

Request For Proposals for Improvements to the City of Takoma Park Website

Answers To Questions

Tuesday, August 19, 2014 | City of Takoma Park Community Center | 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park MD

Questions asked by potential bidders in italic.

Q: We wanted to confirm our understanding is correct that this RFP does not anticipate a redesign of your Website.

A: Correct. We are seeking to improve the existing website, not perform a complete redesign. If a comprehensive redesign is pursued in forthcoming fiscal years there will be a separate RFP.

Q: Do you anticipate having the current theme modified into a responsive design or replacing it with one that is natively responsive?

A: There hasn't been a firm decision made on this front; the stance of the Media Specialists office is open to either avenue with a bias towards working with the current theme or generating a new sub-theme based on the parent theme. (City Management has echoed this sentiment.) The current theme does have some responsiveness cooked into it; it is not fully implemented. Theme modification would likely benefit from the fact we use Adaptive Themes master framework, Pixture Reloaded as a base with a custom (called Azalea) sub-theme on top of it.

Q: Conversion to a responsive design may require some design changes and will certainly omit some features on the cell size.

A: Design changes can be implemented to accommodate cell size. (Vendor question was for a mobile screen sizes.)

Q: Will the successful vendor be working with a committee or a single person for these sorts of decisions?

A: There will be no committee. Once the City Council awards the contract the successful vendor will interact solely with the Media Specialist. Certain key stakeholders and City Management might be pulled into conversations as needed but the bulk of work will be done with the Media Specialist.

Q: It appears that you are using Amazon for document storage. What can you tell us about your current Web server? We ask because we want to make sure what we propose for a search solution will be able to reside on your server. On that subject, would you prefer a search engine that resides on your server or on a Web appliance?

A: TakomaParkMD.gov is hosted on ServInt; a company based out of Virginia. Server functions are managed with cPanel. There is no preference for where search engine resides as long as it works correctly, is an improvement over stock search and is easily maintainable. There would be a bias towards appliances that provide metrics.

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Contact the Media Specialist: craig@takomaparkmd.gov

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Q: How do you plan to make PDF's meet the accessibility guidelines? One way would be to provide an alternative text or html version is also made available. If you plan to take that route, who will be responsible for making the existing PDF's accessible?

A: The City of Takoma Park is still exploring how to do this internally. Vendors should only be worried about web content. Most discussions have centered on developing guidelines for individual document creators to make the PDFs themselves accessible.

Q: Your newsletters may be a challenge to make fully accessible. Have explored building your newsletters on your site via newsletter module?

A: The City of Takoma Park plans on rolling the newsletter onto a separate Wordpress powered website with its own domain and server.

Q: What are the things your content types are not doing now that you want them to do?

A: A sharper implementation of views and panels. Currently various content types - our Recreation Programs are a great example - aggregate a lot of great info but don't present well due to the limitations of the current theme. The complex nature of advanced view and panel setup also precludes complete implementation; there simply isn't enough time for the Media Specialist's office to perform all that work.

Q: In terms of permission are you looking for a more user based approach, such as site administrators versus content contributors or an editorial approach such as restricting accounts to specific pages or sections of the site?

A: The Media Specialist and any hired maintainers/consultants would serve as admins. Takoma Park staff are content contributors and have been given editing rights within specific content types. Individuals that have received training are also given access to limited menu management.

Q: Specifically what sorts of improvements are you seeking in the core and admin functions of the Website?

A: The site was built very 'piecemeal'. A cohesive plan for how to handle taxonomy, content types, panels, views and display rules - both standard and contextual - would be of great benefit. Anything that adopts best standards and practice that reduces maintenance and content management overheads would be considered.

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Q: Would it be possible to have BE log-on access to a copy of the site to determine the amount of time to make the improvements you desire?

A: The vendor from the winning bid will get access to our development site. When works starts beta.takomaparkmd.gov will hopefully be a mirror of www.takomaparkmd.gov; this will allow for unfettered access and testing. (Vendor question is referring to the back-end. BE = back-end.)

Q: Your Scope of Services refers to the need for Web viewers to submit payments and permit applications via the Web. Should our solution only handle permits, or be flexible enough to be used on other portions of your site?

A: We are specifically looking for a mechanism to get payments for permit applications taken care of. Anything that is expandable to other payments needed by various departments would be extremely helpful.

Q: How many forms on your site will require an integrated payment solution?

A: This is currently unknown. There are at least three departments that have more than one permit that requires payment. There are other miscellaneous services, especially through our Public Works and Recreation departments, that require payment.

Q: Can you share your anticipated budget or a range you need to stay within?

A: The approved maximum budget for this is \$35,000.

Q: Do you have any educational or training programs you are using?

A: We are recording and developing instruction manuals for the website in Google Docs. A style guide will developed when there is staff time to devote to the process.

Q: Style guide: Are you talking about formatting for the pages?

A: The style guide will specifically walk users through how to use headers, make links, etc. Think of it as a “formatting content” guide.

Q: Is there a branding guide?

A: No. One will eventually be developed.

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Q: Which is taking importance, the style guide or branding?

A: Style guide. Branding is already happening incrementally.

Q: How do you handle your recreation calendar?

A: (The vendor was specifically asking about ActiveNet.) It is through a third party provider. The calendar feeds that appear in blocks and the calendar page are through the gCal module and the City of Takoma Park's Google Apps calendar.

Q: We were looking at rental and permit application forms and wondering how they will work. Will they take those application via credit card?

A: Yes. The only "odd" situation is passports. Some of the fees are paid directly to the State Department, other fees go directly to the City of Takoma Park.

Q: In terms of scope, you said several things you wanted to focus on. If you had to prioritize those items, what would be 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.?

- A:
- 1.) Search
 - 2.) Payments
 - 3.) Accessibility/Responsive
 - 4.) Back-End Improvements

2 and 3 are very close in priority according to City Management.

Q: How much in person interaction are you going to want or need with the vendor?

A: Only as much as needed. As long as good work is being done, it is thoroughly documented and the City is aware of work as it is happening interaction can be minimized. Travel and in person meetings can always be mitigated via phone or Google Hangouts.

Q: Has there been any decision by the council weather they'll award this to an out of country vendor? Is there a bias of america vs. outsourcing?

A: Not that the Media Specialist is aware of. There is a hope the best vendor could be from the DMV region, but I am not limited to locals. Contract is open to everyone to apply.

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Q: Is there any requirement to have done other city sites?

A: No.

Q: Who's handling your SEO?

A: Currently the Media Specialist. There is a Google Analytics program in place..

Q: Is that part of your sites and wishes for this?

A: Ultimately yes but I have doubts of the usefulness of general SEO work in the context of a municipal website; I'd like to see where fixing search takes us first.

Q: Since the City has a contractor who developed the current Drupal website, why is the follow-on work being competed now rather than awarded to the incumbent? For example, is the new work expected to exceed the threshold for sole source awards, or is there dissatisfaction with the current contractor or an inability of the current contractor to complete these tasks?

A: There is technically no 'incumbent'. The provider working on the site was hired outside of a bidding process. The office of the Media Specialist is not able to discuss the perceived quality of the current vendor's work. The work in the the RFP goes well beyond the scope of work that our vendor performs. The current vendor has been informed about the RFP.

Q: The Scope of Services covers what the City wants done, but many of these items are difficult to estimate without a more detailed understanding of the current issues. For example, it's not clear what issues City staff members are having with content creation. Will there be additional details about the scope of work provided at the bidders meeting?

A: Questions asked at the bidders meeting did cover these; please see answers above. In general we are hoping external help getting us to a better implementation of Drupal's views, panels, content types and backend will make for a website that is easier to manage, more accessible and will present better as a mobile site.

Q: Since the Scope of Services states that a web development firm tackle some or all of these items • , it's not clear what kind of proposal you're looking for. Do you want a summary best-estimate of effort to address these issues and an hourly rate, and then the contract execution will work to the limit of the estimate? In other words, do you want the contractor to complete all the work that fits into the estimate total, or do you want the contractor to work until you feel that enough of the job has been accomplished?

A: We are hoping competitive bids can get as much work done as possible within the constraints of our \$35,000 budget. Work proposed needs to meet or be slightly under that total.

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Q: Is there a specific weighting scheme associated with the Evaluation Criteria, e.g., Overall Vision and Concept is worth X points of the total possible points awarded?

A: There is no formal weighting system. Please refer to answer from another vendor for a list of our priorities.

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