

PROJECT SUMMARY

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., in partnership with local stakeholders, seeks a qualified facilitator or team of firms to facilitate the creation of a cohesive curatorial vision and plan of action for riverfront public art along the Grand River Greenway in Downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Public Art Plan will be largely focused on commissioned or curated permanent installations such as anchoring gateway pieces and site-specific sculptural work.

BACKGROUND

The Grand River is a significant and prominent feature within Grand Rapids and West Michigan. Grand Rapidsians envision a revitalized 'River For All' that can enhance quality of life and equitable opportunities through river restoration, beautification, activation, and connection.

The Grand River Greenway is an emerging network of public parks and other civic amenities linked together by 80 miles of multi-use trails following the Grand River corridor from Kent County's eastern border, through the City of Grand Rapids, to Lake Michigan in Ottawa County. Within the urban core of Grand Rapids, the Greenway encompasses 10 miles of trail and 230 acres of public parks anchored by Riverside Park to the north and Millennium Park to the south. Additional river corridor projects in Downtown Grand Rapids include dam removal and habitat restoration of the river channel, mixed use redevelopment of legacy industrial properties, and new civic spaces like the 12,000-seat riverfront outdoor amphitheater.

The development of the Grand River Greenway is coordinated by a network of public partners including Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County, the Grand Rapids Public Museum and the Grand River Band of Ottawa Indians, along with several private and philanthropic partners. Interagency coordination for implementation of the Greenway is increasing through current and future capital projects, which total over \$300 million of investment in parks, trails, and other recreational assets over the next 5-10 years.

Grand Rapids has an exceptional tradition of world-renowned art that began in 1969 with the installation of Calder's *La Grand Vitesse* in a central downtown plaza. Since then, public art has provided distinction, identity, and a sense of place for the city. Along with Calder's piece, Grand Rapids' reputation for thoughtful permanent art pieces includes Robert Indiana's *Love*, Maya Lin's *Ecliptic*, and di Suvero's *Motu Viget*. Each has contributed to building an important legacy of art in Downtown Grand Rapids from public, private, and institutional contributions.

Even with such meaningful investment, there has not been a cohesive community-wide arts strategy in Grand Rapids, and while many civic plans in the last decade have identified the need for a public art strategy specific to the river corridor, no substantive progress has been made. Community partners are now at a pivotal point of action to capitalize on opportunities to incorporate public art alongside other pending investments in the corridor.

The following community and municipal plans are relevant background on the extensive planning, design and other work done to date that's useful to inform this process:

- [City of Grand Rapids River for All Grand River Corridor Implementation Plan and Trail Design Guidelines](#), 2018
- [City of Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Master Plan](#), 2017 & 2022
- [City of Grand Rapids Strategic Plan](#), 2022
- [GR Forward](#), 2015
- [Grand River Corridor Equity Framework](#), 2023
- [Green Grand Rapids](#), 2012
- [Kent County Strategic Plan](#), 2022

GOALS

As a next step towards implementation of the community's vision of a River For All, project partners seek consultant support services to create a Public Art Implementation Plan for the Grand River Greenway that will:

- Create a cohesive identity and sense of place for the corridor by celebrating the river's historical and cultural landscape and creative identity of the community while preserving creative freedom for individual artists.
- Advance the community's vision for a beautiful, accessible and equitable river through alignment with the Grand River Equity Framework, River For All, and other relevant plans.
- Integrate existing river corridor art with opportunities for new installations and experiences.
- Create strategies that balance supporting local artists while also working with notable national and international artists.
- Identify opportunities to promote partnership, coordination, and collaboration among public landowners, adjacent private property owners, and other community partners.
- Inform and build support for a plan to secure adequate, ongoing funding to commission and steward public art investments consistent with community expectations.
- Provide recommendations for ongoing communication, promotion and awareness of river corridor public art collections.

SCOPE OF WORK

The consultant scope of work for this project includes:

- Define a common curatorial vision and guiding principles for public art in the Downtown river corridor (loosely defined as Riverside Park to Millennium Park).
- Define types of art (temporary, permanent), realms of art (public, quasi-public, private), and other useful terminology for public art within the Downtown river corridor.

- Identify and prioritize sites for existing and future permanent art along and throughout the greenway including, but not limited to commissions, rotating art, exhibits, artistic/interpretive infrastructure enhancements, lighting, etc.
 - See Appendix A for map of upcoming public space projects & known opportunities
- Create a selection process and criteria for art installations that can be utilized by all partners and property owners going forward.
- Inclusive outreach to and engagement of the Grand Rapids community, building upon past public engagement and citizen dialogue around river corridor plans.
 - Process should also plan to coordinate with parallel, broader community efforts such as the emerging Arts & Culture Collective of Grand Rapids, the Grand River Greenway Regional Interpretation Plan, etc.
- Assess any existing policies, procedures and standards for public art along the river corridor and recommend new policies or revisions to existing policies where appropriate.
- Identify funding models and public/private partnership strategies for implementation and long-term management of public art.
- Draft a comprehensive final report that includes, among other things, a plan of action for implementation with strategies for near-term (1-3 years) and long-term opportunities (5-10 years) and associated budget with priorities and sequencing. This is the key project deliverable.

The selected firm is expected to work with an advisory committee of local public art stakeholders and project partners who will help guide the planning process and key deliverables (committee is already set up by client).

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Responses should be formatted as follows:

- Proposals are limited to twelve (12) pages. This includes all pages, from cover to cover.
- Proposals are to be submitted digitally as a PDF that contains not more than 12 pages.
- Proposals are to be 8 ½ x 11" in either portrait or landscape format.

Responses should include the following information:

- **A summary of project understanding** including any observations on particular project expectations, opportunities or challenges.
- **A firm overview** and identification of proposed project firm(s) and team members.
- **A description of experience** in completing this type or related work, including specific examples and project references.

- **A proposed project schedule**, description of your project management philosophy and approach toward completing this work.
- **A proposed engagement strategy**, including the number and type of engagement activities.
- **A proposed project budget**, including hourly rates and/or professional fees to perform the requested services.
- **Additional information**. Please present any relevant data or information which you consider pertinent to the project and selection process.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Project partners will evaluate all responses to this opportunity and anticipate conducting interviews with short-listed facilitators and/or firms.

The basis for evaluation will include:

- Qualifications and capacity to perform the work.
- Experience with, and/or understanding of, relevant public art curation processes.
- Relevant planning, public space design, and experience with public/private/community projects and public engagement.
- Understanding of local ambition and context.
- Creative approach.
- Rates and fees.
- Professional excellence.
- Quality of communication.

REGISTRATION

All interested consultants are encouraged to send an email to Kimberly Van Driel (kvandriel@downtowngr.org) and Catherine Zietse (czietse@downtowngr.org) to register their intent to respond to this RFP.

All firms expressing interest will be added to an email distribution list and will be notified if additional information related to the RFP becomes available. Firms failing to register in this manner may not receive all information relevant to the preparation of their proposals.

RFP QUESTIONS

Any questions regarding the proposal may be submitted by email to Kimberly Van Driel (kvandriel@downtowngr.org) and Catherine Zietse (czietse@downtowngr.org).

Questions must be submitted by 5pm (local time) on **Friday, April 5, 2024**.

Responses will be sent to all registered participants no later than 5pm on **Friday, April 12, 2024**.

PROPOSAL DATES

- March 20, 2024 – RFP Issued
- April 5, 2024 – RFP Questions due
- April 12, 2024 -- Responses to Questions
- **April 26, 2024** – **Proposals Due**
- May 10, 2024 – Notice to Shortlisted Applicants
- Week of May 20, 2024 – Interviews (virtual)
- **May 31, 2024** – **Notice of Award**
- July 2024 – **Commence Project**

PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL

A digital copy of the proposal in PDF format is due by **5pm (EST) on Monday, April 26, 2024.**

Final proposals should be emailed to:

Kimberly VanDriel
Director of Public Space Management
kvandriel@downtowngr.org

Catherine Zietse
Greenway Program Manager
czietse@downtowngr.org

APPENDICES

- A. Map of upcoming river corridor projects and anticipated number of public art opportunities.
- B. Current inventory of existing Downtown river corridor art