

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
VACANT PROPERTY REUSE PROGRAM
HAZLETON, PA

While the Covid-19 Pandemic has been destructive to the local economy in Luzerne County it has been even more so to the Greater Hazleton Area as our region has been struggling for years with higher levels of poverty and unemployment, and lower incomes and educational attainment than the County as a whole. The City of Hazleton has been hit hardest, with 54% of its population considered Low-Moderate Income (LMI) and more than 20% below poverty--prior to the pandemic.

Typical “Main Street” businesses, especially retail, restaurant, and service-based businesses, are most vulnerable. Many small businesses, especially immigrant businesses that make up more than half of Hazleton’s downtown economy, may not recover due to lack of financial solvency, limited financial literacy, and inability to secure government-assisted emergency grant and loan programs. Several businesses have already closed, adding to the number of vacant properties.

When the pandemic hit, the Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress, together with the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, CAN DO, the city and local and regional economic development partners, proactively formed the COVID-19 Recovery & Resiliency Task Force to help coordinate small businesses recovery efforts and identify new initiatives and programs to help them rebound. Based upon the results of our Greater Hazleton Small Business COVID-19 Impact Study, we implemented the Hazleton Area Small Business Emergency Relief Microgrant Program, which provided privately funded financial relief to 85 local businesses.

We have also identified the need for several business recovery initiatives, which are designed to supplement the broader “Get Businesses Back on Their Feet” initiative being undertaken in cooperation with the Greater Wilkes Barre Chamber of Commerce and other partners.

This Request for Qualifications is for the identification and marketing of vacant commercial property resulting from COVID-19 business closures. It will also include marketing vacant real estate available to businesses from outside the area who have closed as a result of COVID-19 and are looking for lower rents and/or smaller communities within which to reestablish their business.

Utilizing vacant property inventory data compiled by the Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress, selected consultant(s) will contact owners of properties to determine their intentions for reuse, renovation, and/or disposition, and assist those willing with the process of listing their property for rent or sale. The consultant(s) will also be responsible for working with the City of Hazleton Code Office to review code deficiencies on file of each property to ensure understanding of the scope of renovation requirements for reuse. Information about each property will be compiled into a database that the Alliance will utilize to market these properties to prospective buyers and tenants.

Funding for this initiative is being provided by the Luzerne County Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act grant via the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce.

SCOPE OF SERVICES SUMMARY

The anticipated scope of work for this project is expected to consist of the following tasks. However, the final scope of services will be negotiated with the selected consultant and may include modified tasks to meet project goals:

1. Contacting property owners and determining their interest in sale, rent, and/or renovation. *Note: The Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress has already identified the PIN and property owner name and the mailing address of record of each property and will make this available to the consultant. Additional contact information may be available at the City Code Office.*
2. Providing guidance to property owners interested in listing their property for sale or rent by providing them with information on comparable sale prices, potential rental revenue, guidelines for listing their property for sale or rent, either by owner, or through local brokers and real estate agencies. This guidance will be in the form of a simple letter to the property owner, with a copy provided to the Alliance as a deliverable.
3. Identifying any outstanding code deficiencies associated with each property on file at the City Code Office.
4. For properties that have outstanding tax liabilities, determining if the property has been identified for auction by the Luzerne County Tax Claim Bureau, and status. *Note: The Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress has already identified properties with outstanding tax liabilities.*
5. Performing a title search on properties that have been targeted for tax sale. *Note: These costs will be considered reimbursable expenses.*

Consultant will compile an electronic database of vacant properties to include: basic property and parcel information (PIN#, street address, square footage, number of stories, previous use, associated parking, and other key features), owner contact information, sale/lease status, known code deficiencies, tax liability, relevant title search data, and recommendations for reuse. It will also include relevant information provided as guidance to the property owner (#2 above), with respect to comparable sale prices and potential rental revenue.

The Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress will work with the consultant to prioritize the list of properties to be included in the database (20 minimum is target). Photographs should be provided for each property in .jpg format. This information will be used by the Alliance to update their Featured Property webpage and prepare printed marketing materials for business recruitment and real estate investment.

Note: Consultant will be responsible for undertaking these services in accordance with PA Department of Health COVID-19 safety guidelines.

Consulting services and all deliverables must be completed by December 23rd, 2020.

COMPENSATION

Consultant compensation for services will be based upon a maximum amount not-to-exceed method of compensation utilize hourly billing rates of the consultant/team. A 50% invoice will be accepted when the database is 50% complete, and 100% invoice when the database is fully completed/delivered.

QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY

All respondents should submit a written Qualifications Summary to include information about the consultant or consultant team directly related to the selection criteria outlined below.

1. Description of consultant. Provide all information for the primary contact person, along with any other key people that will be a part of the consultant's team and their proposed role.
2. Describe the consultant's relative experience.
3. Describe the consultant's familiarity with the City and region.
4. Describe the consultant's ability to speak and write in English, Spanish, and any other languages.
5. Include a disclosure of any known competing interests or potential conflicts of interest for the consultant and any subcontractor(s).
6. Hourly rate of consultant(s) performing desired services.
7. Signed Contractor Acknowledgment agreeing to abide by federal and state statutes and regulations governing use of federal funds (Exhibit A).

SUBMITTALS

Qualification Summaries must be received no later than 3:00 PM on October 13, 2020. Electronic submittals are preferred (PDF format).

Questions regarding this RFQ may be submitted via e-mail to Krista Schneider at kschneider@downtownhazleton.org.

It is the responsibility of the prospective consultant to ensure that their submittal is received prior to the deadline. Any submittal received after the deadline may not be considered.

Qualification summaries shall be addressed to:

Krista Schneider, Executive Director
Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress
8 W. Broad St., Suite M-1490
Hazleton, PA 18201
Or sent via email: kschneider@downtownhazleton.org

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE (please note this may be subject to change)

- October 13, 2020: Qualification Summaries due
- October 15, 2020: Consultant interviews via Zoom (if needed)
- October 16, 2020: Consultant selection/contracting
- October 19, 2020: Project begins
- December 23, 2020: Project ends

CONTRACTOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (EXHIBIT A)

By signing this acknowledgment, consultant(s) agree to abide by the following federal and state statutes and regulations governing use of federal funds (Article V of the Luzerne County COVID-19 Relief Block Grant Contract #C000074007: Compliance with Applicable Statutes and Regulations), attached as Exhibit A, and including but not limited to:

- Prohibition of Illegal Alien Labor on Assisted Projects Act (P.L. 173, No. 43)
- Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment Provisions and its applicability to all subcontractors
- State Contractor Responsibility Program regarding suspension, debarment and tax liabilities
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Reimbursement for Travel
- Contractor Integrity Provisions
- Right to Know Law Provisions
- Federal Contracting Provisions regarding Small and Minority Businesses, Women's Business Enterprises, and Labor Surplus Area Firms (2 CFR 200.321)
- Termination Provisions (2 CFR Part 200 Appendix II (B))

By (signature): _____

Name (printed): _____

Title: _____

Date: _____