

# **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

**FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF:  
Strategic Economic Development Plan  
for the City of Cumberland, Maryland**

By:

City of Cumberland Office of Economic Development  
57 N. Liberty Street  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
(301) 722-4156

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF:**

**Strategic Economic Development Plan for the City of Cumberland, Maryland**

The City of Cumberland Economic Development Office seeks proposals from qualified firms with extensive and demonstrable experience in developing economic development strategic plans for municipalities. All submittals shall be forwarded to the City of Cumberland at the following address and as specified below and received no later than the submittal due date, at which time all submittals will be opened and considered as indicated. All submittals received after the closing date and time will be returned unopened. **The City of Cumberland reserves the right to reject any and all submittals.**

**SUBMIT TO:**

City of Cumberland  
Economic Development Office  
57 N. Liberty Street  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
(301) 722-4156

**SUBMITTAL DUE**

**DATE: 2:00 pm, February 21, 2014**

**FORM**

**OF SUBMITTAL:** Submittal will be divided into two (2) parts:

**(A) Narrative & Technical Approach**

*This section will be delivered separately as one original and twelve (12) hard copies along with one disc containing the material in .PDF electronic format. See Page #6 for the information to be included. Submissions that do not completely address all requirements specified herein may be considered non-responsive and eliminated from the process.*

**(B) Business Cost Proposal**

*This section will be delivered separately as one original in a sealed envelope clearly marked as follows:*

**Business Cost Proposal  
Strategic Plan  
City of Cumberland  
Economic Development Office  
By (Respondent Firm's Name)**

**CONTACT OFFICER:** The primary contact for questions and/or clarifications is Shawn Hershberger, Economic Development Coordinator for the City of Cumberland. He is available Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00pm, excluding holidays.

**Shawn P. Hershberger**  
**Economic Development Coordinator**  
**Economic Development Office**  
**57 N Liberty Street**  
**Cumberland, MD 21502**  
**Office: (301)722-4156**  
**Cell: (240)522-2193**  
**shershberger@allconet.org**

**LETTER OF INTEREST:**

Firms interested in responding to this RFP should submit a "Letter of Interest" to the CONTACT OFFICER by **December 20, 2013** to ensure they are a registered bidder. Any changes to the RFP or the RFP process will be communicated to the registered bidders.

**QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD:**

All questions must be submitted to the CONTACT OFFICER in writing by **January 10, 2014**. All questions will be formally answered by **January 24, 2014** and provided to all registered bidders.

**EVALUATION & SELECTION PROCESS**

Step #1 – The City of Cumberland Economic Development Strategic Planning Taskforce, will evaluate only the **Narrative & Technical Approach** parts of the submittals. Up to three of these will be selected as potential consultants. The City of Cumberland Economic Development Office retains the exclusive right to select consultants based on their judgment of the best qualifying factors. The following factors that will be considered include, but are not limited to:

- Evidence of Unique Skills or Relevant Experience
- Experience in Facilitation/Outreach, Trends Analysis, etc.
- Approach and Degree of Success in Past Performances Documented by References
- Specificity in Approach and Past Performance with a Focus on Actionable Efforts
- References Subject to Appropriate Evaluation

Step #2 – The City of Cumberland Economic Development Office will open the Business Cost Proposals of those selected in Step #1 and evaluate the Consultant Cost Proposals.

Step #3 – After Consultation with the Economic Development Strategic Planning Taskforce, the Economic Development Office will select a consultant based on the findings of Step #1 and #2.

*The process is expected to take a minimum of thirty (30) days from the **Submittal Due Date.***

## **SUBMITTAL**

### **CONTENT (A): NARRATIVE & TECHNICAL APPROACH**

The Consultant responding to this RFP must provide the information on the firm's qualifications and experience, qualifications of the project team, project manager's experience, previous similar projects and references, and references along with approach to services.

#### **Executive Summary**

Attach to each hard copy of the **Narrative & Technical Approach** and include on the aforementioned .PDF, a letter of interest that explains your firm's interest in working on this project. Include an "Executive Summary" which explains your firm's qualifications and experience as they pertain to the Scope of Work/Deliverables. Also, include the names and titles of the persons who will be authorized to make representations for the firm.

#### **Firm Overview**

Provide the following information related to your firm. If the use of sub-consultants is proposed, similar information should be provided for each sub-consultant.

- Brief history of the firm, including the year it was established
- Names and curriculum vitae of the firm's principal(s). Indicate the amount of involvement the principal(s) will have if firm is the successful respondent.
- Names and qualification of individuals who will be responsible for the work described herein. Include an organizational chart.
- Ongoing contracts/projects with current status and projected completion dates.
- Most recent annual reports

*Provide the following information regarding the firm's relevant experience:*

- Firms past performance and experience
- Detailed description of assignments undertaken within the past three years that are similar in scope to those requested herein. Please specify whether each project is ongoing or completed. The description should identify for each project:
  - The Client (including contact info)
  - Description of Work
  - Duration of Project
  - Contact Person and Phone Number for Reference
  - Results/Deliverables for the Project

### **References**

Provide the name, address, telephone and email address of references not included immediately above that would be capable of explaining and/or confirming your firm's capacity to successfully complete the scope of work outlined herein. References should be from the last five years.

### **Technical Approach**

Provide a narrative statement demonstrating an understanding of the overall intent of this RFP, as well as the methods and approach to be used to complete each task. Identify any issues or concerns of significance that may be appropriate. Please include a timeline for work to be completed, with the understanding that the final plan completion must occur no later than **October 30, 2014** with presentation to the City of Cumberland Economic Development Commission to occur prior to **November 21, 2014**.

### **Samples**

Provide relevant work samples of firm's previously completed strategic plans, especially those completed for municipalities of comparable size and characteristics.

**SUBMITTAL  
CONTENT (B): BUSINESS COST PROPOSAL**

**Fee for Services**

Provide a fee for services and a copy of the firm's current billing rate schedule.

**Project Budget/Compensation/Schedule**

The work will be performed on a fixed, not to exceed price basis for a defined number of Consultant site visits, with provisions for change orders, costs for additional site visits and time extensions.

The details of deliverables, project timetable and specific payment schedule will be determined during final contract negotiations and will be based upon the Consultant proposal and the completion of identified tasks, including staff review and Consultant revisions.

# Strategic Economic Development Plan for the City of Cumberland, Maryland

The City of Cumberland Economic Development Office will be the agency responsible for contract administration and day by day liaison with the Consultant. The Economic Development Office will facilitate the gathering of information and coordinate the activities of other stakeholders.

## A. INTRODUCTION

### a. Background on the City of Cumberland

The City of Cumberland is the county seat and largest municipality of Allegany County, Maryland and sits a convenient distance to major population centers of Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington DC, Northern Virginia, and Philadelphia. The City experienced rapid growth due to the presence of the C&O Canal, National Road, and B&O Railroad which propelled it toward extreme success throughout the early and mid-1900's.

The City of Cumberland has historically been a regional hub for economic and commercial activity within Allegany County and the larger Western Maryland region. The City's economy was largely built upon a manufacturing base that established the City of Cumberland as the second largest city in Maryland and a seat of power and influence within Maryland and the larger Mid-Atlantic Region. Starting in the second half of the 20<sup>st</sup> century the city's economy experienced a fundamental transformation as global economic patterns shifted and caused traditional manufacturing based economies throughout the United States to see their foundations altered.

The City has made great strides to stabilize from the economic decline that marked the past 50 years of its history, but much work continues to be needed in order to establish an economic base that will fill the void created through the loss of major manufacturing employers. The City of Cumberland has made progress and seen success in many areas including but not limited to growth as a regional medical services hub, a steady arts and entertainment district, a strong collection of stable tourist attractions, a steadily growing outdoor recreation economy, and a viable location for information technology development and a variety of mid-high level skilled office operations.

## B. PURPOSE

### Overview

The City of Cumberland is seeking a qualified economic development consulting firm to prepare a city-wide Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP). The EDSP will provide a framework to increase the tax base of Cumberland, Maryland by enhancing the business climate and creating higher paying jobs. The ultimate goal is to sustain and

expand the economic base in order to provide for a high quality of life for all residents. It is hoped that the plan will present a key set of strategies, with action items, that build upon the current asset base of Cumberland, Maryland and the surrounding region.

By identifying how to overcome challenges and by facilitating the growth and expansion of existing businesses, as well as, attracting new businesses, the activities resulting from a well-conceived EDSP will have enormous positive impact. A well-conceived EDSP will not only increase employment but will position the City to become an emerging location within the Mid-Atlantic as an attractive place for investment and relocation

The strategies developed must address both the needs and impediments for existing business while defining methods for attracting and growing new business areas of opportunity. Identifying and maintaining a balance between the two is necessary to ensure success.

## **C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **The plan should answer these questions:**

1. What is the current economic base of the City of Cumberland and the surrounding region?
2. What are the opportunities for economic base expansion in the region that Cumberland can look to capitalize on?
3. What must we do in a coordinated effort to take advantage of all opportunities?
4. How can we most effectively deploy our financial and other resources to achieve our goals?

### **EXISTING DATA**

The EDSP is expected to utilize the data and analysis already completed and available from the State of Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development and The Allegany County Department of Economic and Community Development. The City of Cumberland anticipates that considerable data will be available to the Consultant and the amount of information should be taken into consideration when pricing the project.

## **D. SCOPE OF WORK**

### **a. Economic Analysis “Where are we?”**

The Consultant will conduct an analysis of subject areas and their economic relationship to the surrounding Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This analysis will help all concerned to better understand the study area’s economies in the context of nearby and/or other economies in order to identify unique opportunities for economic growth

and diversification. The analysis will also consider how the City of Cumberland's economy relates to the regional potential for economic growth and diversification.

During this phase of the study, the Consultant will review any relevant previous economic studies, reports and other related information provided by the City of Cumberland, as well as additional organizations within the community. To the greatest degree possible, the Economic Development Office will make available local data requested by the Consultant, understanding that the Consultant may have better and more convenient sources of data. The Economic Development Office will provide information regarding its current economic development programs, staffing and budget. It will also provide a listing and general function of its local economic development partners including:

- Allegany County, Maryland
- Cumberland/Allegany County Industrial Foundation
- City of Cumberland Downtown Development Commission
- City of Frostburg, Maryland
- Allegany County Chamber of Commerce
- The Greater Cumberland Committee
- Allegany College of Maryland
- Frostburg State University
- Tri-County Council of Western Maryland
- Western Maryland Consortium
- Western Maryland Small Business Development Center
- Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development
- Maryland Department of Planning
- Allegany County Tourism
- Maryland Mountain Trails
- Allegany Arts Council

### ***Deliverables***

#### **Local Economic Analysis Report**

Produce a report containing a detailed analysis of the City of Cumberland's economic base including:

1. Analysis of economic trends to determine their impact on the study area's future economic composition.
2. Identification of the study area's position within the greater area (County, State, MSA, Region, etc.); how the shared economies interact, and how each business sector contributes to the local economy.
3. Review of existing local industries identified by four-digit NAICS Codes to determine those that are:
  - Well positioned and expected to grow.
  - Emerging and a good match, expected to grow.

- Currently non-existent but for which a good NAICS Code match exists.
4. List of comparative advantages and disadvantages to similar, competitive markets.

**b. Economic Development Issues Identification and Prioritization: “What direction should we go?”**

The Consultant will define a process to determine more specifically what the business community views as key growth and economic development drivers or opportunities. Additionally, using the Economic Analysis as a starting point, the Consultant will facilitate an examination of study area strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) that may impact the area’s economic future. Questions to be asked should include:

1. What are the key economic drivers from the business perspective?
2. How is the area’s overall business climate?
3. How are state and local governments influencing business development?
4. Is there appropriate integration of local businesses and governments?

Through focus groups, meetings, and/or workshops with business leaders and others as identified by the Consultant, the Economic Development Office and Economic Development Commission will use the SWOT analysis to develop and prioritize a list of guiding principles. Of primary importance will be the development and prioritization of those goals that can be accomplished over a three to five-year timeframe. It will also be useful to identify those goals that the Economic Development Office needs to track and address over a longer, ten-year timeframe. Every effort should be made during this process to create a balance between developing an atmosphere that encourages open dialogue and an agenda structure that frames clear examination of the economic development issues.

The product of this task will be the identification and ranking of economic development issues and a set of guiding principles for the development of strategies to implement the desired goals.

***Deliverables:***

**SWOT Assessment**

1. List strategic issues developed by business, government and community leaders that can serve as the basis for formulating goals, objectives and strategies (SWOT Results).
2. Identify constraints and opportunities for economic development, e.g. housing supply, limited developable land, infrastructure capacity, redevelopment and financing constraints, potential land value changes, business climate issues, condition of buildings in the central business district, etc.

## **Guiding Principles**

A broad set of values and philosophies which will guide the creation and implementation of the goals, objectives and strategies developed in the EDSP.

## **Primary Opportunity Areas**

1. Identify no more than six targeted industries by four-digit NAICS directly linked to the findings of the Economic Analysis and the strengths and weaknesses assessment.
2. Prioritize and rank these industries; identifying the primary focus of economic development efforts.
3. This list should act as the roadmap for the future efforts of the Economic Development Office and economic development partners in attracting new businesses as well as maintaining the businesses currently operating within the study area.
4. Identify up to five physical locations or specific properties as primary opportunities for public investment and potential sources of funding.

### **c. Specific Strategies “How do we get there?”**

The Consultant will identify economic development goals and objectives based on research, data analysis and community input. The Consultant will translate the goals and objectives into specific strategies, with actions and performance targets that are realistic and attainable. The plan should focus on specific areas down to the action level and not just on strategic level generalities.

The plan developed should focus on those strategies and activities that have the greatest potential for creating jobs and increasing the tax base in the City of Cumberland. The plan should also focus on those broader economic development activities where the Economic Development Office, the EDC and economic development partners can meaningfully influence the creation and retention of jobs and tax base.

The Consultant will work with the city staff and economic development partners to identify organizational responsibility for completing each strategy (including partners), funding requirements, and overall impacts desired from the plan, and recommend an approach for evaluating and adjusting the plan during its useful life.

The Consultant will present the completed EDSP to the City of Cumberland, the Cumberland Economic Development Commission, and the and also participate in a presentation of the Plan to the community.

## ***Deliverables***

### **Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP)**

The Consultant will provide a completed EDSP ready for recommendation to the City of Cumberland Economic Development Office and all other stakeholders. The Plan will

include goals, objectives and strategies that assist stakeholders in further diversifying the study area economy. The EDSP should address the following specific concerns:

1. Generate actionable ideas to identify and support local businesses and create strong tie-ins between the needs of large – medium businesses and the entrepreneurial activity of small businesses, and new business sectors identified in the SWOT Analysis.
2. Identify areas in which increased collaboration will accrue economies of scale and benefit all parties and community partners that will help achieve strategic objectives. This could include key partnerships (government, private and non-profit) that will improve the success of the plan along with recommendations as to the appropriate level of involvement from each party of these collaborations.
3. Identify Marketing Strategies – What messages and campaigns should be implemented by the Economic Development Office and others to inform and influence site selection decision makers and consultants to attract targeted industries? Who are some of the major decision makers and consultants in the respective targeted industries? What information should be posted on the City Economic Development website that will be most useful to corporate decision makers and national site selection consultants within each targeted industry?
4. Identify Incentive Programs and Development Opportunities - What local incentive programs will help attract new job growth in targeted industries, as well as what programs will help retain existing jobs with those industries?
5. Recommend Policy Changes - Identify changes in land use and/or zoning as well as other local policies or procedures that could facilitate achievement of the desired economic development objectives related to the identified target industries and potential locations.
6. Generate strategies and actionable ideas to strengthen the Central Business District of Cumberland, recognizing the strength of the region is dependent upon the strength of its core.

The City of Cumberland is requiring that all interim reports, draft documents, public presentation materials and final documents will be submitted in electronic formats (unless otherwise noted) and will include clear, descriptive and concise narratives, color graphics (tables, charts, etc.) and wherever applicable photos. The EDC expects the Consultant to produce the following deliverables during the economic development planning process:

- An Updated Overall Project Schedule – Following a kick-off meeting with the Cumberland Strategic Planning Taskforce, the Consultant will be asked to prepare and submit an updated overall project schedule identifying not only the completion dates for each major task under the scope of services but also expected dates for project milestones, public participation elements, draft documents, and final documents. The Consultant will be expected to update and submit the schedule at least monthly.
- The Consultant is expected to prepare monthly project status reports that identify the status of work tasks, whether or not the work is on schedule, issues that arise which may impact the overall project schedule or cost, and any major milestones reached. Financial penalties may result from not completing work on schedule.

- The Consultant is expected to produce complete first draft documents for both the Economic Development Strategy and the Economic Development Action Plan by September 1, 2014. This will allow sufficient time for review and comments, public meetings/responses, the preparation of the final draft documents for final review and comment, and then the preparation of the two final documents.
- All of these documents (the first drafts, final drafts and final documents) need to include clear, concise narratives explaining the master planning process, the state of the City of Cumberland's economy, the consensus view of where Cumberland wants to go (the identified sets of goals) and how as a community we get there (the identified economic development opportunities and actions that need to be taken to achieve those goals).
- In addition to electronic copies of each document, the Consultant will also be expected to produce and submit to the City of Cumberland at least twelve (12) hard copies of draft documents and twenty (20) hard copies of the final documents which will incorporate the use of high quality materials and a substantial number of color graphic presentations of data (tables, charts and models), color and black and white photographs (of local sites, landmarks, facilities, individuals and groups involved in the process and/or the final plan) and color-coded maps useful in describing areas of the city, county, region or state as well as useful in locating specific community facilities and/or economic development opportunity sites.
- The Consultant shall prepare and submit to the Economic Development Office PowerPoint presentations on the master planning process as well as on the final documents for use by the Economic Development Office and the EDC in making public presentations on the City of Cumberland Economic Development Strategy and Economic Development Action Plan. These presentations should incorporate the color graphic presentations of data, color and black and white photographs and color-coded maps produced for the final documents.

#### **d. Outcome Measures**

The Consultant will develop measurement tools to assess, monitor and improve the action strategies on an ongoing basis.