REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

# Westside Corridor Improvement Authority

Brand Discovery, Strategy, and Activation

*Serving the Stockbridge, West Fulton, and West Leonard business districts*

## 1. Introduction and Background

The Westside Corridor Improvement Authority (the "Westside CIA") is seeking proposals from qualified firms to conduct a comprehensive brand discovery, develop a unified brand strategy, and produce an activation plan for the Westside business districts.

The Westside CIA's mission is to strengthen and promote the Westside business districts by improving perception, increasing awareness, emphasizing walkability, and promoting long-term economic vitality. We want the Westside to be known across Grand Rapids and the region as a destination: a place people choose for shopping, dining, working, investing, and gathering, and a place business choose to open and grow.

Grand Rapids' Westside is home to three distinct business districts, each with its own character, history, and mix of businesses:

- **Stockbridge** (the Stocking and Bridge Street area)
- **West Fulton** (including Butterworth)
- **West Leonard**

### Why now

The Westside is growing, and its story needs to catch up. Over the past years, the Westside CIA has invested directly in the corridor through façade and business improvement grants, district banners, public art, wayfinding elements, and the recent gateway arches. New mixed-use and residential development brings more people to live and work here as new restaurants and retail continue to open alongside the established businesses that built these districts.

### Our ambition

The Westside needs a brand that can do two things at once: unite the Westside under one recognizable identity while celebrating what makes Stockbridge, West Fulton, and West Leonard each worth visiting on their own. The brand built through this project will guide how the corridor is presented in the streets, online, and in the community for years to come.

## 2. Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this RFP is to select a qualified consultant or agency to create an authentic, cohesive, and marketable brand identity for the Westside.

**Project Goals:**

- Develop a brand system reflecting the character of the Westside and each of its districts.
- Strengthen community pride and stakeholder alignment.
- Promote the districts as a destination for commerce and engagement.
- Deliver a strategy and visual identity adaptable across print, digital, and district signage.
- Develop a social media strategy that increases awareness of the CIA and its businesses.

## 3. Scope of Services

### A. Brand Discovery and Research

- Review existing branding and marketing materials.
- Conduct stakeholder interviews, surveys, and workshops.
- Identify current perceptions, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.
- Identify and segment target audiences.

### B. Brand Strategy Development

- Define brand personality and core attributes.
- Develop key messages for target audiences.
- Recommend an overarching Westside brand architecture that establishes a recognizable shared identity while allowing Stockbridge, West Fulton, and West Leonard to maintain distinct identities.
- Identify differentiators that distinguish the Westside from other districts.
- Recommend brand positioning strategies for all three districts.

### C. Visual Identity Development

- Propose new logo concepts.
- Develop typography standards.
- Create graphic elements for consistent brand expression.
- Demonstrate applications across streetscape signage, merchandise, social media, and marketing materials.

### D. Activation Planning

- Develop launch strategy recommendations.
- Outline campaign strategy options.
- Identify partnership opportunities with businesses and community groups.
- Provide recommendations for events, signage, and printed materials.

### E. Social Media Templates and Strategy

- Provide posting strategy, campaign concepts, and recommended platforms.
- Deliver sample content and customizable templates for the WSCIA and businesses.
- Provide optional pricing for ongoing social media management services.

## 4. Deliverables

- Stakeholder engagement findings and insights.
- New or revised brand logo.
- Brand strategy, strategic framework and messaging guide.
- Visual identity concepts, graphic elements, and typography with all associated asset files.
- Activation strategy outlining rollout recommendations.
- Campaign strategy guide.
- Social media strategy and content templates.

## 5. Timeline

The proposal should include a detailed timeline outlining project phases, milestones, and anticipated completion dates.

## 6. Qualifications

Proposals should demonstrate:

- Social media strategy and content development experience.
- Examples of comparable past projects.
- Client references.
- Proposed project timeline and pricing.

## 7. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using the following weighted criteria:

| Criterion | Weight |
|---|---|
| Project understanding | **20%** |
| Proposed approach and methodology | **25%** |
| Relevant experience | **20%** |
| Community engagement approach | **15%** |
| Cost and overall value | **20%** |

## 8. Submission Deadline and Contact Information

**Proposal Due Date:** **November 23rd, 2026**

**Submission Format:** Proposals must be submitted in PDF format via email or in hard copy to Verah Narh-Kamara at econdevshrd@grcity.us, or mailed to:

Economic Development Office
300 Monroe Avenue NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

The Westside CIA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, request additional information, or negotiate terms as necessary.

## 9. Terms and Conditions

- All costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal shall be the responsibility of the applicant.
- The Westside CIA reserves the right to negotiate the final scope of services, deliverables, and compensation with the selected consultant prior to executing an agreement.
- The selected consultant will be required to comply with all local, state, and federal regulations related to the services provided.
- This RFP is intended to attract experienced professionals committed to fostering vibrant commercial districts. We look forward to receiving proposals that align with our mission of making the Westside business districts a destination.
- Upon final payment, all approved final deliverables, including logos, visual identity assets, graphic elements, brand guidelines, and associated digital files, shall become the property of the Westside CIA. The selected consultant shall provide editable source files and final production-ready files.