



City Council

Direction to Negotiate a Specific Scope of Work with a Consultant Team for the Downtown Strategy

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Title

Direction to Negotiate a Specific Scope of Work with a Consultant Team for the Downtown Strategy

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to direct staff to negotiate a specific scope of work with the recommended consultant for the Downtown Strategy: MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design, LLP (Option 1)

Report

Issue:

The City Council approved a scope for the Downtown Strategy and directed staff to release a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for consultant assistance. The City Council is being asked to provide direction to staff to negotiate a specific contract with a recommended consultant.

Staff Contact:

Amy Buckler, Senior Planner, Department of Community Planning & Development, 360.570.5847

Presenter(s):

Amy Buckler

Background and Analysis:

On May 19, 2015, the City Council approved a scope for the Downtown Strategy and directed staff to release a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a consulting firm to assist with its public process and formation (**attachment 2 has a link to RFQ/scope**).

The public process to form the Downtown Strategy will kick off in fall 2015. This Strategy will identify priorities - steps we take over a 5-6 year period that will have the greatest strategic impact to move our downtown forward.

Since June, the City has been engaged in an extensive consultant selection process that has

included participation from City advisory boards; downtown stakeholder groups and the general public. As the RFQ describes, there is potential for this project to lead to subsequent contracts or contract amendments to carry out specific related tasks in the future.

CONSULTANT RECRUITMENT & EVALUATION PROCESS:

On June 5, 2015, the City released the RFQ through the Daily Journal of Commerce and Builders Exchange of Washington (the industry standard for posting projects). Emails were also sent to 331 urban design firms registered with the Municipal Resource Service Center (MRSC) or otherwise known to staff.

On June 29, 2015, the application period closed with (8) RFQ applications received.

Staff along with one Planning Commissioner evaluated the applications for consistency with qualifications described in the scope and RFQ. This group selected the top (6) applicants to be interviewed. (Due to the nature of this project, all “applicants” are consortiums of various consulting firms led by one prime urban design firm.)

On July 27, (6) applicant teams were interviewed by two panels:

- Panel 1 consisted of the Director and Deputy Director of Community Planning & Development; the Public Works Director; the Economic Development Director; a Principal Planner; and a Planning Commissioner.
- Panel 2 consisted of the City’s project manager for the Downtown Strategy; and representatives of the Olympia Downtown Association (ODA), Parking & Business Improvement Area (PBIA, Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA), City’s Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) and City’s Design Review Board (DRB).
- Each panel conducted an interview with each team. Questions related to the scope of work.
- Each team brought four members to the interview, including the lead consultant and others who would actually be involved in the project, if selected.

Following the interviews, the two panels convened and selected (3) applicant teams to participate in the final evaluation step: a public open house. The (3) teams’ scores were very close, and the panelists agreed each appeared to be qualified to carry out the City’s scope of work, while there were some differences in their approach.

Between August 3-21, City staff conducted a total of (26) reference checks on the prime urban design firms and subcontracted firms for each team. In general, questions related to the scope and implementation success of the applicants’ previous projects; demonstrated ability to build rapport with diverse public, officials and staff; project management; budget management; and whether there were specific challenges or opportunities presented by their work.

On August 20, 2015, the City hosted an open house with opportunity for the public to provide feedback about the finalists. More than 75 members of the public attended, as well as several City

Council members, advisory board members and staff. At the event, each finalist team made a presentation to the public, answered questions drafted by advisory board members, and set up a booth where they interacted with the public in an open-house format.

At the event, the public was asked to provide feedback on comment cards about their general impressions and what they perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of each team (**attachment 3 links to public comments.**) Public feedback was considered in making the final recommendation on consultant selection to City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends MAKERS architecture and urban design, LLP as the consultant for the Downtown Strategy. In making this recommendation, the staff considered public feedback from the open house; references from other cities; and the City's early evaluation steps, including review of the RFQ applications and formal interviews.

MAKERS RFQ application includes a description of key personnel from both MAKERS and subcontracted firms that would assist with this project (**attachment 1.**)

In their RFQ application, formal interviews and references, the MAKERS team has demonstrated they have the **specific experience and expertise** to carry out the City's scope of work, including:

- MAKERS, is a professional urban design firm with extensive experience integrating urban design principles and qualities into plans and regulations.
- Their prime consultant, John Owen, has 37 years of experience as an architect and urban designer.
- Has extensive experience with view corridors analysis, design standards and SEPA
- Comprises the expertise to assist with the formation of economic, housing and retail strategies.
- Has strong skills and abilities to produce data and graphic elements

In addition:

- **Public comments from 8/20** were positive. See (**attachment 3**).
- MAKERS demonstrates an ability to perform all elements of the scope.
- The MAKERS team has all worked together previously, indicating smooth coordination of efforts.
- MAKERS' has a track-record for successful implementation of their projects.

MAKERS' prior project examples include:

- City of Everett's Downtown Plan, Code Update and street improvement plan
- City of Renton's North Downtown Redevelopment and City Center Plan
- City of Port Angeles and Port of Edmond's Harbor Square View Corridor Analysis
- The City of Tumwater's Transforming Capital Boulevard Study

NEXT STEPS:

Once the City Council provides direction to staff, a specific contract will be negotiated with a consultant team. The contract will be based on the Council approved scope for the Downtown Strategy and the City's standard contract for professional services. Staff hopes to have a consultant under contract by end of September.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

See link to public feedback from the 8/20 open house - **attachment 3**

Options:

1. Move to direct staff to negotiate a specific scope of work with MAKERS architecture and urban design, LLP regarding assistance with formation of a Downtown Strategy.
2. Move to postpone direction on consultant selection.

Financial Impact:

For 2015, \$250,000 has been budgeted to form a Downtown Strategy. Subject to future budget decisions, additional funds may be appropriated, but it is uncertain at this time.