

BOROUGH OF MADISON
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS – PARKS SYSTEM MASTER PLAN
EVALUATION REPORT
MAY 05, 2021

This Request for Proposals (RFP) was administered under New Jersey Local Public Contract Law Competitive Contracting Rules and Regulations. The RFP was advertised in the Daily Record, Madison Eagle and Star Ledger on October 8, 2020. The proposals were due and publicly opened on November 13, 2020 at 10:00AM. The review committee consisted of members from the Borough governing body, Parks Advisory Committee, Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Advisory Committee and Borough staff.

Governing Body: Council Member Astri J. Baillie, Council Member John F. Hoover

Parks Advisory Committee: Thomas Salaki, John Taylor, Debbie Mantone,

Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Advisory Committee: Melissa Honohan

Borough Staff: Zach Ellis, Recreation Director, Kevin O’Keefe, Acting Purchasing Agent

Eleven (11) proposals were submitted:

- 1) Clarke Caton Hintz, Trenton, NJ - \$124,000.00
- 2) Lothrop Associates, White Plains, NY - \$113,975.00
- 3) Brandstetter Carroll, Lexington, KY - \$99,500.00
- 4) ETM Associates, Highland Park, NJ - \$100,005.00
- 5) Greenplay LLC, Louisville, CO - \$99,990.00
- 6) Andropogon Associates, Philadelphia, PA - \$247,220.00
- 7) CME Associates, Howell, NJ - \$24,550.00
- 8) Weston & Sampson, Albany, NY - \$93,250.00
- 9) Suburban Consulting, Flanders, NJ - \$44,875.00
- 10) Stantec Consulting, New York, NY - \$98,280.00
- 11) AECOM, Brooklyn, NY - \$130,000.00

The committee was unable to proceed with reviewing the proposal submitted by Clarke Caton Hintz due to failure to submit the proposal form. The review process took longer than originally anticipated. All the firms agreed to hold their proposals beyond sixty (60) days in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:11-4.5(e).

The purpose of this RFP was to receive proposals for the development of a Parks System Master Plan which would establish goals, policies and plans for the management and development of Madison’s parks and recreation facilities. The required tasks for this project included, but were not limited to:

- 1) Outline process, timing and schedules from start of the project to completion
- 2) Data gathering
- 3) Community surveys
- 4) Strategy for community involvement
- 5) Public meetings and focus groups
- 6) Future needs and current shortfalls
- 7) Inventory list
- 8) Present at up to three (3) meetings each of the Parks Advisory Committee, Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Advisory Committee and Borough Council
- 9) Provide written records and summaries of the results of all public processes, meetings and communications strategies
- 10) Final Master Plan which includes an executive summary, written goals, plans and objectives and policy statement that communicates a clear vision and strategy

The criteria and weighting used for the evaluation of proposals was as follows:

- 1) Technical (35%)
 - Extent and level of the proposed services being offered that can be implemented to ensure the success of the project
 - Responsiveness and thoroughness of the proposal submission
 - Staffing, resources and technological capabilities
- 2) Managerial, Background and Experience (25%)
 - Qualifications and experience of the firm, concerning comparable municipal government and/or private projects of similar size and scope
 - Overall experience and expertise of the proposed project team and any other key personnel
 - Recommendations from previous clients
- 3) Creativity (20%)
 - Ability to demonstrate forward thinking and thinking outside the box
- 4) Cost (20%)
 - Cost to prepare the Master Plan and its comparison with similar proposals
 - Explanation and documentation for the total cost
 - Total years in business and financial stability of the firm

The ten (10) eligible firms submitted proposals that outlined their process for the development of the Parks System Master Plan. The firms were asked to format their proposals as follows:

- 1) Cover letter
- 2) Scope of services
- 3) Project team organization and staffing
 - a) Organization chart including consultants and key personnel
 - b) Minimum of three (3) similar projects in recent years
 - c) Percentage time estimate for each staff member
- 4) Method and approach
 - a) Approach, timeline, etc.
- 5) References
 - a) Projects within last ten (10) years
- 6) Other information

Lothrop Associates, White Plains, NY – Lothrop Associates had five phases in their proposal. The first would be to conduct the initial kickoff to review the scope and establish a schedule. Lothrop would also identify existing parks inventory during the first phase. Phase two would focus on community outreach efforts. Phases three and four would involve the preparation of the preliminary/draft master plan and the last phase would be the final product.

Brandstetter Carroll, Lexington, KY – Brandstetter Carroll's proposal had four phases: 1) Evaluate, 2) Engage, 3) Envision and 4) Plan. Brandstetter would start with an assessment of existing inventory and policies as well as a demographic and financial analysis. The evaluation process also includes the creation of a steering committee, review of previous studies and benchmarking comparisons to similar park systems in the region. The second phase of the project would center on community engagement through various methods (open house, workshops, surveys conducted digitally, by phone and mail). The final product of this phase would be the community engagement report which would incorporate the feedback received and needs identified during this process. The next phase would

focus on identifying and creating a clear strategic plan and vision (mission statement, short-term and long-term goals, etc.). The final phase would be the creation of the final master plan. The plan would include recommendations for new parks, improvements to existing parks, as well as short-term and long-term capital improvements.

ETM Associates, Highland Park, NJ – ETM Associates’ proposal was broken out into seven tasks: 1) Project Kickoff, 2) Data Gathering and Initial Analysis, 3) Engagement, 4) Data Synthesis, 5) Benchmarking, 6) Recreation Programs and 7) Recommendations Plan. Task 1 would begin with a “Strategic Kickoff” by setting up a steering committee, reviewing the scope of work, setting up a schedule and other tasks necessary to start the project. Task 2 would consist of Data Gathering and Initial Analysis. ETM would review existing plans, budgets, staffing and inventory. Community engagement would ensue during Task 3. This process would involve initial input from various stakeholders (general public, Borough committees and staff). Meetings would be conducted online and in-person. If in-person meetings are permitted, they would be held outdoors and subject to public health regulations. Surveys would be created based on the input received. The surveys would be distributed by volunteers and Borough staff at various locations including Borough Hall, parks, stores, schools, and other public locations. The survey would also be promoted online. All the information gathered up to this point would be consolidated during Task 4. Similar municipalities and their existing programs and facilities would be compared to Madison in Task 5. Task 6 would review park classifications and their current use, capacity and limitations. Recreational programs would be reviewed as well. The last task would be the final presentations and plans. The “Recommendations Plan” would include identifying mission, goals and objectives for the next 10-15 years, key projects, costs and recommendations for general operations and staffing.

Greenplay, LLC, Louisville, CO – The first step in Greenplay’s proposal was titled “Strategic Kick-Off and Determination of Critical Success Factors” which would consist of an initial meeting confirming goals and objectives and setting up a project schedule. Monthly progress reports would cover recent progress, outstanding issues, information needed, upcoming meetings and agendas and subsequent steps. Community engagement would follow with meetings, public workshops, surveys and a presentation detailing the findings. The third step would consist of various detailed analyses (demographics, trends, and current levels of service and amenities). Also included would be benchmarking with comparable cities and identification of existing gaps. The final three steps would include reporting all findings gathered during the process, establishing a vision and strategy, recommending fiscal and operational structures and the final plan.

Andropogon Associates, Philadelphia, PA – Andropogon’s proposal had three phases: 1) Project Discovery Phase, 2) Programming and Community Engagement Phase and 3) Master Plan & Guidelines Development Phase. The project would begin with initial meetings, data gathering and an inventory analysis. Phase 2 would assess current programs and usage and identify key stakeholders. Workshops would be conducted and a survey would be developed. Findings and results of this process would be summarized. The Master Plan & Guidelines Development Phase, the final portion of the project, would include the final master plan recommendations, an operational and capital improvement plan, and management guidelines for the parks system.

CME Associates, Howell, NJ – The process would begin with a kickoff meeting, study of the Borough’s parks and their conditions, review of existing plans such as Open Space, Environmental Assessment report and the capital budget. Parks master plans from comparable municipalities would be studied. Task 2 would be the survey portion with a virtual town hall. CME’s proposal recommended placing the inserts in the Borough’s utility bills with the town hall and survey information. These engagement methods would also be advertised and conducted digitally. The third task would focus on communicating with various stakeholders including but not limited to the governing body, committees, schools, and universities. The feedback received from the surveys and stakeholder interviews would guide the development of the final master plan during task 4 (draft master plan) and task 5 (final master plan). The plan would include goals, objectives and recommendations.

Weston & Sampson, Albany, NY – Weston & Sampson’s proposal was separated as follows: A) Kickoff Meeting, B) Existing Conditions Analysis, C) Public Outreach, D) Feasibility Analysis & Schematic Design, and E) Draft/Final Plan. The first phase would be a meeting with staff, Borough committees and key stakeholders. Phase B would analyze current parks conditions, identify inventory and programs and also include analysis of demographics and trends. Public outreach would ensue in Phase C through various methods including digital, mail and in-person. Phase D would include incorporating the feedback received during stakeholder meeting and community outreach. Also included would be two schematic designs for existing parks and spaces as well as possible new parks. The

last phase would be the creation of the master plan which would have a summary, goals, objectives, plans and implementation approach.

Suburban Consulting, Flanders, NJ – Suburban Consulting’s proposal was divided into five phases: 1) Discover, 2) Engagement, 3) Analysis, 4) Visioning and 5) Final Plan. The Discovery phase would begin with an initial meeting with the Borough project manager followed by a broader kickoff meeting that would clarify the scope of work and expectations. There would also be a review of existing plans and Borough demographics. Community engagement would commence in Phase 2 through digital and in-person methods. An analysis of existing programs, services and inventory would take place during Phase 3. Phase 4 would consider a response to the needs and priorities identified during the data gathering and feedback from the previous phases. The final master plan would be created during Phase 5. The plan would include a summary, goals, objectives and action plan.

Stantec Consulting, New York, NY – The proposal submitted by Stantec Consulting was split into five tasks: 1) Project Kickoff and Data Gathering, 2) Community Engagement, 3) Inventory and Assessment, 4) Program Plans and Recommendations, and 5) Agency Coordination. Task 1 would start with a kickoff meeting and initial data gathering. Public engagement would take place during the second task with an online survey, two public meetings and up to five focus groups and stakeholder interviews. Task 3 would analyze existing inventory and programs and benchmark against comparable jurisdictions. The final master plan would be created during Task 4. It would include a “wish list” for facilities and programs, recommendations, strategy for implementation and a capital plan. Task 5 would be presentations to the council and committees.

AECOM, Brooklyn, NY – AECOM’s proposal had four tasks: 1) Data Gathering & Analysis, 2) Stakeholder & Community Outreach, 3) Draft Parks System Master Plan, and 4) Final Parks Master Plan. The first task would be a kickoff meeting with the Parks Advisory Committee. AECOM would also assess current inventory, conditions and programs. Digital community surveys would be conducted to study evolving demographics and existing gaps. The second task would focus on public and stakeholder engagement. Tasks 3 and 4 would draft and create the final master plan. The plan would include identifying goals, objectives, current inventory and propose a comprehensive parks system that would include open space, facilities and walkways.

All of the proposals had a certain amount of detail, though some were more extensive than others. The committee scored each proposal based on the criteria and weighting outlined on page two of this report. This methodology was more quantitative and was used to narrow the number of proposals that would be considered for further consideration and, ultimately, a final recommendation. It was narrowed down from the initial ten eligible proposals to three. The committee then took a more qualitative approach through the lens of the established criteria (technical, experience, creativity and cost) to evaluate the three final proposals. The three firms under final consideration were Brandstetter Carroll, ETM Associates and Stantec Consulting. All three proposals were highly ranked and well-received by the committee.

Brandstetter Carroll’s proposal was very thorough. Current and past projects indicate extensive experience in preparing similar plans in New Jersey. Considering the thoroughness of the proposal and this firm’s experience and that of their staff, the price was very reasonable. ETM Associate’s proposal was also thorough and responsive. ETM appears to be a smaller firm that would be able to devote a significant amount of time and attention to this project as opposed to a larger firm. No direct experience as a lead in a master plan was referenced but they have experience as a consultant and support role in similar projects outside of New Jersey. The cost was considered reasonable and within range of several other proposals. Stantec Consulting’s proposal was also very detailed. The experience seemed to be more geared towards large individual and urban parks but the overall experience of the firm and staff was highly ranked by the committee. Considering the level of experience, the cost is reasonable and the lowest of the top three.

Brandstetter Carroll’s and ETM’s proposals received high marks and positive feedback. Both proposals have technical elements that met or exceeded the criteria and would be second to none compared to many others. Brandstetter Carroll has a significant amount of experience in this area of New Jersey (Morris County, Somerset County, etc.). Although ETM has less experience, they still ranked highly in terms of experience due to their exposure to many similar projects. With all of that considered, the committee still determined that Stantec Consulting would be the best firm for this project. Stantec and their staff have considerable experience and their approach to this project stood out compared to the other firms. Most of the firms would analyze existing inventory early on the process followed by the community engagement; however, Stantec took a unique approach by starting

the surveys and public outreach prior to assessing current conditions and existing reports. "Our Inventory task will begin after the first public meeting is complete, providing our team with a sense of community priorities as a lens for our analysis." One of the criteria for evaluating these proposals was creativity and Stantec clearly demonstrates an ability to think outside the box by approaching the project in this manner. Stantec also asked important rhetorical questions that will need to be answered during this process, including the current condition of existing facilities, short-term and long-term improvements, unidentified amenities, and a focus beyond just sports and active recreation.

Stantec's proposal was detailed and distinct. The firm and their staff has extensive experience and the ability to conduct this project. While the cost is not the lowest of all the proposals received, it is the lowest of the final three that were under consideration.

Given the criteria used to evaluate these proposals, the committee recommends awarding a contract to Stantec Consulting at the proposed price of \$98,280.00. The contents of the original RFP issued by the Borough and the proposal submitted by Stantec will be incorporated into a contract not to exceed two (2) years from the date of execution.