



CITY OF HUDSON

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 28, 2014
TO: Mayor Currin, City Council, and the Downtown Phase II Ad Hoc Committee
FROM: Mark Richardson, Community Development Director and Scott Schroyer, Interim City Manager
RE: Staff Recommendation for a Planning Consulting Firm for the Comprehensive Plan Including a Plan for Downtown Phase II

Staff is pleased to recommend the firm of Houseal Lavigne Associates (HLA) of Chicago, Illinois to undertake the City of Hudson's Comprehensive Plan which will include a plan for Downtown Phase II. This memorandum will detail how staff came to this recommendation.

On March 19, 2014 a Request for Qualifications and Proposal (RFQ/P) was issued for consulting planning services. The RFQ/P was forwarded to the national and state American Planning Associations, the City of Hudson, Heritage Ohio, the Akron Metropolitan Area Planning Study, and Northeast Ohio Area Planning Agency. It was also directly emailed to twenty national, state, and regional firms that have worked in Hudson or Northeast Ohio, were known to do quality plans of the type we are doing, and/or were award-winning firms. Six firms submitted proposals on or before the April 10 deadline. Three of these firms were directly emailed RFQ/Ps, including the recommended firm. The six firms that submitted proposals are:

1. Downtown Again; Ft. Wayne, Indiana
2. D.B. Hartt, a division of CT Consultants; Mentor, Ohio
3. Houseal Lavigne Associates, LLC; Chicago, Illinois
4. OHM Advisors; Gahanna, Ohio (formerly known as Bird Houk)
5. MKSK; Columbus, Ohio (formerly known as MSI)
6. Peter J. Smith and Company, Inc.; Buffalo, New York

Mark Richardson and City Planner Greg Hannan reviewed the proposals and on April 16 notified three firms of our desire to interview them based on the scores derived from an evaluation form that was included in the RFQ/P. On April 21 one hour interviews were conducted with each of the following firms: HLA, MKSK, and OHM Advisors. They were interviewed by Mr. Richardson, Mr. Hannan and Interim City Manager Scott Schroyer.

After interview times with the firms were confirmed, staff contacted approximately five communities where each of the firms did work to discuss the community's experience with them. The recommended firm was selected based on the scores derived from the written proposal and supporting information, separately scored evaluation forms from the interview, and references.

You will be emailed a copy of HLA's proposal. Their website is www.hlplanning.com. We list the following strengths that we believe HLA will bring to Hudson.

The mission of the Hudson City Government is to serve, promote and support, in a fiscally responsible manner, an outstanding community that values quality of life, a well-balanced tax base, historic preservation with a vision to the future and professionalism in volunteer and public service.

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1. HLA's founding principles are better community outreach, commitment to creativity, graphic communication, technology integration, and client satisfaction. All of these principles were proven at their interview and with reference contacts.
2. When asked why HLA responded to our RFQ/P, they replied that they can be selective with the communities they choose to work with. They said that what Hudson wants is exactly what they do and all they do.
3. Most of the communities in which HLA works are of Hudson's size and composition.
4. HLA has already put a lot of effort into learning about the community and has started to think about issues that deserve attention such as the future of the YDC property and developing stronger links between First and Main, Phase II, and N Main Street.
5. HLA has extensive experience with towns and projects that have historic districts.
6. The RFQ/P stated the project is an "update" to the Comprehensive Plan. HLA said their process will actually result in a rewrite accounting for changes that have occurred since 2004. It will be a succinct, easy to read, graphically enhanced plan.
7. All reference communities said they received great value for the fee they paid. No change orders were requested in the last nine years.
8. The principles will be involved with the project. Although relatively small, the firm is large enough that all of the work, including the economic analysis, can be done in-house. Daniel Gardner will be the project manager. Mr. Gardner is a principal and is the firm's fiscal, economic, and market analysis specialist.
9. The principles are experts in their fields to the extent they have written and are instructors for planning associations and conferences, and universities.
10. Among many other awards, HLA is being awarded the 2014 National Planning Excellence Award for an Emerging Planning and Design Firm from the American Planning Association at its annual conference. It also received a state award for implementation of a plan.

We mention one issue that is not HLA's alone. A couple of references said the project schedule slipped some. Often this is not the fault of the consultant, but rather the community which chooses to spend more time on a plan than staff estimated. Nonetheless, regular communications with the consultant will be necessary to insure the project stays on track or the schedule is amended with mutual agreement.

Although the other firms that staff interviewed were qualified to do the work and had strengths of their own, they were not selected for some of the following reasons:

1. Neither MKSK or OHM's public engagement strategy was nearly as robust as HLA's. Nor did either firm have an economic analyst at the interview.
2. OHM's multiple subcontractors may have made project management unwieldy.
3. Although references were positive about MKSK and OHM, they were not nearly as enthusiastic as the references for HLA were.
4. Although the project manager for MKSK is highly regarded, we felt their proposal was not targeted to Hudson's needs.

Staff is confident that Houseal Lavigne and Associates is up to the task and will produce a plan for our community and downtown that will lead to a great future for Hudson.