



# Request for Proposals

## Downtown San Francisco Public Realm Action Plan

June 2021

RFP Released: June 30, 2021  
Proposals Due: August 12, 2021

Downtown Community Benefit District  
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 948  
San Francisco, CA 94104





## Table of Contents

<b>GENERAL INFORMATION</b> .....	3
Proposal Submission	3
About Downtown CBD	4
Other Helpful Information	4
<b>PROJECT SCOPE</b> .....	5
Study Area	5
Scope of Services	6
Community Engagement	7
Topic Areas	8
Final Deliverables	9
Timeline	9
<b>SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS</b> .....	10
<b>CONSULTANT SELECTION</b> .....	13
<b>TERMS &amp; CONDITIONS</b> .....	15

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The Downtown Community Benefit District (DCBD) seeks proposals from experienced urban planning, landscape architecture, architecture, and design firms to develop a public realm action plan for downtown San Francisco. The plan should identify and prioritize targeted improvements and recommend an implementation strategy to achieve short-, near- and long-term improvements with the goal of maintaining the district's role as one of the country's leading financial centers.

The DCBD is charged with providing cleaning, public safety, marketing, and public realm improvements for approximately 47-blocks comprised of San Francisco's historic and iconic Financial District and Jackson Square Historical District. The DCBD seeks a public realm with actionable items that can, if necessary, be accomplished through partnerships and advocacy, including potential collaborations with the City of San Francisco, district property owners, businesses, civic organizations, and non-profit agencies.

Qualified applicants will demonstrate proven experience creating public realm plans for municipalities, business improvement districts, or community benefit districts.

## PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals are due on August 12, 2021 by 5:00 pm Pacific Standard Time (PST). Late submissions will not be considered. Interviews for the top candidate(s) will be scheduled for August 27, 2021.

Address all proposal submissions and inquiries to:

**Claude Imbault**

Director of Public Realm & Strategic Development  
Downtown Community Benefit District  
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 948  
San Francisco, CA 94104  
(415) 606-5856  
[cimbault@downtownsf.org](mailto:cimbault@downtownsf.org)

Only electronic submissions will be accepted. The CBD requests all applicants submit their proposals via Dropbox, Google Drive, or a similar storage solution. Submissions must contain the subject line "Downtown SF Public Realm Action Plan".

## ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY BENEFIT DISTRICT

The Downtown Community Benefit District (DCBD) officially formed in January 2020 and constitutes San Francisco's newest special assessment district. It covers approximately 47-city blocks and comprises the Financial District and Jackson Square Historic District – two of the City's oldest continuous commercial districts dating back to the California Gold Rush.

Developed by a coalition of property owners, businesses and community stakeholders, the DCBD funds three distinct benefits services – cleaning and safety, marketing, and public realm – to supplement baseline services already provided by the City. The DCBD recognizes the impact of a vibrant, place-based, public realm towards increasing the quality of the pedestrian experience that foster moments of surprise, relaxation, and engagement while also advancing the district's economic vitality and status as a world-class destination.

However, emerging challenges to the district's vibrancy exist. Competition from neighboring mixed-use retail/housing/office districts, disruptions associated with the COVID health pandemic, changing retail dynamics, and shifting work/life patterns threaten the district's iconic status as a significant financial, commercial, and historic center. Downtown San Francisco continues to experience the impacts of the COVID health pandemic impacts - and the health crisis may arise yet again. Notwithstanding these conditions, the DCBD remains steadfast in the ability of a public action plan to change attitudes, perceptions, and minds that downtown San Francisco is a world-class destination that is safe, attractive, innovative, inclusive, and accessible for all.

## OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

Visit [www.sfdcbd.org](http://www.sfdcbd.org) for more information on the Downtown Community Benefit District's programs and activities.

City & County of San Francisco Planning documents:

- General Plan
  - <https://sfplanning.org/project/san-francisco-general-plan>
- Downtown Area Plan
  - <https://generalplan.sfplanning.org/Downtown.htm>
- Downtown Plan Monitoring Report -25 Years (1985-2009)
  - <https://sfplanning.org/resource/downtown-plan-monitoring-report-25-years-1985-2009>
- SF Better Streets
  - <https://www.sfbetterstreets.org/why-better-streets/>
- Better Market Street
  - <https://sfpublicworks.org/bettermarketstreet>

# PROJECT SCOPE

## Study Area



# SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Downtown Community Benefit District (DCBD) seeks a qualified urban planning, landscape architecture, architecture, or urban design firm to facilitate a robust community engagement process and develop an actionable public realm plan.

With oversight from the DCBD staff and support from the DCBD Board of Directors and the District Identity & Streetscapes Improvement committee, the selected firm will lead the project’s community engagement process and public realm plan deliverables. The project scope serves as a basic outline for the planning process structure. Therefore, consultants should use this outline as the framework leading to a more detailed project scope that highlights their strengths and capabilities. The scope is not exhaustive. Consultants may add to the scope at their discretion.

## **Visioning**

The public realm plan must include a narrative vision and framework of the project area as an innovative, networked, and resilient downtown that serves as a platform for testing emerging ideas in the fields of urban planning, place management, and/or placemaking. It must ensure the next iteration of downtown San Francisco is a safe, welcoming, healthy, flexible, inclusive, and accessible.

## **Project Management**

The selected consultant leads the public realm plan’s development, including managing time, staff, budget, and travel (if needed). The DCBD will assist the consultant with communicating to district stakeholders, including the DCBD Board of Directors, and work in partnership to determine communication protocols with the public and other necessary stakeholders.

## **Existing Conditions Study**

Consultant will examine the district’s history, as well as current land use, sidewalk and street use patterns, streetscape, and overall infrastructure conditions to understand the district’s current conditions and emerging opportunities. These finding, backed by data, should inform the public realm plan’s vision and strategy.

## **Opportunities and Challenges**

Based on the findings from the existing conditions study, the consultants will engage with the DCBD Board of Directors, staff, district stakeholders, and others to identify the district’s major challenges and opportunities with respect to current conditions and emerging trends. The public realm action plan should identify strategies for catalytic opportunities for programming and activation interventions.

### **Strategies**

Consultants will research best practices and innovative methods for achieving the public realm plan's goals, including a list of strategic recommendations. Strategies should be well-described and with renderings or images, where needed, for illustrative purposes.

### **Implementation**

Consultants will outline the methods for implementing recommended strategies, including timeframes, partners, and potential funding sources. Consultants will differentiate between strategies the DCBD can achieve alone, those that the DCBD can achieve with partners, and strategies that the DCBD can advocate on its own.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The DCBD places a very high value on a robust community engagement process in the development of a public realm plan representative of the district and the City's socio-economic diversity. The DCBD defines stakeholders as persons or groups having an interest in the district's future. The following list of people and organizations is not an exhaustive list of stakeholders and may be expanded as necessary.

- DCBD Board of Directors and staff
- DCBD property owners and businesses
- The public, such as downtown workers, visitors and San Francisco residents
- City of San Francisco – SF Planning Department, SF Public Works, and the SF Municipal Transportation Authority, SF Board of Supervisors
- Allied organizations - SF Chamber of Commerce, SF Hotel Council, Bay Area Council, [sfciti.org](http://sfciti.org)

### **Methods for Community Engagement**

Consultants will be responsible for developing a robust community engagement process that involves the above organizations/groups in a meaningful way. DCBD staff will collaborate with consultants on accessing DCBD stakeholders. A mixture of visioning workshops, charrettes, surveys, online tools, focus groups, and other methods of community engagement, may be necessary to ensure a cross-section of downtown users are represented, including historically underrepresented groups. Engagement should be addressed and resourced from multiple fronts including civic engagement exercises, a clear social media presence, and outreach to the media.

### **Online Tools**

Though not required, the DCBD strongly encourages the use of innovative online tools for civic engagement.

# TOPIC AREAS

Downtown San Francisco is evolving. The DCBD seeks strategies to anticipate and meet the district’s future needs. Such changes include the introduction of new transportation modes ( biking, rideshare, micro-mobility, autonomous vehicles, Shared Streets, Complete Streets), the potential increase in the district’s residential population, improving the pedestrian experience, changing retail buying habits, and overall trends impacting dense, urban centers.

After initial conversations with DCBD stakeholders, the following topic area emerged as priority areas. Topic areas are not exhaustive and may evolve during the public realm planning process.

**Transportation and Mobility:**

Quality and connectivity of the district to the region’s private and public transportation providers (e.g., Uber, Lyft, taxis, BART, SF MUNI, SamTrans, CalTrain), connections between street level and underground spaces, integration of emerging micro-mobility types, the pedestrian and automobile networks, and the evaluation of the district to generally accommodate alternative uses of the public right-of-way.

**Connectivity:**

Emphasize the project scope area’s physical connection and proximity to adjacent iconic San Francisco neighborhoods, such as North Beach, Chinatown, the Embarcadero, the East Cut, Union Square, and SOMA, as well as its connections to San Francisco and the Bay Area more generally. Downtown San Francisco is adjacent to San Francisco’s most iconic neighborhoods and there’s benefits associated with this physical connectivity. A cohesive wayfinding and signage represent one strategy for strengthening these connections.

**Public Space Network:**

The quality of existing public and privately-owned open space, opportunities for new public space and the repurposing of streets and alleys as part of the district’s open space network. This includes opportunities for programming and activating public space through public art, events, performances, and other placemaking initiatives.

**Pedestrian & Streetscape Experience:**

Assess the style and quality of materials of existing street furniture (e.g., signage, wayfinding, public transit portals, planters, plantings, light pole, lighting, transit shelters), street surfaces, and the theme and brand of the street. Emphasis on creative placemaking to draw visitors, including tactical urbanism interventions, is strongly encouraged.

**Technology:**

How the public right-of-way could evolve to meet the needs of a high-tech society. Potential topics may include interactive signage and wayfinding, “smart cities” technologies (e.g., in ground street sensors). Technology may also be the lens with which to examine related topics.

## FINAL DELIVERABLES

The public realm planning process shall result in developing the following deliverables.

- A public realm action plan document detailing the processes, vision, goals, strategies, findings, implementation guidelines, and recommendations. The document shall contain visuals to simplify complex concepts.
- Specific design concepts with short- and mid-term solutions primarily graphic in nature with limited text to describe concepts.
- A summary of community engagement process and findings.
- Presentations to DCBD stakeholders, which could be the DCBD Board of Directors, the annual DCBD State of Downtown event, special events, or a press conference.
- A phased implementation schedule that contemplates levels of funding availability.

## TIMELINE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Deliverables</u>
June 30, 2021 .....	RFP Released
August 12, 2021 .....	Proposals Due
August 27, 2021 .....	Final Candidate Interviews
September 3, 2021 .....	Winning Firm Notified
September 9, 2021 .....	Contract Signed
September 13, 2021 .....	Project Kickoff
Spring 2022 .....	Anticipated Project Completion (negotiable)

## SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

### Submission Requirements

Each proposer is responsible for the costs of preparing and submitting responses to this RFP. Submissions must be signed by a principal of the respondent with the authority to enter into an agreement or contract with the DCBD. By submitting a proposal, each respondent acknowledges and agrees that their submission will become the property of the DCBD for the DCBD's use, without compensation.

Respondents are requested to submit one (1) electronic copy in a PDF file format and one (1) hard copy to the primary RFP contact person. Copies submitted via email should include the subject line "Public Realm Action Plan Proposal".

- **Cover Letter**  
Include a summary of your firm's interest in the public realm plan and your understanding of the services needed and the topics addressed. Explain why your firm is best qualified to provide these services and outline any special capabilities or qualities that would distinguish your proposal from the others. Include information for any required subcontracted consultants or firms.
- **Project Approach**  
Provide a detailed description of the approach and methodology to be used to accomplish the "Scope of Services" of this RFP. Details provided should reflect your understanding of the Financial District and the Jackson Square Historical District. Describe in detail your approach, method and process for project development. Include any project management strategies or techniques used.
- **Project Team**  
Provide a list of individuals who will be working on this contract and indicate the level/title of each member, and the function that each will perform. Include a brief resume for each designated individual, to include relevant work experience pertaining to this proposal, licenses, certifications, etc. Include resumes of the individual(s) who will manage the project.
- **References and Work Samples**  
Provide samples of previous public realm plans (especially plans of similar scale) and include at least three (3) references with full contact information. Include additional information you believe illustrates your firm's capacity to fulfill the requirements described in the work scope.

- **Schedule & Cost Estimate**

Provide your anticipated schedule(s) and cost estimate(s) for the public realm planning process and deliverables. This may be negotiated before contracts are signed.

- **WBE or MBE**

Please describe whether your firm is a Women-owned Business Enterprise or a Minority-owned Business Enterprise and attach any certification to confirm WBE or MBE status.

- **Additional Information**

Include any relevant information not requested elsewhere in this document.

## TOTAL COST

This is a Request for Proposal (RFP) and a final price will be negotiated with the selected consultant team. However, the project funding source requires us to have an idea of expenses. Therefore, we request consultants include a “not to exceed” number for our consideration. In addition, we would like to review the costs of various project elements in the final scope:

- Proposed costs for each scope of work listed under “Scope of Services” and “Community Engagement”
- “Not to exceed” cost for the project, which is **\$115,000**. Proposals that do not include this number will not be considered.

## CONSULTANT SELECTION

Proposals will be evaluated on the following selection criteria:

### Firm Qualifications

- Experience of the respondent in successfully executing comparable projects in similar downtown settings similar in size to San Francisco (or if not possible, in cities with a minimum population of 100,000 people)
- Experience working with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or Community Benefit Districts (CBDs), is a plus
- Composition and qualifications of consultant team members and professional staff assembled to execute the project

### Proposal Quality

- Provide at least one (1) relevant case study of your firm providing similar services
- Firm understanding of the project scope and topic areas
- Understanding of the stakeholder ecosystem involved in the plan and planning process
- Through and robust community engagement strategy
- Creativity and innovation in planning methods
- Emphasis on scalability as shown through submitted work samples (DCBD prefers a plan that can be implemented at various scales and timeframes)
- Quality of visuals as shown through submitted work samples
- Clarity of written proposal and submitted work samples (DCBD is made of many stakeholders, few of which are designers or urban planners. Proposal should be clear and concise to anyone regardless of profession)
- Cost estimate

### Budget and Schedule

- Proposed consultant schedule and work plan
- Proposed meetings (in-person, online, etc.) and/or site visits
- Total project fees and clear budget

**Proposal Scoring & Evaluation**

Applicants will be scored on the following scale based on the following categories provided in the RFP. **A total of 100 points** can be earned.

Cover Letter	05 points
Firm Profile & Staffing	10 points
Qualifications & Experience	20 points
Proposed Budget & Schedule	20 points
Proposal Format & Design	20 points
Methodology & Approach	25 points

**Evaluation Process and Criteria**

Upon receipt and review of the proposals, the DCBD, at its sole discretion, shall determine which respondents meet or exceed the minimum qualifications and rank respondents in order of qualifications. Submissions will be reviewed by the organization’s Executive Director, Director of Public Realm & Strategic Development, and possibly the DCBD District Identity & Streetscapes Committee, or an ad hoc selection committee. The DCBD shall evaluate and score each responsive proposal to determine the ability of consultants to perform the services and establish a list of the highest-ranking proposals. Following the evaluation and scoring of all responsive proposals, the DCBD may require an interview either over the phone, online, or in-person with the highest-ranking respondents. Following the interviews, the DCBD may score each respondent interviewed and select the preferred respondent.

## TERMS & CONDITIONS

### City Contract & DCBD Management Plan

Contract awardees must be able to abide by the terms and conditions agreed upon between the DCBD and the City & County of San Francisco signed January 1, 2020.

DCBD is authorized to subcontract for the provision of programs and administrative, professional and related services necessary or convenient for the implementation of the Management Plan (available at <https://oewd.org/downtown>) in accord with that Agreement. All proposers will be required to meet each and every requirement applicable to subcontractors as set forth in that Agreement including but not limited to any Section 6 Audit and applicable provisions of Sections 13 and 16.

### Open Opportunity

The DCBD is distributing this RFP via the organization's website, trade organization websites, and to pre-qualified firms believed to possess the experience and potential interest to undertake the project. Pre-selected firms were chosen based on local market research or through referrals. If responses are inadequate or failed to provide the minimum qualifications or total number of responses lack interest, the DCBD may seek out additional firms to invite to submit proposals. All interested parties who have not received this opportunity directly but believe that they are qualified are also invited to submit a proposal.

### Submission of Questions to the DCBD

Any party who directly or indirectly receives this RFP and is interested in responding is strongly encouraged to notify and send contact. Questions should be submitted in writing to the DCBD's primary contact person, **Claude Imbault, Director of Public Realm & Strategic Development** via e-mail at [cimbault@downtownsf.org](mailto:cimbault@downtownsf.org). No oral questions will be accepted.

### Availability of Electronic Documents

This document, and all accompanying attachments and background information referenced herein, will be distributed by electronic means. Any responding party accepts full responsibility to ensure that it is responding to the correct version, including any addenda issued by the DCBD. The Proposer acknowledges and agrees that in the event of a conflict between the RFP in the respondent's possession and the latest version maintained by the DCBD, the version maintained by the DCBD shall apply.

### Inappropriate Contact

All respondents and/or representatives of respondents may NOT contact any elected or appointed City officials, City employees, DCBD board/committee members, or any third-party representatives of the DCBD on any matter pertaining to this RFP, aside from the designated

contact person. Attempts to make inappropriate contact and/or influence the evaluation of proposals may result in disqualification of your proposal.

### **Representations of the Proposer**

By submitting a Qualification Statement to the DCBD in the cover letter, the proposer acknowledges, represents and warrants that: (a) it has read the entire RFP and acknowledges and accepts its terms and conditions; (b) the signatory to the proposal is the respondent (or respondent's duly authorized agent or employee with authority to bind the respondent); (c) any information or disclosure provided in the response is an accurate representation as of the submission date; and (d) it agrees that it will voluntarily notify the DCBD immediately if any information or disclosure provided to the DCBD during any part of the evaluation process changes, is no longer accurate or would be misleading.

### **Right to Terminate, Modify, or Suspend RFP**

The DCBD reserves the unqualified right to modify or suspend any and all aspects of the RFP, to terminate the RFP process at any time, to waive any defects as to form or content of any Proposals submitted in response to the RFP, and to reject any and all Proposals without explanation.

### **Protests**

Any protest or objection to this RFP or the solicitation process related to the RFP must be submitted, in a timely manner and in writing, to Robbie Silver, Interim Executive Director, for review and response. The DCBD will develop an appropriate response to resolve protests if/when such a protest occurs.

If a Proposer submits a complete and timely protest, the DCBD will review the notice of protest soon after receipt of the protest to determine its validity, including, but not limited to: (1) receipt by due date; (2) inclusion of a written statement specifying in detail each and every one of the grounds asserted for the protest; (3) signed by an individual authorized to represent the Proposer; (4) citation of the law, rule, local ordinance, procedure or RFP provision on which the protest is based; and (5) specification of facts and evidence sufficient for the DCBD to determine the validity of the protest.

A Proposer may not rely on a Protest submitted by another Proposer, but must timely pursue its own Protest. DCBD, at its discretion, may make a determination regarding a protest without requesting further documents or information from the Proposer who submitted the protest. Accordingly, the initial protest must include all grounds of protest and all supporting documentation or evidence reasonably available to the prospective Proposer at the time the protest is submitted. If the Proposer later raises new grounds or evidence that were not included in the initial protest, but which could have been raised at that time, then DCBD may not consider such new grounds or new evidence.

If DCBD determines that the notice of protest is valid, DCBD will review facts and evidence to

determine the outcome of the protest. The review will be an informal process conducted by the DCBD or its designee and will be based upon the information submitted by the Proposer in its protest letter. The DCBD may seek input from its counsel and/or other City departments as needed or appropriate. The DCBD will notify the Proposer in writing of its decision at the conclusion of the review. The DCBD will make the final determination regarding the outcome of the protest. The decision of the DCBD regarding a protest is final.

### **Contract Period**

Services shall commence upon conveyance of a fully executed contract AND upon a formal recommendation in the form of a vote with an established quorum by the District Identity Committee and/or Board of Directors. The term of this contract shall be from the date of the signing of contract through completion of all tasks for this project.

### **DCBD Rights Regarding Selection, Negotiation, and Contract Award**

The DCBD retains the right to orally interview, and to request clarification or additional information in oral or written form, and to check references orally or in writing, at any time in the selection process, for any, all, or none of the respondents submitting Proposals. Proposers must include valid contact information for DCBD to contact and verify services indicated above. The DCBD will only attempt to contact the listed reference contact three (3) times. The DCBD reserves the right to reject, disqualify, and/or deem nonresponsive any Proposer who submits invalid customer contacts, or if the customer contact is nonresponsive or unreachable.

The DCBD retains the right to select any or none of such respondents for exclusive Contract negotiations, to terminate such negotiations at any time, and to enter into negotiations with another respondent. The DCBD retains the right to accept, reject or require the replacement of any subcontractor during the selection and negotiation process. The selection of a respondent for Contract negotiations shall not in any way bind the DCBD to approve or execute a contract with the respondent. The final selection of the Contractor and the Contract terms are subject to approval by the DCBD Board of Directors. The DCBD reserves the right to reject any Statement of Proposals, all Proposals, or any part of a Proposal submitted in response to the RFP.

### **Transparency**

The DCBD serves properties located within the District boundaries, each paying a special assessment for these services. In the interest of transparency, all information provided by Contractors may be disclosed, unless the information is specifically noted as proprietary or trade secret and considered to be as such under data privacy laws. Please mark each page of your submittal that is to be considered proprietary information or trade secret. All information will be subject to data privacy laws and is subject to disclosure at the DCBD's sole discretion. The DCBD is subject to disclosure of its records under the California Public Records Act.

## Claims Against the DCBD

By responding to this RFP, the respondent waives any claim against the DCBD or DCBD property by reason of any or all of the following: the selection process or any part thereof; any informalities or defects in the selection process, award or non-award of the Contract; any statements, representations, acts, or omissions of the DCBD, its staff or board in the exercise of any discretion set forth in or concerning any of the foregoing; and any other matters arising out of all or any of the foregoing.

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