

# **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IOWA BRAILLE AND SIGHT SAVING SCHOOL CAMPUS OF VINTON, IOWA**

## **Background**

The City of Vinton, Iowa (“City”) has served as Iowa’s home for educating its blind children since 1862. The institution is currently owned by the State of Iowa and is governed by the Iowa Board of Regents, State of Iowa. Today, the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School campus (“Campus”) consists of 48 acres and 11 buildings with approximately 203,000 square feet of usable space.

The model for educating blind children has changed and the need for centralized residential programming has virtually gone away. In 2017, the Board of Regents has offered the opportunity for the City to assume ownership of the entire campus. This is a very substantial and historical opportunity for the City.

To help the City to evaluate the feasibility of assuming ownership, the City has decided to engage in its own Request for Proposal (“RFP”) process with interested developers. The Board of Regents is aware that the City is issuing this RFP. The City has formed a Braille School Committee (“BSC”) to help it evaluate the proposals from developers as well as all other financial opportunities and risks associated with assuming ownership of the Campus. The members of the BSC are volunteers and have no financial or other conflicts with any aspect of this project. Developers interested in participating in this RFP should expect to work with the members of the BSC and for the BSC to be responsive to their inquiries and to assist in whatever way necessary. The BSC will also help facilitate any information needed from the City to assist interested developers in their evaluations and formation of proposals.

## **Property Overview**

Proposals will be accepted for a single area or any combination of multiple areas of property.

See Exhibit A for map.

- A. **South Area** : Approximately 7.2 acres. Contemplated use to include housing.
  
- B. **South Area Campus**: Approximately 7 acres. This property is currently used as a soccer field. It contains an underground geothermal heating and cooling system that was installed in 2014 and feeds Old Main and Palmer Hall. Contemplated use to include public space.
  
- C. **West Area** : Approximately 4 acres of undeveloped land that included a 100-car gravel parking lot and 1,317 feet of access to Highway 218 to the west. Contemplated use may include housing or commercial. The remaining 4 acres have been identified by FEMA as a probable location for a new public safety facility for the City of Vinton in the near future.
  
- D. **North Campus Area**
  - Cottage
    - Constructed: 1933
    - Gross Square Feet: 12,120
    - General Description: This is a two-story structure with a full basement. It is built of concrete, masonry, and steel with an asphalt shingle roof. It currently contains one classroom, 20 dorm rooms and five restrooms.
  
  - Hospital
    - Constructed: 1905
    - Gross Square Feet: 3,200
    - General Description: This is a two-story concrete structure with a masonry exterior and an asphalt shingle roof. It contains four administrative offices and general storage.

- Old Main
  - Constructed: center portion 1858-1860, south wing 1869, north wing 1873, chapel 1913
  - Gross Square Feet: 69,280
  - General Description: This is a four-story structure with a full basement connected to Rice and Palmer Halls by tunnels. It is built of concrete, masonry and steel. It has a new standing seam metal roof as of 2014. It currently contains 18 classrooms, 13 dorm rooms, three large conference rooms, 62 administrative offices, six mechanical rooms and ten restrooms.
  
- Palmer Hall
  - Constructed: 1937
  - Gross Square Feet: 27,486
  - General Description: This is a two-story structure with a full basement with a connecting tunnel to Old Main. It is built of concrete, masonry, and steel with a metal roof. Palmer hall currently contains six classrooms, 29 dorm rooms, two large conference rooms, 28 administrative offices, six mechanical rooms and ten restrooms.
  
- Rice Hall
  - Constructed: 1950
  - Gross Square Feet: 35,910
  - General Description: This is a two-story structure with a full basement and a connecting tunnel to Old Main. It is built of concrete, masonry, and steel with a metal roof. Rice Hall currently contains three classrooms, 58 dorm rooms, four large conference rooms, 6 administrative offices and five restrooms.

## **The City's Goals**

- 1) To preserve, protect and make financially sustainable the operations of the building known as Old Main.
- 2) To sell as many of the existing buildings as is feasible to private interests for use as workforce housing, senior housing and possible lease to existing major tenant (discussed below).
- 3) To sell a portion of the available land to private interests for residential housing, multi-family housing and possible commercial use.
- 4) To preserve approximately 13.5 acres for public use as a park and for recreational activities.

Currently, the primary use of 2 buildings (excludes Old Main) is leased to AmeriCorps NCCC. AmeriCorps NCCC is currently leasing a total of 110,000 square feet for their use as one of 5 centers in the US for training and preparing their volunteers for community service. In addition, AmeriCorps NCCC pays some of the costs for the maintenance of the Rec Center building.

The BSC, with the support of the City, are pursuing grant opportunities to receive funds to help renovate most of the Old Main building for possible use by AmeriCorps NCCC. This process is in the beginning stages, and the BSC will use its best efforts to keep interested developers for this part of the Campus informed.

## **RFP Objectives**

The City wants any interested developer to have free reign to propose ideas for development of any and all of the Campus, any of its buildings and/or land. Assuming the City's 4 goals listed above can be achieved, any and all proposals are welcome. Interested developers are encouraged to submit proposals for some or all of the total project.

The BSC desires to keep this process informal and is prepared to move at the developer's pace. Having said this, we do have certain deadlines that must be met, which will be set out below. The BSC desires interested developers to think

outside the box and participate whatever way makes sense for them and to help meet the City's goals.

Should one or more developers be prepared to move at a faster pace than others, the BSC is prepared to move forward with a formal development agreement. Assuming satisfactory terms can be met and appropriate approvals from the City can be obtained, the RFP process for that part of the project covered by the development agreement will terminate for all others.

### **RFP Schedule**

By March 15, 2018 - interested developers should submit to the BSC a status report as to the following:

- what part of the overall project they are interested in and pursuing;
- list any major contingencies and/or concerns existing at that time that may prevent completion of the contemplated work or completion of the RFP proposal.

By May 1, 2018 – interested developers should submit their final proposals to the Vinton City Administrator (address below). The submittal should be in the form of 2 hard copies along with electronic submittals in the form of flash drives or email attachments. Upon the submittal of these proposals, all materials will become the property of the City.

Final Proposals may be submitted at any time but no later than May 1, 2018, to:

City of Vinton  
Attn: Chris Ward, City Administrator  
110 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
PO Box 529  
Vinton, Iowa 52349

## **Submission Requirements**

### **A. Firm Qualifications**

- 1) **Firm Contact.** Name, address and contact information of firm or individual responding to the proposal.
- 2) **Firm Overview.** Provide a brief description of the organization, year established, number of employees, types of projects undertaken, and the financial volume of projects.
- 3) **Development Team.** Provide a listing, qualifications and role of all of the team members anticipated to participate in the project.
- 4) **Experience.** Provide a list, description and photos of several relevant projects detailing the role of the firm in each of the projects.
- 5) **Firm Financial Viability.** Provide a narrative description of the firm's financial capacity including the number and financial volume of projects undertaken in a typical year. Provide supplemental information validating the firm's financial capacity. Acceptable documentation may include: i. letters of credit from financial institution; ii. documentation of the firm's assets and liabilities; iii. any other documentation deemed by the proposer to adequately describes the financial history and capacity of the firm;

### **B. Project Proposal**

- 1) **Project Description.** Provide a detailed narrative description of the proposed project including, but not limited to: i. number and identification of existing structures included in development proposal, ii. Number, size and description of new structures to be built, if any, iii. sustainable building/site development features.
- 2) **Project Rationale and Strategy.** Provide information supporting the financial and market feasibility of the proposed project.
- 3) **Economic Impact.** Provide estimates of the number of jobs created/retained, overall investment, and estimated post-development assessed value.
- 4) **Tenants.** Provide information on any identified tenants proposed as part of the development including letters of intent, signed leases, or agreements

with end-users including type of business and nature of occupancy (as applicable).

- 5) **Timeline.** Provide a proposed project timeline including: site design, rezoning/site plan approval, issuance of permits, site improvements, construction of the facilities, substantial completion and estimated final completion.

### **C. Project Financials**

- 1) Proposed purchase price and terms.
- 2) Sources and Uses of funds for the proposed project.
- 3) Operational pro form for all residential and/or commercial spaces being leased.
- 4) Detailed project costs and overall investment of the proposed project.
- 5) Estimated post-development Assessed Value for the Property.
- 6) The interested developer shall include financial documentation sufficient to assist the City in determining whether the proposer has secured or has the ability to secure the necessary financing to facilitate the purchase and development of the Property. Acceptable documentation\* may include: i. lender pre-qualification letter; ii. Private equity commitments; iii. Developer financing contribution; iv. Any other financing documentation deemed by the proposer to adequately demonstrate project financing; Financing documentation must include proposed terms and contingencies.
- 7) If the interested developer intends to request City participation, the amount and terms of the requested assistance should be clearly outlined with the justification for the need.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Each of the following items will be taken into consideration in evaluating the proposals:

- 1) Completeness of proposal
- 2) Capacity, experience, and capability of the interested developer
- 3) Economic impact of the proposed redevelopment to the City, including but not limited to property tax revenues.

- 4) Community benefits including amenities or services provided in the project, if any.
- 5) Consistency with City's goals as outlined earlier.
- 6) Timeline for redevelopment and built-out
- 7) Purchase price and terms for any of the buildings to be acquired or land to be used for new construction.

### **DISCLAIMER**

The City reserves the right to determine the appropriateness and merit of all submitted proposals. Issuance of this RFP does not obligate the City to enter into negotiations of agreements with any responding firm. Any development agreement entered into between the City and any responding developer will be contingent upon the Board of Regents approving transfer of the Campus to the City and the City taking ownership of the Campus.

The City shall consider all information provided by any responding firm to be public record.

## **Additional Information**

The following reports are available upon request:

- Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School (IBSSS) Facility Condition Report – completed in December 2016
- Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School (IBSSS) Property & Facility Information Report – completed in July 2016
- Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis for the City of Vinton – completed in August 2016
- City of Vinton utility maps

## **Key Contacts**

Melissa Schwan, Director  
Vinton Unlimited  
319-472-3955  
melissa@vintonia.org

Brian Crowe, Director, Business Attraction  
Cedar Rapids Iowa City Corridor Development  
319.538.8845  
bcrowe@cedarrapidsiowacity.org

## **Resources**

Brian Crowe, Director, Business Attraction  
Cedar Rapids Iowa City Corridor Development  
319.538.8845  
bcrowe@cedarrapidsiowacity.org

Kate Robertson, Director  
Benton Development Group  
319-472-5545  
info@bdgia.com

Melissa Schwan, Director  
Vinton Unlimited  
319-472-3955  
melissa@vintonia.org

Chris Ward, City Administrator  
City of Vinton  
319-472-4707  
cward@vintoniowa.net

**Exhibit A**

