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REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Posted November 25, 2008

I. INTRODUCTION

On behalf of Ascension Parish [County] in Louisiana, the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) is soliciting proposals from professional planning Consultants to create a Parish Comprehensive Plan ["Comprehensive Plan" is the equivalent of "master plan" under Louisiana revised statutes].

The selected Consultants will be asked to review and evaluate the following documents:

The existing Ascension Parish Master Plan, from 2003

<http://www.ascensionparish.net/downloads/planning/masterplan/09landuse040203.pdf>

The Ascension Parish Development Ordinance, adopted in 2003

http://www.ascensionparish.net/images/fbfiles/files/Development_Code_2003.pdf

Transportation Study, from 2005

<http://www.ascensionparish.net/downloads/planning/masterplan/02aptransstudy.pdf>

Also included on the [website](#) are several other studies that have been prepared in the past, but have never been acted upon. This information can be used for background information and as a starting point (but not an item of constraint) that will be refined, added to, improved upon and/or revamped through an inclusive and participatory planning process.

The Plan must reflect Smart Growth best practices (<http://smartgrowthamerica.org/sghowto.html>) and be consistent with the Louisiana Speaks Regional Vision that is available on the website www.louisianaspeaks.org. To the highest degree possible, the consultant team will be asked to aid early on in establishing intergovernmental cooperation with the three municipalities within the Parish: Donaldsonville, Gonzales, and Sorrento in order for the Comprehensive Plan to coordinate with and compliment any other existing city plans and/or ordinances. The final chapter of the Comprehensive Plan should include a phased and prioritized Implementation Strategy. The anticipated project budget is \$250,000 - \$300,000.

II. PROJECT OVERSIGHT

Support Committee

The Support Committee is representative of a cross-section of parish residents, key stakeholder and/or professional groups, parish staff members, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and Ascension Parish Council members. The 20-25 member Committee consists of individuals who are committed to the community and who can provide broad policy direction on the future physical development and quality of life for the Parish.

The mission of the Support Committee is to facilitate, provide recommendations and oversee the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan for the Parish. The Support Committee will be the sounding board and recommending body for the consultant team and Planning Department staff. By representing the broad interests of the community, the Support Committee will help to facilitate the formal review and adoption of the Comprehensive Master Plan by the Planning Commission and Parish Council.

The selected consultant team will interact with the Support Committee throughout the planning process. CPEX will assist the Parish in coordinating the representative Support Committee and facilitating the inclusive planning process.

Point-of-Contact

Respondents shall restrict all contact and questions regarding this RFQ and selection process to the individual named herein. Questions concerning terms, conditions and technical specifications shall be directed in writing to: Center for Planning Excellence, Attn: **Camille Manning-Broome**, Director of Planning, 402 N. Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802 OR via email at camille@c-pex.org.

Respondents and their agents are strictly prohibited from lobbying or contacting members of the Ascension Parish Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, parish staff members, Selection Committee members, CPEX staff and CPEX board members at any time in the application and selection process. All communications regarding the RFQ shall be in written form and submitted as directed by the provisions of this RFQ. Failure to comply with this clause shall be grounds for rejection of their RFQ.

III.BACKGROUND

Project Area

Situated at the junction of the Mississippi River and Bayou Lafourche, <http://apgov.us/parishmap/framesetup.asp> Ascension Parish embodies the unique, rich culture of south Louisiana. The Parish's geography, approximately 300 square miles, has been claimed by several different nations and peoples and situated at the crux of an unrivaled and unprecedented mixing of populations and cultures since the Spanish first came into contact with the Houma, Bayougoula, and Tchitimacha tribes here in the 16th Century. The residents still closely identified with the French Acadiana / Cajun way of life, hosting one of the world's most prominent Jamabalya festivals and serving as home to the nation's most celebrated Greek Revival plantations along Louisiana's historic River Road.

Historic Donaldsonville, founded in 1806 and at one time the capital of Louisiana, is the parish seat with a population of approximately 8,000. The other two of the parish's incorporated municipalities are Gonzales (approx. pop. 8,000) and Sorrento (approx. pop. 1,500).

The development challenges facing Ascension Parish can be characterized by a single word: growth. Geographically, Ascension Parish is a desirable area for development between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, located 30 miles south of Baton Rouge and 50 miles west of New Orleans. Development pressures stem from the growth of commuter populations to both of these nearby cities, the strength of the Ascension public school system, and the growth of Ascension's primary industry—the manufacturing sector in chemical processing.

According to the US Census Bureau, between April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006, Ascension Parish experienced the highest population growth in the state. The Bureau estimates a population growth of 27% during this period, placing Ascension as the 78th fastest growing county nationwide. Such rapid growth has resulted in a Parish-wide population of nearly 100,000 and growing. The Parish has become a bedroom community for individuals who work and shop in East Baton Rouge, to the north, but sleep in Ascension. These new exurban subdivision developments have created a strain on the parish budget by requiring the Parish to meet demands in residential and commercial development rather than guiding growth and development. With the creation of a Comprehensive Plan and implementation strategy, parish officials will be able to budget and plan for development by guiding projects to areas that have been prioritized for growth.

In the face of this development pressure and because much of the parish is located in flood-prone areas, parish officials are struggling to address considerable drainage and stormwater management issues. Housing developments are encroaching areas that often lack adequate infrastructure such as roads and water and sewer systems. Growth concerns include, but are not limited to: prioritization of transportation projects according to land use; provision of public safety; health and human services in areas attractive for new development; scale of development; protection of rural character and aesthetics; appropriate inclusion of buffer zones between varying development types and scales; and achieving a balance between individual property rights and planning/growth management.

Parish citizens place high value on Ascension’s natural beauty, rural character and traditional farming culture, unique environmental characteristics and the recreational opportunities that support and result from these attributes.

In a recent survey residents of Ascension Parish indicated that the lack of road infrastructure (traffic) was their number one concern. Another [survey](#), conducted in August 2008 addressed recreation issues in the Parish.

Parish Government

Ascension Parish is a Home Rule, Council-President form of government. The form of government efficiently combines all executive, legislative, and judicial functions for the parish. Additionally, there are three municipalities in the Parish—Donaldsonville, Gonzales and Sorrento.

Comprehensive Master Plan Requirements

The Comprehensive Plan is required to include, but is not limited to, the following elements:

1. Future land-use
2. Traffic circulation and mass-transit
3. Wastewater, solid waste, and drainage
4. Drainage / Storm water
5. Conservation and environmental resources
6. Recreation and open space
7. Housing and Neighborhoods
8. Public services and facilities, which includes, but is not limited to, a capital improvement program
9. Economic Development and redevelopment
10. Health and human services
11. Emergency Preparedness
12. Financing methods to implement recommendations

Each element must include policy recommendations for its implementation and shall be implemented, in part, by the adoption and enforcement of appropriate land development regulations. The Parish Council is responsible for recommending methods to finance the policies created by the Comprehensive Master Plan.

Consultant Qualifications

Consultants should demonstrate experience in the following areas:

1. Long-term visioning
2. Comprehensive Plans that support Smart/Quality Growth principles
3. Transportation and land use plans and strategic prioritization of existing projects/plans
4. Effective public process and consensus building, particularly working with large landowners and rural communities
5. Creation of intergovernmental coordination and agreements in relation to regional transportation, economic development, schools and education, and land use developments
6. Strong specialized experience working with rural to suburban landscapes, transportation planning, access management, and infrastructure planning
7. Basic knowledge of Ascension Parish and its growth issues
8. Demonstrated successful implementation of Comprehensive Plans
9. Development of long-term monitoring systems with measurable benchmarks
10. Experience writing and/or revising subdivision regulations, landscaping, signage, land use and zoning ordinances

IV.CONTRACT DELIVERABLES

The final deliverables should include, but not be limited to:

1. A transportation improvement strategy that takes into account land use and public building siting, such as school and safety facilities.
2. A transportation and land use plan that creates a hierarchy of streets with corresponding land use recommendations.
3. A land use plan to guide growth and development in areas with existing infrastructure.

4. A consolidated infrastructure / Capital Improvements Plan that coordinates transportation, sewer, and drainage facilities and identification of potential funding sources for the development of these improvements.
5. A conservation and open space element to preserve agricultural land and identify locations for recreation, such as linkages to trails.
6. A housing element to identify areas for redevelopment or potential for blight together with a policy for affordable housing.
7. A recreation element to identify ways to provide Ascension Parish residents with sufficient park lands and recreation facilities to satisfy their health, safety and welfare needs.
8. An implementation strategy and matrix with measurable benchmarks.

Ascension Parish has numerous transportation studies and land use plans. These plans have not been implemented but should be considered when creating a planning and implementation strategy:

http://www.ascensionparish.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=186&Itemid=254

IV.SUBMISSION DETAILS

Deadline for Proposal Submissions

Proposals should be received no later than **January 9, 2009 by 4:00 p.m. CST**. Packages should be mailed to: Center for Planning Excellence, Attn: Camille Manning-Broome, Director of Planning, 402 N. Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802.

A. General Submission Requirements

Applicants should submit 8 identical copies of a thoughtful, clear and well-organized proposal package that demonstrates the required Consultant Qualifications and that includes the following components:

1. Proposal Packets Items:

- a. **Statement of Interest:** Provide a statement of interest for the project. The letter shall cite the individual who will be the primary point of contact for the parish for matters relating to the proposal and signed by an individual authorized to commit the firm to the project and should be written on the firm's letterhead. The letter should also include full contact information (name, address, telephone, fax, email).
- b. **Experience and Expertise of Prime Firm:** Include qualifications and experience of only those team members who will be assigned to the project. Provide resumes giving the experience and expertise of the principals and key professional members of the lead firm that will be involved in the project. Highlight their experience with similar projects and specific planning issues relevant to this project. Highlight Louisiana-based team members or members with experience in Louisiana-based planning initiatives. Provide the number of years members have worked with the lead firm and/or other years of experience.
- c. **Project Team:** Provide an organizational chart showing the roles of the lead firm and each consultant firm or individual. Describe the proposed project assignments and lines of authority and communication for principals and key professional members of the lead firm and sub-consultant(s). Indicate the estimated percent of time these individuals will be involved in the project.
- d. **Representative Projects:** List a maximum of (5) projects performed by the lead firm that are most similar and relevant to this project completed within the last seven years. List the projects in priority order, with the most related project first. Include at least three projects that have been or are being implemented. Provide the following information for each project listed:
 - a. Summary of the proposed project start dates and end dates, and actual start and end dates, with reasons for extensions if any;
 - b. Summary of the proposed project budget and the actual project budget with reasons for increases if any; and
 - c. Current stage of implementation.

Enclosure of a comparable Comprehensive Plan created by the lead applicant firm(s) that has been implemented is encouraged, but not required. The sample Comprehensive Plan may be submitted on a compact disc. An ideal submission would address challenges facing parishes (counties) that are experiencing rapid suburban and exurban growth.

- e. **References:** Provide references for any (3) of the projects listed in response to the Representative Projects. At least one reference should be in the implementation stage or beyond. The references shall include:
 - a. Owner's name, owner's representative who served as the day-to-day liaison during planning, design, and construction of the project, and the owner representative's current telephone number.
- f. **Proposed Project Schedule and Timeline:** Include a clear proposal of project tasks and their associated timelines. Additionally, state the firm's and/or team's present workload.
Budget: Include a statement that the budget of \$250,000-300,000 is sufficient for the level of work anticipated.

B. General Notifications

- a. Ascension Parish notifies all possible respondents that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied any benefits of, or otherwise discriminated against in connection with the award and performance of any contract on the basis of race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, sex, age, ethnicity, or on any other basis prohibited by law.
- b. All proposing entities shall comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and are encouraged to provide a written statement within submitted proposals and any subsequent contract in which the entity certifies that it is an equal opportunity employer, that it does not discriminate in its employment practices or delivery of services, and that it will make every effort, when economically feasible to subcontract with socially or economically disadvantaged persons and businesses (as defined in Louisiana R.S. 39:1732).
- c. This Request for Qualification does not commit Ascension Parish to pay any costs incurred in the submission of a proposal or the costs incurred in making necessary studies and designs for preparation thereof, or contract for service or supplies.
- d. Ascension Parish will not accept any submissions that are delivered by facsimile or electronic mail. Late proposals will be returned to the respondent. The Parish reserves the right to accept or reject proposals that do not contain all elements and information requested in this document.

V. SELECTION PROCESS

Proposal-Based Selection Process

Professional services are procured in accordance with Louisiana Law. Selection of the most highly qualified respondent will be made on the basis of demonstrated competence and qualifications as determined by the Parish based upon the proposal submitted in response to this RFQ, any supplement requested by the Parish and any subsequent meetings with finalists.

Evaluation of Proposals

Ascension Parish established an ordinance outlining a competitive consultant selection process to aid the Governing authority in awarding contracts to various consultants. Therefore, a Qualification Based Selection process will be used by the Professional Services Selection Committee. The Professional Services Selection Committee will short-list applicants who will then be invited to submit a proposal based on an RFP and make a public presentation. The short listed proposal submissions will be weighted based on the Qualification Based Selection criteria. This will be explained in further detail in the RFP.

Firms will be notified in January 2009 whether they have been eliminated or short-listed. If firms are short-listed, they will be asked to submit a proposal and make presentations in February 2009 in Gonzales, Louisiana. After the presentations, the Professional Services Selection Committee will make prioritized Consultant Team recommendations to the Ascension Parish Council.

Timeline

The following dates are intended to provide a guideline for this process, and are subject to change.

- RFQ available (*November 25, 2008*)
- A pre-response meeting will be held at 11:30 am CST on (*December 10, 2008*) via conference call. The purpose of the meeting will be to respond to consultants' questions about the project and the procurement

process. Meeting minutes will not be issued and attendance is not required. Please contact Camille Manning-Broome at camille@c-pex.org for the conference call number.

- Deadline for Qualifications (*January 9, 2009*)
- Notification of short list (top 3 teams) (*January 2009*)
- Deadline for Proposals (*February 2009*)
- Consultant interviews (*February 2009*)
- Selection announced (*February -March 2009*)

All dates in the RFQ are subject to change at the discretion of CPEX and Ascension Parish, and notice of any changes will be provided to all respondents.

Proposal Selection Process and Evaluation

The Selection Committee will evaluate proposals based on Consultant Qualifications and the required Packet Items in this document.

Ascension Parish reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to waive any and all formalities outlined in the RFQ and in the selection process and generally to make the award that in its judgment, will best meet the objectives stated in this RFQ. The Parish reserves the right to request additional information and/ clarifications from any or all respondents to assist in its evaluation process. The parish reserves the right to request changes to consultant team composition. Expenses incurred by the respondents in replying to the RFQ or in making any appearance before the Selection Committee are at the respondents' own expense and risk.