BLUE HILLS MASTER PLAN RFP OUTLINE

Introduction
The City of Hartford is soliciting responses from qualified individuals/firms to provide professional services for creation of a Master Plan for the Blue Hills neighborhood, focusing on the areas known as Westbrook Village, Weaver High School, and Bowles Park. Other potential development sites that would meet the specific needs of the neighborhood may be identified during the process and incorporated into the plan. Blue Hills is a neighborhood that knows what they want, but want guidance on how to set measurable and achievable goals.

The Blue Hills neighborhood is located in the northwest corner of the City of Hartford and boasts a stable residential populations supported by significant levels of homeownership. Strong institutions call this neighborhood home, including the University of Hartford and Saint Francis Medical Center, as well as strong neighborhood organizations such as the Blue Hills Civic Association and the Blue Hills NRZ (Neighborhood Revitalization Zone). These groups and others are anticipated in being active partners in this process.

The City of Hartford seeks a responding team capable of providing the Scope of Work (detailed below) and a flexible team that is willing to tailor the Scope of Work to the needs and the budget constraints of the project. This RFP is requesting that the responding team provide: a retail market estimation for Westbrook Village, a robust community engagement process, master planning and design services, methods to address the opportunities and challenges of homeownership, and the creation of a final document complete with illustrations and narrative.

Professional services shall include the coordination and leading of a robust public engagement and neighborhood charrette process for Westbrook and Weaver High School in order to ensure community ownership and increased chances for success with implementation. The team will also be responsible for creating the final master plan document. The cost for this project shall not exceed $100,000.

TO APPLY, PLEASE VISIT “Current Solicitations” AT http://www.hartford.gov/procurement/purchasing

Project Area
The neighborhood of Blue Hills encompasses the area from the west side of Keney Park, north along Coventry Street, west along the Bloomfield municipal boundary, and then south along Bloomfield Avenue, continuing east along Albany Avenue, and then northeast along Westbourne Parkway to Ridgefield Street.

The primary focus of the design charrette portion, however, will be centered around several anticipated major areas of change known as Bowles Park and Westbrook Village (collectively representing 92 acres), and the site adjacent to Weaver High
School. Other potential development sites that would meet the specific needs of the neighborhood may be identified during the process and incorporated into the plan.

**Project Objective**
The overarching objective of this project is to assist the City of Hartford, the Blue Hills neighborhood, and the Hartford Housing Authority in creating a realistic, implementable plan that addresses three areas of neighborhood concern: 1) Recreation, 2) Housing, and 3) Retail. These three components, in addition to addressing the issues related to education, are believed to be the cornerstone of a successful Blue Hills neighborhood.

**Scope of Work:**
The City of Hartford invites sealed proposals for the following scope of work:

A) **Recreation**
The City of Hartford is fortunate to possess abundant acreage of urban parks and yet there are major challenges to our park system, the most basic of challenges being that the Department of Public Works staff maintains more acres of park with less money when compared to similar sized cities. Blue Hills faces specific challenges as well, namely being that, despite the fact that the neighborhood shares an enormous border with Keney Park, the area still suffers for an overall lack in active recreation opportunities for young and old alike.

The University of Hartford has expressed the desire to provide more recreation space for their students – currently university teams as well as the remainder of the student body utilize the same fields, creating issues of availability and maintenance.

Additionally, Weaver High School is being renovated starting in the Fall of 2015. Adjacent to the high school is an ideal site for an active recreation opportunity – potentially an ideal site for a recreation center that would offer programs unique to the residents of Blue Hills, and draw residents from other Hartford neighborhoods as well as adjacent municipalities. A potential recreation center or building at this site must be kept separate from the high school due to funding sources; however, a rec center should be designed to complement the renovation and design of the adjacent high school.

**Deliverable** – Incorporate into the Master Plan document a framework for proving increased access to a variety of recreation types in Blue Hills. This component of the plan should propose potential locations, potential methods of maintenance, and take into consideration the findings of the recently completed Capital City Parks Guide.

The site adjacent to Weaver should be considered as a potential location for a recreational opportunity site and/or for a recreation center. Perspective and/or Elevation Renderings should be created for the proposed sports complex at
Weaver High School to demonstrate how the design of the recreation building compliments the design at the high school.

B) Housing
Blue Hills benefits from being one of the more stable homeownership populations in the city. However, residents, stakeholders, and the City feel this character is being threatened. The neighborhood is in danger of reaching a tipping point where homeownership will no longer be supportable or attainable.

The City of Hartford has several housing programs in place but they do not address the challenges faced by the residents who may have incomes that exceed the income limitations required by these programs. This RFP should propose ways in which existing homeownership can be better supported and also how we can grow homeownership in this area.

Additionally, Blue Hills is a neighborhood with enormous potential for development. The Housing Authority owns two prime development areas known as Bowles Park and Westbrook Village, the two sites combined equate to roughly 92 acres. Currently, these sites contain multiple affordable housing projects that are at the end of their lifespan and need to be demolished. The Housing has plans to redevelop this land to provide new forms of housing – the questions of "what" remains to be answered. Blue Hills’ residents know they want single-family homes at Bowles Park that are similar in size and scale to the rest of the Blue Hills and they also know that they want mixed-use development that includes various types of housing at Westbrook Village. However, the owner of the land, the Housing Authority, is faced with the challenge of how to finance and develop these parcels in a way that also meets their goals.

Deliverable
1) Organize and lead a community outreach process with neighborhood stakeholders that would facilitate:
   (a) An interactive, “human-centered design” or similar approach; and
   (b) The brainstorming of new solutions for the housing challenges in Blue Hills and/or the city that would yield results directly applicable to the Blue Hills neighborhood.

2) Incorporate the results of the process into the Master Plan document.

3) Provide a conceptual plan of design that proposes:
   (a) A new street network at Bowles Park;
   (b) How the land at Bowles could be subdivided to align with the existing built residential form of Blue Hills; and
   (c) A realistic proposal for how development could be phased on this land that considers the realities of the market and the financing realities of the Housing Authority.
4) Provide a conceptual plan of design that proposes a layout of Westbrook Village that includes various types of housing, which may include but is not limited to market-rate, affordable, student, senior, single-family, rowhouse-style, multi-family, etc. The plan should demonstrate how the various housing types transition from one another and to the surrounding amenities and retail that is also envisioned for Westbrook.

C) Retail

The City of Hartford has an abundance of retail and commercial space spread across the city; as such we have higher than desirable amounts of vacant storefront space. Despite this fact, residents of Hartford remain underserved in certain markets. Blue Hills’ stakeholders strongly feel that attracting and retaining the appropriate retail uses will help support and attract homeownership.

The Blue Hills Civic Association had a Market Feasibility Study conducted in 2013 to identify the gaps in market supply and demand. Results were informative but questions about the quantity and type of retail and commercial that is truly feasible in the context of market realities still remain unanswered.

The City of Hartford recognizes that any developer interested in Blue Hills will want to conduct their own market feasibility analysis. Therefore, it is not the desire of this project to produce a full-scale retail market analysis. Instead, the city would like the responding team to be able to provide enough information to create an informed master plan that adequately estimates the amount and type of supportable retail that would realistically locate at Westbrook Village. This analysis should be based on national retailer standards and should reflect their location theories.

The consulting team should consider the following in their recommendations: 1) a seasonal population of 4,000 from the University of Hartford, 2) traffic from Route 44 and nearby towns, and 3) the existing neighborhood market in Blue Hills.

**Deliverable**

1) Utilize real estate locating software to identify retailers that the Westbrook Village site would support.

2) Utilize the findings of the software to inform the amount of supportable retail space provided in the mixed-use portion of the Master Plan.

3) Utilize existing data that is available to determine what types of other retail might be supportable (University of Hartford data and the BHCA Feasibility Study, 2013)

4) Utilizing the community engagement process, gain understanding of what retail Blue Hills’ residents and stakeholders feel is needed, and explain in the Master Plan narrative what discrepancies might exist between needs, demands, and the realities of the retail market and possible steps going forward.
5) Perspective and/or Elevation Renderings should be created for the proposed mixed-use portion and included in the Master Plan document.

D) Master Plan
The responding team shall integrate the deliverables of Tasks 1 through 3 above to create a Master Plan document. This document should also include the results from community outreach and/or public meetings, conceptual map demonstrating proposed massing and layout of the three primary development sites, artistic renderings of the proposed recreation center and the mixed-use development at Westbrook Village, and a narrative. When creating this map, the team should consider the Blue Hills neighborhood in its entirety – budget allowing, vacant and/or underutilized properties in the neighborhood should be identified and solutions/appropriate infill should be proposed. Identification of certain underutilized sites may be integrated into the concept plans for the primary development sites as an opportunity to improve their chances of redevelopment.

Deliverable
1) Master Plan document and all source files; and
2) Narrative in the Master Plan document that serves as a general guide for how to handle vacant and underutilized land.

E) Community Engagement
Utilizing existing data and supplementing that data through a public process, the City of Hartford seeks to innovatively engage members of the community in understanding and focusing on what they want to see in the neighborhood – generally this is understood, but specifics in regards to building scale, retail/service amenities, housing types, and recreation options are needed.

We would like to provide a unique outreach opportunity; providing a robust, potentially multi-day planning and design charrette process. We would like the responding team to propose a potential framework that could be modified depending on needs, which may include but is not limited to: day-time and evening availabilities, open house(s), setting up a “base of operations” in the community, a housing forum or problem-solving session, etc.

Responding teams are encouraged to suggest their own innovative framework for public outreach that encourages participation in new, exciting, and fun ways that Hartford stakeholders have not participated in before, which may include but is not limited to utilization of the public realm, hands-on designing, real-time designing by experts.

This process should take several items into consideration: 1) the proximity of neighboring amenities and retail being offered by other municipalities or neighborhoods, 2) utilizing the public outreach process as a method to answer some of the information gaps from the BHCA Feasibility Study, and 3) the impact
of the Lighthouse Grant awarded to Rawson School as well as the infusion of housing planned for Bowles Park (Fall 2015) and Westbrook Village (TBD).

**Deliverable**
1) Provide framework for community outreach and planning process  
2) Organize and conduct these processes  
3) Provide summary memo of the results and incorporate findings into the Master Plan document.

**F) Sustainability**
The narrative in the Master Plan document must provide guidance on how to make the project findings actionable, estimated construction costs, phasing options for development, etc. The neighborhood needs additional data + insights to confirm sustainability and wants a plan that does more than lay out the ideal vision.

**Deliverable –** Incorporate the phasing and development information into the Master Plan.

**SUBMISSIONS**
All submittals shall contain the contents described below, in the order listed, and with each section clearly tabbed for reference:

1) **Statement of Interest** – A general statement expressing interest in the RFP and summarizing the key points of the Proposal, with an introduction of the proposed team and an organizational structure by which it will function, including identification of the Project Manager. Discuss your ability to fulfill the project design and development objectives and meet the project timelines.

2) **Scope of Work** – A detailed description of how your team proposes to address the work requirements from inception through execution. Specifically this scope of work shall include a framework for how the consultant team proposes to integrate the University of Hartford students from the Schools of Architecture, Engineering, and Business.

3) **Schedule** – A schedule, defined by task and depicting key milestones shall be submitted. The City of Hartford, from the time of a signed contract, expects this project to last approximately 4 months.

4) **Cost** – Provide a detailed table of the tasks you are providing and their estimated costs. The budget for this project is $100,000. The responding team may propose one or more frameworks for completing this project and staying on budget. If necessary, alternate scenarios may include: the cost of completing the Scope of Work as is and under budget; OR if the cost of completing the Scope of Work as described is greater than $100,000 the responding team may propose an itemized list and cost of all services and a recommended amended Scope of Work.

5) **Qualifications/Demonstration of Experience** – General qualifications statement of the entire team with resumes, representative projects, etc. Provide a complete list of key personnel to be assigned to this project and include an organizational
chart. Explain track record on any projects that are similar in nature and scope, calling attention to experience with similar multi-discipline, master plan and marketing projects that involved a robust community engagement component.

6) References – Provide references for at least three (3) similar projects completed, including the key personnel and consultants involved. List the client, location, original and final budget, and the members of the responding team that were involved and their roles. References should include name, title, and contact information.

7) Additional Data – If necessary, provide any other data that is essential in the evaluation of the submittal, including but not limited to: outstanding characteristics of the team, special capabilities, testimonials, and previous history working with team members.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

1) QUALIFICATIONS + EXPERIENCE

Strong team experience, including, if applicable, a history of previous working relationships among key members of the responding team.

Demonstrated experience with similar master plan, marketing projects that have included a robust community engagement aspect.

Proven track record at successfully engaging the community based on quantity and quality of feedback.

2) TIMELINE

Project staff capacity to ensure that the project is designed and developed on time and within budget.

Demonstrated capacity of projects of similar size and scope completed on time.

3) FRAMEWORK

Responding team proposes a framework that shows thoughtful consideration as to how the proposal best meets the Scope of Work and the needs of the various stakeholders, integrates the University of Hartford students into the project, and best utilizes the budget.