

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
Planning for Sustainable Development
in the
Fort Washington Office Park

Summary

Upper Dublin and Whitemarsh Townships are requesting qualifications from interdisciplinary firms and consulting teams interested in evaluating the opportunities and constraints for sustainable development and redevelopment within the Fort Washington Office Park. Of particular interest is information on alternative zoning and development code regulations and evaluating the potential for creating a successful Transfer of Development Rights program.

Nine (9) hard copies and one digital copy of the team's qualifications should be submitted by 2 PM on Friday, November 20, 2009. Consultants may submit complete copies to:

Jonathan Bleemer, Finance Director
Upper Dublin Township
801 Loch Alsh Avenue
Fort Washington, PA 19034-1697

Responses shall not exceed 20 to 25 pages. The submission should be placed in a sealed envelope, clearly marked on the outside with the following: "RFQ/Fort Washington Office Park."

For information or questions concerning this Request for Qualifications ("**RFQ**"), please contact Elizabeth Rogan, AICP, by phone at (610) 649-6931 or via e-mail at esrogan@gryphonsystems.com

This project is being partially funded by an Efficient Growth for Growing Suburbs (EGGS) grant from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission ("**DVRPC**."). Matching funds are provided by Upper Dublin and Whitemarsh Townships. The total project budget shall not exceed \$90,000.

Project Area Description

Upper Dublin and Whitemarsh Townships are situated in eastern Montgomery County, north of Philadelphia. Both communities were initially settled in the 1690s, and have a development history similar to other nearby communities, such as Upper Moreland, Abington, and Springfield Townships. Upper Dublin Township ("**UDT**") is approximately 90 percent developed, primarily as a bedroom suburb with a population of 25,878. Whitemarsh Township has little concentrated commercial area and a few larger residential tracts; otherwise its development pattern is similar

to Upper Dublin Township's. Whitemarsh Township's population is approximately 16,702 (population figures from the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau).

UDT and the portion of Whitemarsh in the Fort Washington area can attribute much of its growth to its location at the intersection of State Route 309 (S.R. 309) and the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76). In addition to these major transportation corridors the area is well served by SEPTA's R-5 commuter rail line and a number of bus routes that link the train station to the Fort Washington Office Park.

Opened in 1953, the Fort Washington Office Park ("**Park**") extends over approximately 563 acres. The Park is situated within the Sandy Run watershed and its southern boundary is the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Two streams, the Pine Run and Rapp Run, traverse the Park resulting in approximately 65% of the land area being within these streams' floodplains. When the Park was initially constructed development regulations were limited. Many building lots situated in wetlands and flood-prone lowlands were developed with commercial, warehousing and industrial uses. These marginal lots were never well suited for this type of development but were functional. However, as surrounding residential areas grew, flooding in the Office Park worsened. Currently there are buildings on lots in the most flood prone areas that sit empty and lots on higher and dryer ground are under utilized.

Frequent flooding in portions of the Park exacerbates local roadway deterioration and private properties sitting vacant have lowered property values and tax ratables. UDT finds itself in a catch-22 situation since one key to encouraging private property investment and to retaining the quality of life for those who live and work in an area is to maintain and invest in local infrastructure. However, in this case that investment could literally be "washed away."

Fundamentals

Given local and national economic circumstances and the obligations local governments have to provide for the public's health, safety and welfare, municipalities understand that to retain the quality of life and level of public services its communities expect any non-residential tax base must be stable and expanded, when possible. UDT and Whitemarsh Township believe that the values of commercial properties in Fort Washington are dramatically reduced by both flooding and by poorly organized and maintained vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems.

Over the years, to deal with these ongoing challenges UDT has worked with Temple University's Center for Sustainable Communities ("**Center**".) The Center recently completed the *Fort Washington Area Flooding and Transportation Improvement Study* and provided UDT with a conceptual redevelopment implementation plan. This RRQ seeks a professional team to evaluate the feasibility of those recommendations, including the likely success of a Transfer of Development Rights program as well as to recommend other viable strategies.

In responding to the RFQ and, eventually, in preparing a final product the consultants/consulting team should review and consider the following:

1. UDT has a long history of planning in a topical fashion. Existing neighborhood plans and topical reports should be used for general policy direction and as the base for any data collection. The following list identifies some of the pertinent studies.
 - a. Temple University's Center for Sustainable Communities presentations and studies on the Park. Copies of these documents are available in the "Forms and Documents" section of the website under "**Temple University Studies for Upper Dublin Township/Fort Washington Flooding Study by Temple University**"
<http://www.upperdublin.net/documents/index.aspx>
 - b. The link for the final version of Temple University's most recent report on flooding and infrastructure improvements is provided below. Please note: additional report sections are on the UDT website and floodplain mapping in the study area is being updated.
http://www.upperdublin.net/inc/documents/30/FortWashingtonStudy_Report_08082008.pdf
 - c. Temple University's City and Regional Planning Fall 2006 final planning project, "*Out of the Water, A Revitalization Plan for the Fort Washington Office Park*" can be viewed at:
<http://www.temple.edu/ambler/crp/CRP%20Studio-Fall%202006.pdf>
 - d. The 2003 draft Master Plan for the Fort Washington Office Park, prepared by Wulff Architect's. The Board of Commissioners never acted on the plan and there was little consideration of the location and/or impacts floodplain.
 - e. The Spring 2008 Urban Land Institute Technical Advisory Panel's final report focused on the Dresher Triangle area, an underdeveloped area immediately north of the Park.
http://www.upperdublin.net/inc/documents/30/ULI_TAP_UDT_DresherTriangle.pdf
2. Whitemarsh Township's Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed and recommendations are expected to be consistent with that Plan. Inconsistencies, if any, would need to be identified and explained.

Consultants please note: *While the final SRP may need information contained in the above noted reports to be updated &/or gaps filled in, there should be no duplication of existing data collection or analysis.*

3. UDT is currently in the process of working with URS to prepare its first Comprehensive Plan. Consultants engaged as a result of this RFQ/RFP process are expected to coordinate closely with URS and the Comprehensive Plan's Steering Committee. Presentations to elected and/or advisory boards in both Townships are also anticipated.

4. In built-out, suburban communities the border between residential and non-residential uses is a challenging area to plan for and manage. If development in flood prone areas is relocated to “higher and dryer” ground and new development occurs in a more compact area, then what buffering requirements and design guidelines are the most appropriate to address various stakeholders’ concerns? How can issues and options be explained to the stakeholders so that they are clearly understood?
5. Given existing environmental and physical constraints in the Park and the deterioration of the pedestrian and vehicular infrastructure in the Fort Washington commercial area, what options, regulatory and otherwise, can be used to reverse the clear and cyclic public and private disinvestment in the area?
6. If a TDR program is viable what happens to privately owned “decommissioned” properties and/or are there more appropriate public options for those lots? Given Pennsylvania’s Municipalities Planning Act, is a multi-municipal program possible? In any case, what sending and receiving zones are possible? What processes and entities are most useful to manage the program?
7. Other options to enable the creation of a sustainable Fort Washington Office Park are critical. Are more stringent floodplain regulations possible and/or what are the opportunities and constraints associated with Site Specific Zoning?

Project Goals

While the previously noted studies provide a good start for this effort, the Townships expect the consultants to identify other possible effective and efficient alternatives and/or combinations of options that may address and remedy the major issues discussed in this request. Ultimately, the goal is to provide the technical expertise, guidance and tools necessary for both Townships to move forward. These may include:

1. An analysis of existing conditions and identification of the opportunities and constraints associated with a wide range of sustainable (re)development option.
2. Creating educational material and conducting informational workshops to inform and obtain feedback from various stakeholders, including elected and advisory bodies, commercial and residential property owners and tenants, institutions and non-profit entities.
3. Identifying areas of agreement and issues of concern with the various sustainable (re)development options. Based on this understanding outline recommended next steps, responsible parties and a potential timeline.

Scope of Services

The consultant or consulting team responding to this RFQ must outline the methodology proposed to create a SRP addressing the Fundamentals and Project Goals. It is envisioned that the work program will require six to nine (6 – 9) months to complete. UDT will coordinate with Whitemarsh Township and the DVRPC and administratively support the consultants' efforts by providing base maps, property ownership and tenant information and any other publicly available information, including financial data. An appointed steering committee, the project manager and Township staff will co-ordinate and work with the selected consultant throughout the process to provide feedback and direction.

Respondents must provide examples of similar projects they have successfully completed, including the type and outcome of public participation activities. Examples of implementation plans created for other communities will be helpful as will understanding the consultants' thoughts for how the challenges presented in this situation may be addressed.

Qualification Requirements

Consultants and consulting teams shall submit written qualifications which clearly demonstrate their ability to provide quality services in a timely and cost effective manner. Submittals should include:

1. General background information on and resources available to the firm(s),
2. Documentation of experience on similar projects,
3. Unique qualifications and methodologies to be employed,
4. An outline of the conceptual work-plan and schedule,
5. A staffing plan or organizational chart of personnel and/or contractors, and
6. Any additional related information the respondent deems helpful.

Selection Process

A selection committee, to include a DVRPC representative, will be appointed by UDT and Whitemarsh Township and review all submitted qualification statements. The intent is to select three to five (3 -5) firms that may, if determined by to be beneficial, be invited for an interview.

Selection criteria include:

1. Qualifications of the firm based on previous performance with similar projects;
2. The qualifications and experience of key personnel to be assigned to the project;
3. Understanding the project and the local community;

4. Project management capabilities, including facilitation and consensus building skills;
5. Clear demonstration that work will be completed in a timely manner; and
6. References attesting to previous performance with similar projects.

After reviewing the submissions and conducting interviews, if deemed necessary, UDT will prepare and issue, to each selected consultant/team, a detailed Request for Proposals (**RFP**.) Responses to the RFP will require a fixed fee quotation for the entire project, broken down by specific element. Based on the RFP responses the Selection Committee may have requests for additional follow-up information or clarification. The Selection Committee will rank the finalists and forward a recommendation to the Townships for their review and consideration.

Other Conditions

UDT and Whitemarsh Township are not liable for any costs incurred by individuals/firms in preparing responses or proposals or participating in the selection process. These costs are the sole responsibility of those submitting the proposal. Furthermore, all submitted materials shall become the property of the Townships.

The participation of Women Business Enterprises (WBE) and Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) is strongly encouraged.

UDT and Whitemarsh Township reserve the right to:

1. Select a consultant who, in the sole opinion of the Townships and their representatives, can best carry out the work and interface successfully with the other project team members.
2. To reject any or all of the teams and re-advertise the project, if deemed necessary.
3. Approve, disprove or cancel all services associated with the project.
4. Faxed or emailed responses will not be accepted.