



USI Request For Proposal

ST. PAUL'S/ TIDEWATER GARDENS PUBLIC RELATIONS

EXTENDED DEADLINE 4.30.2021 BY 5 P.M. CST

PURPOSE:

Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI) is soliciting proposals for a public relations firm with extensive background and experience in providing media, public relations, and communication strategies in underserved and marginalized communities to execute a multi-faceted communications strategy for a major neighborhood revitalization program. Interested firms must be able to provide media and public relations services, develop and implement strategies and tools that increase awareness of the programs, activities, services, and initiatives of the St. Paul's/Tidewater Gardens Transformation and its associated People First program in Norfolk, VA. Having experience in local politics and issues, branding, and economic and neighborhood development/revitalization efforts (i.e., HOPE VI or Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) projects) are preferred. The overall goal is to grow and maintain community trust, public awareness and understanding of the project.

CONTRACT PERIOD:

USI expects to hold this contract for 3 - 5 years.

PROPOSAL DUE DATE:

All proposal submissions are due no later than 5:00 p.m. CENTRAL TIME on Friday, April 30, 2021. All proposals must be submitted through the drop box. Dropbox Link provided below.

DROPBOX LINK:

<https://www.dropbox.com/request/n12vhvP2eeUunwzJ6JG2>

BACKGROUND:

Transforming the St. Paul's area offers Norfolk one of the greatest prospects for economic uplift and expansion of housing opportunities in a generation.

The population of St. Paul's over 200 acres is 98 percent minority with a 70 percent poverty rate and a median family annual income of just \$12,000. The area encompasses three large public housing communities whose aging infrastructure has rendered them structurally and functionally obsolete. Tidewater Gardens, Young Terrace and Calvert Square provide 1,674 public housing units with a total 4,174 residents. Home to more than 2,200 children, the communities are served by two public elementary schools that are not meeting state educational standards. The concentration of poverty in these communities has fostered an area that presents health, economic and security challenges.

In contrast to the dynamic activity centers that border the area, St. Paul's is confronted with significant social and economic struggles. Limited economic activity results in low real estate tax revenue and a low jobs-per-acre ratio. Coastal and storm water flooding further impact economic growth. Today, the area regularly experiences nuisance flooding during high tides and rain events. This flooding is expected to become catastrophic as sea levels continue to rise.

In 2018 the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) and the City of Norfolk were awarded a \$30 million Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) implementation grant from

the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Norfolk is using the grant to fund the redevelopment of Tidewater Gardens, a 618-unit public housing community. USI was hired in 2019 to provide supportive services to residents around housing stability, economic mobility, education and health and wellness through a program envisioned by residents, the City and NRHA called People First. People First is funded by the City of Norfolk through a \$3M annual allocation to ensure that all families are safe, stable and thriving. The City, NRHA and USI are working collaboratively on this comprehensive neighborhood revitalization effort. More information on the history of the St. Paul's area can be found on www.stpaulsdistrict.org and <https://www.norfolk.gov/4879/Office-of-St-Pauls-Transformation>.

The plan for the comprehensive revitalization of Tidewater Gardens centers around three strategic goals: People First, Housing and Neighborhood.

People First Empowered by USI

People First Goal: All St. Paul's families will be safe, supported and thriving.

NRHA, the City and NRHA's residents have collaborated to create the People First initiative that focuses on core inter-related areas: housing stability, economic mobility, health and education. People First is strengths-based and family focused. Launched in August 2018, People First seeks to address current family challenges, empower residents to lead healthy, prosperous lives, and build upon existing community strengths and assets. The program is providing effective and high-quality mobility services and human capital investment services to residents.

Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI), a non-profit organization, was selected by the City and NRHA through a competitive procurement process to implement the People First program. USI is a national leader in results-informed human services development, planning, and strategy implementation as part of comprehensive neighborhood transformations. Through People First, USI will ensure that all families and children in St. Paul's are stable and thriving.

Housing

Housing Goal: To replace distressed public and assisted housing with high-quality mixed-income housing that is well-managed and responsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood.

Brinshore Development, LLC, an award-winning developer with substantial experience with public housing transformation, was awarded the housing lead contract to implement the St. Paul's/Tidewater Gardens CNI transformation plan. In order to realize this goal, the transformation plan must simultaneously do the following:

- Create new housing options and choices for Tidewater Gardens' public housing residents
- Connect the St. Paul's area to downtown Norfolk's mixed-income residential population and economic activity
- Protect the neighborhood through storm- and tidal-resilient design
- Help repair generations of economic and racial segregation in Norfolk

Neighborhood Goal: To create the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods to offer the kinds of amenities and assets that are important to families' choices about their community including safety, good schools and commercial activity.

In order to attract public and private reinvestment in the transformation of the St. Paul's area, the plan's neighborhood component must provide a re-design of the area that both withstands rising sea levels and creates a lively and attractive sense of community where residents will find commercial, residential, recreational and educational opportunities.

To accomplish this, the Tidewater Gardens Transformation plan manages storm water by allowing Newton's Creek to return to nature creating beautiful greenway/blueway spaces. The mixed-income, mixed-use community offers a diversity of housing types for all ages and stages of life. Re-imagined street grids create meaningful connections through a pattern of neighborhood blocks and streets that make it a walkable and bikeable community. Additional street connections to the north, south, east and west of the Tidewater Gardens neighborhood reconnect this currently isolated community to the rest of the city.

GENERAL VENDOR REQUIREMENTS:

1. The contractor shall be in good financial standing, not in any form of bankruptcy, current in payment of all taxes and fees and have no financial difficulties that may prevent its company from fulfilling its contractual obligations.
2. The contractor shall be responsible for all licenses and fees associated with this project.
3. The contractor shall agree to work under the creative oversight of the USI and the USI St. Paul's Communications Workgroup.
4. The contractor shall ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations in executing the work, including any Federal, State, or local Safety and Environmental laws and regulations.
5. For security measures, Contractor employees shall wear uniforms, wear/carry company identification badges, or provide other means, acceptable to USI that identifies Contractor employees at all times whenever working on USI property.

OUR AUDIENCES:

The key audiences for this website include but is not limited to:

- NRHA public housing residents
- NRHA Housing Choice Voucher participants
- Norfolk citizens
- Media
- HUD
- Business community
- Civic leagues
- Nonprofit partners
- Advocacy groups
- Public housing authorities
- Housing agency partners

- St. Paul's Advisory Committee

SCOPE OF SERVICES:

1. **Public Relations Plan:** Develop and implement an effective public relations plan that includes research, planning, implementation and evaluation. The plan should have a stated goal of increasing support of the St. Paul's redevelopment and strategies and tactics that address all stakeholders with accompanying metrics. Identify events to establish or strengthen meaningful presence with the City, NRHA and its residents and community partners.
2. **Message Development:** Design, develop and produce ongoing messaging, message-specific campaigns and create informational materials for various audiences (residents, community groups, elected officials, media, funders/investors, general public) as needed, such as newsletters, videos, brochures, blogs, annual reports, ads, flyers, banners, posters, decals, promotional items (such as magnets, buttons, t-shirts, caps, mugs and pencils for programs) and direct mail pieces in accordance with the St. Paul's design guidelines.
3. **Media Relations:** Assist in implementing a media relations plan that results in consistent, quality media coverage. Monitor, vet, and manage all media inquiries; coordinate relationships to facilitate positive media coverage to include press releases, advisories, media pitching, coordinating media interviews and inquiries (identify/make available staff/administrative officials). Plan press conferences, press tours and other appropriate media opportunities. Provide sample of previous media relations efforts.
4. **St. Paul Crisis Planning:** Assist in the development and implementation of a crisis communications plan with action protocols, plans and procedures specific to Tidewater Gardens. Execute crisis management in situations where it is deemed necessary or appropriate. All crisis plans roll into the plan for the city and should be coordinated with those offices.
5. **Measurement and Tracking:** Develop a methodology, including benchmark(s), for measuring the success of the public relations strategics and tactics and utilize ongoing measurement and evaluation. Work in coordination with internal communications team to track coverage and measure overall efforts delivering weekly reports and comprehensive monthly reports (including estimated number of impressions and media value). Send media clips on a regular basis, tracking coverage and measuring efforts.

In all services outlined above, firm should work in coordination with the internal communications groups at the City, NRHA and USI to ensure that messaging is coordinated, and all organizational platforms are utilized efficiently. The direct managerial support will be via USI.

CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL:

1. The contractor shall replace employees who USI judges to be incompetent, careless, unsuitable, or otherwise objectionable, or whose continued use is deemed contrary to the best interest of USI. USI will discuss the desire for a replacement with the contractor and before the replacement request is issued.
2. The request for a replacement will include the desired replacement date and the reason for the request. The Contractor shall affect the replacement in a manner that does not impact quality, cost, or schedule.
3. The contractor will be given the opportunity to demonstrate that USI's request for staff replacement is unreasonable or not necessary.
4. The contractor shall provide a designated content specialist staff member who will assist in creating narrative copy(s) and streamlining content. USI will provide written content as well as video, audio, PDFs, and photos.
5. To maintain cohesiveness of the working environment, key personnel assigned to the contract shall not be replaced without prior approval from USI.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION:

A. General Requirements:

RFP Response: In order to be considered for selection, submitting firms must submit a complete response to this RFP in digital format uploaded to Dropbox.com through the link provided. Proposals shall be submitted in three (3) separate Volumes: Volume I Pricing, Volume II Technical Proposal, and Volume III Samples. Offerors must submit ALL volumes via dropbox.com. The uploaded files should be named with the appropriate volume number. Offeror company name must be included in the file name.

Digital proposals must still be organized using tabs to separate the sections.

Submit all responses to Dropbox.com through the link no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, April 30, 2021: <https://www.dropbox.com/request/n12vhvP2eeUunwzJ6JG2>

Evaluation and Selection Criteria:

The following is the evaluation criteria USI will use when evaluating proposals:

TAB A - Approach and Understanding: (25 points)

The approach for this project should demonstrate the firm's understanding and qualifications of the nature of the work and approach to be taken. Provide a detailed description of your approach to each Scope of Work element. A key aspect to focus on is increased outreach to target audiences.

TAB B - Qualifications and Experience of Firm and Key Personnel: (35 points)

1. Provide a description of the history, experience, performance and qualifications of your firm/company/corporation and any proposed subcontractors* to perform the Scope of Work.
2. Identify background in government, public relations, mainstream news media, social media.

3. Demonstrate experience and familiarity in local politics, branding, and economic and neighborhood development projects.
4. Demonstrate experience and familiarity of working in underserved and marginalized communities, past experience with public relations related to HOPE VI or Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) programs.
5. Identify key individuals to be assigned to this project and include the function and/or responsibility of each identified individual. Experience summaries of these key individuals must be provided with emphasis on previous experience in similar roles on comparable projects.
6. NOTE: Key personal and/or subcontractors may not be reassigned or otherwise replaced without the approval of USI.

* If any element of the scope will be subcontracted, please provide the same information for the subcontracting firm.

TAB C - Detailed Service Description and Service Timeframes: (10 points)

Provide a detailed description of the services to be performed by the vendor based on the Scope of Work and the average timeframes required to complete each. This should include:

- The account manager's name and specific staff assigned to the project
- The estimated number of staff hours to complete scope of work
- All personnel anticipated to be involved in each task

TAB D - Samples: (25 points)*

Submit at least three samples of campaigns similar in scope, scale, elevating cultural competency, and attention to detail.

TAB E - References: (15 points)

Submit at least three references with names, addresses, and phone numbers of those familiar with the firm's ability, experience, and reliability in the performance and management of similar projects.

TAB F - Economic Inclusion: (10 points)

Present evidence of Small, Women and Minority (SWaM) or Section 3 business status of both the proposing entity and any subcontractors. Provide either Commonwealth of Virginia certification or equivalent. USI expects significant participation from women and minority owned businesses. If your business is not woman or minority owned, present your economic inclusion plan for achieving this stated goal.

TAB G - Proposed budget and fees: (5 points)

Include the firm's proposed budget and fees for each contract year (1-5). Provide a detailed list specific to the objectives provided herein. Indicate the firm's willingness to consider flexible fee arrangements.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND AWARD

USI reserves the right to give preference to Offerors who meet one or more of the following individual criteria:

- Business holds certification for SWaM, M/WBE or status of similar nature.
- Business office is geographically located in Norfolk, VA.

Proposals will be evaluated by USI using the following:

Criteria and value

1. Approach and Understanding - 25 points
2. Qualifications and Experience of Firm and Key Personnel - 35 points
3. Detailed Service Description and Timeline - 10 points
4. Sample Campaigns - 25 points
5. References - 15 points
6. Economic Inclusion - 10 points
7. Proposed Budget and Fees - 5 points

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 125

QUESTIONS

Questions can be submitted by email with the purpose of allowing potential bidders/offerors an opportunity to present questions and obtain clarification relative to any facet of this RFP.

Questions must be sent to Erika Wilson at Erika.Wilson@UrbanStrategiesInc.org by April 23, 1:00 p.m. CST. After this date, technical questions will not be accepted.

An RFP addendum will be issued with a response to address all inquiries.

*Denotes updated criteria.

USI RFP for PR Services – Questions



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.
Families at the Center of Results

www.urbanstrategiesinc.org
720 Olive Street, Suite 2600
Saint Louis, Missouri 63101
314.421.4200 Main Phone
314.421.0836 Main Fax



1. How do you measure success for the PR firm?
 - a. *USI utilizes a Results Count Framework in conjunction with our race equity work in community. Through this framework, the use of performance measures are established to gauge effectiveness; those measures look at **how much**; **how well**; **difference made**; and **better off**. The selected firm will be responsible for identifying the measures with USI. Some examples have been listed below:*
 - b. *How Much*
 - i. *Quarterly & Yearly Reports*
 - ii. *PF^{USI} interviews / panels with external media*
 - c. *How Well*
 - i. *70% open rate*
 - ii. *20% increase in views and/or engagement*
 - d. *Difference Made*
 - i. *2 mainstream media stories published a year*
 - ii. *Engagement with Resident storytelling*
 - e. *Better Off*
 - i. *\$2,000 in yearly donations*
 - ii. *\$5,000 in-kind donations*
 2. Who will manage the selected agency?
 - a. *USI will manage the selected agency.*
 3. Is there an existing communications/pr strategy?
 - a. *Currently, the project utilizes a Communications committee comprised of USI, City of Norfolk, and the Norfolk Redevelopment Housing Authority to convene around high-level strategies and implementation discussions. This group function will dissolve upon the selection of a PR firm.*
 4. Will social and digital media be welcomed as part of the strategy recommendations?
 - a. *Yes, social and digital media are welcomed.*
 5. Is there an incumbent contractor?
 - a. *No, there is no incumbent contractor outside of the three collaborative parties (USI, City of Norfolk, and the Norfolk Redevelopment Housing Authority) that have been working on behalf of the project.*
 6. What is the budget for services?
 - a. *USI is requesting proposals based on the scope.*
 7. May an out of state firm submit a proposal?
 - a. *Yes. We are open to qualified firms applying with the understanding that strong relationship building will be necessary for media relations.*
 8. Is there a total or annual budget for this project?
 - a. *Proposals should reflect the firm's understanding of the scope of work.*



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9. If the redevelopment work is delayed or canceled because of the pandemic, the pending lawsuit, or another unforeseen event, what happens to this PR work?
 - a. *This work will move forward.*
10. Who would be the day-to-day client and point of contact for the chosen PR contractor?
 - a. *Erika Wilson, USI's Manager, Communications and Marketing*
11. USI is contracted to run the People First program, which is a critical part of the Tidewater Gardens revitalization. There is limited information on People First in the RFP. Can you please share any additional information about the plan for People First and the services it will provide to residents?
 - a. *{People First First Year Report}*
12. Under "our audiences" on page 3 it reads, "The key audiences for this website include..." Is "website" a mistype? There's no previous mention of a website in the RFP. If it is a mistype, what is it supposed to say?
 - a. *It was a mistype. It should read, "The key audiences for this proposal include but is not limited to: "*
13. USI is contracted to run People First, which appears to be one critical component of the Tidewater Gardens redevelopment, which is only one piece of the broader St. Paul's redevelopment. Is the PR work specific to People First and/or Tidewater Gardens? Or is it in service to the broader St. Paul's area development? If the latter, what is the chosen contractor's relationship to the broader St. Paul's redevelopment team?
 - a. *Broader St. Paul's development and the contractor will work closely with USI, the City, NRHA and the housing lead, Brinshore so that communications are effectively aligned amongst all of the groups.*
14. Crisis planning is one component of the scope of services. Are there any potential crises USI is particularly concerned about or monitoring?
 - a. *Yes, there are current concerns that will require immediate and ongoing support.*
15. USI requires that proposals be submitted in two separate volumes: pricing and technical proposal. Is there any template we should use or specific format they're looking for? Is there a restriction on the length of the technical proposal?
 - a. *No template or format other than the two pieces being separated for review. There is no length restrictions.*
16. Is there a component of community engagement in the research or PR plan? If so, what is the expectation level of community engagement for the hired PR firm?
 - a. *Community engagement is a welcomed strategy and should be used when necessary. Further discussions on expectations will be covered in a later round.*