

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
EVENT & MARKETING MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR  
SPECIAL SERVICE AREA NO. 17 AND THE RAVINIA DISTRICT  
CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS

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Issue Date: October 11, 2022  
Proposals Due: November 11, 2022, at Noon CST

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Request for Proposals  
Marketing and Event Management Services For  
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**Request for Proposals  
Marketing and Event Management Services For  
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City of Highland Park, Illinois**

The City of Highland Park, Illinois, requests proposals from qualified proposers for the provision of marketing, public relations, event development, production, and management services for Special Service Area Number 17 in the Ravinia District for three consecutive automatically renewable one-year terms, which coincide with the term of the SSA, for an annual amount not to exceed \$45,800, inclusive of retainer and expenses.

Expenses include social media paid ads for events and activities, and creative for and production of posters to promote events and activities.

For this Request for Proposals ("RFP") and the anticipated agreement, "City" means the City of Highland Park; "Services" means marketing, public relations, event development, production, and management services, as more fully described in this RFP; "SSA" means Special Service Area Number 17; "RD" means the Ravinia District, and; the "TIF District" means the Ravinia District Tax Increment Financing District.

The selected proposer will be invited to enter into an agreement with the City, in a form to be provided by the City ("Agreement"). The City Council has the ultimate authority to approve any proposal and to authorize the execution of an Agreement. Award of an Agreement in response to this RFP is contingent entirely on the approval of the extension of SSA 17, which is scheduled to be considered by the City Council on November 28, 2022.

KEY DATES	
Release of RFP	October 11, 2022
Questions Due from proposers	October 21, 2022, by Noon CST
Response to Questions Posted on the City's Website	October 28, 2022
<b>Proposal Due Date</b>	<b>November 11, 2022, by Noon CST</b>
Schedule Interviews with Contractor(s)	Week of November 14, 2022
Interview Contractor(s)	Week of December 1, and December 2, 2022
Select Contractor	Week of December 5, 2022
Agreement Finalized	Week of December 12, 2022
Award of Contract by the City Council	January 9, 2023
Contractor to Commence Work	January 16, 2023

**SECTION I: PROJECT BACKGROUND**

**A. Community Overview**

23 miles north of Downtown Chicago, the City of Highland Park is nestled along five miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, and near the center of the metropolitan area's most affluent residential markets. Highland Park is a thriving community with a diverse population of greater than 30,000, a stable economic base, more than 800 businesses employing more than 14,000, top-rated schools, and a university-affiliated hospital. It is also easily accessible from Route 41, Interstate 94, and Interstate 294, and is served by PACE Bus and three Metra stations.

The City's businesses enjoy the benefit of an active Office of Business Development, the Business and Economic Development Advisory Group, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Highland Park Alliance, the Briergate Business Association District, Ravinia TIF District Advisory Group, and the Ravinia District Special Service Area 17 Advisory Group, which together help to promote a favorable business climate and community by providing leadership for the improvement of economic, civic, cultural and social interests.

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The City of Highland Park operates under a Council-Manager form of government, in which a Mayor and six City Council members are elected at large. The Park District of Highland Park is a separate municipal agency, as are the City's elementary/middle and high school districts.

Additional information about the City of Highland Park can be found on the [City's website](#).

**B. Ravinia District Overview**

The RD is a walkable, secondary local hub of the community, and the neighborhood of the world-renowned Ravinia Festival. A broad range of convenience commercial activities occurs within the RD. The Metra commuter train provides easy access to the RD and offers City residents, customers, and employees frequent service between the RD and downtown Chicago and Kenosha, Wisconsin. The RD has withstood substantial changes and challenges over the past several years. These include the development of regional shopping malls and big box stores, changes in the retail industry, and fluctuations in the economy. The City's recent investment in revitalizing the RD, including streetscape improvements, events, and marketing, has attracted new businesses, and private investment and encouraged redevelopment.

**C. Event Overview**

The RD has become recognized as the North Shore 'go-to' hot spot on Thursday nights due to its immensely popular Food Truck Thursdays. Each week between June and September more than a dozen food trucks line up on Dean Avenue to cater to a dining culture that brings families and people of all ages out to enjoy everything from standard kid-friendly fare to the more out-of-the-box fusion and gourmet creations. Adult beverages are available from local restaurants. Family-friendly crafts and activities in Jens Jensen Park round out the fun for everyone.

The City has retained Bensidoun USA for the operation and marketing of Food Truck Thursdays, and is in the process of renewing Bensidoun USA's contract. Together with Bensidoun USA, the Ravinia District SSA 17 (for more information about SSA 17, see page 5) sponsors Food Truck Thursdays. The Ravinia District SSA 17 covers the cost of supplemental marketing and operations for this event, which includes street banners, posters, ads, and signage, as well as area maintenance.

The SSA also sponsors music for Food Truck Thursdays in Jens Jensen Park (Park), which is adjacent to Dean Avenue. The SSA engages an independent contractor to provide music management services for Food Truck Thursdays. Simultaneous to this RFP, the City has issued an RFP for an independent contractor to provide event music management services for the music portion of Food Truck Thursdays.

To support local commerce, local restaurants with a valid liquor license and a State of IL Liquor Control Commission Special Event License sell their beverage specialties in the Park. To benefit from the event, some local businesses stay open late on Thursdays. Restaurants in the RD continue to benefit from the event, as well.

**D. Ravinia District Tax Increment Financing District**

In 2005, the City Council established the Ravinia Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) to foster redevelopment and strategic improvements along Roger Williams Avenue. For up-to-date information about the Ravinia District TIF, please visit the [City's website](#).

**E. Ravinia District Market Study**

In 2008, the City, local property owners, merchants, and the Ravinia Neighbors Association (a non-profit organization devoted to preserving the unique character of the Ravinia neighborhood) joined informally and together are committed to improving and regenerating the RD. Following discussions among members of the informal group during the latter part of 2008, it was determined that the City should solicit proposals from consulting firms to provide a market analysis of the TIF District.

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In 2009, the City Council approved a consulting agreement with the Community Land Use and Economics Group, Inc. ("CLUE Group") for the completion of a retail market analysis of the RD, as well as a strategic plan for retail and mixed-use development.

Upon completion of the study in April 2010, the consultants presented their findings at a public meeting. In conjunction with the presentation of these findings, an RD advisory committee ("Committee") was appointed by the Mayor. Presently, the Committee is comprised of property owners, representatives of the City Council, City staff, Ravinia Festival, the Chamber of Commerce, and business owners and Ravinia neighborhood residents. The Committee met with the consultants to review the market analysis and the playbook (an addendum to the market study report intended to support the implementation of the study's findings and recommendations). Subsequently, the Committee refined and prioritized the consultant's recommendations. On August 9, 2010, the City Council unanimously accepted the [Ravinia Market Analysis Report and amended Playbook](#), as recommended by the Committee.

In summary, the market study report recommends pursuing two compatible market-based strategies. The first strategy involves increasing the number of convenience retail and service-related businesses within the RD. As noted in the report, this objective can be attained by initiating actions, including increasing the RD's daytime population and increasing weekend activities within the RD.

The second strategy, which centers upon increasing the number of dining and small-scale entertainment options in the RD, is most easily supported through increasing evening activities within the RD, enhancing gateways and way-finding signage within the RD, and furthering outreach efforts to users of both Ravinia Festival and the Green Bay Trail.

Finally, general actions that support the furtherance of both strategies included: the establishment of an SSA to fund marketing and events efforts to attract residents and visitors to the area and to enhance business attraction and retention, which is directed by the Ravinia District SSA Advisory Group; implementation of distinct identity branding for the RD, which was recommended through the TIF; and stimulating the redevelopment and/or adaptive re-use of existing buildings.

The brand identity has been implemented via signage. The TIF Streetscape Project has been initiated with the installation of new streetlights with banner poles, which are expected to be installed by year-end. The SSA provided supplemental funding for benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles, as identified in the RD Streetscape Plan.

**F. Special Service Area Number 17 Overview**

On December 9, 2013, to enhance the quality of the business and community environment, and increase the economic impact of the RD, the City Council approved Special Service Area No. 17 to fund marketing, events, and beautification in the RD. The SSA was extended for a second three-year term, from January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2019, and a third three-year term from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2022. The City received a request to renew the SSA for an additional three-year term, from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2025.

The SSA boundaries include:

- Commercial, mixed-use commercial/residential rental properties in the B2-RW and RM2 zoning districts;
- The City parking lots on the north and southwest sides of St. Johns Avenue;
- Brown Park;
- The Union Pacific Ravinia Train Station;
- The City parking lot between the Ravinia train station and the east side of Burton Avenue;
- The east side of Burton Avenue bordering Brown Park;
- Jens Jensen Park; and
- Dean Avenue between Roger Williams and St. Johns Avenue.

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The SSA does not include residential condominiums with separate real estate tax PINS that are within the SSA's boundaries, to the extent allowed by law. SSA funds can be spent on the parks and any other area within the SSA.

The SSA is funded by an additional commercial property tax on specified properties within the SSA. The three-year SSA annual budget/levy is \$90,000. Costs include marketing, public relations, events, banners, and expanded beautification. The SSA funds are utilized to revitalize and promote the RD. For more information about SSA 17, please visit the [Ravinia District](#).

**SECTION II: PROJECT SCOPE**

To achieve the objectives of SSA 17, the City of Highland Park is seeking an independent contractor ("Contractor") to promote the RD and promote and produce events in the RD to ultimately increase consumer visits to the area and attract new businesses. The goals and activities of the Contractor will be guided by the RD Advisory Group and managed by the City's Office of Business Development. The Contractor will report to the City's Business Development Manager. The Contractor will also work with the City's committees, sub-contractors, and volunteers to produce events and programs.

The purpose of this RFP is to invite qualified proposers to submit proposals for the provision of marketing, public relations, event development, and production services for the RD for the period of January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2025 ("Term"), as more fully described in this section. The overall budget for the project, including all expenses, is \$45,800.00. Expenses include social media paid ads for events and activities, and creative for and production of posters to promote events and activities.

**A. Services**

The Contractor will be responsible for raising public awareness of the RD locally and regionally by developing and implementing an integrated marketing campaign that may include: (i) ongoing advertising; (ii) development, promotion, and production of events; (iii) production (and/or outsourcing for) materials; (iv) preparation of the monthly activity and financial reports for the RD Advisory Group; and (v) tracking data; and maintaining databases, while adhering to the approved budget.

More specifically, the Services must include the following:

1. Creating and implementing effective marketing, public relations, and social media campaigns to:
  - a. Promote the RD and increase its visibility as a regular destination to attract consumers;
  - b. Promote RD events, to increase attendance, and increase the number of consumers in the RD, and;
  - c. Attract quality restaurants and retailers that draw customers from the region.
2. Developing and implementing events to attract residents and visitors to support the RD businesses, as well as attract new businesses to the RD.
3. Managing events, which will include, without limitation, the provision and coordination of:
  - a. Four seasonal events, including décor and staging;
  - b. Marketing;
  - c. Event poster design, production, and distribution;
  - d. Photography for social media posts;

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- e. Social media posts before, during, and after events;
- 4. Arranging publicity/media coverage, including interviews and appearances at events (if deemed appropriate);
- 5. Providing information to City staff about businesses and events in the RD to be posted on the City's website and/or social media;
- 6. Coordinating SSA activities with RD businesses to increase activity and local spending in the RD;
- 7. Creating and coordinating marketing opportunities for all RD businesses;
- 8. Creating coordinating cross-promotion incentives for existing shoppers to use at RD businesses;
- 9. Creating connections to Ravinia Festival;
- 10. Developing collateral materials (flyers, postcards, posters, advertisements, etc.) that integrate with the City and RD branding;
- 11. Maintaining promotional materials at events;
- 12. Tracking costs, and financial documentation;
- 13. Preparing benchmark reports by collecting, analyzing, and summarizing event data;
- 14. Arranging and communicating alternate event parking in the RD.

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**B. Budget**

The total annual budget for the SSA is \$90,000. The Contractor's marketing expenses will be reimbursed by the SSA provided that the expenses are approved by the City and do not exceed the SSA's marketing budget.

**PROPOSED RAVINIA DISTRICT SSA 17 2023 BUDGET**

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2023</b>
SSA 17 Annual Revenue	\$90,000
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$90,000</b>
<b>EXPENSE-Operations</b>	
Legal (Estimate)	(\$0)
Licenses and Fees (Estimate Public Notices, Recording Fees for Renewal)	(\$300)
<b>Subtotal Operations</b>	<b>(300)</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Marketing Contractor Retainer 1. 10 Press Releases: events, new businesses, new developments, the state of the district, and capital improvements news. 2. Draft Social Media Content: events, new businesses, and activities, as well as paid ads for Facebook, and Instagram 3. Coordinate with Bensidoun on FTT promotions and activities 4. Coordinate Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter Décor 5. Coordinate Halloween Stroll 6. Coordinate Holiday Cookie Stroll 7. Coordinate Contest for Best Décor 8. Secure Outdoor Sign Boards 9. Put Signs Out for Events	(\$37,500)
Marketing Contractor Expenses Reimbursed by SSA: 1. Social Media Paid Ads Facebook & Instagram: Events and Activities (\$7,500) 2. Creative & Production: Posters to Promote FTT, Halloween, Holiday Creative & Production (\$800)	(\$8,300)
Event Expenses 1. FTT - 17 weeks: Music, sound, set up, and management (21,000) 2. Bensidoun Weekly Event Trash Maintenance - Food Truck Thursdays (\$500) 3. Security Guard FTT (\$2,000) 4. Spring Event (\$1,000) 5. Halloween – Candy Stroll Candy (\$1,000) 6. Holiday Cookie & Cocoa Crawl (\$1,000)	(\$26,500)
Beautification(may be covered by reserves): 1. Seasonal Décor 2. Signs & District Banners: Farmers' Market, FTT, Halloween Candy Stroll, Holiday Cookie Crawl, Winter Wonderland 3. Replace Cement Planters 4. Maintain Existing Seasonal Décor & Lights	(\$5,250)
Other – City 1. Food Truck Thursdays PDHP Special Event Permit Application Permit Fee (\$1,200) 2. Refundable Deposit \$50 / Deposit Refund (\$50) 3. Equipment Storage Pod (\$2,000)	(\$3,950)
<b>Est. Subtotal Marketing</b>	<b>(\$81,400)</b>
<b>EXPENSE-Staff</b>	
SSA Management (Avg.15 - 20 Hours Mo.)	(\$8,500)
<b>Subtotal Payroll/Benefits</b>	<b>(\$8,500)</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>(90,000)</b>
Net Income Over Expenses Estimate	(\$0)
Beginning Reserve (High reserves due to the pandemic will be spent down on décor or events as approved by SSA Advisory)	\$65,504

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**SECTION III: MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

The City encourages proposals from any proposers meeting the following minimum qualifications:

1. At least five years of experience providing marketing, public relations, project management, and event production services to a municipality or governmental agency;
2. Ability to work evenings and weekends, as necessary;
3. Ability to track and analyze data, and provide timely reports;
4. Possess integrity and have a high sense of personal and professional ethics;
5. Understand the local market, and media landscape, and can meet goals and objectives;
6. Willingness to serve as an extension of the Advisory Committee and the City;
7. Follow a management style that involves a “no surprises” approach in presenting all matters to the City;
8. Ability to provide detailed and accurate information concerning project activities, measure success, and report progress and outcomes on an ongoing basis;
9. Be able to encourage a cooperative climate and working relationship among property owners, business owners, the City, and vendors;
10. Ability to work effectively with small businesses;
11. Service-minded and comfortable working in a community that expects a high level of responsiveness; and
12. The proposer’s pre-existing relationships with potential sponsors.

**SECTION IV: SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

All proposals must be signed by an authorized officer of the proposer. Proposals that contain omissions, erasures, alterations, conditional quotes, or that contain irregularities of any kind may be rejected.

All proposals must be prepared in the following format:

1. A response to the Project Scope outlined in Section II and a description of how each of the Services would be provided. Indicate what, if any, additional tasks may be necessary or advisable.
2. Proposed Flat Contractor Fee schedule for the Services to be provided, with a breakdown of tasks.
3. A timeline for implementing the Services.
4. Name of the firm and designated representative, including a direct telephone number, cell phone number, and email;
5. A list of names and addresses of all owners, officers of the corporation, partners in the partnership or managers and members in the limited liability company;

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6. If incorporated or a limited liability company, the State and date of incorporation;
7. Office address, main telephone number, and website address;
8. Number of years at the above address;
9. The names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of three client references (preferably local government entities) who received similar Services to those described herein;
10. A description of the team structure that would be used to provide the Services;
11. A list of key personnel that would provide the Services, which must include descriptions of each individual's relevant professional experience. This list should indicate which key personnel would perform each function;
12. The name of the staff liaison that would be responsible for managing timelines and the budget;
13. A brief overview of your firm's history and philosophy;
14. An in-depth list of the firm's capabilities;
15. A description of how your firm differentiates itself from its competitors;
16. A description of any personal or corporate business and staff members or their immediate family have with the City or its employees;
17. A description of your experience within the City's local and regional market;
18. List any media, analyst, or online influencer relationships you have within our market;
19. An explanation of your firm's ability to enhance branding efforts of the RD through strategic media outreach in such a way that the RD's unique mix of merchants and restaurants, location walkability, events, and overall environment stand out;
20. Provision of a minimum of three samples of collateral press releases that demonstrate strong writing technique based on media outlets, social media campaigns, and other related material;
21. Provision of brief case histories that illustrate ability and experience related to the City's need, and existing examples of the proposing firm's familiarity with the City;
22. Identification of any operational areas for which the proposing firm might expect to use subcontractors, describing the services and roles that each subcontractor might assume in providing services, and;
23. Indication of the method of project management if subcontractors or volunteers will be used.

**SECTION V: EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS**

Proposals submitted will be evaluated by the City's Review and Selection Committee ("Selection Committee"). The Selection Committee will consist of representatives of the City Manager's Office ("CMO") and the RD SSA Advisory Group. The Selection Committee will evaluate all properly submitted proposals concerning the Project Scope and Submittal Requirements outlined in this RFP, including without limitation, the responsiveness of the proposal.

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As part of the selection process, the Selection Committee may interview none, some, or all of the proposers for the Contract. The Selection Committee will recommend the preferred Contractor to the City Manager's Office ("CMO"). The CMO will present the recommendation to the City Council for formal consideration. The results of the RFP process will be posted on the [City's website](#) and all proposers will be notified by electronic mail.

The City reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted and use any idea in a proposal regardless of whether the said proposal is selected.

The City reserves the right to make clarifications, corrections, or changes in this Request for Proposals at any time before the deadline for submission of proposals. Proposers should check the [City's website](#) for clarifications, corrections, or changes to the RFP.

**SECTION VI: SUBMITTAL PROCEDURES**

**A. Questions and Clarifications**

All questions regarding this Request for Proposals should be directed in writing to [chersch@cityhpil.com](mailto:chersch@cityhpil.com).

Questions will be accepted until Noon CST on Friday, October 21, 2022. All questions and responses will be compiled and posted on the City's website by Friday, October 28, 2022.

All contacts regarding the proposal should be with the above-named individual only. Proposers should not contact other City staff or City officials.

**B. Submission of RFP Proposals**

Please deliver one digital copy of the proposal via email to [chersch@cityhpil.com](mailto:chersch@cityhpil.com), and five hard copies to:

Carolyn Hersch, Business Development Manager  
City of Highland Park  
1707 St. Johns Avenue  
Highland Park, Illinois 60035

Proposals must not exceed 20 pages in length, and which page limit does not include any company brochures.

Proposals must be received no later than Noon CST, Friday, November 11, 2022 ("**Deadline**"). Proposals will not be opened publically. Proposals submitted after the Deadline will not be opened. No oral, telephone, or facsimile proposals will be considered.

Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the contractor of the conditions contained in this RFP unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the subsequent Agreement between the City and the contractor selected.

**C. Standard Terms and Conditions**

Proposals submitted are offers only, and the decision to accept or reject is a function of the quality, reliability, capability, reputation, and expertise of the firms submitting proposals. Issuance of this RFP does not obligate the City to pay any costs incurred by a proposer in its submission of a proposal or conducting any necessary studies or creating any necessary designs for the preparation of that proposal, or for procuring or contracting for the services to be furnished under this RFP.

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A proposer may withdraw its proposal, either personally or by written request, at any time before the submittal Deadline. No proposal may be withdrawn for 60 days after the date set for opening proposals. Proposals will be subject to acceptance during this period.

The City reserves the right to accept the proposal that is, in its judgment, the best and most favorable to the interests of the City and the public; to reject the proposal with the lowest cost to the City; to accept any item of any proposal; to reject any and all proposals, and; to waive irregularities and informalities in any proposal submitted or in the RFP process; provided, however, that the waiver of any prior defect or informality will not be considered a waiver of any future or similar defect or informality. Firms should not rely upon, or anticipate, such waivers in submitting their proposal.