

Pre-Visioning / Visioning Consultant

Introduction

Expansion and contraction are a natural part of the life cycle of any community. Over the years and decades Shreveport has experienced such transformations, including population shifts, new economic drivers and even successive waves of new leadership. During these years Shreveport's Comprehensive Plan, although enjoying early success, would have required frequent amendments that did not occur to respond to the community's changes.

In addition, there are potential or inevitable changes on the community's horizon that require a completely new response and plan for Shreveport. Not only has the community changed, but these changes have perhaps brought about less than desirable consequences, such as the growth of suburban communities spawning congestion, stressed infrastructure, and unsustainable land use patterns. Older urban communities, on the other hand, have lost jobs, population, recognition, and political strength. As a result, the ideas and desires of these communities have been overlooked altogether, or given very little credence at best. However unintended, these neighborhoods and older communities have been largely excluded and denied meaningful participation in any broad process. Plans that might be produced through such a similarly flawed process would not completely reflect the goals, desires and aspirations of the community at large and, therefore, lack the political backing necessary for meaningful implementation, progress, or even responsive amendments.

The pending changes are potentially so transformational that the planning process can no longer afford to exclude from participation previously under-represented voices in the community. These voices, however, present certain challenges to the creation of a meaningful and sustainable planning process in a community such as Shreveport and Caddo Parish. Foremost among these challenges is an effort to discern the right mechanisms that will ensure meaningful and broad community participation. Once the comprehensive planning process in Shreveport and Caddo Parish begins in earnest (progressing intensely), the one chance to "get it right" from the perspective of widespread community involvement and support, may have realistically "come and gone."

For this reason, the Shreveport Metropolitan Planning Commission of Caddo Parish has prepared this Request for Proposals (RFP) which seeks submittals from qualified consultants detailing a pre-visioning and early visioning process that will define, test, refine, and validate methods that will ensure broad community participation in the comprehensive planning process. It will begin with this effort, but become more focused and intense when a group of strategies and methods have subsequently been proven to be successful.

The importance of the pre-visioning process is vital for the ultimate success of the comprehensive planning effort. To be successful, the planning effort must validly and in a meaningful manner, engage a broad cross-section of the community during the early stages of the process to develop the plan's overall vision, its goals, and its objectives. Without such involvement, decision-makers cannot be assured that the plan completely represents the will of their specific constituencies. Lacking this assurance, the political will to implement the plan, and the continued "push" from the community to do so, cannot be sustained.

The pre-visioning process is anticipated to require from three to six months, but this time will be invested to set the stage for a process designed to permanently and constantly address or anticipate the needs of the community. Moreover, it is intended that the effort itself will help

prepare the community to participate effectively in the more focused efforts that will follow. While a separate RFQ (request for qualifications) is being issued simultaneously for the primary consultant firm that will lead the comprehensive planning effort, there is nothing that should be implied to preclude a single firm or team of consultants from pursuing both roles. Simultaneous outreach and engagement support (marketing and branding) will be provided, but coordinated under the direction of the pre-visioning / visioning consultant team and the primary planning consultant. That support will be provided through a qualification based selection process that will be concluded prior to the selection of these other consultants. In addition, a brief profile describing the historic development of the community and its current demographic profile will be commissioned and available to the consultant team very early in the process. Moreover, a local demographic consultant will be made available to the consultant team at all times. GIS services, including but not limited to neighborhood mapping (already completed) will be provided to the consultant as requested.

Scope of Services

The proposal should adequately describe the consultant's approach to providing services in each of the following task areas defined herein as the Scope of Services.

- Task 1: Pre-approval of Community Outreach Methods

The Shreveport Metropolitan Planning Commission of Caddo Parish will provide a project manager, who along with a citizen based committee of some form and the primary planning consultant will work with the selected specialist to pre-approve methods of outreach to be tested and validated in the community. It is anticipated that the citizen's committee will permanently provide oversight, participate in consultant selection, recommend funding levels and sources, and evaluate both the progress and effectiveness of the process. The proposal itself should include recommendations on how the citizen's committee should be staffed and structured.

The purpose of this task is to detail the outreach methods to be tested, define the neighborhoods to serve as test beds for particular methods, describe why a particular method may work in one neighborhood or community and not others, and describe precisely how such methods will be employed, tested, and results reported. The purpose of these various outreach methods is to ensure at least one method can effectively induce participation of the selected neighborhood or community in the planning process. Success in this area means that each segment of the community will be heard. This effort will set the stage for more detailed issue development during the more focused comprehensive planning process that will utilize additional consultants. It is anticipated that the community outreach methods, at a minimum, will include neighborhood / community meetings, public hearings, phone surveys, web-based methods, door-to-door canvassing and informational kiosks in work centers and similar areas.

Particular attention must be given to the development of a website or web-based method for effective community input, on-going involvement, and feedback. Existing governmental websites may be suitable hosts for this method and should be explored. It is of particular interest to the community whether there is a benefit to treating this as a permanent asset to be shared among various governmental, private and / or non-profit entities. Finally, we would expect a recommendation or evaluation of various alternative technologies or vendors currently providing a suitable solution.

The consultant is free to propose other methods for consideration by the project manager, the primary planning consultant and citizen's committee, but must be prepared to describe them in detail, as stated above. The product of this task will be a technical memorandum.

- Task 2: Neighborhood / Community Deployment and Issue Development

This task will actually deploy the pre-approved methods in appropriate neighborhoods and communities, using them to gather initial information about community ideas, concerns, desires, etc., on a variety of topics including among others housing, economic development, transportation, land use, schools, etc. The consultant will specify the issues to be discussed, data collection methods, and how records will be maintained in a technical memorandum.

- Task 3: Assessment of Results

In this task the selected consultant will provide an assessment of the results of the previous task. This will involve a detailed comparison of neighborhoods, methods, and issue development. The work product of this task will be a technical memorandum

- Task 4: Refinement of Methods

The assessment of results in Task 3 will suggest how methods might be refined to produce better results. The consultant, after discussing possible refinements with the Project Manager and citizen's committee, will deploy an agreed upon number of method refinements in appropriate neighborhoods and report on results in a technical memorandum.

- Task 5: Pre-Vision / Vision Report

Combining and summarizing the technical memoranda and findings of this effort, the consultant will produce a final report that will set the stage for more detailed and further issue development to be performed in partnership with additional consultants during the balance of the initial comprehensive planning effort. This report will describe in detail the community involvement process necessary to ensure cross-sectional involvement throughout Shreveport and Caddo Parish for the subsequent comprehensive planning process. The report will detail which methods worked in which neighborhoods, which did not, and why. This report must demonstrate which combination of outreach methods will be effective in securing broad and adequate community participation throughout the balance of the planning process. In this manner over-representation of one group, neighborhood, or community, and conversely, the under-representation of others can be avoided prior to the engagement of a variety of additional consultants and the initiation of a much more intense effort has begun.

Requirements

It is anticipated that the form of compensation to be included in the executed contract will be a stipulated sum, the basis of which must be described or estimated in some form in the proposal. However, should the services provide the desired results and additional services be required during the remainder of the effort, it is anticipated that the consultant will be engaged to continue. As such the response should include some description of expected profit and overhead rates and the level of compensation for each category of personnel that the successful candidate might employ. It is understood that some equitable and mutually agreeable method of escalation will be employed for work beyond the initial term of the agreement or any extension.

Except as contained herein, there are no specific or formal submittal requirements for responses, which should be received no later than 3:00 P.M. on September 26, 2008 at the following address:

Attn: Diane Tullos
Shreveport Metropolitan Planning Commission of Caddo Parish
505 Travis Street, Suite 440
Shreveport, LA 71101

However, it is expected that the following information will be included in some manner: 1) primary contact information for the firm or team of consultants; 2) the form of ownership structure and all key principals, officers or directors; 3) a statement of the qualifications of both the firm and all key personnel intended to perform services; 4) a brief explanation of the capacity of the firm or consultant team and the availability of key personnel; and 5) a list of relevant projects and clients who may be contacted for references. If it is the intent of the proposal to engage local firms or individuals as facilitators to supplement capacity, it should be clearly stated in the proposal although it is not necessary to identify the specific individuals or entities at this stage of the process.

As an agency that serves both the City of Shreveport and Caddo Parish, the contract to be executed will require insurance and/or indemnifications that meet the minimum requirements for both of those governmental entities. A copy of those requirements will be provided upon request. The City of Shreveport also maintains a policy of providing and ensuring contracting opportunities for small and economically disadvantaged businesses (Fair Share). While it is not anticipated that each individual contract will require a specific level of participation, it is intended that the sum of all contract services performed in association with the comprehensive master plan effort meet the desired goal. As such, a firm's ability to help meet this goal either directly or through the association of third parties is relevant information that should be included in the response.

Requests for clarifications or additional information should be directed to Roy Jambor, AICP / PA at (318) 673-6464.