



**DEPARTMENT
OF
PURCHASING & CONTRACTING**

**OFFICE
OF
DIRECTOR**

**DeKalb County Government
2nd Floor, The Maloof Center, 1300 Commerce Drive, Decatur, GA 30030**

March 28, 2013

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) No. 13-500263

FOR

PERMITTING IMPROVEMENT PROCESS PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA

DeKalb County Government (the County) requests qualified individuals and firms with experience in permitting and business license operations planning to submit proposals for providing a permitting improvement process.

I. INTRODUCTION

DeKalb County seeks to engage a contractor to develop and implement a permitting improvement process plan. This process will involve outreach to stakeholders, a review of the current state of operations, development of a plan to improve the permitting process, and implementation of agreed upon changes.

The consulting services requested in this RFP will be a critical part of a comprehensive effort to improve the processes, operational structure, business culture, and technology associated with permitting and licensing in the County. In conjunction with this effort, a Steering Committee has been formed to oversee the project. A Project Team, comprised of staff from each of the functional areas of the permitting and licensing divisions, has been created to identify and remedy short-term, "low-hanging fruit" business process changes, and to assist the selected service provider with establishing the current state of operations and implementing desired changes. A Stakeholders Group has also been established to provide input throughout the process, and to serve as ambassadors to the community. Finally, a Technology Group has been formed to coordinate the identification of user requirements, to assist the selected service provider with the creation of a comprehensive technology plan, and to facilitate the implementation of the comprehensive technology plan.

Selected service provider will specifically target the following areas for improvement:

- Customer service
- Efficiency of permitting and business license processes
- Timeliness of the plan review and approval process
- Timeliness of inspections and approval process
- Timeliness of the business license issuance process
- Elimination of undue burdens within the processes
- Dependencies with other approvals (i.e. zoning)
- Quality of reviews and inspections
- Allocation of resources in relation to service demand levels
- Technology requirements (software and hardware) to effectively and efficiently provide services and accept payments
- Consistency of policies and adopted standards with best practices

Feedback has been received from the business community and residents of the County that current permitting and business license issuance functions are not executed efficiently in support of the customer service demands and the economic development objectives of the County. Additionally, there are several new technology applications that support the permit issuance and associated payment processes that the County wishes to consider. Permitting and business license functions are currently spread across several County departments including, Planning and Sustainability, Public Works, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Fire and Rescue, Finance, and Information Technology. Permitting and licensing in the County includes, but is not limited to the platting process, zoning review and approval, construction of infrastructure (water/sanitary sewer/paving/storm drainage), review and issuance of building and building-related permits, skilled trades (electrical/plumbing/mechanical/building) inspections, fire marshal reviews, all business and occupational taxes, environmental compliance (ie. grease trap/tree reviews), and the parcel validation and change process.

II. STATEMENT OF WORK

The goal of the permitting improvement process is to create a comprehensive, efficient and effective permit and business license issuance system for the County. The selected service provider will be responsible for creating a project plan that includes the following: (1) a detailed activities and project timeline; (2) developing project performance metrics for on-going reporting purposes; (3) giving progress presentations at project planning meetings to the Steering Committee, Project Team, and Stakeholders Group; (4) maintenance of all project-related documents, notes, and records (in a format approved by the County) to ensure appropriate documentation of project history and progress; (5) development of reports for presentation to the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners; and (6) working closely with the County's project sponsor, the Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Development, and coordinating with the Project Manager and Project Team.

The contractor shall deliver the plan to the County within four hundred and fifty-eight (458) calendar days. This project, including analysis and implementation, is expected to last fifteen (15) months.

A. Baseline Analysis

1. Obtain Stakeholder Input

In an effort to determine the primary concerns and objectives of the permitting customers, the service provider shall develop and conduct direct interviews (no less than 15) with a variety of key stakeholders in the County. These stakeholders should be individuals who are familiar with the County's permitting and business license operations. Stakeholders interviewed should include, but not be limited to, residential and commercial real estate developers, land use attorneys, independent contractors, business owners, and professional plan-runners.

2. Review Business Processes

The service provider shall be responsible for reviewing and documenting, through flow charts and narratives, all business processes associated with the issuance of permits and licenses in the outlined departments, including but not limited to, Planning and Sustainability, Public Works, GIS, Fire, Finance, and Information Technology. This will include the development of workflow diagrams for each of the permitting streams and a workflow analysis conducive to the identification of bottlenecks and the formulation of business solutions. The service provider shall gather data from staff to document processes and opportunities for improvement. The service provider shall assess the effectiveness of the County's website with respect to the permitting process, and assess current forms and applications used in the permitting process.

3. Review Structural Issues

In addition to reviewing business processes, the service provider shall analyze the organizational structure, organizational charts, the physical location and arrangement of staff, staffing levels, and opportunities for training and cross-training. The service provider shall document reporting hierarchies where County organizational charts are inadequate. They shall analyze how staff is arranged such as on what floors they are located, and investigate alternatives to continuing to operate out of the Clark Harrison Building at 330 West Ponce de Leon Avenue, Decatur, GA 30030.

The service provider shall review the fee structure currently in place in DeKalb County, as well as the fee structure for major cities and counties in the region, in addition to the best practices of permitting and licensing operations nationally.

The service provider shall investigate the merits of outsourcing building permit reviews. Outsourcing should be considered a potential option to supplement the work of internal County staff or as an option for certain County departments or divisions in the process as well.

4. Review of Technology Uses and Needs

The service provider shall be required to review all technology used in permitting and licensing including, but not limited to hardware and software. The service provider shall document how technology is currently used while looking for ways to more efficiently or effectively employ hardware and software. The service provider shall analyze all critical applications, and look for alternatives to continued reliance on these applications.

5. Review of Fee Structure

The service provider shall review and analyze the current permit and business license fee structure relative to similar jurisdictions regionally and nationally. Jurisdictions used for comparative purposes should maintain highly effective permitting and business license operations. This analysis should be conducive to potential modifications of the currently employed fee structure.

B. Develop and Present the Permitting Improvement Process Plan

The service provider shall analyze the current business processes, structural issues, and technology uses and needs, and develop a series of recommendations that will be known as the "Permitting Improvement Process Plan and Implementation." The service provider shall consider all relevant applicable local, state, and federal laws, in addition to County policies and procedures, when making recommendations. These recommendations should be prioritized and presented along with an implementation timeline. The timeline should be prioritized according to benefit, cost, and ease of implementation. The service provider shall be required to present this plan to the County's project sponsor, the steering committee, key stakeholders, and elected officials.

The plan shall propose an optimal solution for the currently-fragmented issuance and decision-making process for permits and business licenses, providing customers with a single streamlined and efficient unit of services. The plan shall propose changes that will support a customer-friendly and customer-oriented culture through ideal staffing levels, appropriately matched skill sets, and adequate technology. The plan shall recommend online and written materials about the permit and license request requirements and issuance that are easily understandable and accessible, thorough, and effectively designed to satisfy the needs of all customers. The plan shall also recommend the implementation of changes or deployment of new technologies consistent with proposed business process and structural changes.

The plan shall include the following:

- Flow charts and narratives describing proposed new business processes.
- Proposed changes to the County's website as it relates to the permitting process and business licenses. Proposed changes should transform the County website into an interactive web portal that provides comprehensive information about the requirements associated with each permit type.

- Recommendations regarding forms and applications used in the permitting process.
- Proposed metrics the County can use going forward to gauge the success of the plan.
- Proposed changes to staffing levels, job descriptions, and training requirements.
- Proposed changes, if any, to the operational structure and the reporting hierarchy.
- Proposed changes, if any, to physical location of staff within current facilities.
- Proposed alternative to current location, with associated costs and benefits.
- Proposed changes to the fee structure for permits and licenses, keeping in mind that fees should remain competitive with those charged in the region, and should be consistent with those charged by the majority of permitting and licensing operations nationally.
- Recommended use of outsourcing to supplement DeKalb County plan review staff.
- Recommended changes to technology. Recommended changes should include online verification of zoning, online plan submission, online permit application for residential additions and alterations, an online portal for customers to track where their permit is in the process, and other initiatives that allow for more online customer services, and which decrease in-person visits to County facilities. This will include making better use of technology currently employed, upgrading or enhancing hardware and/or software currently owned, purchasing new hardware or software, or some combination. Detailed cost estimates should be included with any recommended upgrade, enhancement, or purchase.
- Assessment of County-driven permitting and business license data cleanup initiative, and recommended course of action regarding permitting and business license data cleanup to ensure efficient processes and accurate reporting.
- Development of an implementation tasks list and timeline.

C. Implementation

The service provider shall be required to implement all aspects of the Permitting Improvement Process Plan, with the exception of any proposed major hardware or software purchases, or major facility changes. Implementation shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- Creation of materials to train staff on new processes.
- Creation of new work flows and supporting documentation for stakeholders and customer information.
- Creation of all other communications materials (electronic and print), consistent with recommendations.
- Training of all relevant staff on new processes.

- Creation of new policies and procedures, where necessary, consistent with recommendations.
- Creation of new job descriptions, where necessary.
- Collaboration with County staff, as requested, to make website more user-friendly, consistent with recommendations.
- Collaboration with County staff to better utilize currently-owned technology.
- Collaboration with County staff to affect any relocation recommendations, or changes in organizational structure or reporting hierarchy.
- Implementation of organizational and structural changes where necessary.

III. PROPOSAL FORMAT

Responders are required to submit their proposals in the following format:

A. TECHNICAL PROPOSAL (NOTE: DO NOT INCLUDE ANY COSTS OF ANY KIND IN THIS SECTION.)

1. Technical Approach: Respondent shall briefly describe the method that the company will utilize to provide the deliverables as outlined above in the above "Statement of Work." Responders may include supplemental material or literature in order to substantiate that their service meets the specified minimum requirements. There are no restrictions on the number of pages presented in the submitted proposal; however, it is recommended that responder's proposals are specific and concise.
2. Organizational Qualifications: Describe the company's experience, capabilities and other qualifications for this project. Include three (3) successful, comparable projects of similar size and scope to this project. Include the company name and description of work performed and the total value of the project. Provide the contact information for these projects on the Reference Form, attached herein as Attachment G. Include an audited financial statement for the last three (3) years.
3. Project Management: Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Include the anticipated use of subcontractors or vendors. Describe any resources necessary to accomplish the purpose of the project.
4. Personnel: Identify the individuals who will be part of the project team. Include any outside personnel such as subcontractors.
5. Responder declares further that it is / is not a DeKalb County Firm.