REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
Professional Services: Strategic Planning Engagement

Issuing Organization: Downtown Columbia Community Improvement District (CID)
Submission Deadline: December 7, 2026
Question Submission Deadline: November 20, 2026, 5:00 PM-CT

Questions may be submitted in written form no later than November 20, 2026, at 5:00 PM-CT to:

RFP Contact Name:	Kathy Becker
Contact Address:	11 S. 10th Street Columbia, MO 65201
Telephone Number	573-442-6816
E-mail Address:	kbecker@discoverthedistrict.com

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1. Introduction

The Downtown Columbia Community Improvement District (CID) is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a qualified consulting team to execute Comprehensive Strategic Plan, the Advancement of a Conference Center within the CID, and exploration of potential entertainment district models available for the CID.

Downtown Columbia is a vibrant urban core anchored by the University of Missouri, a dynamic dining and arts sector, and a growing creative economy. To guide future investment and policy, the CID requires a strategic roadmap focused on establishing a regulatory framework for an Entertainment District, advancing plans for a regional Conference Center, and completing a comprehensive Downtown Assessment.

All proposals submitted for consideration must be received by the time as specified above under "SUBMISSION DEADLINE"

Respondents may propose sub-consultants for discrete portions of the Scope of Services. Each sub-consultant must be identified in the proposal with the portion of the work it will perform. No sub-consultant may be engaged or substituted after award without the Downtown CID's prior written consent. The selected Vendor shall remain fully responsible to the Downtown CID for all services, whether performed by the Vendor or by a sub-consultant, and shall ensure that each sub-consultant complies with the terms of the contract.

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2. Scope of Services

The selected consultant will conduct detailed research, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning across three interconnected phases:

Phase 1: Downtown Assessment & Strategic Vision

- Economic Baseline Analysis: Audit commercial/retail vacancy, business mix, property values, foot traffic trends, and recent private investment.

- Public Realm Assessment: Evaluate parking availability, streetscaping, lighting, wayfinding, pedestrian/bicycle connectivity, and green spaces.
- Events & Programming Audit: Review existing events, identify calendar gaps, and benchmark programming against peer downtowns.
- Quality of Life Scan: Examine safety perceptions, housing options, access to community services, and user experiences across diverse demographics.
- SWOT & Recommendations Matrix: Deliver a comprehensive SWOT analysis and prioritized strategic recommendations spanning short-, medium-, and long-term horizons.

Phase 2: Entertainment District Feasibility & Framework

- Statutory & Legal Analysis: Evaluate Missouri statutes and case law governing entertainment districts and special overlay zones.
- Peer Benchmarking: Benchmark district models, governance, and operating strategies from comparable university communities.
- Regulatory Tool Evaluation: Assess regulatory mechanisms including hours of operation, alcohol density controls, outdoor music/noise standards, design guidelines, and security requirements.
- Public Safety Integration: Analyze crime patterns and public safety concerns within the downtown core to formulate targeted policy remedies.
- Framework & Legal Pathway: Formulate governance options, draft policy frameworks, and necessary state/local legislative action steps.

Phase 3: Conference Center

- Research Synthesis: Review prior demand and feasibility studies to synthesize past findings.
- Site Infrastructure Evaluation: Assess candidate development sites based on access, land assembly, infrastructure readiness, development costs, and catalytic economic impact.
- Funding Strategy & Capital Stack: Identify public and private funding mechanisms, including federal grants, state economic development incentives, TIF, hotel/motel tax allocations, naming rights, private equity/philanthropy, etc..
- Governance & Partner Alignment: Outline ownership, management, and operational structures involving key institutional partners (e.g., University of Missouri, City of Columbia, CVB, Downtown Community Improvement District, Chamber of Commerce).
- Action Roadmap: Provide a phased implementation matrix outlining critical path milestones and decision points.

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3. Stakeholder Engagement Requirements

Proposals must outline a structured community and stakeholder outreach strategy:

- CID Leadership: Formal project kick-off and regular progress briefings with CID Board and staff.
- Individual Interviews: Conduct direct interviews with at least 10 key community stakeholders (property owners, anchor institutions, local officials, law enforcement, hospitality operators, arts/cultural leaders).
- Focus Groups: Facilitate 2–3 targeted focus groups with downtown business owners, residents, and entertainment/hospitality operators.
- District Survey: Design and distribute a quantitative survey to CID members, business owners, and property owners.

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4. Schedule & Required Deliverables

It is requested that the proposal includes a schedule that includes key milestones and required deliverables.

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5. Pricing Structure & Options

The proposal should include a cost proposal with three options of engagement.

- Option A: Full Strategic Planning Scope
- Option B: Conference Center Advancement (Standalone)
- Option C: Entertainment District Feasibility & Framework (Standalone)

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6. Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

1. Firm Qualifications & Team Organization: Profiles of the lead firm and sub-consultants covering expertise in urban planning, civic legal structures (CID/TIF/TDD), government affairs, and civil infrastructure.
2. Relevant Experience: Examples of prior engagements.
3. Technical Approach: Narrative explaining the methodology for research, engagement, analysis, and implementation scoping.
4. Project Schedule & Deliverables Plan: Detailed schedule aligned with the roadmap.
5. Cost Proposal: Broken-down cost breakdown matching the options above.
6. References: Three professional references from similar municipal or CID engagements.

Proposals will be evaluated by a selection committee on the following weighted criteria: (a) Technical Approach and Methodology, [30] points; (b) Relevant Experience and Firm Qualifications, including the qualifications of named personnel, [25] points; (c) Stakeholder Engagement Plan, [20] points; (d) Cost Proposal, [25] points. The Downtown CID may interview

one or more Respondents before making a selection. Exceptions to the Contract Conditions may be considered under any criterion. The Downtown CID is not required to select the lowest-cost proposal.

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7. Required Certifications and Disclosures

Each proposal must include the following, signed by a person authorized to bind the Respondent:

7.1 Non-Collusion Certification. The Respondent certifies that its proposal was prepared independently, without consultation, communication, or agreement with any other respondent or competitor relating to price, the intention to submit a proposal, or the terms of the proposal, and that the Respondent has not directly or indirectly induced any other person to submit or refrain from submitting a proposal.

7.2 No Contingent Fees. The Respondent certifies that it has not employed or retained any company or person, other than a bona fide employee working solely for the Respondent, to solicit or secure the contract, and has not paid or agreed to pay any company or person any fee, commission, percentage, gift, or other consideration contingent upon or resulting from the award of the contract.

7.3 Debarment and Suspension. The Respondent certifies that neither it nor any of its principals is presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in contracts by any federal, state, or local governmental agency, and that it will notify the Downtown CID immediately if that status changes.

7.4 Conflict of Interest and Relationship Disclosure. The Respondent shall disclose any current or prior business, financial, familial, or employment relationship between the Respondent (including its principals, proposed personnel, and sub-consultants) and any director, officer, employee, or member of the Downtown CID, and any engagement within the preceding three (3) years for the City of Columbia, the University of Missouri, the Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, or any owner of real property within the District that could reasonably be perceived as a conflict in performing the Scope of Services. The Downtown CID may, in its sole discretion, disqualify a Respondent on the basis of a disclosed or discovered relationship, or require that the relationship be addressed in the contract.

7.5 Authority and Accuracy. The Respondent certifies that the person signing the proposal is authorized to bind the Respondent, that the information in the proposal is true and complete, and that the Respondent is, or before contract execution will be, registered and in good standing to do business in the State of Missouri.

7.6 E-Verify Affidavit. The Respondent shall submit with its proposal the sworn affidavit required by Section 285.530, RSMo, affirming that it is enrolled in and participates in the federal E-Verify program with respect to employees working in connection with the services and that it does not knowingly employ any person who is an unauthorized alien in connection with the services, together with documentation of its E-Verify enrollment.

8. RFP Procedures

8.1 Exceptions to Contract Conditions. The Respondent must identify, in a separate section of its proposal titled "Exceptions," each provision of the Contract Conditions or other terms of this RFP to which it takes exception, with proposed substitute language. Any provision not listed as an exception is deemed accepted by the Respondent without modification. Exceptions may be considered in the evaluation of proposals and may be grounds for rejection. The Downtown CID is under no obligation to accept any exception.

8.2 Proposal Validity. Proposals shall remain firm and irrevocable for one hundred twenty (120) days after the Submission Deadline. The Downtown CID may request an extension of this period.

8.3 Submission and Late Proposals. Proposals must be received by the RFP Contact [by email at the address above] no later than [5:00 PM CT] on the Submission Deadline. The time of receipt recorded by the Downtown CID is controlling. Proposals received after the Submission Deadline will not be considered, regardless of the reason for delay. Proposals may not be modified after the Submission Deadline except at the Downtown CID's request.

8.4 Single Point of Contact; No Contact with Board. From the date of issuance of this RFP until the Downtown CID announces an award, Respondents and their representatives shall communicate regarding this RFP only with the RFP Contact identified above. Any contact with a director, officer, committee member, or other employee of the Downtown CID regarding this RFP, other than the RFP Contact, may result in disqualification of the Respondent.

8.5 Questions and Addenda. Questions must be submitted in writing to the RFP Contact by the Question Submission Deadline. The Downtown CID will respond by written addendum issued to all known Respondents. Only written addenda issued by the Downtown CID modify this RFP; oral statements by any person are not binding. Respondents shall acknowledge receipt of all addenda in their proposals.

8.6 Format and Page Limit. Proposals shall be submitted as a single PDF, in 11-point or larger font, and shall not exceed [thirty (30)] pages excluding the cover letter, resumes, required certifications, and cost proposal. Proposals shall follow the order of Section 6.

8.7 Negotiation and Best and Final Offers. The Downtown CID may negotiate with one or more Respondents, request best and final offers, and award a contract on the basis of initial proposals without negotiation. Respondents should therefore submit their best terms initially.

8.9 No Obligation Until Execution. No contract, commitment, or obligation of the Downtown CID arises from this RFP, any notice of selection, or any negotiation until a written contract is approved by the Board of Directors and executed by an authorized officer of the Downtown CID.

Contract Conditions

The acceptance of any proposal and selection of any vendor shall be subject to, and contingent upon, the execution by the Downtown CID of a contract. The contract shall contain, among other items, certain provisions required by law and by policies of the Downtown CID including, without limitation, the following, and the Vendor:

I. Shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless the Downtown CID, including employees and directors, against any claims or damages and losses, including reasonable attorneys' fees, to the extent arising out of or resulting from the negligent acts, errors, or omissions, willful misconduct, or breach of contract of the Vendor, its sub-consultants, or anyone for whose acts they may be liable. The Vendor's obligations under this subsection are not limited by the insurance required under the contract. The Downtown CID does not and will not agree to indemnify the Vendor;

II. Shall maintain financial and other records relating to the Contract, including without limitation, payroll records for a period of seven (7) years from the later of final payment or termination of the contract, and shall make such records available for inspection and audit;

III. Shall maintain insurance with insurers rated A- VII or better by A.M. Best, licensed or authorized to provide insurance and in good standing with the State of Missouri, in not less than the following amounts: (a) Commercial General Liability of $1,000,000 per occurrence and $2,000,000 aggregate; (b) Professional Liability (Errors and Omissions) of $1,000,000 per claim and in the aggregate, maintained for not less than three (3) years after final acceptance; (c) Automobile Liability of $1,000,000 combined single limit; (d) Workers' Compensation at statutory limits and Employer's Liability of $500,000; and (e) Cyber Liability and Data Breach coverage of $1,000,000 if the Vendor will collect, store, or process survey responses or other personal information; such policies shall be in a form acceptable to, and include any conditions reasonably required by the Downtown CID, and naming the Downtown CID, employees and directors as additional insureds on a primary and non-contributory basis, with certificates and endorsements delivered before work begins and thirty (30) days' notice of cancellation, non-renewal, or material reduction;

IV. Shall be licensed to conduct business in the State of Missouri;

V. Shall represent and warrant that neither it nor any of its directors, officers, members or employees has any interest, nor shall they acquire any interest, directly or indirectly, which would conflict in any manner or degree with the performance of the services as set forth in the contract. Further, the Vendor must agree that it shall employ no person having such a conflict of interest in the performance of the services;

VI. Shall agree to Boone County, Missouri as the venue in any legal action or proceeding between the Vendor and the Downtown CID;

VII. Shall agree that all deliverables, reports, data, analyses, survey instruments and responses, models, maps, presentations, drafts, and other materials prepared or developed under the contract, in any form or medium (collectively, “Work Product”), are works made for hire and the sole and exclusive property of the Downtown CID from the

moment of creation. To the extent any Work Product does not qualify as a work made for hire, the Vendor hereby assigns to the Downtown CID all right, title, and interest in it, including all intellectual property rights. The Vendor retains ownership of its pre-existing proprietary tools, methodologies, and templates ("Vendor Materials") and grants the Downtown CID a perpetual, royalty-free, non-exclusive license to use Vendor Materials to the extent incorporated in any Work Product. The Vendor may not publish, present, or otherwise use Work Product or identify the Downtown CID as a client without the Downtown CID's prior written consent, except that the Vendor may list the engagement in its qualifications;

VIII. Shall acknowledge that any statutory, regulatory, or legal analysis included in the Scope of Services is provided for planning and policy purposes only, does not constitute legal advice to the Downtown CID, and will be reviewed by the Downtown CID's legal counsel before the Downtown CID relies on it. The Vendor shall coordinate with the Downtown CID's legal counsel in developing any proposed ordinance, legislation, regulatory framework, governance document, or intergovernmental agreement, and shall not present any such document to a governmental body or third party as a position of the Downtown CID without the Downtown CID's written approval. Nothing in the contract authorizes the Vendor to practice law or to hold itself out as legal counsel to the Downtown CID;

IX. Shall agree that the contract will not limit the Vendor's liability to the Downtown CID to an amount less than the greater of the total contract price or the limits of insurance required under the contract, and will not exclude liability for the Vendor's gross negligence, willful misconduct, breach of confidentiality, or indemnification obligations. Any limitation of liability proposed by the Vendor must be identified as an exception in its proposal;

X. Shall acknowledge that the Downtown CID is a political subdivision of the State of Missouri and that nothing in the RFP, the proposal, or the contract waives, or shall be construed to waive, the sovereign immunity of the Downtown CID, its directors, officers, or employees, or any defense, limitation, or protection available to them under Missouri law, including without limitation Sections 537.600 through 537.650, RSMo;

XI. Shall agree that the Downtown CID's payment obligations under the contract are contingent upon the lawful availability and appropriation of funds for that purpose. If funds are not available for any fiscal year after the fiscal year in which the contract is executed, the Downtown CID may terminate the contract without penalty on written notice, and the Downtown CID's sole obligation shall be payment for services performed and deliverables accepted before the effective date of termination. Nothing in the contract creates a debt or multi-year financial obligation of the Downtown CID in violation of Article VI, Section 26 of the Missouri Constitution;

XII. Shall agree that (a) the Downtown CID may terminate the contract for convenience, in whole or in part, at any time on thirty (30) days' written notice, in which event the Vendor shall be paid for services satisfactorily performed and deliverables accepted through the effective date of termination and shall deliver to the Downtown CID all Work Product, complete or incomplete, as of that date; and (b) either party may terminate the contract for cause if the other party materially breaches the contract and fails to cure the breach

within fifteen (15) days after written notice specifying the breach. Termination for convenience by the Downtown CID shall not entitle the Vendor to lost profits, unabsorbed overhead, or any other damages;

XIII. Shall agree that compensation will be paid in installments tied to the Downtown CID's written acceptance of the deliverables identified in the contract's schedule, and not on the basis of time elapsed. The Downtown CID shall withhold ten percent (10%) of each installment as retainage, payable upon final acceptance of all deliverables. Invoices shall be submitted no more often than monthly, shall identify the deliverable or milestone to which they relate, and shall be paid within thirty (30) days after the Downtown CID's approval of the invoice. The Downtown CID shall have no obligation to pay for work performed outside the Scope of Services without a written amendment signed by the Downtown CID before the work is performed;

XIV. Shall submit each deliverable to the Downtown CID for review and shall, at no additional cost, make the revisions reasonably requested by the Downtown CID within [fifteen (15)] days after receiving the Downtown CID's comments. A deliverable is accepted only upon the Downtown CID's written notice of acceptance. The Downtown CID's review, comment, or acceptance shall not relieve the Vendor of responsibility for the accuracy and professional quality of its work;

XV. Shall assign to the engagement the personnel identified in its proposal, including the project lead, and shall not remove, replace, or materially reduce the involvement of any such person without the Downtown CID's prior written consent, which shall not be unreasonably withheld for departures from the Vendor's employment. Any replacement shall have qualifications equal to or exceeding those of the person replaced. The Downtown CID may require the removal of any Vendor personnel whose performance is unsatisfactory;

XVI. Shall perform the services as an independent contractor and not as an employee, agent, partner, or joint venturer of the Downtown CID. The Vendor has no authority to make any commitment, representation, or agreement on behalf of the Downtown CID to any governmental body, institution, property owner, stakeholder, or other third party, and shall make clear in all stakeholder engagement that it is gathering input and not stating positions of the Downtown CID;

XVII. Shall treat individual interview responses, focus group statements, and survey responses as confidential to the extent permitted by law, shall use them solely for the purposes of the contract, shall report them only in aggregated or anonymized form unless the participant consents to attribution in writing, and shall return or destroy all such materials at the Downtown CID's direction upon completion of the engagement, except as the Downtown CID directs that they be delivered to it as Work Product. The Vendor acknowledges that materials delivered to the Downtown CID may be public records under Chapter 610, RSMo;

XVIII. Shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, and regulations in the performance of the services, and shall not discriminate against any employee, applicant, or participant on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law;

XIX. Shall not assign, transfer, or delegate the contract or any interest in it, in whole or in part, without the Downtown CID's prior written consent. A change in control of the Vendor shall be treated as an assignment. Any purported assignment without consent is void;

XX. Shall agree that in the event of conflict among the contract documents, the following order of precedence applies: (a) the executed contract and any written amendments; (b) this RFP and any addenda; (c) the Vendor's proposal, to the extent accepted by the Downtown CID in writing. Any terms and conditions contained in the Vendor's proposal, invoices, engagement letters, or other documents that conflict with or add to the contract are rejected and of no effect unless expressly accepted in the contract; and

XXI. Shall acknowledge that any additional work beyond the Scope of Services shall be performed only under a written amendment or separate agreement signed by the Downtown CID, and that nothing in the RFP or the contract obligates the Downtown CID to engage the Vendor for any additional work or creates any exclusivity in the Vendor's favor.

State of Missouri Sunshine Law

The Downtown CID is a public governmental body subject to the Missouri Sunshine Law, Chapter 610, RSMo. Proposals, the contract, and all Work Product are public records and may be disclosed upon request, except as closed by law. A Respondent that believes specific portions of its proposal contain trade secrets or other information closed under Section 610.021, RSMo, must mark each such page and specify the legal basis for closure. Blanket designations of an entire proposal as confidential will be disregarded. The Downtown CID will make the final determination regarding disclosure and shall have no liability to any Respondent for disclosure made in good faith under the Sunshine Law. By submitting a proposal, the Respondent waives any claim against the Downtown CID arising from such disclosure.

Costs

The Downtown CID shall not be liable for any cost(s) incurred by the respondent in the preparation of its submission or for any work or services performed by the respondent prior to the execution and delivery of the contract. The Downtown CID is not obligated to pay any costs, expenses, damages or losses incurred by any respondent at any time unless the Downtown CID has expressly agreed to do so in writing.

Downtown CID Rights

This is a “Request for Proposals” and not a “Request for Bids”. The Downtown CID shall be the sole judge of whether a proposal conforms to the requirements and merits of the RFP and of the merits and acceptability of the individual proposals. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained herein, the Downtown CID reserves the right to take any of the following actions in connection with this RFP: amend, modify or withdraw this RFP; waive any requirement of this RFP; require supplemental statements and information from any respondents to this RFP; award a contract to as many or as few or none of the respondents as the Downtown CID may select; to award a contract to entities who have not responded to the RFP; accept or reject any or all proposals received in response to this RFP; extend the deadline for submission of proposals; negotiate or hold discussions with one or more respondents; reject any or all proposals and

cancel this RFP; in whole or in part, for any reason or no reason, in the Downtown CID's sole discretion. The Downtown CID may exercise these rights at any time, without notice to any respondent or other parties and without liability to any respondent or other parties for their costs, expenses or other obligations incurred in the preparation of this proposal or otherwise. All proposals become the property of the Downtown CID.

Applicable Law

This RFP and any contract, subcontract or any other agreement resulting henceforth shall be governed by the Laws of Missouri, and are subject to applicable laws, rules, regulations and executive orders, policies, procedures and ordinances of all Federal, State and City authorities, as the same may be amended from time to time, including, without limitation, equal employment opportunity laws.

Brokerage Fees or Commissions

The Downtown CID shall not be obligated to pay any fee, cost or expense for brokerage commissions or finder's fees with respect to the execution of this contract. The respondent agrees to pay the commission or other compensation due any broker or finder in connection with the contract, and to indemnify and hold harmless the Downtown CID from any obligation, liability, cost and/or expense incurred by the Downtown CID as a result of any claim for commission or compensation brought by any broker or finder in connection with this contract.

Additional Work

During the contract, the Downtown CID, at its sole discretion, may choose to work with the selected vendor and/or hire its services for projects other than the Scope of Services or projects that exceed the Scope of Services. The Downtown CID's decision to do so may be based on the firm's relevant experience and its successful performance under the contract. Any such additional work shall be performed only under a written amendment or separate agreement, and nothing in this paragraph obligates the Downtown CID to engage the selected vendor for any additional work.