



Request for Proposals: Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Strategic Plan Update

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC) seeks proposals from qualified consultants to facilitate refreshing and updating its strategic plan. The strategic planning process will result in a comprehensive three to five-year plan based on considerable research and extensive input from a variety of stakeholders. The finished plan will identify goals and objectives that will be used to guide priorities and build consensus around the organization's future. Identified priorities must be grounded in operational and fiscal sustainability and incorporate the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

June 30, 2023

THE PITTSBURGH PARKS CONSERVANCY
317 E. Carson Street, Suite 230
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

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Confidentiality Statement

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Thank you for your consideration,

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Please respond to James Snow with any questions or concerns.

All information contained herein is the property of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and may not be disclosed to any third party or used for any purpose whatsoever without the prior express written consent of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

Submission Details

Submission Deadlines

All submissions for responding to this request must be submitted via e-mail (pdf) as stated below, no later than:

**Monday, July 31, 2023
5:00 PM EDT**

Submission Delivery Address

The delivery address to be used for all submissions is:

James Snow
Chief Administrative Officer
The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy
317 E. Carson Street, Suite 230
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Email: jsnow@pittsburghparks.org

Submission Questions and Clarifications

You may contact the following person by Monday, July 24, 2023, if you have any questions or require clarification on any topics covered in this Request for Proposal:

James Snow
Email: jsnow@pittsburghparks.org
Phone: 412-682-7275 ext. 220

Responses will be provided on an ongoing basis and no later than Friday, July 28, 2023. Questions and responses will not be shared.

Electronic Submissions

Electronic submissions in response to this Request for Proposal will be accepted. All submissions via e-mail should be in pdf format and sent to James Snow at jsnow@pittsburghparks.org with the subject line "Strategic Planning Proposal."

Organization Overview & Background

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC) was formed in 1996 when a group of concerned citizens joined forces to address the deteriorated condition of city parks. Working in partnership with the City, they adopted an innovative public-interest partnership model, and in 2001, jointly published the "Regional Parks Master Plan" as the blueprint for parks restoration. In 2012, the plan was updated to accommodate changing circumstances and a broadening scope of work.

The Conservancy originally focused on Pittsburgh's four historic regional parks — Frick, Highland, Riverview, and Schenley — but public recognition of the organization's expertise has led to requests from neighborhood groups, community development organizations, and elected officials for assistance in city-owned community and neighborhood parks. The Parks Conservancy is now active in 22 of the 170 parks across the city's park system.

As the primary fundraiser and non-profit advocate for Pittsburgh's parks, the Conservancy has raised more than \$145 million and completed 23 major capital projects. Completed projects include Frick Park Gatehouse at Reynolds Street, the Highland Park Entry Garden, Schenley Plaza and Schenley Park Visitors Center, Riverview Park Chapel Shelter, Mellon Park's Walled Garden, and Mellon Square in the heart of the city's downtown. In 2016, August Wilson Park in the Hill District, the Westinghouse Memorial in Schenley Park, and the Frick Environmental Center were completed. In 2019, the Patricia Rooney Memorial Fountain in Allegheny Commons was officially dedicated, followed by the restoration of the first phase of the North Promenade and Hartzell Monument in the park. Current projects include ecological restoration in Emerald View Park and Hays Woods Park, additional improvements to the North Promenade in Allegheny Commons Park, development of a vision plan for Baxter Park in Homewood, implementation of the Mellon Park Action Plan, and trail restoration in McKinley Park.

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is a national leader in park planning, management, maintenance, and restoration. Through its partnership with the City, the Parks Conservancy works to create a healthier, more vital urban landscape by providing beautiful and safe places for exercise and relaxation, introducing residents to park resources through robust environmental education programming, attracting new residents

and businesses, increasing property values, and reducing the negative impacts of the urban "heat island" and stormwater runoff into natural waterways.

Current organizational priorities are identified below and a link to the PPC's current strategic plan can be found here: www.pittsburghparks.org/about/reports/

- Implementing equitable investment strategy based on park and community needs to guide development of Pittsburgh's parks and ensure that all Pittsburgh residents have access to quality parks close to home.
- Capital restoration and maintenance of historic structures, public art, and cultural landscapes.
- Ecological restoration and maintenance of natural areas.
- Education and other programming for children, youth, and adults that promotes the following: healthy active lifestyles; an appreciation of nature and its role in our lives; and increasing environmental literacy and stewardship.
- Environmental stewardship through programs that recruit and train volunteers in hands-on restoration of natural areas.
- Operations management and park maintenance.
- Parks planning and community engagement.

The Current Situation: Challenges and Opportunities

Pittsburgh has faced financial challenges since the 1980s, including the City's Act 47 distressed municipality status, which have had a dramatic, negative impact on many of the City's parks. The City has worked hard to balance the public's interests in all the public services it is responsible for, including working to best manage and care for City parks with very limited resources.

While the City has judiciously allocated its resources to care for the parks, historically our regional parks have been the greater beneficiaries of the resources. Because of the size and visitation draw of regional parks, there is a much greater ability to generate revenue from multiple sources for investments in regional parks than in community and neighborhood parks. One important source that is legally restricted to Pittsburgh's regional parks, our largest parks (200 acres or greater), is an annual portion of capital and operating dollars from the Allegheny Regional Asset District (ARAD) funding.

Park agencies across the country face funding challenges for their community and neighborhood parks. Financial challenges faced by the City of Pittsburgh, coupled with the funding disparities among regional, community and neighborhood parks, have resulted in significantly deteriorated conditions at many community and neighborhood parks. The result is reduced value to our neighborhoods.

Vital to the improvements in a few of our beloved parks is the City's public-interest partnership with the PPC, started in December 1996. Since then, the PPC raised over \$145 million from a variety of public and private funding sources. Twenty-three major capital projects have been completed with several additional projects currently underway. The organization stewards hundreds of acres of parkland, engages volunteers and community groups to maintain parks, conducts extensive environmental education programming to more than 4,000 children, welcomes thousands of visitors to spaces like Schenley Plaza and Mellon Square, and operates a handful of park spaces and facilities across the system annually.

To accomplish this, most funds raised annually for projects, programs, and operations have been secured by the PPC from private donors. Private funding alone, however, is not a sustainable model for the continuous care, upkeep, and expansion of the organization. In recognizing this, the PPC and the City of Pittsburgh led a campaign for increased public investment to ask the residents of Pittsburgh for additional property tax revenue to support the parks. In November 2019, Pittsburgh voters passed a ballot referendum by a narrow 52-to-48 percent margin to levy a ½ mill property tax increase dedicated to the parks. Since enacted in 2020, this fund has raised an additional \$30 million for Pittsburgh’s public park system, with the City of Pittsburgh retaining full control of the tax funds and allocation decisions.

In 2021, Pittsburgh City Council unanimously passed an expanded cooperation agreement with the PPC that allows the organization to request funds from the dedicated parks tax. In 2022, the PPC received a capital project budget allocation for the first time. While a major organizational milestone, this funding represents a precedent and is not necessarily guaranteed in future budget cycles. Currently, these funds are restricted to capital expenditures, and cannot be used for the organization’s extensive operating needs. Extensive and ongoing private fundraising has continued to support the organization’s annual budget of \$6 million.

The PPC is at an organizational inflection point with significant opportunities ahead. We believe parks are the most democratic spaces in any city, and as such are critical to addressing a city’s needs for racial and economic equity. They provide places for all members of our city to gather, contemplate, recreate and be physically active. They are cultural assets and with proper investment, parks improve life in the city and the quality of life for all. With significant accomplishments achieved and funding opportunities in place, the PPC requires an updated strategic plan. This plan should identify key strengths and opportunities for sustainable organizational growth, while also assessing the landscape for challenges and ideas for organizational refinement. At its core, the plan should authentically embrace and integrate the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility across all aspects. Parks are for all, and our strategic way forward should be as well.

Qualifications, Expectations and Scope of Work

Qualifications and Expectations

Those Consultants responding to this RFP should possess the following specific qualifications:

- Existing knowledge of city systems, Pittsburgh neighborhoods, city government (preferred)
- Successful representation of similar non-profit clients.
- Successful development of strategic plans, detailing implementation and financing strategies to achieve organizational success.
- Demonstrated ability to manage all aspects of an organizational strategic planning and implementation project.
- Cultural competency and ability to create consensus and conversation from diverse stakeholder interests. For this project, the ideal team will be able to facilitate good dialogue and implement creative approaches to engagement.
- Ability to work fast and synthesize material quickly.
- Demonstrate any conflicts of interest among clients in advance.

The PPC expects that the Strategic Planning team will meet regularly (via video conference and in-person) with key personnel to establish priorities, develop organizational strategies, provide updates, and track progress toward meeting deliverables identified together.

Scope of Work Requested

- Conduct a pre-meeting with PPC staff and PPC Strategic Planning Committee
- Review relevant documents identified by PPC team including previous strategic plans and other materials.
- Organize and facilitate meetings to encourage participation and gather insight regarding critical issues and priorities for PPC.
- Work with the Strategic Planning Committee to ensure that there is thorough board, staff, partner, and community engagement.
- Partner with PPC marketing and communications staff on all related event notifications.
- Provide Strategic Planning Committee with documentation of findings from any public and staff meetings, and preliminary direction for a Strategic Plan.
- Provide a draft Strategic Plan that will guide the organization's work over the next 3-5 years to PPC leadership and the Strategic Planning Committee for input and review by March/April 2024.
- Provide final Strategic Plan by May 2024.

Budget and Timeline

The PPC looks to the Consultant to present a high-quality scope of work and cost-effective fee proposal, with a maximum budget of \$40,000. The estimated schedule for completion of the plan, including involvement of PPC staff, key external stakeholders, and presentations to the Strategic Planning Taskforce of the Board of Directors, is 8 months from date of contract execution. The PPC anticipates executing a contract with the selected consultant in August 2023. The Consultant must remain available to the extent of any scheduling delays.

Please find a preliminary timeline of the project below.

- Project kickoff with Project Kickoff with Staff & Steering Committee – September 2023
- Project Overview Presentation to Steering Committee – October 2023
- Community and Stakeholder Outreach – October 2023 – January 2024
- Project Update to Board of Directors Draft Plan Development – February 2024
- Draft Plan Submitted – March/April 2024
- Submit Final Plan – May 2024
- Board Adoption of Final Plan – June 2024

Proposal Requirements

The PPC is requesting that submitted proposals contain the following information in the ensuing order:

1. **Table of Contents**
2. **Letter of Interest:** A letter expressing the Consultant's interest in being considered by the PPC. Please include a brief statement of any experience working with organizations in a strategic

manner seeking to conduct, support, and/or foster diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, and accessibility initiatives.

3. **Project Understanding and Approach:** A statement demonstrating your understanding of the proposed project and describing your approach to completing your proposed scope of work in a timely and cost-efficient manner.
4. **Team Organization and Description:** Please include information about the professional background and specific relevant experience for the proposed project team. If using subconsultants, provide a description of each of the individual firms that will be a part of the Consultant Team; their role on the Consultant Team and involvement in each task; and how the Consultant Team will be organized.
5. **Scope of Work, Fee Proposal, and Schedule:** Please provide a detailed scope of work, task-by-task fee proposal, and task-by-task schedule. This section should also include a complete schedule of costs (including supplies, travel, etc.) associated with the successful execution of your proposal.
6. **References:** Please provide 2-3 professional and/or client references.

Consultants are also encouraged to submit any examples of previous strategic planning work.

Terms and Conditions

Please include the following terms and conditions with your submission:

- Standard billing terms
- Contract termination rights and obligations
- Reciprocal indemnification
- Arbitration settlement provisions
- Insurance requirements and proof of insurance

Facilities

The primary place for the Consultant's work will be completed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Meetings may occur at one, or all, of the following locations; The Highline (317 E. Carson Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219); The Frick Environmental Center (2005 Beechwood Boulevard, Pittsburgh, PA 15217); and Schenley Plaza (4100 Forbes Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15260). Meetings may also occur in parks across Pittsburgh or at other stakeholder locations. The Consultant shall attend meetings and perform various tasks during the contract period. Identified PPC staff will work with the Consultant in arranging meetings with staff, elected officials, community partners, and the Board of Directors.

Consultant Selection

Final selection will be based on several factors, including, but not limited to, the firm's ability to demonstrate a commitment to the PPC's mission and vision; articulation of how the firm's qualifications and experience will best serve the PPC's goals; demonstration of ability to craft a high-quality organizational

strategic plan; commitment to the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; demonstrated ability to conduct stakeholder and community engagement; and proposal cost. Please see a detailed breakdown of proposal scoring criteria below.

The PPC is committed to being an equitable and inclusive organization and strives to incorporate equity throughout all of our work and outcomes. Minority and/or Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) are strongly encouraged to apply to this opportunity.

Criteria 1 - Experience with strategic planning and evidence of ability to execute 30%

- Proposal demonstrates consultant(s) possess the qualifications and expectations outlined.
- Proposal outlines consultant(s) experience working with similar organizations and projects.
- Strength of sample documents and references.

Criteria 2 – Scope and quality of proposal 40%

- Proposal demonstrates an understanding of the objectives and desired results.
- Proposal contains all requested materials.
- Approach outlined likely to lead to successful development of an actionable strategic plan.
- Proposal outlines detailed information on tasks, milestones, and timeline.
- Proposal illustrates consultant(s) ability to execute the proposed approach.

Criteria 3 – Budget 15%

- Budget is reasonable and justified given the scope and work plan.

Criteria 4 – Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) 15%

- Consultant(s) or subconsultant(s) have MWBE certification.
- Consultant(s) have demonstrated experience in integrating DEIA principles and actions into strategic plans.