

# Request for Proposals

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## Buffalo Urban Development Corporation & City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning

Planning, Marketing and Graphic Design  
consulting services for:

### Downtown Development Zone Strategy

**RFP Issued: Monday, May 18, 2026**

**Questions Due: Friday, May 22, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.**

**Proposals Due: Monday, June 1, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.**



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## **1.0 RFP Overview**

### **Project Overview**

Buffalo Urban Development Corporation, in partnership with the City of Buffalo, Erie County, and the Erie County Industrial Development Agency, is seeking proposals from qualified consultants to assist in the preparation of a major funding proposal to New York State for a coordinated package of downtown redevelopment, infrastructure, and public realm investments.

The funding request will support a phased Downtown Development Zone strategy intended to unlock private investment, advance catalytic building redevelopment projects, improve infrastructure, enhance the public realm, and strengthen the economic vitality of downtown Buffalo.

The current concept includes a multi-phase geography, beginning with an initial focus on the downtown inner core, including Niagara Square and adjacent redevelopment and infrastructure opportunities. Later phases are anticipated to expand into additional downtown subareas, as reflected in the project map attached to this RFP.

The selected consultant will work closely with BUDC, the City of Buffalo, Erie County, ECIDA, and other identified stakeholders to develop a compelling, data-supported, implementation-ready proposal for State consideration.

### **Purpose of the Engagement**

The purpose of this engagement is to retain a consultant or consultant team to prepare a comprehensive State funding proposal that clearly communicates:

- The scale and importance of the Downtown Development Zone
- The specific redevelopment and infrastructure projects requiring public investment
- The relationship between public funding and private/catalytic development outcomes
- The phased implementation strategy
- The economic, fiscal, housing, placemaking, transportation, and community benefits of the proposed investments
- The readiness, feasibility, and urgency of the funding request
- The final work product should be suitable for submission to New York State and should be persuasive to senior State officials, funding agencies, and decision-makers



### **3.0 Scope of Work**

The selected consultant shall provide the following services.

#### **Task 1: Project Initiation and Work Plan**

The consultant shall begin the engagement with a kickoff meeting with BUDC and project partners to confirm project goals, deadlines, roles, available information, and expected deliverables.

The consultant shall prepare a project work plan that includes:

- A detailed schedule
- Key milestones
- Information needs
- Stakeholder interview list
- Division of responsibilities between the consultant and project partners
- Expected review periods
- Final submission timeline
- The consultant should assume that this engagement will require close coordination with BUDC, the City of Buffalo, Erie County, ECIDA, and potentially private property owners, developers, utilities, transportation agencies, and State representatives

#### **Task 2: Review of Existing Materials and Project Context**

The consultant shall review all relevant background materials provided by BUDC and project partners, which may include:

- Project maps and phase boundaries
- Prior downtown plans and studies
- Infrastructure; Streetscape, mobility, or public realm concepts and cost estimates
- Information on specific buildings or redevelopment projects
- Known funding gaps
- Private development assumptions
- Ownership information
- Market data
- Prior grant applications
- State economic development priorities
- Relevant City, County, and regional economic development strategies
- The consultant shall summarize the existing planning context and identify what additional information is needed to create a strong State funding proposal

#### **Task 3: Define the Downtown Development Zone and Phasing Strategy**

The consultant shall help refine and clearly describe the Downtown Development Zone, including its boundaries, subareas, and implementation phases.

At minimum, the consultant should address:

- The overall development zone geography
- Phase 1, focused on the inner core of downtown, including Niagara Square and nearby catalyst projects
- Future phase areas shown on the project map
- The relationship between the phases
- Why the proposed sequencing is logical
- How Phase 1 can create momentum for later phases
- How the zone aligns with downtown revitalization, economic development, housing, tourism, transportation, small business support and placemaking goals
- The consultant should prepare clear narrative language and graphics that explain the phased approach in a way that can be easily understood by State decision-makers

#### **Task 4: Project Inventory and Funding Needs Assessment**

The consultant shall work with BUDC and project partners to develop a detailed inventory of projects within the Downtown Development Zone

The project inventory may include, but is not limited to:

- Building redevelopment projects
- Adaptive reuse projects
- Historic rehabilitation projects
- Housing projects
- Commercial or mixed-use projects
- Hotel, office, civic, cultural, or entertainment-related projects
- Public infrastructure projects
- Streetscape improvements
- Utility upgrades
- Public realm investments
- Transportation, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-access improvements
- Parking, access, or mobility improvements
- Open space, plaza, or civic space improvements

For each project, the consultant should collect and organize available information, including:

- Project name
- Location
- Ownership or sponsor
- Description
- Current status
- Total estimated cost
- Funding gap or public funding need
- Private investment leveraged
- State funding request amount, if known
- Readiness status
- Permitting or approval needs
- Implementation timeframe

- Expected public benefits
- Role in the broader development zone strategy

While much of the documentation exists through other recent planning efforts, the consultant shall identify gaps in available project information and assist BUDC and partners in developing reasonable assumptions where final details are not yet available.

#### **Task 5: Infrastructure and Public Realm Strategy**

Utilizing recent Infrastructure and Public realm planning documents, materials and coordination with BUDCs Infrastructure Project & Cost Management team, the consultant shall prepare a clear description of the infrastructure and public realm investments needed to support the Downtown Development Zone.

This should include narrative around:

- Streetscape improvements
- Sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, signage, and wayfinding
- Utility infrastructure needs
- Roadway, curb, and intersection improvements
- Pedestrian safety and accessibility
- Connections between key buildings, destinations, and public spaces
- Niagara Square and surrounding civic/public realm opportunities
- Connections to waterfront, transit, entertainment, employment, and residential districts
- How infrastructure investment will support private development and improve downtown experience
- The consultant should help distinguish between infrastructure investments that are necessary to unlock specific development projects and broader public realm investments that support district-wide revitalization

#### **Task 6: Economic and Community Impact Case**

The consultant shall prepare a data-supported case for State investment in the Downtown Development Zone.

The analysis should include, as available and appropriate:

- Estimated total project costs
- Estimated State funding request
- Private investment leveraged
- Construction jobs
- Permanent jobs
- Housing units created or preserved
- Commercial space activated
- Vacant or underutilized square footage reactivated
- Increase in assessed value
- Estimated fiscal impacts
- Tourism, visitor, and downtown activity impacts
- Small business and local business impacts
- Equity and community benefit considerations
- Regional economic development impacts

- Relationship to downtown office, housing, hospitality, and retail market conditions

The consultant should present the investment case in a way that demonstrates why State funding is necessary, what it will unlock, and what benefits will result.

#### **Task 7: Funding Strategy and State Alignment**

The consultant shall analyze and describe how the Downtown Development Zone aligns with State priorities, including but not limited to:

- Downtown revitalization
- Housing production
- Adaptive reuse
- Economic development
- Infrastructure modernization
- Transit-oriented development
- Historic preservation
- Climate resilience and sustainability
- Small Business Development
- Tourism and destination development
- Workforce and job creation
- Equitable development
- Public-private partnership

#### **Task 8: Stakeholder Coordination and Interviews**

The consultant shall participate in stakeholder outreach necessary to prepare the funding proposal.

Stakeholders may include:

- BUDC leadership and staff
- City of Buffalo departments
- Erie County representatives
- ECIDA representatives
- State agency representatives, as appropriate
- Property owners
- Developers
- Utility providers
- Transportation agencies
- Cultural, civic, institutional, or business district stakeholders

The consultant shall prepare interview questions, conduct meetings as needed, summarize findings, and incorporate stakeholder input into the final proposal. BUDC and project partners will assist in identifying stakeholders and facilitating introductions where appropriate.

#### **Task 9: Proposal Narrative and Supporting Materials**

The consultant shall prepare a complete, polished funding proposal package suitable for submission to New York State, as well as other potential funding partners.

The proposal package should include, at minimum:

- Executive summary
- Description of the Downtown Development Zone
- Statement of need
- Project background and planning context
- Description of phases
- Project inventory
- Infrastructure and public realm strategy
- Funding request summary
- Economic and community impact analysis
- Implementation strategy
- Governance and partnership structure
- Project readiness discussion
- State priority alignment
- Maps, graphics, tables, and exhibits
- Appendices, as needed

The consultant shall be responsible for creating a clear, persuasive, professionally formatted document that can be used both as a formal submission and as a briefing document for State officials.

#### **Task 10: Graphics, Mapping, and Presentation Materials**

The consultant shall prepare visual materials to support the proposal.

These may include:

- Project area maps
- Phase maps
- Infrastructure investment maps
- Before-and-after or precedent imagery, where appropriate
- Tables summarizing projects and funding needs
- Charts showing investment leverage and economic impact
- A concise presentation deck for use in meetings with State officials
- One-page or two-page executive briefing materials

The consultant should be prepared to use the existing project map as a starting point and refine or recreate it as needed for presentation-quality use.

#### **4.0 Project Budget and Timeline**

The expected duration of the project from commencement to completion is eight (8) weeks. Proposals should include a timeline for completion, identifying major project milestones to include, at minimum, each phase of the project. The project budget is \$30,000 - \$50,000.

## **5.0 Proposal Format/Requirements**

Submissions must include the following information in a brief and concise format. While there is no page limit for proposals, they should be concise. BUDC and the City reserve the right to request additional information during the review of proposals and to reject all submissions.

### **Cover Letter**

The cover letter should include the official name of the firm submitting the proposal, mailing address, e-mail address, telephone number, and primary contact name. The letter must be signed by an official authorized to bind the proposer contractually and contain a statement that the proposal is firm for sixty (60) days. An unsigned letter, or one signed by an individual not authorized to bind the consultant, may be disqualified.

### **Minority and Women Business Enterprises**

The contracting goal with firms that subcontract is 25% for minority-owned businesses and 5% for women-owned businesses as a percent of the total proposed fee.

### **Understanding and Approach**

Respondents to this RFP should include a brief narrative explaining their understanding and approach to this project and the requested scope of work. The understanding and approach should outline a proposed scope of work, specific phases and tasks, and the deliverables and products to be provided.

### **Firm Profile, Experience of Firm/Project Team, and References**

Firms or their principals responding to this RFP must be licensed to practice in New York State. Proposals should include a firm profile, an organizational chart identifying the project manager and team members with their titles, resumes from key personnel, and references from at least 3 clients for whom the consultant has performed services within the past 3 years. All proposed sub-consultants must also be identified, along with their project managers and key personnel.

The project team should have a full range of relevant experience for the project. Primary personnel in each of relevant disciplines must be identified by name and office location, with resumes included, and should demonstrate satisfactory experience and depth in each of the required disciplines. The role of your organization should be highlighted in any references to experience on prior projects and initiatives.

### **Fee Proposal**

The proposal should include a proposed fee for all services delineated by phase and task as outlined in the consultant's proposed scope of work. The fee proposal should include the hourly rate of each staff member who will work on a task and their number of hours by phase and task. The consultant contract will be a fixed-price or lump sum cost contract per phase and task. Therefore, all proposals must contain a Lump Sum Cost Proposal for the scope of services delineated, inclusive of all expenses (there will be no reimbursables).

BUDC and the City of Buffalo encourage submissions from Women and Minority Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE).

**Please note: THE BUDC AND THE CITY OF BUFFALO RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL PROPOSALS, AND THE RIGHT TO WAIVE ANY INFORMALITIES THEREIN**

## **6.0 Submission Instructions**

Seven (7) copies of the proposal must be submitted in hard copy and one (1) electronically via e-mail, no later than 4:00 p.m., June 1, 2026 to:

Brandye Merriweather, President  
Buffalo Urban Development Corporation  
95 Perry Street, Suite 404  
Buffalo, New York, 14203  
E-mail: [Bmerriweather@buffalourbandevelopment.com](mailto:Bmerriweather@buffalourbandevelopment.com)

Questions regarding this RFP should be made in writing to Brandye Merriweather at [Bmerriweather@buffalourbandevelopment.com](mailto:Bmerriweather@buffalourbandevelopment.com) no later than 1:00 p.m. on May 22, 2026. No requests for oral interpretations via the telephone will be accepted.

## **7.0 Selection Process**

A detailed evaluation of proposals will be conducted by BUDC and the City of Buffalo and partners with the County of Erie, and the Erie County Industrial Development Agency. To select the most advantageous proposal for consulting services related to the scope of work contained in the RFP, comparative judgments of technical factors, in addition to price, will be necessary. Evaluation will be based on at least the following criteria, not necessarily in the order provided or with equal weight given to each criterion. Interviews may be required.

1. Responsiveness to the provisions and requirements of this RFP.
2. The thoroughness of the proposal and clarity of services to be provided.
3. Ability, capacity, and skill of the consultant to perform the services requested in this RFP within the requested timeframe.
4. Strategic planning, asset-based and need-based planning, open space planning, and design experience, Experience with stakeholder outreach and engagement
5. Background in similar projects of this nature
6. Quality of performance of previous contracts or service as demonstrated through your references.
7. Ability to meet or exceed M/WBE requirements.
8. Fee proposal.

BUDC and the City do not assume the responsibility or liability for costs incurred by firms responding to this RFP or any subsequent requests for interviews, additional information, submissions, etc. before issuance of a contract.

## **8.0 General Requirements**

Please complete and include all forms in your proposal.

### **Procurement Lobbying Restrictions**

#### **1. Restrictions on Bidder Communications with BUDC**

Pursuant to State Finance Law §§139-j and 139-k, this Request for Applications imposes certain restrictions on communications between Applicants and BUDC during the procurement process. Applicants are prohibited from making contacts (whether oral, written, or electronic) with any BUDC personnel or BUDC Board member other than the designated BUDC staff member (unless the contact is otherwise permitted under State Finance Law §139-j (3) (a)). In addition, Applicants are hereby notified that any contact with any BUDC personnel, BUDC Board member, or the designated BUDC staff member that a reasonable person would infer is intended to influence the award of the contract under this Request for Applications is prohibited. These prohibitions apply from the Bidder's earliest notice of BUDC's intent to solicit applications through the final award and approval of the procurement contract ("Restricted Period"). For purposes of this Request for Applications, the designated BUDC staff member is Brandye Merriweather ([bmerriweather@buffalourbandevelopment.com](mailto:bmerriweather@buffalourbandevelopment.com)).

Applicants are hereby notified that BUDC is required to collect certain information when contacted by a Bidder during the Restricted Period and make a determination of the responsibility of the Bidder pursuant to State Finance Law §§139-j and 139-k. Certain findings of non-responsibility can result in rejection of a contract award, and in the event of two findings within a four (4) year period, the Bidder may be barred from obtaining governmental procurement contracts.

#### **2. Bidder's Affirmation of Understanding of and Agreement pursuant to State Finance Law §139-j (3) and §139-j (6)(b)**

BUDC is required to obtain written affirmations from all Applicants as to the Respondent's understanding of, and agreement to comply with BUDC's procedures relating to permissible contacts (described in paragraph 1 above). The affirmation must be provided to BUDC when the Bidder submits its application. The form of affirmation to be completed and submitted by the Bidder is included herein as Attachment A.

#### **3. Bidder's Certification of Compliance with State Finance Law §139-k(5)**

State Finance Law §139-k (5) requires Applicants to provide written certification that all information provided to BUDC with respect to State Finance Law §139-k is complete, true, and accurate. The certification must be provided to BUDC when Bidder submits its application. The form of certification to be completed and submitted by the Bidder is included herein as Attachment B.

## **Procurement Lobbying Restrictions**

### **4. Bidder Disclosure of Prior Non-Responsibility Determinations**

State Finance Law §139-k (2) obligates BUDC to obtain specific information regarding prior non-responsibility determinations with respect to State Finance Law §139-j. In accordance with State Finance Law §139-k, each Bidder must disclose whether there has been a finding of non-responsibility made within the previous four (4) years by any Governmental Entity due to: (a) a violation of State Finance Law §139-j or (b) the intentional provision of false or incomplete information to a Governmental Entity. State Finance Law §139-j sets forth detailed requirements about the restrictions on contacts during the procurement process. A violation of State Finance Law §139-j includes, but is not limited to, an impermissible contact during the Restricted Period (for example, contacting a person or entity other than the designated contact person, when such contact does not fall within one of the exemptions). As part of its responsibility determination, State Finance Law §139-k(3) mandates consideration of whether a Bidder fails to timely disclose accurate or complete information regarding the above non-responsibility determination. In accordance with the law, no procurement contract shall be awarded to any Bidder that fails to timely disclose accurate or complete information under this section, unless a finding is made that the award of the procurement contract to the Bidder is necessary to protect public property or public health and safety, and that the Bidder is the only source capable of supplying the required article of procurement within the necessary timeframe. Attachment C entitled “Offerer Disclosure of Prior Non-Responsibility Determinations” must be completed by the Bidder and submitted to BUDC at the time of Bidder’s submission of its application.

### **5. Contract Termination Provision**

New York State Finance Law §139-k (5) provides that every procurement contract award subject to the provisions of State Finance Law §§139-k and 139-j shall contain a provision authorizing termination of the contract in the event that the certification provided by the Bidder that is awarded the contract is found to be intentionally false or intentionally incomplete. The following provision is hereby incorporated by reference and included in the contract that is awarded (if one is awarded) pursuant to this Request for Applications:

#### **BUDC Termination Provision**

Pursuant to New York State Finance Law §139-k (5), BUDC reserves the right to terminate this contract in the event it is found that the certification filed by the Contractor in accordance with New York State Finance Law §139-k was intentionally false or intentionally incomplete. Upon such finding, BUDC may exercise its termination rights by providing written notification to the Contractor in accordance with the written notification terms of this contract.

**Procurement Lobbying Restrictions**  
**ATTACHMENT A**

**Affirmation of Understanding & Agreement pursuant to State Finance Law §139-j (3) & §139-j (6) (b)**

I affirm that I understand and agree to comply with the procedures of BUDC relative to permissible contacts as required by State Finance Law §139-j (3) and §139-j (6) (b).

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Procurement Lobbying Restrictions**  
**ATTACHMENT B**

9.0 **Offerer/Bidder Certification:**

I certify that all information provided to BUDC with respect to State Finance Law §139-k is complete, true and accurate.

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



