

Request For Proposal

for Website Design Services

for OurTown Media, llc

Background

OurTown Media, llc., based in Cincinnati, Ohio, is a limited liability company that operates a network of hyper-local websites under the domain name www.OurTown.com.

OurTown.com is divided into local area portals covering cities, towns, and communities across the United States. These local area portals are licensed to "Local Editors" who are given editorial control over that portal. Local Editors are asked to provide local content (news, photos, etc) for display on their portal, which can be augmented by content modules provided by OurTown such as RSS feeds, weather, etc.

The current site looks outdated, cluttered, and does not have uniform branding. To address these design issues, as well as other limits of the current site, we have decided to throw it out and start from scratch with a new design and a new site. The winning bidder for this RFP will create a new branding identity for OurTown.com and design a new site that has a more modern "Web 2.0" look and feel.

Scope and Guidelines

The chosen designer will have free rein to create a new logo, palette, etc. when creating the new branding identity for OurTown. We would like to keep our current tag-line of "Local News, Local Views, Local Search, and Local Commerce". The new site will have six main areas. They are: the front page portal, the local area portals, the registered user admin, the OurTown store, the self-serve ad system, and the internal company admin.

Front Page Portal

Purpose: To allow visitors to quickly and easily find and navigate to their local area's portal.

Audience: News viewers and local community members looking for information on their local community

Potential Sitemap:

- Home
- Search Results (for "Find My Town" searches)
- Local Area Coverage (list of active areas)
- About Us
 - Company
 - Employees
 - News (Press Releases)
 - What is OurTown? (linked directly from the front page?)
- Become a Local Editor Info
- Ad Sales (link to self-serve ad system)
- Contact Us
- Sign Up (for user account, needed to apply for local editor)
- Login/Logout
- Legal Stuff and Sitemap (privacy policy, etc)

This should be as simple as possible, with search being prominent. It will also need to link to other "front page" areas of the site. These include the self-serve advertising system, the OurTown shop, about the site/company, how the concept works, and other basic information.

Local Area Portals

Purpose: To inform local community members of the latest happenings in their town, as well as encourage contributions and interaction from them.

Audience: Members of the local community

Potential Sitemap:

- Home - News Portal page
- Events
- Discussion
- Contribute (for anonymous users only)
 - News (articles)
 - Photos
 - Videos

- Events
 - Attachments/Files (PDF, DOC, etc)
- Admin Section (for registered users only, see Registered User Admin below)
- Content View Page (i.e. click-through to read article, view photo, watch video)
- Content View by Category Page (i.e. Sports, Politics, Schools, etc)
- Search Results Page (for content searches)

This is the heart of OurTown, where community members can gather to read and contribute to the latest happenings in their community. The local editor and their designated agents will be constantly entering and approving content which is then displayed to the community members through this portal. We're looking for a designer to build a "Web 2.0" looking news site, with a local feel.

Registered User Admin

Purpose: To allow easy creation, management, organization, and approval of content.

Audience: Local Editors and Registered Users of OurTown

Potential Sitemap:

- Home/Dashboard (quick links to useful tasks, site news, communication from company, etc)
- My Account
 - Username and Password details (basic info)
 - Profile (including social networking accounts for sharing purposes)
 - Subscription (local editors only)
- Manage and Create Content
 - News (article) management/organization tool
 - News (article) creation/edit tool
 - Photo management/organization tool
 - Photo creation/edit tool
 - Video management/organization tool
 - Video creation/edit tool
 - Event management/organization tool
 - Event creation/edit tool
 - Attachments management/organization tool
 - Attachment upload/creation tool
- Manage Ads (local editors only)
- Statistics (local editors only)
 - Site Traffic
 - Top Content
 - Others as Deemed Useful

- Resource Center (how-to videos, links to useful guides and tools, etc)
- Help/FAQ

Trying to streamline the process of entering content into the system, and giving the user a flexible, clean UI for managing the large volume of content they will be generating is paramount here. We need to really create something attractive and easy to use, making the content entry tools the most important focus. These tools should be reusable so that non-registered users can still use the entry tools to submit content for approval by the Local Editor.

The OurTown Store

Purpose: To provide a place for local editors to purchase OurTown-branded supplies for their advertising and marketing needs.

Audience: Local Editors

Potential Sitemap: TBD

This section will be used to provide OurTown-branded supplies like business cards, letterhead, ad brochures, etc. to local editors. This is currently run by a third-party and so the designer may have to interact with that company to provide the template HTML code needed to match the rest of the new site.

Self-Serve Ad System

Purpose: To allow local editors and businesses to place ads on the OurTown network of sites.

Audience: Local Editors, Businesses, Potential Advertisers

Potential Sitemap: TBD

This system will allow people to advertise on OurTown with minimal interaction from the site administrators. Businesses and local editors should be able to easily choose the area of the country where they would like to advertise, upload their ad, and pay for it. There will also be a reporting interface where local editors and businesses can "slice and dice" their ad statistics to see how their ads are performing on OurTown.

Internal Company Admin

Purpose: To allow the site administrators to manage and control the various features of OurTown.

Audience: Site Administrators

Potential Sitemap: TBD

Here, the designer will need to provide a flexible framework from which future administrative tools can be built. Since this will be for internal use only it will constantly be in-flux and so a basic flexible layout where new tools and reporting functions can be included is key.

Other Potential Design Responsibilities (Branding Related)

- Template for a weekly newsletter
- Template for e-mails to Local Editors
- Business Cards
- Letterhead
- Report Templates

Technical Resources and Specifications

The winning bidder will be responsible for working with our technical team on the front-end implementation of the new site. Our development team will be building the new site using ASP.NET, Microsoft SQL Server 2008, and jQuery. Familiarity and experience building sites with these technologies is a plus, but is not required.

Qualifications

The chosen designer must meet the following qualifications:

- Be able to write HTML, CSS, and light Javascript.
- Have a proven track record designing modern, streamlined user interfaces.
- Be able to present current references from firms or individuals for whom they have previously performed website design services.
- Have a proven track record of working on a team and of being able to meet deadlines.

Timeline

We anticipate that this project will take approximately six months with most of the design work happening in the early phases. Flexibility and availability as the project evolves will be paramount.

Proposal Requirements

All bids should include a bid for the total project cost plus a hourly rate for follow up work or work required outside of the bid contract. It should also include:

- A link to the bidder's portfolio of work completed.
- At least two references of individuals or companies for whom you have completed design work.
- Links to the most recent two web sites you have produced that best reflect your work and relevancy to this project. Include a description of your role in each project.
- A personal/company profile, length of time in business and core competencies.
- A brief description of your company's organizational capacity--How many full-time staff do you employ? What percentage of your staff would end up working on this project? Where are they located?

Also include any other pertinent information or resources that will help us to evaluate your proposal.

Submissions

Bidders should submit sealed or confidential e-mail bids to:

Carol Meinhardt

OurTown Media, llc

600 Vine Street, Suite 600

Cincinnati, OH 45202

carol@cwpllc.com

Chris Burnett

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For questions on this bid or the bidding process, please contact Chris Burnett at cburnett@cwpllc.com.