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Highland Park Central Business District Alliance

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Public Relations/Branding for Fashion Promotions

Acceptance Period: June 9, 2009 to June 16, 2009

Introduction

The Highland Park Central Business District Public/Private Economic Alliance (the "Alliance") is an award-winning partnership of the City of Highland Park, the Central Business District Property Owners Association and the Highland Park Chamber of Commerce. The Alliance was founded in 2008 to enhance the economic vitality of Downtown Highland Park through business attraction, branding, and marketing for Downtown Highland Park businesses. More about the Alliance may be found on the About Us page of the Downtown Highland Park website: downtownhp.com

Downtown Highland Park is the primary commercial district of the City of Highland Park, a community of 34,000 residents on Chicago's North Shore. There are over 450 businesses located in Downtown Highland Park that comprise a balanced mix of service businesses and independent, regional, and national restaurants and retailers.

The character of Downtown Highland Park is a blend of urban and suburban, with a focus on the cultural arts, dining, and activities for families. Downtown Highland Park is host to two movie theaters, an award-winning streetscape designed by Sasaki Associates and other physical assets including proximity to Lake Michigan and numerous pocket parks.

Downtown Highland Park is conveniently accessed by U.S. Route 41, Green Bay Road, Sheridan Road, Metra Rail, and Pace bus service. There are over 2,500 free public parking spaces in Downtown Highland Park.

Background

The Alliance seeks an experienced public relations consultant to develop a 2.5-month campaign (July through mid-September 2009) to brand Central Avenue in Downtown Highland Park as *the* fashion destination on Chicago's North Shore. There are 30 fashion-related merchants in Downtown Highland Park including:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| - Sak's Fifth Avenue | - Lori's Sole of Chicago |
| - Anthropologie | - E Street Denim |
| - Free People | - SHE Boutique |
| - Eileen Fisher | - Bett's/B2 Contemporary |

The PR/branding campaign will conclude with a series of fashion-related events in the first two weeks of September, planned and hosted by the Highland Park Chamber of Commerce.

Scope of Work

The campaign will require a thorough understanding of the goals of the Alliance and efforts that have already been completed to brand Downtown Highland Park as a whole. While the scope refers primarily to the fashion campaign, promotion of Downtown Highland Park as a whole will also be expected.

- Develop a brief brand message for Central Avenue as a fashion destination appropriate for inclusion in all press releases related to the campaign
- Develop a brand name that can be implemented on temporary street signs in September
- Get media coverage of the fashion-related activities, for example:
 - o event listings in *Chicago Magazine*, *TimeOut Chicago*, *North Shore Magazine*, *Sheridan Road*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Highland Park News*
 - o features on Central Avenue as a fashion destination in regional publications
 - o features on the Alliance using branding and public relations to promote its fashion merchants in regional and/or trade publications
- Track media coverage and obtain clips
- Create one-sheets for 10-15 independent fashion merchants to conduct media outreach
- Includes three meetings: initial project meeting with Alliance Executive Director and Marketing committee; outreach meeting with Downtown Highland Park fashion-related merchants; and presentation of campaign to Alliance Board of Directors.
- Must devote at least 20 hours per month to the campaign (min. overall: 50 hours)

Submittal

Bidders must submit (i) a fee proposal for the Scope of Work, (ii) proposed project team and qualifications, (iii) a suggested timeline for campaign activities, and (iv) examples of past work, at minimum: press releases, story placement, and a comparable marketing plan.

Questions will be accepted until noon (CST) on Friday, June 12, 2009.

All submittals shall be forwarded by email to the attention of the Alliance Executive Director, Sarah Wiebenson at info@downtownhp.com by noon (CST) on Tuesday, June 16, 2009.

Evaluation Criteria

Previous experience completing projects of a similar nature is desired and competitive pricing is important as the Alliance has limited funds. Submittals will be evaluated on a 1-5 scale primarily based on the following criteria: portfolio, quality of work, creativity, resources/team size, and experience related to the Scope of Work.

Brand Message Book

March 2009



This brand message book is a reference tool to be used by the Alliance and its contractors in the creation of marketing materials to promote Downtown Highland Park. The purpose is to maintain a consistent message and language to describe Downtown Highland Park.

Messages used in 2008-09 marketing initiatives include:

Experience Downtown Highland Park (Holiday 2008)

Downtown Highland Park Is Open For Business! (Spring 2009)

What's New in Downtown Highland Park? (e-blast header)

It Pays to Support Downtown Highland Park (customer reward promotions)

A generic tagline has not yet been established for Downtown Highland Park.

Section 1. Characteristics of Downtown Highland Park

- Family friendly and fun
- Attractive blend of urban and suburban
- Upscale with value added (unique or high quality items)
- Forward-thinking

Section 2. Vision for Downtown Highland Park

Downtown Highland Park is a bustling commercial district, with plenty to do and see for people of all ages and walks of life. It is easily and safely accessible by car, train, bus, bicycle, or on foot. It is an attractive, fun, and welcoming place to meet a friend or to spend time with family. Many Downtown Highland Park business owners live in Highland Park or grew up in Highland Park and all businesses place a premium on customer service. People live, work, shop, dine, and play in Downtown Highland Park every day of the year. There is always something new to try in Downtown Highland Park.

Section 3. Values of Downtown Highland Park

Downtown Highland Park values families, business, community, vitality, friendliness, accessibility, customer service, customer loyalty, uniqueness, cultural arts, and sustainability.

Section 4. Mission

The mission of Downtown Highland Park is to provide the North Shore with a vibrant, relaxed, fun, and easily accessible place to live, learn, work, shop, dine, and play.

Section 5. Value Proposition

Downtown Highland Park embodies the best that urban and suburban commercial districts have to offer. It is conveniently accessed by car, train, bus, bicycle and on foot and offers over 2,500 free public parking spaces. The 450 businesses located in Downtown Highland Park are a balanced mix of retail, service, and office uses that cater to one's every need. Located in Lake County, its sales taxes are two percent lower than commercial districts in Cook County less than four miles away. When Highland Park residents do business in Downtown Highland Park, each dollar spent has direct benefits in the form of enhanced City services and increased property values.

Section 6. Culture

The Downtown Highland Park consumer is generally well-educated, middle-to-upper income, with tastes that lean toward high quality, trendy, artistic, and progressive goods. The Downtown Highland Park consumer likes to meet with friends and family at favorite eateries and is loyal to favorite stores.

Section 7. Target Market

Downtown Highland Park enjoys a loyal customer base of Highland Park residents. Its target market is demographically broad, while typically originating within a five-mile radius geographically, or occasionally from as far as Chicago or Milwaukee. The Alliance would like to increase the market share of Downtown Highland Park's existing customer base by encouraging more frequent visits, patronizing an expanded number of businesses, and spending more per visit.

Section 8. Segments

Typical weekday visitors to Downtown Highland Park businesses are as follows:

- Women aged 30-45 with children, not working
- Men aged 30-45 with children, work out of the home
- Retired men and women aged 65-85
- Children aged 14-19
- Daytime employees aged 20-65

Weekend visitors range more broadly, attracted by events or activities or shopping opportunities.

Section 9. Stakeholder Perceptions

Visitors. The 2007 CBD Market Study included interviews with district visitors to obtain their perceptions of Downtown Highland Park. Positive perceptions were reflected in comments such as "I love the downtown, it was my primary reason for moving to Highland Park" and that sixty-three percent of survey respondents said that the CBD "contributes strongly" to quality of life in Highland Park. Negative perceptions related to the number of banks (too many), time limits on parking (too short), way-finding (want better directional signage), traffic and pedestrian safety (want more courteous drivers), outdoor seating at restaurants (want more), store affordability (want more inexpensive offerings), and entertainment (want more).

Property Owners and Merchants. Comments to the Alliance reveal a perception that Downtown Highland Park is a good place to do business because of its loyal customer base, a resident population with high incomes and high educational attainment, and the quality of City services and streetscaping. Barriers to doing business included a perception of negativity among other business owners and a lack of clarity from the City on business rules and regulations.

Section 10. Services

Businesses and customers in Downtown Highland Park enjoy a high level of service from the City in the form of streetscaping, landscaping, snow removal, holiday lighting, public safety, and more than 2,500 free public parking spaces.

Section 11. Products

The Downtown Highland Park product is the sense of comfort and welcoming to its visitors, residents, merchants, and property owners. Merchants offer unique items or a level of customer service that distinguish Downtown Highland Park from other commercial districts.

Section 12. Infrastructure

Downtown Highland Park enjoys easy access from U.S. Route 41, Sheridan Road, and Green Bay Road, with Central Avenue acting as its “spine” from which smaller streets extend. The district is bi-sected by the regional Metra railroad with a large decorative gateway over the tracks to welcome visitors to Downtown Highland Park. The gateway feature is one component of an AIA award-winning streetscape design that includes lamp posts, paving, bike racks, benches, refuse containers, informational kiosks, and banners. There are planters and trees primarily along Central Avenue, with a large gathering space for public events in Port Clinton Square. There are four public “pocket” parks in Downtown Highland Park, one with a sculpture from the Highland Park Sister City in Mexico, one with a “public forum” for free speech, one with a Veteran’s Memorial sculpture, and another with a sun dial sculpture.