the UCC Church Building and Loan Fund, is a sequence of neighborhood redevelopment initiatives designed to incite comprehensive transformation in selected host cities, counties, and/or regions in the United States. In each Redeem! host location, national and local lead partners work together with churches and other faith organizations, local community development corporations, philanthropists, investors, government officials, planners, developers, and neighborhood leaders to identify and redevelop a concentration of properties (including at least one church-owned parcel) in a high-poverty neighborhood.

The developments may include any combination of mixed-income residential, industrial, commercial and/or retail uses that would offer opportunities to local residents for entrepreneurship, employment, and/or housing. Properties selected are in locations that once redeveloped, would leverage continuing investment and development beyond the Redeem! development, resulting in significant, measurable, sustainable transformation of the neighborhood and region. Additional information about CB&LF can be found on our website: www.cblfund.org.

III. SCOPE OF SERVICES

Overview

Deaconess Foundation is seeking a Planning Firm/Team with a track record of successfully designing and implementing innovative and collaborative approaches to engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the development of a Vision Action Plan.

It is important that the Planning Firm/Team remain cognizant of the need for the project to establish and sustain credibility with citizens and decision-makers. It is also essential that the selected team have the ability to:

- Develop and implement customized outreach methods, activities and strategies that will be effective within the political and social environment of the community. Such approaches can include workshops, citizen polling, consensus building, participatory decision-making, focus groups, small “coffee shop” gatherings in citizen’s homes, personal interviews, engagement at community events, youth, church group or other target group outreach activities, opinion surveys, mailings, media coverage, city-wide newsletter, interactive use of a project web site, town hall meetings, vision fairs and other techniques, including the use of a variety of media, activities and methods to capture, focus and engage citizens, decision makers and other key players. Special emphasis should be placed on community members that are not typically engaged in civic or community dialogue;
- Link the community visioning and strategic planning process and outcomes with other existing and proposed planning efforts and decision-making processes in the community;
- Develop and manage the process to achieve outcomes perceived as balanced and authentic by as many community stakeholders as possible.

It is expected that the work will be approached as a collaborative partnership between community members, service clubs, non-profit organizations, business representatives and school and city elected officials and staff with the Planning Firm/Team taking the lead on project management, facilitation of collaborative discussions, task implementation and follow through.

Partnership Opportunities – Lead Consultant: The community recognizes that our needs in this project may require the services of experts with specific skills or from various disciplines. As such, we anticipate possible partnerships among planning firms and consultant teams. All participating consultants and team members must be identified in the Planning Firm/Teams proposal, with the lead party identified. Considering North Central footprint demographics and the Foundation’s commitments to [racial equity in governance and operations](#) we encourage and prefer proposals that include local, people of color and indigenous (POCI)-owned and/or women-owned businesses.

This RFP process will be transparent and will include feedback from a diverse set of community stakeholders, as is consistent with Deaconess’ commitment to financial stewardship and community leadership.

Tasks

The Firm/Team selected to work in partnership with the community on this project will be expected to produce the following products and outcomes and provide the following services:

- Overall Project Management.
- Review of relevant existing plans and studies, including the 2000 North Central Plan.
- Summary of Existing Conditions including demographic, housing, and economic data, land use and zoning, existing and proposed projects, etc.
- Development and Implementation of Communication and Outreach Plans. The Communication Plan should include marketing and other methods of publicity, media relations and creating key messages to increase recognition, build credibility and deepen understanding of the process, its objectives and outcomes within the community. Such approaches would include use of media to deliver information to a diverse community in a variety of ways and should be linked to the Outreach Plan. The Outreach Plan should be designed to engage, involve and promote collaboration directly with the public, including youth and other community stakeholders throughout the entire process. This includes identifying innovative and effective ways to engage community members that do not normally participate in planning processes. The Planning Firm/Team will be expected to attend and/or facilitate meetings and community events, including presentations to appointed and elected officials and a wide variety of community groups.
- Preliminary site visits and meetings with the Steering Committee and other community stakeholders to:
 - Gauge effectiveness of previous planning efforts and barriers to implementation.
 - Discuss neighborhood needs, areas of opportunity, and existing and proposed planning initiatives and/or proposed projects;
 - Identify opportunities and locations to elicit high levels of community participation; and
 - Solicit ideas on potential strategies, projects, programs, and actions.
- Coordinate and facilitate community-wide meetings to develop a Core Values Statement. A “core values” statement would be one of the intended outcomes of the Communication and Outreach Plans and must be developed with broad stakeholder input.

- Coordinate and facilitate community-wide meetings to develop a Community Vision Statement. The Community Vision Statement will be based upon the Core Values Statement, and must be developed with broad stakeholder input.
- Coordinate and facilitate community-wide meetings to identify strategies, projects, programs and actions including a description of strategies, projects, programs and actions related to community planning and capacity building, economic development, health and social services, housing, infrastructure and natural and cultural resources.
- Coordinate and facilitate community-wide meetings to develop a prioritized list of strategies, projects, programs and actions. This may include bricks-and-mortar projects, policy decisions, regulatory changes, political cooperative efforts, or other actions which will be prioritized in terms of community benefits, support for the project, estimated project cost, funding requirements and availability, feasibility assessment, implementation timeframes, and overall project impact.

Deliverables

1. Outreach Plan and Communications Plan that include a list of stakeholders and outreach methodologies.
2. Material for outreach, presentations, meetings, etc.as needed.
3. Minutes of stakeholder meetings.
4. Key Findings Report that includes:
 - a. Community Feedback: Effectiveness of previous planning efforts (such as the North Central Plan) and barriers to implementation.
 - b. Site Visit Observations.
 - c. Existing conditions, emerging and projected trends and areas of opportunity.
5. Final Core Values Statement to include an accompanying narrative explaining the facilitation process utilized to develop the Statement, the communication and outreach activities utilized to maximize representation and participation, the level and type of community participation, and the number and location of meetings/gatherings etc.
6. Final Community Vision Statement to include an accompanying narrative explaining the facilitation process utilized to develop the Statement, the communication and outreach activities utilized to maximize representation and participation, the level and type of community participation, and the number and location of meetings/gatherings etc.
7. Vision Action Plan that includes a list of strategies, projects, programs and actions including a description of strategies, projects, programs and actions related to community planning and capacity building, economic development, health and social services, housing, infrastructure and natural and cultural resources, and a discussion on potential impacts, constraints and opportunities. The North Central Plan will be revised for submission to the City of St. Louis, MO to be approved and adopted.
8. Implementation Plan for implementing one or more of the elements of the Vision Action Plan. The Implementation Plan should be logically structured to include a description of the project or action, lead partner to champion the implementation effort, potential partners for

implementation, the Steering Committee potential funding sources, timeframe and priorities for implementation.

In addition to the items listed above, all data, analysis, multi-media materials, master copies (hard and digital) of final products and all other relevant documentation shall be provided to the Deaconess Foundation for project files.

IV. OTHER PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Change in Scope. If, it is determined by either party that a change in the scope of the work is necessary, the party shall promptly notify the other party in writing. The parties shall then determine whether the contract should be amended to provide for an adjustment in the scope of work performed and costs under the contract. In no event shall any payment be made for work beyond the scope of the original contract without prior written authorization for the additional work.

Access to Work Papers. Deaconess Foundation, Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being, the UCC Church Building and Loan Fund and their authorized representatives will have free and unrestricted access throughout the contract period and for three years after the contract ends to work papers, records and reports prepared or in process of being prepared under this contract.

Alignment with St. Louis City Planning Requirements. Firms providing services will ensure that product and reports are aligned with the City of St. Louis Planning Department and St. Louis Development Corporation requirements and standards for Neighborhood Development Plans.

V. PROPOSAL CONTENT

Proposals should include the following information. Please provide the information in the order requested to facilitate our review of the qualifications of each firm. Please limit your proposal to a black and white Microsoft Word document of no more than 20 pages using 12-point Times New Roman font.

1. Name and Background – Include complete name and contact information. If this is a collaborative effort with another firm or firms, or if any of the work is subcontracted to another party, please provide the same information for all consultants and indicate who will be the lead consultant.
2. Profile of Firm Proposing – Provide a brief description of the size of the firm(s) and the composition of professional staff by level. Include the racial/ethnic and gender demographics of your firm and its leadership. Indicate any regional or national resources available to the local team.
3. Qualifications – Describe the recent experience of your firm in working with comparable organizations to Deaconess (faith-based, grantmaking, advocacy) and communities (predominantly Black, urban neighborhoods, experiencing housing vacancy, vagrancy and violence). Provide the names of organizations and contact information for 501(c)(3) organizations and foundations for whom you have worked within the past three years.

Deaconess believes that diverse and inclusive teams lead to better outcomes. Describe your firm's efforts to recruit, retain and support people of color.

4. Understanding – Statement of your understanding of the work to be performed.

5. Approach – Describe your planned approach to meet Deaconess Foundation and UCC Church Building and Loan Fund needs. The description should be adequate to demonstrate that you have knowledge of our activities to complete the work in a timely and cooperative manner. Describe your firm’s philosophy on scheduling, whether staff will work remotely or on location, and continuity of staff assigned to the engagement.
6. Quality – Briefly describe the firm’s system of quality control to ensure that the work is adequately performed, controls established by the Foundation are adhered to and proper controls are established by the firm.
7. Communication – Please describe your firm’s philosophy on communications with Deaconess and the Steering Committee throughout the scope of work. Please describe anticipated written and oral communications.
8. Key Personnel – List those staff directly assigned to this project, setting forth name, job title, duties and responsibilities and relevant experience. Resumes should be provided for senior leadership assigned and management/supervisory personnel who make up the engagement team. The resumes should include the amount of experience of everyone, as well as a summary of specific experience with not-for-profit organizations. Resumes should be limited to one page and will not be counted against overall page count.
9. Conflict of Interest – Describe any existing or potential relationships with board members or employees of Deaconess Foundation or UCC Church Building and Loan Fund that could affect your firm’s independence by creating an actual or perceived conflict of interest.
10. Budget and cost – Provide a not-to-exceed fee for the services described above. The fee is to be inclusive and include all out-of-pocket expenses. Describe your billing rates and procedures for technical questions and break down hourly rates by management level.
11. References – Offer at least three current references for similar types of projects. Briefly describe the scope of your work for these references, the year completed, and a contact name and telephone/email for each one. (This information may be included with #3 above.)
12. Information on additional services – Please provide any information on additional services that you believe would be pertinent and aligns with this project and/or Deaconess and CB&LF’s mission, vision and values.

VI. SELECTION CRITERIA

Each proposal received will be evaluated and a determination will be made if it meets the minimum requirements. Failure to meet these requirements will be a cause for eliminating the proposal from further consideration.

Deaconess and CB&LF reserve the right to reject any and all proposals, to waive any technicalities, informalities and irregularities, to accept or reject all or part of the proposal, and to be the sole judge of the suitability of the proposals offered.

Evaluation of the proposals will be made by a Steering Committee of residents and supported by Deaconess Foundation and UCC Church Building & Loan Fund staff. In addition to evaluating written proposals, oral interviews may be requested.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Qualifications and experience of your firm and staff, particularly with not-for-profit organizations, faith-based organizations and under-resourced communities.
- Understanding of the work to be performed and scope of services available
- Knowledge of best practices, latest standards, and innovative solutions
- Demonstrated experience working in collaboration with communities on similar projects
- Your firm's alignment with Deaconess mission, vision and values, including racial equity
- Personalized service and
- Fees

On April 6, 2020 there will be a teleconference for organizations and individuals interested in responding to the RFP. Following the teleconference there will be a two-day period in which questions may be submitted via email and responded to within 24 hours.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND DUE DATE

The proposals must be submitted in a PDF format via e-mail to David Nehrt-Flores at the e-mail address listed below by **5:00 p.m. Central Time on April 27, 2020.**

David Nehrt-Flores
Manager, Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being
1000 N. Vandeventer
St. Louis, MO 63113
(314) 436-8001
davidn@deaconess.org

Questions regarding your submission may be directed to David Nehrt-Flores at 314.436.8001 or via email at davidn@deaconess.org. Please direct all inquiries to David Nehrt-Flores only. Please do not contact any Board members. The failure to comply may result in disqualification.

PROPOSAL SELECTION TIMELINE

Deadlines and Selection Timing is as follows:

April 27, 2020	Deadline for submitting a proposal
May 13, 2020	Firm Presentations
May 29, 2020	Firm selected

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – [THE NORTH CENTRAL PLAN](#)

APPENDIX B – [MAP OF NORTH CENTRAL PLAN BOUNDARIES](#)