

# **REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)**



## **Design Guidelines Update: City of Kent, Ohio**

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**Proposal Submission Deadline:  
3:00 p.m. EST, Monday, February 28, 2022**

City of Kent. Community Development Department. 930 Overholt Rd. Kent OH 44240. 330-678-8108  
RFQ Contact: Bridget Susel. Community Development Director. [suselb@kent-ohio.org](mailto:suselb@kent-ohio.org)

## **INTRODUCTION AND DESIGN HISTORY**

The City of Kent, Ohio, is requesting statements of qualifications from consultants with the appropriate expertise and experience to conduct a review and recommend updates to the City of Kent's "Design Guidelines for the Kent Design Overlay District: Chapter 1114: APPENDIX A and APPENDIX B" (Design Guidelines) of the City of Kent Planning and Zoning Code. The City of Kent Planning and Zoning Code can be viewed online at:

<https://oh-kent.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/10041/FINAL-Zoning-Code-Update-6-16-21> .

The City of Kent completed a comprehensive update of its Zoning Code (Chapters 1101-1113) that was approved by Kent City Council on June 16, 2021. In furtherance of completing the full update of the Zoning Code, the City is now seeking to update the Design Guidelines (Chapter 1114: APPENDIX A, APPENDIX B).

The Design Guidelines currently incorporated into the City's Zoning Code were developed by a consultant in 2009 on behalf of a nonprofit main street entity that was establishing itself in the City of Kent. In 2011, the City adopted the Design Guidelines, with some minor modifications, as appendices to the City's Zoning Code. The Architectural Review Board (ARB) was assigned the authority of applying the Design Guidelines to the review and approval of all new construction, as well as to any modifications to existing buildings and signs, located within the "Kent Design Overlay District," which includes most of the downtown commercial area.

The existing Design Guidelines were developed with a historic preservation focus, predicated on the assumption the City would be designating a historic district in the City's downtown area in the near future. In 2012, however, when the City was seeking to designate a historic district as part of the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO) Certified Local Government (CLG) process, property and business owners within the boundaries of the proposed area opposed the designation. As a result, Kent City Council did not proceed with the designation of a historic district in the City's downtown central business area.

Since the adoption of the Design Guidelines in 2011, the City's downtown has undergone a \$100+ million redevelopment that resulted in the construction of numerous new buildings and the renovation of several existing properties to which the Design Guidelines have been applied. New development activities in the downtown area are ongoing and most remain subject to compliance with the Design Guidelines as part of the ARB review process. The City has, however, encountered some challenges applying the historic preservation focused Design Guidelines, to new construction activities that are actually not located within a designated historic district.

The City of Kent is looking to update its Design Guidelines in order to:

- Establish guidelines that more accurately reflect the aesthetic of the current downtown, including the presence of existing historic buildings situated in close proximity to newly constructed structures;
- Present concepts that promote design elements that complement existing exterior styles into future development projects;
- Identify a framework and articulate standards for evaluating projects with more objectivity;
- Provide clear direction to property owners and developers regarding the commercial development styles and standards supported by the Kent community;
- Specify the quality standards expected regarding façade features and materials to be incorporated into projects;
- Develop an appeals process that is based on identifiable standards for review that can be administered by an existing zoning board or commission (Board of Zoning Appeals; Planning Commission).

## **COMMUNITY PROFILE**

The City of Kent is the most populous municipality in Portage County, Ohio, and is located 6 miles west of the county seat, 10 miles east of Akron, and 31 miles south of Cleveland. The City of Kent covers an area of approximately 9.29 square miles. Kent is home to Kent State University, which had 2020 enrollment of 27,019 students at its main campus.

The U.S. Census reports the City of Kent's 2020 population at 28,215. In reviewing the population's age distribution and housing tenure, Kent has characteristics of both a residential community and a campus community. Kent housing stock consists of 61% rental properties and 39% owner-occupied single-family homes, with the City's 2019 median home value at \$146,700. Kent State University is the City's largest employer, but several other international companies have their world headquarters located in Kent, including Davey Tree, Smithers-Oasis, and Ametek Corporation.

In partnership with Kent State University and three different private commercial developers, the City of Kent completed a \$100+ million redevelopment project in the City's downtown central business district that began in 2011 and was primarily completed in 2017. The Kent downtown redevelopment project has won numerous awards and received extensive accolades, including receiving the State of Ohio Economic Development Project of the Year award in 2012 and featured articles in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

The City of Kent Community Development Department staff will serve as the point of contact throughout the project and will be responsible for coordinating and implementing the update to the Design Guidelines, pursuant to legislative requirements.

The selected consultant will be required to meet with various groups/stakeholders who have interest in, or involvement with, the City's Design Guidelines. Extensive outreach and communication are expected in order to develop proposed amendments to the Design Guidelines that are more representative of design standards that are supported by the larger community.

The following is a list of some of the key components the City is expecting from the selected consultant:

- Conduct an initial review and evaluation of the current Design Guidelines;
- Identify best practices and examples of innovative and effective design guidelines from other communities that can be applied to the City of Kent's downtown area;
- Solicit and engage in meaningful public outreach and gather input from key stakeholders, including but not limited to Council, Architectural Review Board, Planning Commission, Main Street Kent, Committee on Design and Preservation, Kent Historical Society, downtown business and property owners, and interested residents. Outreach is anticipated to be primarily through in-person engagement so consultant's availability to be physically present in the community is required.

## **GOALS FOR THE UPDATE TO THE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

- Clear, concise, and easy to understand with an emphasis on pictures and illustrations used in tandem with text description;
- When feasible, use locally-relevant examples and illustrations;
- Maximum document length of twenty (20) pages. Pages exceeding this goal limit will be considered if such an increase is needed in order to provide more clarity or to allow additional illustrations;
- Final draft of proposed updates to the Design Guidelines is expected no more than five (5) to seven (7) months after the execution of the consulting agreement;
- Maximum total budget not to exceed \$30,000.00.

## **DELIVERABLES**

The selected consultant will prepare the update to the Design Guidelines in a format agreed upon in advance in consultation with the Community Development Department. The specific deliverables will be subject to further discussion with the selected consultant.

## **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Prospective consultants should respond to this RFQ by providing the following:

1. **Consulting Firm Information**: Name, address, phone number, e-mail for primary contact, the number of professional staff members and list of their specialties who will be assigned to work on this project, including years of experience in their respective specialty fields.
2. **Statement of Qualifications**: Provide a summary of the firm's overall background, capabilities, experience and qualifications.
3. **Availability**: A brief statement as to the availability of the key personnel responsible for the project.
4. **Timeframe**: Statement on ability to meet specified timeframe based on the scope of work as listed in this RFQ. Report on prior experience in delivering services within prescribed timeframes.
5. **Examples of Work**: Provide up to three (3) examples of successful design guidelines or similar planning documents prepared by the consultant that demonstrates the quality of the work product.
6. **References**: Provide three (3) references that can speak to the consultant's ability to perform the scope of work as listed in this RFQ.
7. **Estimated Project Cost**: Provide cost for completion of the scope of work as listed in this RFQ and additional costs, if any, that may apply.
8. Signed and notarized "Noncollusion Affidavit."
9. **Submission Packet**: The entire RFQ response needs to be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "City of Kent, Ohio, Design Guidelines Update" on the front.
10. **Deadline**: Responses to this RFQ are due no later than 3:00 p.m., EST, Monday, February 28, 2022 and need to be sent or delivered to:

Bridget Susel  
Community Development Director  
City of Kent  
930 Overholt Road  
Kent, Ohio 44240

- Any questions regarding the information included in the RFQ must be submitted, via email, to [suselb@kent-ohio.org](mailto:suselb@kent-ohio.org) no later than 3:00 p.m., EST, Monday, February 21, 2022.
- All questions will be responded to via email, no later than Wednesday, February 23, 2022, and will be forwarded to all persons who received a copy of the RFQ.

### **OTHER INFORMATION**

The City of Kent reserves the right to waive any irregularities or informalities, and the right to accept or reject any and all proposals including, but not limited to, any proposal which does not meet the stated requirements, or any proposal which does not furnish the quality, or offer the availability of materials, or services as required by the specifications, description or scope of work, or proposals from an offeror who lacks experience or financial responsibility, or proposals which are not made to form.

The City of Kent reserves the right to not award a contract to the lowest and most responsive offeror, and may require a new request for qualifications. The City of Kent may rescind the award of any proposal within one (1) week when the public interest will be served thereby. Only sealed proposals received by the City of Kent will be accepted. Proposals submitted by telephone, email or facsimile machines are not acceptable. Any proposals submitted after the stated due date and time will not be accepted.

The City of Kent is an equal opportunity employer and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, military status, familial status, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation.

**NONCOLLUSION AFFIDAVIT**

PROJECT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

CONSULTANT: \_\_\_\_\_,

being first duly sworn, deposes and says that he/she is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (sole owner, a partner, president, secretary, etc.)  
of \_\_\_\_\_, the party making the foregoing PROPOSAL; that  
such PROPOSAL is not made in the interest of or on behalf of any undisclosed person, partnership,  
company, association, organization, or corporation; that such PROPOSAL is genuine and not collusive  
or a sham; that said person has not directly or indirectly induced or solicited any other person to put in  
false or sham PROPOSAL, and has not directly or indirectly colluded, conspired, connived, or agreed  
with anyone else to put in a sham PROPOSAL, or that anyone shall refrain from submitting a  
PROPOSAL; that said person has not in any manner, directly or indirectly, sought by agreement,  
communication or conference with anyone to fix the PROPOSAL price of said PROPOSAL or of any  
other PROPOSAL, or to fix any overhead, profit, or cost element of such PROPOSAL price, or of that  
of any other PROPOSAL, or to secure any advantage against the OWNER awarding the contract or  
anyone interested in the proposed contract; that all statements contained in such PROPOSAL are true;  
and, further, that said person has not, directly or indirectly, submitted a PROPOSAL price or any  
breakdown thereof, or the contents thereof, or divulged information or data relative thereto, or paid and  
will not pay any fee in connection therewith, to any corporation, partnership, company, association,  
organization, depository, or to any member or agent thereof, or to any other individual except to such  
person or persons as have a partnership or other financial interest with said person in his/her general  
business.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

Subscribed and sworn to before me this

\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

Seal of Notary

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