

MT. PLEASANT COMMUNITY BRANDING

Request for Proposals

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Request for Proposal is to solicit proposals from firms and/or individuals experienced in community brand development and design to establish a shared brand for the Mt. Pleasant community to be utilized among area stakeholders.

The goals of the branding program are to:

- Provide a clear vision that articulates the community's competitive advantage and distinct strengths by focusing on the unique characteristics of the Mt. Pleasant community
- Shift perceptions and mitigate negative stereotypes
- Community-wide alignment around a vibrant, authentic place brand, perception and reality
- Increase and sustain pride and enthusiasm of what makes Mt. Pleasant great
- Enhance awareness of the Mt. Pleasant area
- Recruit and retain talent, making our community an even better place to live for the next generation
- Increase tourism, increasing visitors' length of stay and diversity of experience
- Foster economic and business growth
- Increase number and diversity of residents
- Engage residents and business owners to have conversations about what they love about Mt. Pleasant, and give them the tools to become advocates for Mt. Pleasant
- Support the efforts of Central Michigan University and Mid Michigan College to recruit and retain students, faculty and staff; encourage alumni to live in, work in, or visit the area; and promote the partnership with the community
- Help recruit and retain physicians and other medical professionals
- Promote the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe's influential culture and history, as well as build awareness of the wide-array of entertainment attractions offered in a community that is centrally-located and easily accessible
- Motivate partners to build brand into communication strategies year after year

BACKGROUND

For those who live, work and play in the Mt. Pleasant area, it is easy to recognize the rich culture and history that exist with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe; the active lifestyle that is encouraged with the scenic parks and miles of trails; the vitality and opportunities generated by Central Michigan University and Mid Michigan College; and the countless other appealing features and offerings of the community.

Unfortunately, many of these attributes are often overshadowed by common misconceptions, such as "There's nothing to do in Mt. Pleasant," and "It's in the middle of nowhere." Additionally, the messaging used among business, residents and the community to describe the area often varies, resulting in an unclear understanding of the essence of the Mt. Pleasant community.

The City of Mt. Pleasant is collaborating with project partners to pursue the development and launch of a community-wide brand. A strong community-wide brand would shift perceptions and mitigate negative

stereotypes, while providing a consistent representation of the area, in order to make the Mt. Pleasant area more desirable to visit, call home or start a business.

Project Partners:

- Central Michigan University
- Central Michigan University Alumni Association
- Charter Township of Union
- City of Mt. Pleasant
- Isabella County
- McLaren Central Michigan Hospital
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Mid Michigan College
- Middle Michigan Development Corporation
- Mt. Pleasant Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau (CVB)
- Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

It is anticipated the City of Mt. Pleasant will manage the RFP process, respond to applicant questions and formally award this contract for branding services.

Once the project is awarded, representatives from the City of Mt. Pleasant and the Mt. Pleasant CVB will serve as the primary contact for the selected firm, and will ensure performance of the scope of work.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS AND SCOPE OF WORK

The brand identity for the Mt. Pleasant community should convey the area's assets and unique qualities in a way that is authentic, succinct and memorable. It will describe who we are, what we are for, what we do and why we do it.

The following should be submitted with all proposals:

A. A formal cover letter including:

Firm Profile. Proposals should provide a complete and concise description of the firm's ability to meet the requirements of this RFP. The profile should also include a short bio of key staff members who will work on this project and the firm's website and social media sites.

Proposed Budget. Include a summary of costs and fees based on the three steps and deliverables noted Section (B) below. Please provide a budget for each individual task as an independent project and an aggregate budget for the entire project. All overhead costs (including travel and vehicle mileage) should be included in the basic fee. Any optional services recommended by the consultant may be included but should be priced separately.

The Mt. Pleasant community branding project partners anticipate that the development of a community brand **should not exceed \$35,000**, excluding the cost of creating collateral materials, media placement and other expenses that will be incurred in implementing the brand.

Project Schedule. Include a proposed schedule for the product delivery broken down by each of the three steps noted in Section (B) below.

Minimum qualifications. The selected firm must have experience formulating new brands based on research-driven methodology combined with informational insights provided by stakeholders through a public engagement process. Experience working with municipalities, government clients or destination marketing organizations is preferred.

References. Include three (3) references and at least two (2) summary samples of completed projects.

B. A detailed proposal encompassing the following three (3) steps and deliverables:

1. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

The first step is research. This is a crucial step in a branding campaign as its purpose is to understand the community's internal and external stakeholders' views of the Mt. Pleasant area. What makes the Mt. Pleasant community different from neighboring towns? Why do residents choose to make it their home? Why do people choose to visit? Who are we as a community? How are we viewed by visitors? Involving stakeholders to answer these questions is key in identifying the essence of the Mt. Pleasant community and lays the foundation on which to build the brand.

During this step, there must be extensive engagement of stakeholder groups representative of the entire community, including (but not limited to):

- City/Township/County leaders
- City/Township/County commissions and boards
- City/Township/County residents
- Educational Institutions:
 - Central Michigan University students, alumni, faculty, staff and leaders
 - Mid Michigan College students, faculty, staff and leaders
 - Local K-12 Schools students/families, faculty, staff and leaders
- Local Parks & Recreation staff, volunteers and program participants
- Local business owners, including those in downtown Mt. Pleasant
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe leaders and members
- Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort
- Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce
- Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation

- United Way of Gratiot and Isabella Counties
- McLaren Central Michigan
- MidMichigan Health
- Mt. Pleasant Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Middle Michigan Development Corporation leaders
- Representatives of Restaurants/Attractions/Golf Courses/Events
- Visitors

The selected firm will use a variety of outreach methods to conduct this research, including focus groups, town hall meetings, social media, paper surveys/feedback, and other methodologies as appropriate. After the research is collected, the data will be analyzed and the findings will be presented to the branding project partners.

Deliverables:

- Complete research results
- Summary of research results

2. BRAND MESSAGE AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Based on the findings of the research, the branding company/firm will help the project partners determine what the Mt. Pleasant community's brand represents today and what it should represent in the future.

The selected firm will create the messaging, the expression of the brand, and visual elements that will effectively communicate the Mt. Pleasant community's identity to target audiences. Messaging should connect to the hearts and minds of the audiences and be believable, relevant and simple. Consistency with the allowance for flexibility is also necessary so the messaging can be used by all project partners.

With the research and messages defined, the branding company/firm will create an updated visual identity for the community. This includes a logo concept, tagline and guide outlining the proper use of the new visuals. The project partners will work closely with the company/firm to review, revise and finalize the visual identity. Project partners could use the visual identity within the guidelines established for their respective organizations.

Deliverables:

- A logo concept, tagline and brand themes that reflect the essence of the Mt. Pleasant community
- Brand standards and guidelines outlining the proper use of the brand messaging and visuals
- Key messages and words that are easy to implement and universally adoptable among stakeholders and target audiences
- Vector-based graphics of the selected logo concept and taglines that can be used across various applications and platforms
- A comprehensive community "Points of Pride"
- Guided development of a brand champion team to gather feedback and generate enthusiasm

- Recommended templates for common needs such as municipal signage, brochures, web page layout, PowerPoint, report covers, etc.

3. **STRATEGIC BRAND IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.** This task will define the activities designed to effectively launch the community's new brand identity, as well as identify ongoing strategies for communicating, maintaining and enhancing the brand's value over time. These strategies should:
- Prioritize both short- and long-term strategies and tactics, including a timeline
 - Employ a variety of communication tools and platforms
 - Engage all stakeholder groups (as listed in Step 1)
 - Enable target audiences to connect and interact with the community brand
 - Provide opportunities for key stakeholders to become community brand advocates

To ensure effective implementation, the brand strategy should recommend methods for tracking results and measuring success with target audiences.

Deliverables:

- Brand launch strategy and campaign tactics
- Concrete, measureable key performance indicators
- A recommended long-term maintenance plan for brand project partners to make certain the messaging remains strong and coherent, and the community continues to adopt the brand

Additional Project Deliverables:

- Meetings: The consultant will be responsible for meeting with branding project partners on a regular basis. The number and frequency of the meetings will be determined in consultation with all parties before the project begins. The purpose of the meetings will be to establish objectives, discuss alternatives, provide direction and review progress.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

It is anticipated that the contract for consulting services will be awarded in April 2018. The City expects a formal launch of the brand within 6-8 months of the execution of that contract.

The consultant should provide a schedule that identifies the timing of major tasks, beginning with the contract award and ending with the formal brand launch and recommended timing of suggested long-term maintenance tactics.

- RFP Issued: Friday, Feb. 16, 2018
- Proposals Due: Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at 1:30 p.m.
- Firm Interviews (if necessary): Schedule to be determined
- Firm Selected: April 2018

EVALUATION OF SUBMITTALS:

The City and its project partners will evaluate all submittals to determine which consultants have the experience and qualifications that are most suited for this project. The project partners may request personal interviews with the highest-ranked consultants or may request one or more prospective consultants to submit detailed proposals, which may include the following:

1. Detailed description of the methodology being proposed.
2. Work program detailing:
 - a. Tasks to be performed.
 - b. When each will be completed (timeline).
 - c. Schedule of work products.
3. Methods the consultant proposes to use to manage the project and communicate with the project partners and the public as to project progress, reviews, and conduct of public meetings.
4. Hourly rates (inclusive of overhead and profit) for personnel or personnel categories.
5. Data expected to be provided by the project partners.

SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS

To be considered, ten (10) copies of the completed submittal must be submitted in a sealed envelope, clearly marked: REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL – MT. PLEASANT COMMUNITY BRAND and received by 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 by mail or hand delivery to:

City Clerk's Office
City of Mt. Pleasant
320 W. Broadway
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

Submittals arriving after the date and time will remain unopened and will be disqualified.

Any submittal may be withdrawn by giving written notice to the City Clerk before the stated opening time.

Questions regarding the proposal may be directed by email to:

Molli Ferency
Public Relations Coordinator
City of Mt. Pleasant
mferency@mt-pleasant.org

Questions must be received by March 11, 2018.

Answers will be posted as they are received in the Bids and Quotes section of the City's website at www.mt-pleasant.org for the benefit of all interested firms.

It is the responsibility of the interested firms to check the website for new questions and answers prior to submittal. The names of firms and individuals submitting questions will not be disclosed.

RESERVATIONS

The City reserves the right to accept any submittal, to reject any or all submittals, to waive defects in submittals in response to this request and to select the submittal deemed to be in the best interests of the City. Issuance of this request for qualifications does not obligate the City to award a contract. The City accepts no responsibility for reimbursing consultants for expenses incurred in responding to this Request for Proposal.