

City of Buffalo

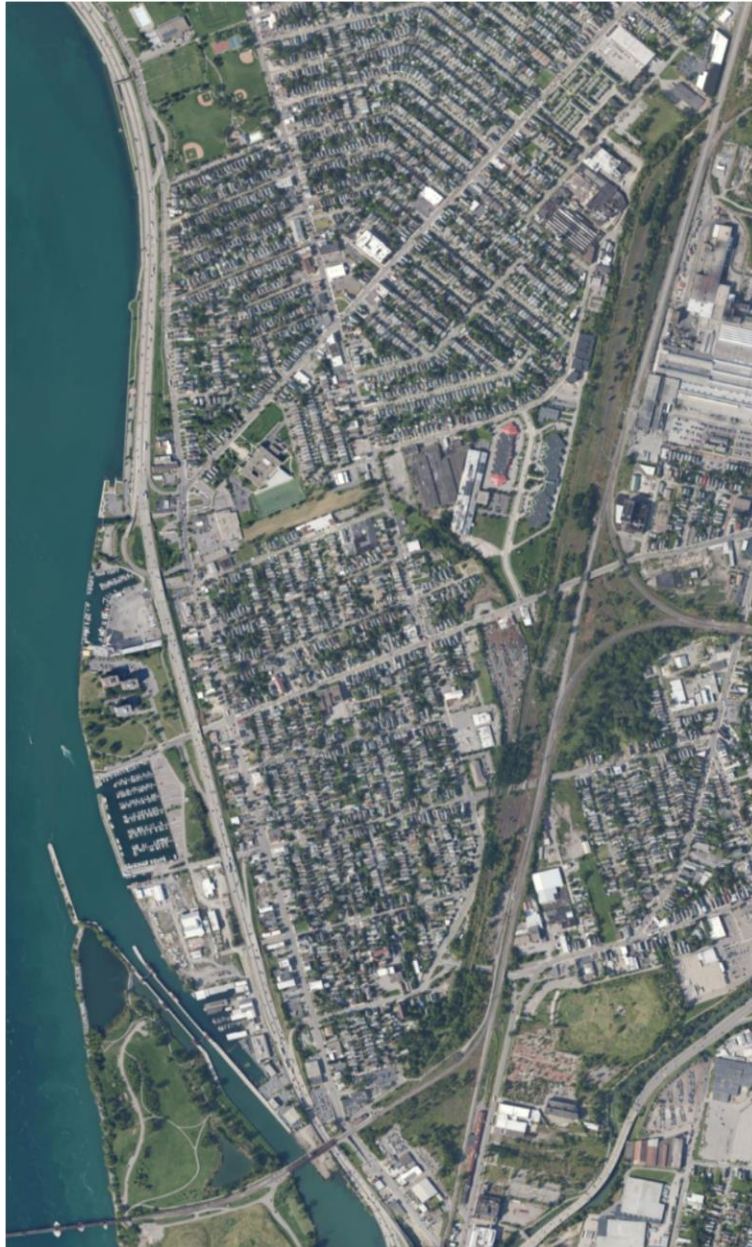
Request for Proposals – River Rock Connections

RPF ISSUE DATE: September 29th, 2020

DEADLINE FOR QUESTIONS: October 23rd, 2020

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE: October 30th, 2020

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION TO: Nadine Marrero, Director of Planning, nmarrero@city-buffalo.com



1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this RFP is to solicit proposals from qualified planning and design firms and enter into a contract with the selected firm for the creation of a plan and supporting urban design, engineering, and environmental work to improve existing connections, establish new connections, and develop specific plans at strategic locations that will foster the overall connectivity to and between waterfront, open space assets, and various strategic locations in the Black Rock and Riverside neighborhoods of the City of Buffalo (City). The Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency (BURA) is the lead agency and will enter into a contract with the selected firm. Proposals will adhere to the City's objectives and build on existing planning initiatives underway by BURA and community stakeholders highlighted under Section 3. Vision of a Connected River Rock.

2 OVERVIEW

The Black Rock and Riverside neighborhoods (River Rock) are defined by their access to the Niagara River, Scajaquada Creek, and Black Rock Canal. This access initiated the industrial development that drove the growth of these neighborhoods but has also left a legacy of vacant and underutilized former manufacturing sites and rail corridors. The result is limited public access to the water due to brownfields, rail corridors, private property, and I-190 Niagara Thruway.

The City of Buffalo and County of Erie have recently created or invested in five public parks in River Rock: Unity Island Park, Tow Path Park, Riverside Park, George Washington Park, and Black Rock Canal Park. Although widely used by the community, these parks are poorly connected. Park users often must drive to each park despite being part of a predominantly walkable, pre-1950s community. Navigation between the parks also usually requires a car trip even though each is within a mile and a half of the others. Between each park are a series of privately held parcels with limited public access.

Beyond the parks, vacant and underutilized former manufacturing sites pose a risk to public health and quality of life due to deteriorating building conditions, contaminated brownfields, and the potential for crime. They negatively affect adjacent property values and limit the potential economic growth of the surrounding neighborhoods. All of this is happening while the city and its partners have made considerable investments in public parks, affordable housing, schools, and infrastructure in River Rock. Toward the interior of the neighborhood is a rail corridor that forms their eastern boundary. This large rail corridor is only partially used for rail purposes (along its eastern flank) and is informally used by the community as a multi-purpose trail.



Despite recent investments in waterfront parks, key gaps in public access remain along the edge of the Niagara River.



The CSX rail corridor is only partially utilized with vacant rail rights-of-way on its western edge. They are informally used as trails.

3 VISION OF A CONNECTED RIVER ROCK

The City has been engaging River Rock stakeholders about a way forward to address these conditions. Community leaders understand the problems and have stated the following objectives:

1. **Riverfront Public Access**

Recent public investments have been made at Riverside Park, George Washington Park, Black Rock Canal Park, Tow Path Park, and Unity Island Park. Although the Niagara Street and Trail Reconstruction project will help unify these parks, key gaps in public access remain along the edge of the Niagara River. Opportunities exist to create public access along the river's edge – between Tow Path Park and Black Rock Canal Park – on private properties at 24 and 32 Hertel Avenue, and 2190 and 2192 Niagara Street. Owners of the latter three properties have been engaged by the City. Public access would likely consist of a multi-purpose public path, benches, pedestrian-scaled lighting, landscaping, trash cans, and other amenities. It would reinforce planned redevelopment projects at 32 Hertel Avenue and 2190-2192 Niagara Street by providing water-enhanced investment.

2. **Complete Streets**

The I-190 expressway makes public access to the Niagara River difficult and limited to only a few public rights-of-way at dispersed underpasses. These underpasses are primarily designed to provide vehicular access to the I-190 and adjacent commercial properties and are poorly equipped to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. Investments in complete streets would facilitate multi-modal activity toward the river. These complete streets would include wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and enhanced landscaping, while the underpasses themselves would receive enhanced lighting and other pedestrian amenities that could include murals, colorful pavers, and signage. These streets strategically traverse River Rock, connecting the waterfront to the neighborhood including the strategic locations noted below in section 4. Study Area/Strategic Locations.

3. **Rails-to-Trails**

The CSX rail corridor handles both passenger (Amtrak) and freight rail with a spur to the International Railway Bridge to Canada. The main north-south line is excessively wide due to a series of rail spurs that access surrounding industry, both active and inactive. One spur in particular – departing the main line at Hertel Avenue and terminating at Niagara Street – is vacant and now under private and public ownership, depending on the parcel. This spur presents an opportunity to reconnect River Rock with waterfront public parks, reinforce planned redevelopment projects at 32 Hertel Avenue and 2190-2192 Niagara Street, and facilitate future development at 25 Rano Street and 308 Crowley Avenue. The north-south corridor is also only partially utilized, with abandoned rail lines on its western half. These vacant corridors, which still contain bridge overpasses at Amherst Street, Austin Street, and Hertel Avenue, could improve access and quality-of-life for neighborhoods and generate future redevelopment opportunities.

by both the public and private sectors. Many vacant parcels exist along the rail corridor that could be acquired.

The community's objectives reinforce the City's objectives to:

- Increase public access to the waterfront and improve connections between these locations so that there is continuous waterfront connectivity from Broderick Park to Vulcan Street.
- Stimulate the creation of water-enhanced and water-dependent uses along the water so that people are near the water and engaged with programming at the water's edge at various points in intervals measured by walking distance.
- Implement the [Tonawanda Street Corridor BOA](#) by targeting brownfields and other former manufacturing sites for productive social and economic reuse. New development does not have to be specifically related to the water as much as a hub of activity for employment, housing, or recreation that can take advantage of new connectivity option created in this plan. Sites along the water's edge must maximize that advantage as noted in the second bullet point above.
- Implement the [Local Waterfront Revitalization Program's](#) call for a water-enhanced mixed-use development area for the Black Rock Harbor so that waterfront connectivity extends inland, along Scajaquada Creek, and leverages the existing Jesse Kregal bike path.
- Reconnect fragmented neighborhoods through a comprehensive access plan that uses current and future public rights-of-way, as well as vacant rail corridors, so that a web of connectivity is formed giving people an array of multi-modal options to access various strategic locations.
- Ensure that the inclusion of every resident – regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, and ability – is considered and given the full opportunity to experience and enjoy the investments.

4 STUDY AREA/STRATEGIC LOCATIONS

The River Rock Connections study area is bounded by the Niagara River to the west, the city-line to the north, and the CSX/Amtrak rail corridor to the east. The geography of the rail corridor omits Scajaquada Creek as a southern boundary. However, a boundary addition will include Black Rock Harbor not to exceed Grant Street to the east and Austin Street to the north.

Strategic locations may include:

Residential redevelopment opportunities:

Marina Vista Apartments
Acqua Restaurant/West Marine
Shaffer Village
P.S. 51 (former Black Rock Academy)

Public parks and waterfront access:

Unity Island Park
Tow Path Park
Black Rock Canal Park
Riverside Park
George Washington Park
Riverside High School and its athletic facilities

Commercial redevelopment opportunities

25 Rano Street
308 Crowley Street
River Rock Industrial Park
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



5 PROJECT SCOPE AND DELIVERABLES

The selected firm will work with BURA to continue the planning and community engagement work that is currently underway to develop a plan to achieve the community's and city's objectives by doing the following:

1. **Collaborate in a community engagement process that maximizes input from residents, businesses, and local institutions.** Community engagement will be coordinated with BURA staff and the selected design team will play an active role in preparing materials, participating in and integrating feedback from public engagement. This will include periodic smaller stakeholder committee meetings and larger community meetings that are open to the public. A public meeting will serve as a project kickoff/introduction and a second will serve to present the draft plan.
 - a. Perform a site visit of the study area and surrounding neighborhoods.
 - b. Prepare presentations and exhibits as needed for the community meetings, up to five stakeholder committee meetings, and for the project website.
 - c. Present plan/design concepts and answer related questions at meetings.
2. **Create plans for connectivity** to implement the community's vision.
 - a. Identify existing public rights-of-way to be enhanced and identify/design complete street treatments. Design, plan, and profile for rails to trails typical sections.
 - b. Identify where and determine how waterfront land will be connected.
 - c. Identify and plan for current and additional strategic locations with BURA staff.
 - i. Create visuals highlighting each site and its interconnectivity with other strategic locations. The renderings should show physical improvements made to each location, improvements made outside each site relevant to their connectivity, as well as a general study area map showing connectivity. Detailed reuse plans for locations are not necessary if they are beyond the project scope of connectivity.
 - ii. Identify both publicly- and privately-held land to be targeted for acquisition.
 - iii. Outline a plan to address any environmental obstacles at each site.
 - iv. Design waterfront locations (30% design).
3. **Develop initial project budget** with rough order of magnitude cost estimates for property acquisition, environmental remediation, and infrastructure costs. Develop an implementation timeline to include schedule, prioritization, and phasing recommendations associated with each concept design.
4. **Inclusion is a core value** to Mayor Brown's Administration. The project must show meaningful participation from certified Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE), minority and women workforce participation and mentor protégé opportunities at all project levels, including, financing, management, design, and construction.

6 PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

The proposal requirements will provide BURA with sufficient information on each Consultant - including services offered, capabilities, and experience - to enable it to complete the selection process.

Responders should indicate that their response remains valid and accurate for at least ninety (90) days. All responses must contain the following information:

1. Cover Letter and Disclosure Statement
 - a. Name, address, e-mail address, and telephone number of the Consultant submitting the proposal.
 - b. Summary of the Consultant's interest in the Project.
 - c. A disclosure statement listing all potential conflicts of interest related to this Project. This disclosure statement must be addressed specifically in your response, even if no conflict exists.
 - d. The percentage and dollar amount of the proposed fee that will be paid to certified MWBE vendors.
 - e. A statement indicating whether you and/or any of the principals or officers of your business have been debarred or found to be a non-responsible bidder in New York or any other state.
 - f. A statement indicating if your employees are legally entitled to work in the US.
 - g. A statement indicating that prevailing wage has been applied to any applicable tasks and/or portions of the cost proposal.
 - h. The cover letter must be signed by an authorized official of the primary consultant.
 - i. Completed Section 139-D, Statement of Non-Collusion in bids to the State
2. Experience & Qualifications
 - a. The Contractor must clearly demonstrate experience with similar tasks as detailed in this RFP and demonstrate that they employ the staff and subcontractors with requisite skills and knowledge.
 - b. Provide a list of the design team's experience with similar projects.
 - c. The design team should include experience with neighborhood planning, landscape architecture, urban design, transportation planning, utility systems, civil engineering (including green stormwater infrastructure).
 - d. Provide three profiles of past project experience involving similar work with contact information for references. Include photo(s), brief description of the project, and scope of work statement your firm or team completed.
3. Project Approach
 - a. Respondents should include a narrative, no longer than five pages describing its design approach to this project and other items it recommends BURA consider that are not

explicitly covered in this RFP. Consultant should take this opportunity to ensure BURA is taking full advantage of its expertise.

- b. Respondents should demonstrate understanding of the study area, existing planning initiatives, and the neighborhood vision/objectives listed above.
- c. Respondents should provide a simple project management staffing chart detailing roles and responsibilities of key personnel who will be directly involved in the project, including experience, qualifications, certifications, licenses, resumes, etc.

4. Fee & Workflow Proposal

- a. The proposal must include the Consultant's best estimate of a lump sum ("not to exceed") fee for each recommended project component, and should include a separate allowance for reimbursable expenses for each recommended component.
- b. The proposal must include the hourly rate and anticipated number of hours per project component for each team member.
- c. Final fees will be negotiated following the selection of the Consultant. If fee negotiations with the Consultant determined most qualified are not successful, and/or the fees discussed are outside the budgetary constraints for the Project, BURA reserves the right to suspend negotiations with the most qualified responder and proceed to other responders.
- d. The design work is expected to be completed over a sixth month period. Respondents should provide a project timeline, including availability to proceed with confirmation of project start and completion dates.

Proposals must be received electronically via file sharing link by 12:00 p.m., October 30th, 2020.

Proposal submission should be emailed to:

Nadine Marrero, Director of Planning
Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning
nmarrero@city-buffalo.com
Re: RiverRock Connections RFP

All questions or inquiries regarding the RFP must be emailed to nmarrero@city-buffalo.com. Questions and inquiries will be accepted from all interested parties until October 23rd, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. (EST). No responses will be provided for questions and inquiries received after this time.

Proposals must include the following information in a brief and concise format – not to exceed five (5) pages of narrative (not including project experience and key personnel/resumes). BURA reserves the right to request additional information during the evaluation of responses.

BURA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.

7 EVALUATION CRITERIA

Consultants will be evaluated and scored based on overall experience, approach to design, the composition of the design team and cost. Once proposals are reviewed and scored, interviews may be conducted with any or all respondents. Additional information may be required at that time. Negotiations will begin with the Consultant determined to be the most qualified. Proposals will be evaluated and scored by a procurement committee based on the criteria listed below.

1. Experience & Qualifications (55 points) Responses should specifically address the Contractor's or sub-contractors' experience performing the following tasks on similar projects:
 - a. Planning for neighborhood connectivity and designing multi-modal access in urban settings (15 points)
 - b. Designing universally accessible waterfront access in complex locations to include ADA accessibility, complete street treatments, conservation design principles, and the use of sustainable stormwater management (15 points)
 - c. Responsiveness to community design feedback and demonstrated ability to work successfully and productively with racially and ethnically diverse low- to moderate-income communities (10 points)
 - d. Cost effective design strategies for traversing public and privately owned right of ways, including private property acquisition and/or easements, municipal streets, public multi-purpose pathways, and inactive and/or active railroad lines – if the latter is deemed necessary (10 points)
 - e. Experience, diversity and inclusiveness of project management team (5 points)
2. Proposed Approach (20 points) - Extent to which the proposed approach understands and considers the neighborhood's vision and its relation to recent planning efforts and waterfront access/open space projects; as well as the creativity, clarity and reasonableness of the proposed approach. Insights and recommendations to enhance the community engagement that has already taken place and will further occur as the project progresses.
3. Participation by businesses owned by women and people of color (10 points) A goal for this project is to support enterprises owned by women and people of color (MWBEs). Vendors will be ranked by the percentage of their cost proposal that goes to a certified minority or women owned business. For example, a MWBE vendor performing all services would receive the full 10 points, a non-MWBE vendor who subcontracts 30% of the work to a MWBE vendor would receive 3 points, and a MWBE vendor who subcontracts 30% of the work to a non-MWBE vendor would receive 7 points. MWBE businesses must be listed in the NYS Directory of Certified Firms (<https://ny.newnycontracts.com/>).
4. Cost & Timeline Analysis (15 points) Cost benefit analysis will be used to evaluate all proposals to assure BURA pays a fair and reasonable price for services provided based on the quantity and quality of those services, and that the availability and proposed project timeline of the respondent does not detract from overall project goals or funding source requirements and agreements.