

TOWN OF DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS/QUALIFICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING SERVICES JULY 24, 2006

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Dauphin Island, Alabama is requesting proposals from qualified firms to conduct an island wide strategic planning process that guides resource management and growth over the next decade and beyond. The Dauphin Island community recognizes the importance of natural resources and the environment, striving to achieve balance between the need for economic development and the maintenance and improvement of our quality of life and cultural integrity. Change is inevitable. How we manage this change is a key motivating factor for creating this strategic plan. By positively influencing the direction and momentum of change, Dauphin Island will be a better place to live, work and visit.

PURPOSE

The strategic plan should become the means by which the citizens and elected leaders of the Town of Dauphin Island can retain the community's character, define its identity and establish a blueprint for the inevitable change to come. The proposal should:

- Create a vision of what the community wants to become
- Identify both current strengths and shortcomings
- Ensure that everyone in the community shares in its well-being
- Create a sense of "ownership" by involving as many people and organizations as possible
- Identify all resources, not just financial, needed to manage future challenges and opportunities
- Be a guide for the management of change
- Link the strategic and comprehensive planning processes

BACKGROUND

Dauphin Island is a subtropical barrier island situated three miles off the Alabama coast surrounded by Mobile Bay, the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi Sound, 35 miles to the south of Mobile, and 150 miles to the east of New Orleans. It has approximately 3,545 acres and is 14.86 miles long and 1.75 miles wide. The island's eastern, wider end helps to define the mouth of Mobile Bay and is composed of maritime forest, but the narrow, western part of the island features scrub growth, few trees, and over 7 miles of sand beach.

Dauphin Island is a family oriented community of 1,800 year-long residents with modest business and commercial activity. It is home to a marine sciences laboratory, The Estuarium, historic Fort Gaines and numerous private homes as well as vacation rental units. Tourism activities include boating, fishing, camping, swimming, scuba diving, cycling and bird watching. The island is connected to the mainland by a three mile long Bridge.

Although the island has several bird sanctuaries, the main one is the 164 acre (664,000 m²) Audubon Bird Sanctuary. Dauphin Island is the first landfall encountered by many birds as they migrate north from South America, and as a consequence many species can be found resting there before continuing their journey.

Dauphin Island is made up of four different governing units. First and oldest is the Dauphin Island Property Owners Association which is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote the development and betterment of the island, and to uphold the building covenants and restrictions set up during its establishment. This organization was established during the initial development of the

island as a tourist destination and vacation community. Originally charged with developing a water system, constructing a public golf course, and developing parks, beaches and other recreation sites for the use of owners of lots in its subdivisions, the POA divested of the water system, which is now run by the Dauphin Island Water, Sewer, and Fire Authority and most all of the parks and the public beach on the island are under the management of a publicly appointed Dauphin Island Park and Beach Board. Finally, incorporated as a Town in Mobile County, Alabama in 1988, the Town itself is run by a Mayor and Town Council.

CURRENT SITUATION

Dauphin Island is frequently affected by hurricanes and other major storms. As a barrier island, it is generally thought of as a first line of wave attenuation, breaking the force of the storm before it hits Mobile County coastline. Its real environmental importance goes beyond mainland protection. Dauphin Island forms one geographic boundary of a nationally important estuary which produces hundreds of millions of dollars of economic value to its region and that it is one of 10 globally important stop over sites for North American migratory birds.

In light of hurricanes Ivan (2004) and Katrina (2005), Dauphin Island faces issues of economic sustainability and environmental security. The town has suffered economic instability due to loss of ad valorem tax revenues caused by the complete destruction of more than 10 percent of its housing stock and other property. In addition, this barrier island has major public access issues for residents, tourists and recreational boaters, as well as increasing economic pressures for intensified development patterns.

Due to its location off the coast of mainland Alabama, Dauphin Island is a first line of defense against each storm event that passes over the northern Gulf of Mexico. If the island is to sustain its economic livelihood and environmental relevance, it needs to explore new ways of doing things: primarily through the adoption of voluntary mitigation such as non-government mandated efforts to make the community more disaster resistant, affordable housing activities, coastal conservation, and diversifying and strengthening its economic base. The proposed strategic planning effort would evaluate the competing demands for public access, environmental conservation, economic development, housing, and cooperative governance that are currently before the community. At the same time, it will examine and evaluate hazard mitigation measures and the geographic importance of this fragile and shifting ecological unit to bound and shelter a nationally important estuary from which many citizens derive their livelihood.

GOAL

The goal of this project is to develop a long-term strategy and implementation plan for community development on Dauphin Island. This plan will provide the foundation for building a more hazard resistant community that balances its economic growth with its environmental sustainability.

SCOPE OF WORK

Issues

The Dauphin Island community is grappling with several different issues in part due to damage sustained from two hurricanes in subsequent years, Ivan and Katrina. The firm selected to develop this strategic plan will outline how it will tackle the following questions:

- 1) How can the Dauphin Island Community come together to develop a common vision for the community of what the island should be in 20 to 30 years?
- 2) How can the Dauphin Island Community plan for and develop improvements to Island infrastructure that are environmentally sensitive and hurricane resistant?
- 3) How can the Dauphin Island Community engage in commercial revitalization and expansion of economic opportunities including tourism and business growth in a way that capitalizes on its community assets?
- 4) Can the Dauphin Island Community manage growth through the implementation of Smart Growth concepts sustaining the unique environmental quality of the island, including the beaches, dunes, maritime forest, swamplands and marshes that make the island a special place?
- 5) How can the Dauphin Island Community maintain and improve housing diversity so that work force and other affordable housing for island commercial/retail establishment workers will be available?
- 6) How can the Dauphin Island Community improve/expand its arts/community/recreational facilities and opportunities and access to the water?
- 7) How can the Dauphin Island Community improve provision for social/community services on the island?
- 8) Composition of the island is such that we have various entities. How can we better work both independently and interdependently as a community?
- 9) Can the Dauphin Island Community better coordinate its governing activities, financing activities and the organizational capacity of the current entities?

Methodology

The selected firm will outline in their proposal how they anticipate addressing the above questions.

At a minimum, the proposal should include:

- 1) Data collection method
- 2) Plan to examine existing organizational policies and planning documents
- 3) Plan to research other successful programs that might be applicable to solving issues on Dauphin Island
- 4) Plan for engaging the entire community

Contents of Plan

The final executive plan should include the following:

- 1) Executive Summary of Document for public distribution
- 2) Clear and concise community vision statement
- 3) Island Profile that includes assessment of existing conditions, demographics, regional role
- 4) Community Priorities
- 5) Strategy to address above areas
- 6) Implementation Plan
- 7) Identification of resources available and needed including people, money, organizations, facilities and equipment that can be used to carry out implementation plan
- 8) A review of the Town's existing Comprehensive Plan that makes a determination of whether there have been significant changes in the amount, kind, or direction of development on the island or other reasons that would make additions or changes to the comprehensive plan necessary or desirable
- 9) An evaluation process to measure the strategic plan's success

TIME SCHEDULE

From the project start date, it is estimated that Long Term Community Development Strategy and Implementation Plan will be completed within one year of commencement, followed by an update to the Town's comprehensive plan within a 6 month period. Adoption of new ordinances and code will take place over the course of the following year.

CONTENTS OF PROPOSAL

All proposals submitted for review should contain at a minimum the following:

- 1) Firm Name, address, telephone number and e-mail address;
- 2) Firm history, including experience related to this task;

- 3) Personnel to be assigned to this task, along with resumes and experience relevant to this task;
- 4) References of three previous clients with similar projects;
- 5) Description of approach and process to be used to complete this task addressing above issues;
- 6) Identification of presentations and reports that the consultant will deliver during course of strategic planning process;
- 7) Description of the citizen participation/involvement process;
- 8) Proposed time schedule for completion of the different elements of the task;
- 9) Estimated fee for the services provided, including any estimated out of pocket expenses.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The proposals will be evaluated using the criteria listed below:

- 1) Depth and range of experience in similar projects including a list of those completed by the firm;
- 2) Experience in developing strategic plans for other coastal/tourist areas that have generated tangible effective results;
- 3) Experience and qualifications of key staff assigned to the project (There shall be no replacement of key members without prior approval of the Town Council.)
- 4) Availability of key staff to perform the work, either on staff or as subcontractor;
- 5) Demonstrated ability to foster and encourage public involvement and participation in strategic planning processes including innovative activities that generate involvement.
- 6) Use of Data Collection and Simulation that utilizes GIS, photographic and computer visualization to model future development scenarios and coastal hazards.