



Request for Proposals for Rebranding Historic Downtown Wilson

RFP # 2023-86

Respond to:

Meg Edwards, Downtown Marketing & Communications Coordinator
medwards@wilsonnc.org

Issue Date:

June 14, 2024

Submission Deadline:

Friday, July 26, 2024 @ 3:00 pm

RFP Issued by:

City of Wilson
Downtown Division
PO Box 10
Wilson, NC 27894

www.historicdowntownwilson.com

Project Brief:

The City of Wilson - Downtown Development Division on behalf of the Wilson Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC), Wilson Downtown Properties (WDP), and downtown stakeholders invites the submission of proposals from qualified marketing and branding consultant firms for rebranding and marketing services, including, but not limited to market research, brand strategy, brand creative and design, and website redevelopment.

Downtown Partnerships Overview

In Wilson, the downtown development effort is a partnership between Wilson Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC), Wilson Downtown Properties, Inc. (WDP), Wilson County, and the City of Wilson. Both the WDDC and WDP, Inc. boards have representation from the city, county, downtown stakeholders, and are staffed by members of the Downtown Development Division of the City of Wilson. All partners share the same vision:

Vision: The home of charm and innovation, Historic Downtown Wilson is the heart of an inclusive community where arts, culture, entertainment, recreation, and diverse businesses create a welcoming lifestyle that draws people day and night.

Wilson Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC)

Wilson Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC) is a non-profit organization that promotes historic preservation and combats community deterioration. WDDC is managed by a Board of Directors comprised of downtown business owners, property owners, non-profit leaders, and City and County representatives who share a passion for revitalizing the heart of our city. Board members provide leadership in downtown development by delivering vision, human capital, and managing financial resources.

Mission: Wilson Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC) leads community investment and drives the social, cultural & economic engine of an authentic Wilson by creating and promotion a vibrant, innovation & sustainable downtown.

Wilson Downtown Properties, Inc. (WDP)

Wilson Downtown Properties, Inc. (WDP) is a non-profit organization that acts as the redevelopment affiliate of the Wilson Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC). Created to facilitate the adaptive reuse of obsolete properties, the organization acquires downtown properties and then partners with entities to redevelop obsolete properties.

Mission: Wilson Downtown Properties, Inc. (WDP) is the leader in creative placemaking and property redevelopment projects – through economic development, art, culture, innovation and preservation – that drives community and economic investment to fully realize the vision of Historic Downtown Wilson.

Main Street Association:

Wilson is a North Carolina Main Street Community, designated by the NC Department of Commerce and Main Street & Rural Planning Center and is nationally accredited by Main Street America. Wilson Downtown Development Corporation is charged with administering the program at the local level and building public-private partnerships to spur economic development that achieves measurable results such as investment, business growth, and job creation.

WDDC operates within the Municipal Service District (MSD) known and promoted as Historic Downtown Wilson (HDW); HDW is the destination branding for WDDC and WDP

Overview of Downtown

Downtown Wilson is known for its rich ties to agriculture, arts and culture, technological innovation, redevelopment, and train transit.

Agriculture

In the early 1900s, Wilson had the largest bright leaf tobacco market in the world. There are several examples of how our tobacco history is reflected throughout our downtown. The whole design and layout of one of our biggest economic drivers and arts & culture focal points, the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park (VSWP) mirrors the floor plan of a tobacco warehouse. The bricks that line the stage and the ground's barrier wall are all recycled from tobacco warehouses of the past. The park itself is based on the grounds where the first-ever tobacco warehouse was located; which truly is magical in itself, as it once served as the biggest economic driver at the conception of our downtown. The only standing tobacco warehouse downtown, holds not only apartments but the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park Museum & Gift Shop, as well as the American Center for Photographers (ACP). Even one of our downtown businesses, Artisan Leaf is dedicated to preserving the tobacco leaf by cultivating the crop into stunning works of art. The history is everywhere.

Arts & Culture

While taking a drive or stroll around downtown, it is easy to see how we embrace arts and culture. You can't go down one of our main streets without walking past an art gallery/studio, various sculptures, and/or murals on walls and streets. One mural is a captivating rendering of several famous musicians with Wilson roots and is a part of the African American Music Trail. Once a year, the outside of some of our downtown buildings, become a gallery for the annual Eyes on Main Street Photography Festival. Photographers from all around the world visit our downtown to participate and view 100 enlarged photo printouts displayed on the outside of our downtown buildings. This Spring, the structures that hold the photos in place were occupied by works of art from the students of our local charter school, Sallie B. Howard School of Arts and Sciences.

Technology Innovation

Within the last 20 years we have quickly adapted to the needs of advancing technology. Greenlight, housed under the City of Wilson, is North Carolina's first community-owned, symmetrical gigabit, fiber-to-the-home-network in the state. It represents more than two decades of planning and designing for a future-proof infrastructure that was the natural outflow for a community characterized by a long history of self-reliance and public infrastructure focus. The advancement of technology spawned the Gig East Initiative in 2016, with the vision of growing an entrepreneurial ecosystem of innovation in arts and technology. Then in 2019, the Gig East Exchange opened its doors as a coworking space that creates a home for entrepreneurs to begin cultivating their businesses.

Redevelopment

Over the past two decades, more than 50 downtown buildings have been restored and renovated. Along with renovations, in the past three years we have been apart of the creation of a new Healthcare Foundation YMCA, a 5-story parking deck, and a 240-unit mixed-use apartment complex, Centro at Pine-Nash. We have progressed so much that the Single-A team of the Milwaukee Brewers, the Carolina

Mudcats, have decided to make downtown Wilson their new home. Along with the new baseball stadium, we will have a new hotel, and several additional apartment complexes within walking distance of the stadium.

Train Transit

The Wilson Amtrak station was built by the Atlantic Coast Line in 1924, marking this year as its 100th anniversary. Our Amtrak station has one of the highest ridership of all transit systems in North Carolina. Our marketing plan needs to incorporate how to better promote and utilize this asset.

Intended Impact

Our growth will only continue as we prepare to break ground for a new minor league baseball stadium, new hotel(s), and new apartments. As we grow, we do not wish to leave our history behind, however we are no longer a small town with a few hidden gems and assets. We are on the cusp of something much larger and are ready for our new brand to reflect our new identity.

Scope of Work

The purpose and intent for retaining rebranding services is to establish a contract with one or more qualified firms to develop a coordinated strategy to build a credible and distinctive brand for downtown Wilson. The branding initiative will be comprised of five distinct components. Interested partners are invited to submit proposals on any individual components or they may submit a proposal for the full scope of the initiative:

- Market Research
- Brand Strategy
- Brand Creative & Design
- Website Redevelopment
- Social Media Strategy

The selected firm(s) must be collaborative (able to work with City of Wilson staff, WDDC board members, WDP board members, stakeholder groups, and other consultants/partner firm(s) as needed) and have extensive experience in rebranding similar companies/organizations.

I. Market Research

Conduct market research that will ensure the marketing strategy for the rebrand is based on sound data and principles and will feel authentic and organic to those most familiar with the area.

- a. Audit existing research, reports, neighborhood assets & institutions, as well as the current branding materials and standards, that will assist in achieving the project's goals and meeting all deliverables.

II. Brand Strategy

Define how downtown should be perceived through its identity.

- a. Develop a brand platform, as well as positioning, personality, promise, differentiation, and values.

- b. Develop a comprehensive brand architecture that addresses relationships between demographics, events/programs, location, and umbrella organization.
- c. Develop and help implement a strategy to gain organizational consensus for the new brand. This should include, but is not limited to, target audiences, key stakeholders, residents, business and community leaders and media. Guide new brand implementation.
- d. Develop implementable strategy for marketing, promotional, public relations, and community outreach effort, with specific details of timelines and tactics.
- e. Create a communications plan inclusive of brand rollout strategy for stakeholders and target audiences. This includes a marketing strategy inclusive of public relations and outreach, internal implementation, and external awareness.
- f. Develop standards for monitoring and measuring brand performance.

III. Brand Creative & Design

Develop the visual identity for the new brand platform.

- a. Create a visual identity and logo package with brand and style guidelines for its use.
 - i. Logo (full color and one color)
 - ii. Color palette
 - iii. Brand & font guidelines
 - iv. Associated visual and digital elements
- b. Inventory and assess current brand and collateral materials.

IV. Website Development

Develop a strategy to create a new website to match/reflect updated brand identity that is inclusive and accessible to all; hearing impaired, visually impaired, etc.

V. Social Media Strategy

Develop an implementable strategy that reflects our organization's personality, values, and ensures a consistent and distinct brand experience across all channels.

- a. Audit current channels, content and analytics.
- b. Create actionable plan to increase engagement and growth across all platforms including how to increase post performance and strategic insights to innovative storytelling narratives.
- c. Create content guide that includes best practices and improvement for each platform and suggestions for maximizing content

Existing Brand Elements (logo, colors, tagline):



Colors: Red: PMS 1805
Gold: PMS 124
Green: PMS 575
Greenish/blue: PMS 323

Tagline: “Crossroads of charm & innovation”

Submission Requirements

Electronic proposals must be received by **Friday, July 26, 2024 at 3:00 pm**. Proposals received after the closing date may not be accepted and, if accepted, may not be considered in response to the RFP. The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any informality it deems in its best interest. Any requirements in the RFP that cannot be met must be indicated in the proposal. Proposers must respond to the entire Request for Proposals (RFP). Any incomplete proposal may be eliminated from the competition at the discretion of the City. Proposals not received by the deadline stated will not be considered.

Submissions should be submitted to: Meg Edwards, Downtown Marketing & Communications Coordinator medwards@wilsonnc.org and Kimberly Van Dyk, Director of Planning & Community Revitalization kvandyk@wilsonnc.org.

Questions & Responses

Questions regarding the RFP must be in writing and should be directed to Meg Edwards via email medwards@wilsonnc.org and Kimberly Van Dyk, Director of Planning & Community Revitalization kvandyk@wilsonnc.org. Questions should be submitted no later than **Friday, July 19, 2024**. All questions and answers will be shared with all proposers.

Submission Content

Each submission shall contain the following:

1. Firm Experience:

- **General Overview:** years in business, number of employees, philosophy, operating approach.
- **Specific Experience:** A description of services the respondent has previously provided to organizations with similar requirements to those contained herein.
- **Project Team Composition:** Describe the roles of team members, including qualifications and demonstrated success in branding and/or creative development initiatives; only include people who will have continuous or substantial involvement in the project.

2. General Capabilities: Advertising, branding, public relations, collateral development, etc.

3. Approach: Description of the process and project elements you plan to pursue. The scope of work description may be expanded to provide further detail or modified to reflect specific procedures unique to the contractor.

4. Cost: Lump sum cost for all basic services described in the scope of work, as well as a breakdown of costs by task components (Market Research, Brand Strategy, Brand Creative & Design, Website Development, Social Media Strategy) in the scope of work and/or fee schedule.

5. Timeline: including discovery, visioning and execution on all deliverables, including start and end dates and phases.

6. Clients: Sample list of past and present clients and list of at least three (3) most relevant references providing contact names, organizational names, addresses, emails, and phone numbers.

7. Consultants/Partner firms: Resumes of all consultants, specialists or other firms who would be involved in the project.

RFP Timeline:

<u>RFP Process</u>	<u>Date and Time</u>
RFP Advertisement Date	06/14/2024
Deadline for Written Questions	07/19/2024
City Response to Questions (anticipated)	07/22/2024
Proposals Due	07/26/2024 @ 3:00 pm
RFP Award	TBD

Selection Criteria

Criteria on which the evaluation team will base its selection may include, without limitation, the following:

Experience: demonstrated experience in marketing, branding, graphic design, destination promotion and other beneficial expertise. The quality of the respondent's management, reputation, and references.

Deliverables: depth and clarity of the services and process to deliver those services in a fashion that is manageable for the City to implement, along with the degree to which the proposal demonstrates the respondent's full understanding of and the ability to perform the services required by the RFP.

Approach: quality, clarity, creativity, and the success with which the proposal(s) meet the needs and goals of the BID in the undertaking of this project.

Cost: The cost estimates to complete the project compared to the deliverables offered.

Review of Submissions

The Evaluation Team will review all submissions for completeness and compliance with the requirements and terms and conditions hereof. The City reserves the right to request additional materials, including those it may deem useful or appropriate to evaluate each respondent's qualifications and past experience, or clarification or modification of any submitted proposal. Submission of a proposal shall constitute the respondent's permission to the City to make such inquiries concerning the respondent as the City, in its discretion, deems useful or appropriate. The City is not obligated to make any such request or to accept any unsolicited additional materials, clarification, modification, or background information. The City may conduct discussions with some of the respondents submitting proposals and not others. The City reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject at any time, any or all proposals, and to withdraw this RFP without notice.

Interviews

Interviews may be held with any or all the respondents after the receipt of the submissions. Interviews with potential firms will be scheduled after initial review of the proposals.

Miscellaneous Conditions

The issuance of this RFP and the submission of a response by any responding firm(s) or acceptance of such response by the City RFP do not obligate the City in any manner. The City reserves the right to amend, modify, or withdraw this RFP, to revise any requirements of this RFP, to require supplemental statements or information from any firm, to accept or reject any

or all responses hereto, to extend the deadline submission for responses thereto, to negotiate or hold discussions with any respondent and to waive defects and allow corrections of deficient responses which do not completely conform to the instructions contained herein, and to cancel this RFP, in whole or in part, if the City deems it in its best interest to do so. The City may exercise the foregoing rights at any time without notice and without liability to any proposing firm or any other party for their expenses incurred in the preparation of the responses hereto or otherwise. Responses to this RFP will be prepared at the sole cost and expense of the responding firm(s). No copies of materials submitted in response to this RFP will be returned.