City of Mercer Island, Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Update
Request for Proposals/Qualifications (RFP/RFQ)

Date of Release: May 17th, 2019
RFP/RFQ proposal due: June 17, 2019 at 3:00pm
Contact: Zach Houvener, Operations & Programs Supervisor | Zach.Houvener@mercergov.org

INTRODUCTION

The City of Mercer Island (the “City”) is requesting proposals and statements of qualifications from consultants to assist in developing/updating the City’s Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (“PROS Plan”) for 2021-2027. The purpose of this RFP/RFQ is to select a firm that has collective planning experience in parks, trails, open space, recreation facilities, arts and culture, program planning, policy development, parks capital planning, statistically valid surveying, and community engagement.

GOALS OF THE PROS PLAN

In this plan update, the City desires to have a consultant assemble a comprehensive and accurate picture of the community’s needs and desires. Historically, PROS plans have evaluated levels of service by measuring the quantities of various facilities and programs per thousand population.

In recent years, surveys, market data and other analytical tools have augmented these traditional metrics to capture emergent or latent demand in the community. There is also a trend towards using such tools to reach subpopulations within the community to capture demand that may not surface in a standard public engagement process.

The City is seeking a consultant that has experience in a range of statistical and qualitative demand analyses. The consultant should also plan on a robust community engagement process that includes innovative methods of capturing and evaluating community needs.

This plan will contain useful planning data to support the development of capital projects, alternative funding opportunities, such as Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants, and other long-term planning strategies.
BACKGROUND

Since the early 1960’s, planning efforts have been undertaken to address park and recreation services and community facilities on Mercer Island. A 1973 “Preliminary Community Facilities Plan” guided development for over 17 years until community decisions on the public library and City Hall prompted a newer plan to be developed. In January 1991, the City Council adopted a Comprehensive Park, Recreation, Open Space, Arts and Trail Plan to reflect current attitudes, needs and demands and “guide future City actions relating to the elements discussed herein”. The plan was updated at the beginning of 2007, incorporating almost all the same goals and objectives cited in the 1991 plan.

The 2014-2019 plan updated the earlier planning work and added a significant new inventory of park facilities. It provided a comprehensive look at the capital needs for the park system, which guided the City in future park, recreation, community center, arts, open space, and trails planning.

CITY OVERVIEW

The City of Mercer Island is located along Interstate 90, between Seattle and Bellevue (3 miles from Seattle, 1 mile from Bellevue, 20 miles from Sea-Tac Airport). Mercer Island was incorporated in 1960 with a council/manager form of government. Easy access to the entire Puget Sound region makes Mercer Island highly desirable and partially explains (along with excellent schools) why Island real estate values have always been among the highest in the state.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

In October 2017, the City launched a public engagement process to help residents understand the financial challenges it faced, in terms of balancing the operating budget, maintaining current service levels, and funding capital projects. The process scoping began by holding an informal listening session with important Quality of Life partners in June 2017.

The first major step entailed the formation of a Community Advisory Group (CAG) consisting of 23 island residents, who were appointed by the City Manager following an application process with a kick-off meeting in November 2017. The CAG was tasked with learning about City finances, reviewing financial forecasts, exploring various budget balancing options, and making a recommendation to the City Manager.

In late April 2018, the City conducted its biennial citizen survey to determine satisfaction levels with City services, identify funding priorities, and gauge public support for an operating levy lid lift. On May 15, 2018, the survey results and the CAG’s recommendations were presented to the City Council (view materials and footage). Council discussion and public hearings were conducted on June 5 and June 19, 2018 regarding placing an operating levy lid lift on the November 2018 ballot.

In November 2018, a six-year levy lid lift (known as Proposition 1), failed to pass amongst voters. With the failure of Proposition 1, the Council directed staff to make additional reductions in order to begin the process of transitioning to new lower levels of service. On April 2, 2019 the Council approved an additional $1.34 million in reductions in 2019-2020, for a total of $2.7 million in staffing and service level changes over the biennium.

The Parks and Recreation Department was significantly impacted by the 2019-2020 biennial budget reductions, primarily in the area of recreation programming and Community Center operations.
Although park maintenance resources were not reduced, there is concern about the future, as existing resources are not keeping up with parks system maintenance needs.

In addition to operating needs, there remains a significant funding need for the capital program as the park’s infrastructure is aging and in many cases at the end of its useful life. Most recently, capital resources have been directed to repair work only as funds are not available for full replacement.

**SCOPE OF WORK**

The following is a preliminary scope of work that may be modified during the contract negotiations with the selected consultant. Consultants should be familiar with the following City documents and plans:

- **2014-2019 PROS plan**
- **City’s Comprehensive Plan**
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan**
- **Capital Improvement Program Budget**
- **Transportation Improvement Plans**
- **Open Space Plan Update**
- **Aubrey Davis Master Plan**
- **Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan**
- **Luther Burbank Master Plan**

1. **Project Management:** The selected consultant is expected to provide project management services in close consultation with the City’s project manager, including coordination of sub-consultants, ensuring the project remains on schedule and within budget.

2. **Community Profile:** The profile update includes demographic profile as well as natural characteristics of the City’s watershed, hydrology, forests and critical areas. Data from the Puget Sound Regional Council (PRSC) as well as the City’s Comprehensive Plan will be utilized.

3. **Statistically Valid Survey:** The PROS Plan update combines technical analysis with the input of the community to set a direction for the future of the City. This process is designed to ensure that the planning team gathers the input necessary to develop a plan that is technically sound, rooted in the needs of the community and is implementable. There may be one or multiple surveys, or focus groups used as a baseline to determine needs, desires and cost structures. The City may conduct the survey, with input from the selected firm. This is a priority and should be completed in 2019.

4. **Inventory:** The consultant will evaluate and update existing inventory data and propose a methodology to complete any necessary additional inventory work for parks, open space, trails, athletic and recreation facilities, including other publicly and privately-owned community facilities. An infrastructure assessment should be completed by the end of 2019. GIS capabilities will be required.
5. **Trails:** This includes an updated inventory and evaluation of existing trails within parks, linkages between community destinations and connections to regional trails and planning for future trail corridors of these systems. This incorporates trail corridors within and adjacent to the city limits and urban growth boundary. Some data is available in GIS format.

6. **Parks and Facilities level of service:** Review and update facility level of service standards to align with local recreational needs, staff direction, and estimated financial implications. In addition, develop a secondary level of service considering geographic distribution and facility access founded in public process, stakeholders, advisory groups, City Commissions and Council input.

7. **Recreation level of service:** The consultant will update the inventory and analysis of current level of service standards for the City’s recreation and cultural arts programs.

8. **Updated goals and policies:** Update the goals and policies, using the 2014-2019 PROS Plan as the baseline, in consideration of new policy guidance. The consultant will also reference the plans and documents identified on page 3 when developing new goals and policies.

9. **Coordination with neighboring jurisdiction plans:** Consider cooperative and partnership opportunities with, and appropriate connections to existing and planned facilities in neighboring jurisdictions (Seattle, Bellevue, King County, WSDOT, Sound Transit, etc.). On-island coordination with other service providers includes the Mercer Island School District, Stroum Jewish Community Center, Boys & Girls Club, Mercer Island Beach Club, etc.

10. **Capital Plan:** Develop/Update the 6-year Parks & Recreation Capital Improvement Plan adopted in 2014, including development of a long-range project evaluation criteria for capital projects.

11. **Implementation Strategy:** The consulting firm will include provisions for a PROS Plan implementation strategy including financing options.

12. **Public Involvement:** The consultant team will develop a robust public involvement plan and help facilitate public meetings to solicit community and stakeholder input. The plan will include a variety of tools and methods to ensure ample opportunity for the public to be informed and involved. Outreach tools used may include social media, virtual town hall, open houses, focus groups, booths at City-sponsored events, and meetings with advisory boards and the City Council.

   The selected consultant is expected to participate in multiple meetings of the Parks & Recreation, Arts and Planning Commissions, public open houses and other community outreach events, as well as City Council meetings for presentations and consideration of the plan. The consultation team will also track, organize and provide information necessary for City staff to respond to public comments.

13. **State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA):** The consultant will complete a draft and final SEPA checklist for the proposed plan.
14. **Draft and Final Plans:** It is anticipated that several drafts of the plan will be completed prior to final plan adoption. Plan sections may be developed and reviewed as interim steps to development of the full plan. Public input will be solicited and incorporated throughout the planning process. After consideration by the Commissions, recommendations will be incorporated for plan adoption. The selected consultant will be expected to participate in multiple advisory board meetings, public open houses and other community outreach events, as well as City Council meetings for presentations and consideration of the plan.

15. **Agreement Form:** The consultant selected by the City will negotiate a scope and fee schedule based with the City on using the City’s standard professional services agreement (PSA) form which is attached. Consultants that submit proposals are expected to be able to meet the terms contained in the form.

16. **Business License:** Provide a statement to the effect that the respondent understands and agrees to obtain a City of Mercer Island business license as a requirement for performing these services. A City business license application can be found at:


**PROJECT BUDGET**

Upon selection of a qualified consultant, scope and fee shall be negotiated. The anticipated budget for this project is $125,000. Additional funds are available to perform the comprehensive infrastructure assessment. Staff are still evaluating whether this work will be performed as part of this contract or a separate engagement.

**SUBMITTAL CONTENTS**

Please provide the following in the Proposal Package:

- **Cover Letter/Statement of Interest:** Describe your interest in assisting the City in updating the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan and commitment to provide the services described in the Scope of Work.

- **Project Team:** Provide a brief description of the individuals on the consultant team including their relevant experience and qualifications. Additionally, please provide information demonstrating the organizational structure of your team, who will be the principal project manager throughout the process, reporting relationships between members and the physical location of the offices from which the work will be performed. The team may consist of multiple firms with focused areas of expertise.
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- **Project Experience**: Please provide the following information for no more than (5) five relevant and recent projects with similar scope and size that have been managed by the proposed project manager:
  
o  Description of project, location, and current status  
o  Project results and challenges  
o  Description of professional services provided by the consultant team  
o  Initial project budget and final cost and end date (if applicable)  
o  References (name, title, address, phone number and email)  

- **Project Approach**: Please describe the project approach to preparing the PROS Plan update, including the public participation methodology and techniques, which are significant to this project. Please also include a high-level timeline which identifies major proposed tasks and products that result in an anticipated plan adoption by the end of 2020. Firms should be prepared to outline the methodology utilized in previous projects, and how they will go about meeting the deadlines as outlined in the Proposed Timeline below.

- **Disclosure of Conflict and Interest**: Disclose any potential conflict of interest due to any other clients, contracts, or property interests regarding private development of any property within the City of Mercer Island.

**Costs for Development of Submittals**: All costs for developing submittals in response to this RFP/RFQ are the obligation of the consultant and are not chargeable to the City. All submittals will become property of the City and will not be returned. Submittals may be withdrawn at any time prior to published close date, provided notification is received in writing to the Project Manager listed on this RFP/RFQ. Submittals cannot be withdrawn after the published close date.

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

- **Project Understanding**: Demonstration of thorough understanding of project scope and how the team plans to address the challenges of the project, and unique qualities of the team as it relates to the project

- **Team Description**: Complete and comprehensive organizational chart or similar explanation of team members’ roles and responsibilities, including summary of each firm on the team, office locations, number of staff, and area of expertise

- **Key Team Member Resumes**: Combination of team members that meet the interdisciplinary needs of this project and represent the team’s strengths and unique qualities

- **Project Schedule/Deadlines**: Demonstration of ability of the team to meet the proposed project schedule including assigned staff availability
• Relevant Project Experience: Demonstration of Consultant’s relevant experience with projects of similar scope and size

• Methodology: Demonstration of comprehensive understanding of this project; identification of ways to engage the City, its partners, and the public in an open process of visioning and reviewing alternatives; and a sound approach that will meet the schedule

The City of Mercer Island reserves the right to reject any or all qualification packages received, and to waive any irregularities or information in the evaluation process. The final selection is the sole decision of the City of Mercer Island, and the respondents to this formal request have no appeal rights or procedures guaranteed to them.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

• RFP/RFQ Release: May 17, 2019
• Deadline for questions: June 3, 2019
• City response to questions: June 7, 2019
• RFP/RFQ proposal due: June 17, 2019 at 3:00pm
• Notify short listed firms: June 28, 2019
• Interview short listed firms: mid-July, 2019
• Contract awarded: End of July 2019
• Target project kick-off: August 2019
• Target plan adoption: End of 2020

SUBMITTAL FORMAT, LOCATION AND DEADLINE

Limit submittals to 10 sheets of two-sided, 8 ½” x 11” pages in length (or folded to that dimension), not including resumes and cover letter.

Please submit five (5) hard copies of your team’s qualification package as well as a pdf copy uploaded onto a CD or USB drive. Sealed submittals plainly marked “City of Mercer Island 2019 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Update” on the outside of the mailing envelope, addressed to:

City of Mercer Island
Parks & Recreation Department
ATTN: Zach Houvener
2040 84th Ave SE, Mercer Island WA 98040

Submittals will be accepted until June 17, 2019 at 3pm PST. Qualification submittals may also be hand delivered to the customer service desk on the first floor of City Hall by the required date and time. Submittals delivered after the posted deadline will not be considered for selection. No faxed or emailed submittals will be accepted.
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It is the obligation and responsibility of the Consultant to learn of addendums, responses, or notices issued by the City relative to this RFP/RFQ. These will be posted on the City website http://mercergov.org/RFP.asp under the heading Parks & Recreation – Planning by the date shown on the Proposed Timeline above.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Inquiries should be submitted, via email only, at any time prior to the question deadline identified in the Proposed Timeline to: Zach Houvener, Operations & Programs Supervisor at: Zach.Houvener@mercergov.org.

Any email communications will be considered unofficial and non-binding on the City.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) INFORMATION

This material can be made available in an alternate format by calling 206-275-7839