

August 22, 2006

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS – DUE SEPTEMBER 13, 2006
HISTORIC FLORENCE GATEWAY VISITOR/WELCOME CENTER PLAN**

This letter is to invite you to submit an Expression of Interest and Qualifications for preparing the Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center Plan. Your firm has been selected as one of a small group of consultants invited to participate because of its good reputation.

The Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center Plan will address a central corridor along the South side of I-680 from 30th easterly along Dick Collins Drive to the Missouri River. The expanded study area limits, as shown in the attached map, include the wooded area south of McKinley from 30th to 48th Streets, as well as the river land area north of I-680 along Pershing Drive (River Road) to and including Dodge and Hummel Parks.

The Plan is expected to involve visioning tourism and recreational land use and zoning; tourism mixed use development; transportation and traffic; trail, river and pedestrian; environment; and the visitor/welcome center site development concepts. The proposed project will complement a number of current and ongoing planning programs within the area, particularly the proposed Downtown Historic Florence Redevelopment Master Plan (a separate consultant study sponsored by Florence Futures). In addition, the Plan must be coordinated with the Omaha City Planning, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation Departments; Nebraska Department of Roads; Omaha By Design; Metropolitan Area Planning Agency; Corp of Engineers; and Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

Purpose and Need

There is a clear desire to enhance Florence as a destination for commercial/retail shopping by local and regional residents as well as for expanding tourism. To accomplish this goal, a comprehensive master plan is needed to establish a road map for the types and mix of tourist activities, promoted through a high-tech visitor/welcome center. In addition, an economic analysis must accompany the master plan. Together, these two elements will serve as the factual document to attract a minimum of \$50 million in private development. The result will be the new Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center Plan.

The attached "Destination Florence" paper outlines the goals and the status of current activities to complete the goals.

BACKGROUND

The people of Florence have identified the need for both a visitor/welcome center and a motel/restaurant/family plex to be located in or within proximity of Downtown Florence (November 1, 2005 Town Hall meeting).

When tourists stop at the Mormon Trail Center, they frequently ask "Where can we stay? Where can we eat? Where can we let the children unwind?" When residents of Florence have out of town visitors, these same questions are asked.

The Mormon Trail Center has been generating, depending upon the year, approximately 80,000 annual visitors. The Mormon Temple generates another 35,000 per year. But there are six other historical events or eras that have occurred in proximity to Florence ¹⁾. How can we develop these histories to expand the annual visitors to 400,000?

Within the metropolitan area there are 800,000 people. These residents are within 20 minutes of the Florence neighborhood via I-680.

For shopping, Florence residents currently travel west to Maple Street, West Center Road, West Dodge Road, or the new Target Store at 72nd and Sorensen Parkway. Some even travel east to Council Bluffs.

Thus, local residents could find Florence to be a regional destination location for enjoyment of the expanded historical activities.

¹⁾ In addition to the Mormon Winter Quarters at Florence, there is historical significance of three Indian Nationals (Omahas, Otoe/Missourias and Poncas), explorers, Mormon Trail, California Gold Rush, alternate fur trade posts, ferry crossing, riverboat, the railroad, three wagon trails west, two U.S. Calvary forts, the Frontier Military and Territorial settlement. It is the story of America's western migration.

But there is certainly more that can be embellished. Since the region is steeped in so many historical and cultural activities, the Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center could serve as the generator of a “circle tour concept.” Using technology, each visitor could generate a daily plan (circle tour) specifically designed for that tourist family, routing them out for the day and back for the night in Florence (see Attachment).

In addition, Florence needs to create a pageant. These are one or more musical stage productions with stories developed from the historical events and presented in an outdoor amphitheatre. The amphitheatre could also serve as a concert/theatre venue for appropriate events. Such a production has recently captured the attention of the Mormon Church.

Thus, the question for the Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center Plan is how to assemble the types of businesses that would serve out-of-state tourists, metropolitan area visitors, and local resident shoppers. The Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center Plan and the hotel/restaurant/family plex could certainly serve as anchors for the revitalized Florence Business District along with the new Hy-Vee Drug Store at 30th and State Street.

Formation of Florence Futures - In 1998, a group of local advocates formed Florence Futures. Their mission statement reads:

- * To preserve, enhance and promote the cultural, historical, educational and community assets of the Florence area;
- * To serve as the organizational liaison between public and private entities for the fulfillment of its Mission on behalf of, and for the enhancement of, the Florence community;
- * To receive grants, gifts, donations and sponsorships for the funding and administration of Florence Community Planning, Development, Educational, Marketing and other activities related to the Foundation's non-profit Mission on behalf of, and for the enhancement of, the Florence-area community.

In 2006, Florence Futures officially became a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Their goal is to sponsor two master plan consultant studies to redevelop Downtown Florence and to develop a Visitor/Welcome Center to expand tourism in Historic Florence and throughout the region.

The Florence Futures Board is comprised of:

Linda Meigs, Chairman
Lowen Kruse, Vice-Chairman
Brad J. Brummund, Treasurer
Lillian Wunsch, Secretary
Clare Duda
Mele Mason
Bud Hartlaub
Elder Duane Whiting
Betty Davis
Kay Haman
Bruce Hamilton
Jon T. Hansen
Liz Jaunty
Paul Mullen
Charles Bressman
Jim Thompson

Funding for the Project – Funding will be from donations by public and private individuals and foundations to “Florence Futures Development Fund.” A maximum budget of \$110,000 (including reimbursable expenses) has been set for this consultant study.

Contract Administration – Florence Futures will identify a single person as administrator to coordinate the project and address day-to-day issues with the consultant.

Project Completion – Approval of the Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center Plan by the Florence Futures Board will mark the conclusion of the consultant contract. The desired time schedule is four months from start to completion.

Outcomes from the Study

1. A Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center Master Plan Report (25 copies, and an electronic version).
2. An Economic Analysis Report including a ten year proforma for the Visitor/Welcome Center and for the pageant (25 copies, and an electronic version).
3. A minimum of two public meetings. One during the early stage of the study, and a second at the conclusion.
4. A public summary handout of the project studies, including an illustrative map of the Plan (250 copies, and an electronic version).

These questions must be addressed in the Plan and Economic Analysis Reports:

- A. How does the Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center become a tourist attraction itself? Become the first place for tourists to stop?
- B. How does a high-tech Visitor/Welcome Center conceptually function to best create circle tours for each day for each individual tourist facility?
- C. How do we develop the land area south of I-680 from 30th Street to the Missouri River into a pedestrian friendly tourist experience?
- D. How do we develop the Center into a destination and "trail head" for users (bicyclists, joggers, etc.) of the Missouri River Trail System?
- E. Is a water taxi system a feasible idea on the Missouri River?
- F. How do we best incorporate Neale Woods, Dodge and Hummel Parks into the tourist experience? RVs? Camping? Field sports? Boating?
- G. How can we best use the COE (Corps of Engineers) complex for tourism? A river restaurant park? Where does the COE relocate?
- H. Can we project an east-west trail out McKinley (SR 36) from the Missouri River to Lake Cunningham?
- I. Is an outdoor musical stage production pageant feasible? Where? What size seating?
- J. How do we develop each of the six major histories of Florence?
- K. How can we best cashflow and structure a non-profit corporation to manage the Historic Florence Gateway Visitor/Welcome Center?

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Expressions of Interest – Please indicate your interest in pursuing this opportunity by September 13, 2006, by mailing the required information to:

Linda Meigs, Chair
Florence Futures, Inc.
P.O. Box 12121
Omaha, NE 68112
E-Mail: lsmeigs@msn.com

Contact Information – Include information on the primary contact person including name, position, address, phone number, and e-mail address. This should be the person that will be the contact for all correspondence and notifications.

Company Description – Provide a brief history of your firm, addressing:

Historical background and growth in consultant studies, for planning, economic analyses and related services to tourism, historic enhancements, and environmental preservation.

Locations of the offices your firm operates, and the specific location that would be the base for this contract.

Project Experience – Describe your firm's relevant project experience, including total project cost and time, on similar types of tourism planning projects (include a minimum of three, a maximum of seven) covering these elements:

- Downtown Planning/Corridor Planning
- Sub-Area Planning
- Infill/Redevelopment Planning
- Urban Design
- Form Based Codes/Design Guidelines
- Infrastructure Assessment and Design
- Pedestrian/Bicycle
- Tourism and Historical
- Market/Real Estate Analysis
- Traffic, Parking and Transit
- Economic Impact Studies

References – Provide five references with names, titles, client name, addresses, phone numbers and websites, as appropriate, for the tourism planning project experience described above. Include at least two tourism planning projects that have been completed more than five years ago which have been implemented.

Project Approach – Describe your process in leading the visioning process and obtaining support of affected parties.

Staffing – Include the resumes and related experience of the key personnel that would have the hands-on role as a team member on this project. Include the number of years the key personnel have been with the firm and how many years they have been in their current position.

- Who will be the project planner? What is his/her:
 - Demonstrated experience in managing the historic tourism enhancement master plan study?
 - Demonstrated ability to work with the Florence Futures Board and with their other employed consultants?
- Who will be the project economic analyst? What is his/her:
 - Demonstrated experience in completing factual economic analyses of historic tourism enhancement plans?

Subcontracting/Outsourcing – Indicate what components of the work you would outsource to another consultant(s). List the subcontractors that you prefer to use.

Fees and Expenses

- Describe how you charge for your company's services within our budget.
- Define the items that would be included in reimbursable expenses.
- Address how you propose to distribute the billing for your services over the life of the project.

Format of Response – Respondents will submit five paper copies with at least one non-bound, and one copy in an electronic file format.

The response must include at least the requested information. Florence Futures reserves the right to request additional information during the review period.

Clarifications shall be requested in writing to Florence Futures. Using e-mail is recommended to expedite the process.

If an answer is appropriate and not already contained in the RFQ, it will be issued in writing via e-mail to all those who received this RFQ and who have provided an e-mail address.

SELECTION

The responses will be evaluated for relevant experience, past record, ability of professional personnel, location and ability to meet time and budget requirements. Those most closely matching the needs of Florence Futures will receive a Request for Proposal and Interview. Firms completing this phase will be ranked based upon their qualifications, proposal and interview.

The top ranked firm will be invited to negotiate a scope and contract with Florence Futures. If Florence Futures cannot negotiate terms successfully with the first ranked firm, we will open negotiations with the second ranked firm (and so on).

Florence Futures does reserve the right to reject any and all submittals.

Sincerely,

Linda Meigs
Chair
Florence Futures

JS/wl
Attachments