



**Request for Proposal (RFP):**  
Design Guidelines for a Near West  
Indianapolis Urban Village

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# INTRODUCTION & PROJECT SUMMARY

The Westside Community Development Corporation invites firms to submit proposals and work examples for consulting services to create context-sensitive Village Design Guidelines for both commercial and residential development (separately bid), to apply to both infill and new construction as well as rehabilitation of existing structures in a variety of urban design contexts from urban village to suburban neighborhood. While the guidelines are potentially applicable to all of Indianapolis and Marion County, the community engagement and stakeholder process for this project is limited to the case study location of the River West Great Place.

Date of Issue: November 4, 2016  
Deadline for Inquiries / Questions: November 16, 2016  
Response to Inquiries / Questions : November 21, 2016  
Proposal Submission Deadline : December 2, 2016  
Selection Completion: December 16, 2016  
Commencement of Project: January 2, 2017  
Public meeting: On or before February 1, 2017  
Draft 1: March 1, 2017  
Draft 2 (if needed): April 1, 2017  
Final draft: No later than May 1, 2017

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All inquiries and questions about this request for proposals must be submitted in writing by email to Martha Henn at [hennm@iupui.edu](mailto:hennm@iupui.edu). Inquiries and questions must be submitted by November 16, 2016. All submitted questions, along with responses to them, will be published in the form of an addendum on Near West Indianapolis's website at [www.nearwestindy.com](http://www.nearwestindy.com) on November 21, 2016.

# PROJECT SCOPE & DELIVERABLES

The Westside Community Development Corporation and the Near West Collaborative are interested in contracting with an urban design and planning consulting firm (Consultant) to provide design guideline deliverables for Near West Indianapolis. As explained in the Background section below, this work also has the potential to be expanded to other parts of Indianapolis and Marion County through the City of Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development's Comprehensive Plan. As such, guidelines will need to be sufficiently generic to allow for applicability to multiple neighborhood contexts, from urban village to suburban neighborhood, without mandating overly strict style restrictions. Design guidelines will consider and reinforce existing characters of village and neighborhood areas while anticipating and embracing future changes, with a goal to provide clear direction and guidance for bridging the existing character with envisioned changes. The guidelines should be designed to encourage high quality urban design, both commercial and residential,

accommodating a variety of building types and elements and important architectural characteristics.

Although guidelines must be sufficiently context-sensitive to guide infill development in a variety of neighborhood development patterns, it is expected that guidelines will include an emphasis on the existing character of areas that may be targeted for development as urban villages and to anticipate future changes. The goal of the design guidelines is to provide clear direction and guidance for bridging the existing character and future vision for urban villages. The West Michigan Street Corridor within the River West Great Place should be used as the predominant case study for development and application of such urban village guidelines.

While applicable county-wide, it is expected that the community engagement process is limited to the case study location of the River West Great Place.

It is important that guidelines consider and comply with the new City of Indianapolis Zoning Code effective April 1, 2016 ([IndyRezone](#)).

The Consultant deliverables will be as follows:

- ▶ Proposed context-sensitive guidelines for Indianapolis villages and neighborhoods generally, as a baseline,
- ▶ An added layer of specific recommendations for the West Michigan Street Corridor in Near West Indianapolis, between White River and Concord Street.

- ▶ As part of the West Michigan Street Corridor recommendations, an audit of existing development, citing specific examples of both strong and poor design.
- ▶ All original editable files, including but not limited to any original artwork files such as SketchUp, AutoCAD, Illustrator,

or Photoshop, and any publication files such as Microsoft Word or InDesign, shall be provided. Westside Community Development Corporation and the City of Indianapolis shall have all rights to use, manipulate, and repackage such work for any non-commercial purpose without further consent of the Consultant.

# BACKGROUND

Westside Community Development Corporation (WCDC) is a not-for-profit community development organization with a mission to stabilize and revitalize the Near Westside neighborhood of Indianapolis through housing and commercial development, property management, and community planning. WCDC is a partner in the River West Great Place. Additional information about WCDC is available at [www.wcdcindy.org](http://www.wcdcindy.org).

Located at the confluence of four neighborhoods just west of Downtown Indianapolis, the River West Great Place is one of three communities currently selected for participation in the Great Places 2020 initiative. Great Places 2020 is a collective impact, community development project led by six implementation partners to transform strategic places in Marion County neighborhoods into dynamic centers of culture, commerce and community. Additional information about Great Places 2020 is available at [www.greatplaces2020.org](http://www.greatplaces2020.org), and the River West Strategic Investment Plan is available at [www.greatplaces2020.org/strategic-plans/](http://www.greatplaces2020.org/strategic-plans/).

West Michigan Street forms the backbone of River West. Historically, the West Michigan Street Corridor has been considered what development researchers call a “border vacuum.” Border vacuums are defined when one or more concentrated city land uses create a major border that is often characterized by an oversimplified empty area that supports a singular use. Border vacuums are often found near universities, medical campuses, or waterways (Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2012). The Michigan Street Corridor is located next to all three of these examples. In order to improve the economic climate of the Near Westside, the Michigan Street Corridor must be deliberately developed to use vacant spaces in diverse ways, thus transforming the “borders” that pose barriers to “seams” that invite economic growth.

The City of Indianapolis is one of the six implementation partners for the Great Places initiative. The City’s Department of Metropolitan Development (DMD) works to encourage, stimulate, and participate in community development, economic growth, neighborhood stabilization,

and district revitalization within the city of Indianapolis and Marion County. Additional information about DMD is available at [www.indy.gov/dmd](http://www.indy.gov/dmd).

To support implementation of the River West Strategic Investment Plan and in response to community desires to create a walkable and vibrant urban neighborhood, WCDC and the River West project team desire to establish design guidelines for commercial and residential property within the Great Place. While developing design guidelines for the neighborhood is beneficial for projects undertaken by River West partners and for negotiations with other investors, they would lack recognition within the official planning and zoning system defined by Indiana Code, which references only the Comprehensive Plan as the document upon which land use and zoning decisions should be made.

## BACKGROUND (CONT)

Separately, the City's Department of Metropolitan Development is exploring the feasibility of adding a design guideline element to the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan that could be applied in select neighborhoods across the City to inform both rezoning and variance cases as well as DMD community development investments. While no commitment has been made or should be implied to implement such a system, inclusion of design guidelines in the Comprehensive Plan would permit application of the guidelines to all property seeking land use or zoning approvals in the applicable area and thus have greater reach. Therefore, because of mutual needs and shared desires of improving the design quality of development, River West and DMD desire to coordinate development of design guidelines.

DMD has precedent for implication of design guidelines in several ways.

First, the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission (IHPC) utilizes guidelines and robust design review for property within a locally-protected historic district. Second, the Regional Center Secondary Zoning District includes design guidelines and design review for property in the downtown area. Next, from time-to-time, DMD revitalization efforts have included design guidelines to inform investments, such as with the Fall Creek Place Homeownership Zone. And finally, while lacking official guidelines, the Department also has recently instituted basic design review for all of its community development investments.

It is envisioned that two primary documents form the foundation upon which design guidelines for this RFP are developed. For residential property, DMD developed advisory Infill Housing Guidelines in the early 1990s focused primarily on the

context of traditional neighborhoods in the core of the city; this document is available at <http://www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DMD/Planning/Documents/1993-InfillHousingGuidelines.pdf>. It is important to note that design guidelines developed for this RFP will need to be flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of development contexts from traditional neighborhood to modern subdivision. For commercial property, the guidelines applicable to the "village mixed-use" areas of the Regional Center Design Guidelines, available at <http://www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DMD/Planning/Documents/2008CPSR003-RegionalCenterDesignGuidelines.pdf>, are thought to be applicable to most neighborhood or village centers, although guidelines developed for this RFP will likewise need to accommodate a variety of neighborhood-scale commercial area contexts.

# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES & SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals should include both commercial and residential guidelines, but bid separately. Design guidelines should include an Introduction, including general principles, intent and explanation of process. Public sector elements (street lighting and parking, traffic calming, bicycle and pedestrian features, street trees, planting and landscaping, street furniture and corridor branding and strategy) do not need to be addressed in submissions. Rather, guidelines will focus on private sector elements, such as development and redevelopment recommendations and concepts (using context to address building footprints, height, density, uses, etc.), style-neutral architectural recommendations, off-street lighting and parking, landscape elements and signage recommendations.

Electronic submission is requested. Proposal target length should aim for no more than 25 pages but shorter proposals are welcome. Please email your proposal to Martha Henn, Near West/River West Convener, at [hennm@iupui.edu](mailto:hennm@iupui.edu), with “Design Guidelines Consultant Submission” in the subject line.

Please address the following in your submittal:

- ▶ Description of approach – intended approach and methods, including community engagement and feedback, with attention to schedule and timeline as outlined and a list of deliverables to be developed.
- ▶ Team expertise – demonstrate firm’s ability to prepare design guidelines by a description of Consultant team and qualifications, with specific information of the project manager and main contact and responsible party for the project and general information on other team members. Include any subcontractors and their specific tasks.
- ▶ Sample Design Guidelines document – at least one but no more than three sample design guidelines projects and client contact information. If the Consultant’s role was limited, please explain what portion of work or of the document can be attributed to Consultant.
- ▶ Project costs, with costs broken out separately for commercial and residential guidelines, not to exceed \$25,000.00.
- ▶ Statement of start date – confirm Consultant’s ability to start project in January 2017.
- ▶ Additional information – please include any additional information Consultant deems useful for the selection process.

The committee responsible for selection of Consultant will include representation from the River West team, DMD, LISC Indianapolis, the West Michigan Street Business Coalition, Near West residents, and all the citywide Great Places. The Committee will review all proposals and may include an interview process. Proposals will be evaluated according to these elements:

- ▶ Experience in preparing design guidelines;
- ▶ Experience with areas undergoing change and rapid and new forms of development;
- ▶ Strength of graphic representations;
- ▶ Strength of written and verbal communications and presentation skills;
- ▶ Experience in identifying, evaluating, synthesizing, and explaining the essential qualities of community design and character;
- ▶ Rationale for proposed fees and budget; and
- ▶ Ability to start and complete project in keeping with stated timelines.

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The City of Indianapolis' Infill Housing Guidelines and Regional Center Design Guidelines will be available for Consultant review as Consultant prepares baseline design guidelines (links provided above). Additional existing reports and documents specific to Near West will be available for the recommendations specific to the West Michigan Street Corridor and Near West Indianapolis.

After contracting with the Consultant in December 2016, Consultant will be responsible for a public participation process that will include one public meeting, to be held in Near West Indianapolis, on or before February 1, 2017 and promoted in advance to the Near West community, for the purpose of gathering input and ideas from community members. In order to remain sensitive to context, Consultant is encouraged provide opportunities for public meeting attendees to respond to and express preferences based on a variety of images; one example of such a process might be a slide deck Community Character Preference Survey.

The Consultant will prepare, by March 1, 2017, a draft of the design guidelines based on all inputs and best practices and presented to the selection committee and any interested members of the community to solicit feedback on the draft. The meeting will be in early March 2017, allowing one week prior to the meeting for committee and public review.

Based on feedback, the Consultant will revise the draft guidelines by April 1, 2017. If warranted by the number and complexity of changes, there will be a second presentation to the selection committee and interested members of the public, in April 2017 and having made the draft public for review one week prior to the meeting.

Based on all feedback, a final draft will be presented to the selection committee by no later than May 1, 2017.