



Request for Qualifications

Downtown Master Planning - Placemaking and Public Realm Services RFQ No. S5-0726.1

Solicitation Due Date: Monday, July 13, 2026 | **Time:** 3:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

All Statements of Qualification (SOQ) must be received by the City of Wilmington (City) by the date and time cited above pursuant to the submittal requirements established in Section 4 of the RFQ. It shall be the Proposer's sole risk to ensure submission by the designated time.

VENDORS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO READ THE ENTIRE SOLICITATION .

SOLICITATION PACKAGE

Solicitation packages can be obtained by downloading from the City's website:
<https://www.wilmingtonnc.gov/Connect-With-Us/Doing-Business-with-the-City/Current-Bids>.
Should you experience problems downloading the solicitation, contact Aoriental Fullwood,
ariental.fullwood@wilmingtonnc.gov.

All questions concerning the RFQ **must** be submitted via email only to the following individuals, as identified within this solicitation in Section 6.2.

- Aoriental Fullwood, Buyer
ariental.fullwood@wilmingtonnc.gov
- Linda Painter, Director of Planning & Development
linda.painter@wilmingtonnc.gov

Communications with other City staff, other than for assistance with downloading the solicitation, may disqualify you from the evaluation process.

LINKS TO FORMS, WORKSHEETS, AND OTHER ATTACHMENTS

[Responder's Certification](#)

[Certificate of Non-Collusion](#) (PDF)

Table of Contents

1	Purpose and Background.....	1
1.1	About the City.....	1
1.2	Project Background	1
1.3	Study Area.....	2
1.4	Project Objectives	3
1.5	Final Product.....	3
1.6	Phasing	3
1.7	Approach	4
1.8	Secondary Geographies (Potential Add-Alternates)	5
2	Scope of Work	6
2.1	Phase 1: Assess Baseline and Set Strategic Direction	6
2.2	Phase 2: Create a Roadmap.....	8
2.3	Phase 3: Adopt.....	9
2.4	Data, Standards, and Ownership	10
3	Qualification Requirements	10
3.1	General Information.....	10
3.2	Introduction	10
3.3	Team Qualifications and Relevant Experience	10
3.4	MBE/WBE/HUB/DBE.....	10
3.5	Team Capacity and References	11
4	RFQ Submittal Requirements	11
4.1	Submission Requirements.....	11
4.2	Maximum Length.....	11
4.3	Submission.....	11
4.4	Disqualification	12
5	Selection Process	12
5.1	Selection Committee	12
5.2	Evaluation.....	12
5.3	Selection and Award.....	13
6	RFQ Schedule	14
6.1	Projected Timeframe for Selection and Award	14
6.2	Questions	14
6.3	Amendments and Addenda	14
6.4	Non-Warranty of RFQ Information	14

1 Purpose and Background

1.1 About the City

The City of Wilmington, incorporated in 1739, is in the southeastern region of North Carolina. The city's borders touch the Cape Fear River on the west and the Intracoastal Waterway on the east, adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean. Wilmington is the County Seat of New Hanover County. The City's historic core hugs the Cape Fear River, while later patterns of development extend eastward toward the ocean. The City has a Council-Manager form of government. The Council is comprised of the Mayor and six Council members. The Mayor is elected at large every two years, and the Council members are elected at large every four years with staggered terms. The Council is the legislative body of the City government, with the Mayor as a voting member and the presiding officer. The City Manager is appointed by the Council and oversees the City's daily operations through appointed department heads. City Council meetings are typically held on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month in City Hall.

The following table contains statistics related to the City. These statistics are estimates and are provided for planning purposes only. Additional information has been provided in [Table 3.2: Functional Area Statistics](#).

Table 1.2: City Statistics

Area	Statistic
FY27 Proposed Budget	Approx. \$349.8 Million
Population Served	Approx. 123,756
Total FTEs	1149.17
Fiscal Year	July 1 - June 30

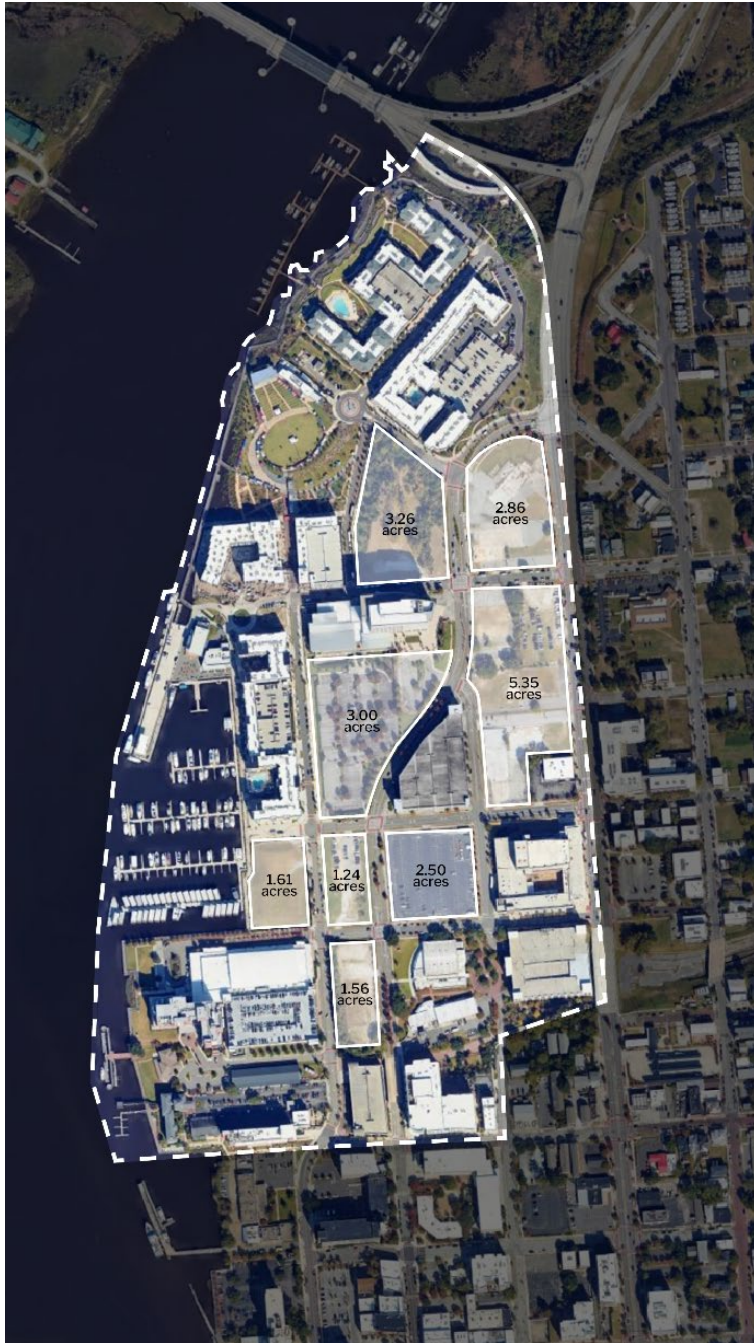
1.2 Project Background

On June 16, 2026, the Wilmington City Council adopted the [Greater Downtown Plan](#) to guide the growth and development of the 18 neighborhoods that were part of the city in 1945 and to achieve the following vision:

"Greater Downtown Wilmington honors its rich history while moving toward a more sustainable future. It's a welcoming and affordable place to live, full of local character and culture, with growing opportunities for work and business - all within a walkable and charming urban setting."

Strategies and actions to achieve this vision are organized under the following themes: Local Character, Economy, Small Business, and Mobility. The strategies and actions identified in the Plan will guide the development of detailed master plans for the study areas.

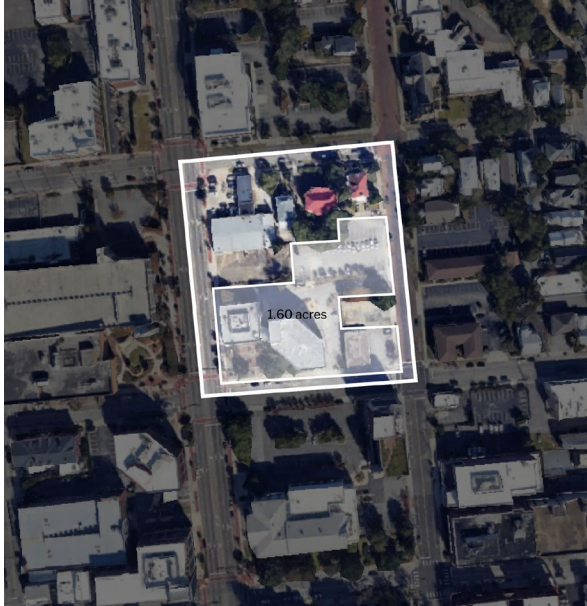
1.3 Study Area



1.3.1 Northern Riverfront District

Over the last 30+ years, the Northern Riverfront has transformed from underutilized industrial properties to the northern gateway of Downtown. This new downtown district is currently anchored by civic facilities, including the Wilmington Convention Center; Riverfront Park - home to Live Oak Pavilion, Cape Fear Community College; and the new City Hall at Skyline Center (formerly the PPD corporate headquarters). These catalyst projects have spurred private development, such as Pier 33 and The Metropolitan at the Riverwalk.

While much progress has been made, significant opportunities remain. Over 22 acres of land are currently vacant or underused, of which over 12 are owned by the City. These landholdings have the potential to transform the northern gateway to downtown for decades to come. The best way to capitalize on the available opportunity and ensure that the development of this district meets both short and long-term community needs is to create a master plan that sets the stage for both public and private investment.



1.3.2 305-319 Chestnut Street (Former City Administrative Complex Site)

The northeast corner of Chestnut Street and North 3rd Street is located in the heart of the City's historic downtown, directly across the street from Thalian Hall (the former City Hall) and Project Grace, a mixed-use development including the new home of the downtown/central library and Cape Fear Museum. The three parcels comprising this site total approximately 1.6 acres.

1.4 Project Objectives

- **Northern Riverfront.** Create a thriving, vibrant gateway district that prioritizes transformative placemaking and public amenities to attract both investment and visitors, and helps to achieve the vision for Greater Downtown as it grows and adapts to changing conditions.
- **305-319 Chestnut Street.** Identify a redevelopment strategy that builds on the site's key location and adjacent uses in the heart of downtown and supports continued investment and development of the Central Business District.

1.5 Final Product

When completed, the city will have a **roadmap to success**, including:

- A plan that identifies preferred land uses, scales, and intensities, along with the placemaking and public amenities that can drive investment and visitors to the Central Business District;
- A playbook in the form of design standards and updated covenants and restrictions that spur creative design while providing predictability and the ability to adapt to changing conditions; and
- An economic incentive toolkit that identifies steps the City can take to help drive investment and catalyze action.

1.6 Phasing

The project consists of three phases:

- **Phase 1: Assess Baseline & Set Strategic Direction**
 - Gather data, analyze strengths and opportunities, and identify potential incentives

- Develop the district's overall vision based on community priorities and outline public investment and incentive opportunities
- **Phase 2: Create a Roadmap**
Building on the vision established in Phase 1, this phase creates the plan to achieve that vision: locating preferred uses and intensities; identifying future public spaces and conceptual activations; establishing preferences for urban design, streetscapes, and connectivity; and developing detailed public investment and incentive strategies.
- **Phase 3: Adopt**
Translate the preferred design concepts established in Phase 2 into implementation documents for adoption by City Council: a district master plan that specifies what, where, and how; a regulating plan and form-based code for the district; updates to Covenants and Restrictions; and details for the public realm – street sections, streetscapes, etc.

PROJECT PHASING



1.7 Approach

1.7.1 Consultant Team

The City is seeking to assemble a team of consultants to assist in this effort through the issuance of three separate requests for qualifications from firms that focus on the following specialties:

- Placemaking and Public Realm
- Urban Design
- Market Feasibility and Economic Incentives

The firms selected for this work will be expected to coordinate work plans and deliverables with each other and with the City.

1.7.2 City Collaboration

This will be a collaborative effort with multiple city departments. The City anticipates its role will include the following:

- Developing and executing a community engagement strategy with input from each of the consulting firms.
- Providing data and expertise on existing conditions and current challenges.
- Actively participating in visioning, development of alternative scenarios, and final recommendations.
- Packaging the final deliverables from each consulting firm into documents for adoption by City Council, including: a cohesive master plan document, land development code amendments, updates to restrictive covenants, and updates to policies and procedures.
- Leading adoption efforts with support from consulting firm technical experts.

1.8 Secondary Geographies (Potential Add-Alternates)

While the focus of this RFQ is on the study area outlined above, the City has identified the following areas as potential add-alternates:

1.8.1 Other City-Owned Properties

Objective

Identify redevelopment opportunities for the following City-owned properties within the Greater Downtown that support community priorities identified in the Greater Downtown Plan:

- 1114 S. 17th Street (Coleman Complex)
- 804 N. 10th St, 811 N. 11th St, 1009, 1013, 1015 Post Street
- 901 and 906 Fanning Street (DREAMS)

Final Product

- Preferred land use strategy, including scale, intensity, and uses
- Urban design guidelines for each parcel to inform potential conditional district zoning
- An economic incentive toolkit identifying strategies for achieving community goals through redevelopment

1.8.2 Central Business District

Objective

Identify key redevelopment opportunities and small business growth in the remainder of the CBD with a focus on:

- Barriers to redevelopment for underused and vacant parcels
- Critical mass of office and residential uses needed to support retail and other active ground-floor uses other than bars and nightclubs

- Opportunities for larger-scale buildings while maintaining context-sensitive design, key viewsheds, and primary pedestrian corridors

Final Product

- Parking analysis and recommendations
- Retail study and strategy
- Streetscape improvement plan
- Urban design guidelines to inform Land Development Code updates
- An economic incentive toolkit identifying strategies for achieving community goals through redevelopment

1.8.3 Greater Downtown Commercial Districts

Objective

Identify barriers and incentives for small business growth and context-sensitive mixed-use development in the following districts:

- Brooklyn Arts District
- Castle Street
- Cargo District
- Soda Pop District
- South Front District

Final Product

- Parking analysis and recommendations
- Retail study and strategy
- Streetscape improvement plan
- Urban design guidelines to inform Land Development Code updates
- An economic incentive toolkit identifying strategies for achieving community goals through redevelopment

2 Scope of Work

2.1 Phase 1: Assess Baseline and Set Strategic Direction

This phase is focused on:

- Gathering data, analyzing strengths and opportunities, and identifying potential incentives; and
- Developing the district's overall vision based on community priorities.

2.1.1 Engagement Focus

Property Owners | Stakeholders | Downtown Community | Decision-makers

As the Greater Downtown Plan has identified a vision for downtown and identified community priorities, engagement for Phase 1 of this project will focus on:

- Understanding the goals of property owners within the district and other downtown stakeholders for future development, and barriers they see to realizing those goals and the overall vision for downtown;
- Obtaining guidance from decision-makers on their goals for the project to help set the strategic direction; and
- Working with the broader community to refine the vision for the study area.

2.1.2 Objectives

Answer the following questions to create baseline information and set strategic direction for placemaking:

- How do we build on our existing assets?
- What are the essential components of placemaking that are needed to create a vibrant, livable district and great places/spaces?
- How do we activate our waterfront and maximize use of City riparian rights?
- What challenges are we currently experiencing that require new solutions? (i.e. Nutt Street event staging, impact of rising sea levels on durability of the riverwalk, etc.)
- What opportunities exist for both short-term and long-term activation of public spaces?
- What types of interim uses are possible to activate spaces in advance of redevelopment?
- How can we activate Riverfront Park so that it is more welcoming to non-amphitheater visitors?
- How can we be more inclusive in our offerings to expand reach and interest?
- What properties should be reserved for parks and other public amenities?
- How can we better activate the waterfront and take advantage of the City's riparian rights?

2.1.3 Tasks and Deliverables

1. Project Initiation & Workplan

Kick off; confirm boundaries, finalize engagement activities, data access, and coordination with market feasibility and urban design teams.

Deliverables: Work plan and timeline; feedback on community engagement strategy; QA/QC protocol.

2. Existing Conditions Analysis: Strengths and Opportunities

- Identify gaps in the key elements that are needed to create great places, particularly in downtown environments.
- Inventory existing public spaces and amenities, including assets and constraints, using placemaking fundamentals as a baseline.
- Evaluate existing conditions and identify strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities.

- Provide examples of great placemaking from other communities, including similar riverfront districts.

Deliverables: Placemaking strategy framework and SWOT-type analysis, including comparative benchmarking and placemaking case studies.

3. Visioning

Coordinate with City staff and the urban design and market feasibility teams to conduct visioning exercises with the broader community and key stakeholders for the two study areas.

Deliverables: Data, materials, and technical support in developing and executing the visioning exercises.

4. Public Space and Amenities Strategy

In coordination with market feasibility and urban design teams:

- Identify parcels for future parks/public amenities
- Identify and evaluate waterfront/riparian rights activation options
- Identify and evaluate strategies for activating Riverfront Park

Deliverables: Placemaking strategy framework; priority public realm improvement opportunities (map and narrative)

5. Space Activation

- Identify opportunities for short-term and long-term activation of public spaces.
- Identify potential interim placemaking strategies and short-term activations for vacant/undeveloped parcels.

Deliverables: Preliminary report identifying interim activation options with representative case studies.

2.2 Phase 2: Create a Roadmap

Building on the vision established in Phase 1, this phase creates the plan to achieve that vision: locating preferred uses and intensities, identifying future public spaces and conceptual activations, establishing preferences for urban design, streetscapes, and connectivity, and developing detailed public investment and incentive strategies.

2.2.1 Engagement Focus

[Property Owners](#) | [Stakeholders](#) | [Downtown Community](#) | [Decision-makers](#)

Engagement during this phase will focus on both stakeholders and the broader community as preferred placemaking, land-use, intensity, and urban design alternatives are finalized.

2.2.2 Objectives

Answer the following questions:

- How do we activate both existing and future public spaces and vacant/underdeveloped sites over the short, medium, and long-term to create great places as redevelopment gradually occurs?
- How do we incorporate public art into public and private development to create a vibrant public realm?

2.2.3 Tasks and Deliverables

1. Interim and Long-Term Activation Strategies

Coordinate with City staff and the urban design and market feasibility teams to finalize recommendations for short, medium, and long-term space activation.

Deliverables: Public and private space activation plan

2. Public Art

In coordination with urban design team, identify strategies to incorporate public art into both public and private development and strengthen district connections.

Deliverables: Public Art Strategy

2.3 Phase 3: Adopt

This phase takes the roadmap established in Phase 2 and translates it into implementing documents: a district master plan that specifies what, where, and how; a regulating plan and form-based code for the district, updates to Covenants and Restrictions, and details for the public realm – street sections, streetscapes, etc.

2.3.1 Engagement Focus

[Property Owners](#) | [Stakeholders](#) | [Downtown Community](#) | [Decision-makers](#)

This phase focuses on the adoption process and soliciting feedback from stakeholders and the broader community on the master plan and implementing documents, both prior to and during the formal public hearing process for adoption.

2.3.2 Objectives

Finalize implementation documents for adoption: District Master Plan, Form-Based Code and Regulating Plan, updates to Technical Standards and Specifications, and updates to covenants and restrictions.

2.3.3 Tasks and Deliverables

1. Finalize placemaking and public realm components of the Master Plan

Deliverables: Review final master plan produced by the City to ensure it accurately captures urban design elements; Review form-based code for placemaking and public realm elements

2.4 Data, Standards, and Ownership

- The City will provide access to relevant parcel, permitting, finance, and GIS data; the Consultant will supplement with subscription datasets and public sources.
- All work products, cleaned datasets, and models become the property of the City of Wilmington upon final payment; the Consultant may reference the work in portfolios subject to City approval.

3 Qualification Requirements

The City seeks qualified firms specializing in providing placemaking and public realm services. For your Statement of Qualifications to be considered responsive, it must include the following elements.

3.1 General Information

- Firm's official name, address, telephone number, email address, and desired primary contact for purposes of a professional services agreement
- Expression of the firm's interest in a professional services agreement

3.2 Introduction

- Brief history of the firm's practice, including any experience in North Carolina
- Name and brief resume of the firm's principals
- Statement regarding the firm's possible conflict of interest regarding the work

3.3 Team Qualifications and Relevant Experience

- Statement of specific areas for which the firm has specialized qualifications
- Identify the firm's qualifications and experience as related to the scope of work
- Organization chart with a brief summary addressing the experience and qualifications of the firm's key personnel that will be assigned to the project
- Identify unique qualifications of key team members
- Experience providing similar services to other municipalities
- Examples of similar work performed within the last five (5) years

3.4 MBE/WBE/HUB/DBE

It is the City's goal to promote local and minority business participation in all construction and service contracts. Therefore, in accordance with the City of Wilmington's MBE/DBE Policy, the appraiser shall make a good faith effort to identify and hire minority subcontractors for this project. A complete copy of the City's MBE/DBE policy is available at <https://www.wilmingtonnc.gov/files/assets/city/v/2/development-amp-business/documents/minority-and-small-business-participation-and-outreach-plan.pdf>.

Submittals should include an indication of an understanding and a commitment to the City's MWBE program as it relates to professional services.

3.5 Team Capacity and References

- Statement regarding the availability of personnel for this work
- References, including North Carolina municipalities if applicable/available

4 RFQ Submittal Requirements

4.1 Submission Requirements

Please prepare and organize your Statement of Qualification in accordance with the requirements below. Any other information you would like to include should be placed in a separate section at the back of your Statement of Qualification.

4.1.1 Cover Letter/Statement of Interest

Provide a cover letter/statement of interest submitted under the firm(s) name on the firm's letterhead containing the signature and title of the person or an official of the firm who is authorized to commit the firm to a potential contract with the City. The cover letter should express the firm's interest and serve as an executive summary of the proposal. This document should also include the physical address of the primary proposer and the e-mail address of the person to be notified of the award, manually and duly signed by an authorized corporate office, principal, or partner.

4.1.2 Supplemental Materials

It is the responsibility of the proposer to submit materials supporting their qualifications to complete the project scope, in accordance with the Qualification Requirements established in Section 3 and the evaluation process outlined in Section 5.2.

4.2 Maximum Length

Statements of Qualification shall not exceed 25 pages, excluding the cover, table of contents, and required forms.

4.3 Submission

Statements of Qualification (SOQ) shall be submitted to the Purchasing Division in both electronic and paper form no later than 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on July 13, 2026, as follows:

- **Electronic Submission.** Submit Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) in one (1) pdf via email to Arial Fullwood (ariental.fullwood@wilmingtonnc.gov)
- **Paper Submission.** Submit a minimum of five (5) hard copies of the SOQ to the following address:

City of Wilmington Purchasing Division
929 N. Front Street | 10th Floor
P.O. Box 1810
Wilmington, NC 28402
Attention: Arial Fullwood, Buyer

4.4 Disqualification

- Statements of Qualification received after the “Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) Due Date” deadline established in Table 6.1 as amended through issued addenda to this RFP will not be considered.
- Incomplete submissions will be considered non-responsive and subject to rejection.
- Please do not contact any City staff members other than the designated contact persons regarding the project contemplated under this RFQ while this RFQ is open and a selection has not been finalized. Any attempt to do so may result in the disqualification of the firm’s submittal for consideration.

5 Selection Process

5.1 Selection Committee

The City’s selection committee will review the statements of qualifications submitted in response to the RFQ and select the most qualified firm(s) for an interview. After the City determines the most qualified firm(s), staff will enter into negotiations with the firm(s) to define the final scope of work and negotiate a fee. If, for any reason, the City and the selected firm(s) cannot agree on a scope and fee, the City will enter into negotiations with the next most qualified firm.

5.2 Evaluation

5.2.1 Evaluation Process

Statements of Qualification (SOQ) will be evaluated and ranked by a selection committee comprised of City of Wilmington staff. The committee will assess the submitting firm’s qualifications, experience, and the proposer’s ability and resources to perform the work. The City may, at its discretion, request that an applicant modify or supplement their submission with additional information.

5.2.2 Interviews

The City’s selection committee will review the statements of qualifications submitted in response to the RFQ and select the most qualified firm(s) for an interview.

5.2.3 References

The city may contact references provided with the SOQ as part of the evaluation process. This process may include teleconference meetings, web conferences, and in-person meetings with references. The City reserves the right to conduct reference checks at any point in the evaluation process and to contact other known clients beyond those provided as references.

5.2.4 Evaluation Criteria

This is not a bid. There will not be a bid opening. Qualifications packages will be evaluated by the Selection Committee using the following criteria and weights:

Table 5.2: Selection Criteria

Criteria	Description	Points
Qualifications & Experience	Qualifications and experience of the proposed team members for the requested services	30
Similar Services & Projects	Demonstration of prior successes with similar services and projects	25
Quality of Submittal	Overall quality and detail of submittal; demonstrated understanding of the scope of services	15
Capacity and Availability	Demonstration of the firm's capacity and ability to meet the desired schedule	15
Exceptional Strength	Firms that demonstrate exceptional strength in certain areas of the scope of work	10
MBE/WBE/HUB/DBE Commitment	MBE/WBE/HUB/DBE participation	5

5.3 Selection and Award

5.3.1 Negotiation

After the City determines the most qualified firm(s), staff will enter into negotiations with the firm(s) to define the final scope of work and negotiate a fee. If, for any reason, the City and the selected firm(s) cannot agree on a scope and fee, the City will enter into negotiations with the next most qualified firm.

5.3.2 Award

The selection committee will make a recommendation to the City Manager for awarding a contract. If the contract exceeds \$90,000, the Manager will submit the recommended contract award to the City Council for approval.

As part of the selection and award process, the City reserves the right to the following, where it determines such actions are in the best interest of the City:

- Award a contract to the firm(s) that best meet the requirements of the RFQ.
- Split the scope and award contracts to more than one firm.
- Request clarification of any submitted information.
- Accept or reject any or all Statements of Qualification prior to the execution of the agreement, with no penalty to the City.
- Amend or cancel this process at any time.
- Change the scope of services to be provided.
- Negotiate the final project scope and fee with the selected Firm.
- Cancel any resulting contract with 30-days' notice.

Receipt of Statements of Qualification in response to this RFQ does not oblige the City in any way to engage any firm.

6 RFQ Schedule

6.1 Projected Timeframe for Selection and Award

The following table presents the City's best estimate of the schedule it will follow, subject to change at the City's discretion. If a component of the schedule is accelerated or delayed, the remaining components are expected to be adjusted by a similar number of days.

Table 6.1: RFQ Tentative Timeframe

RFQ Process	Date/Time*
RFQ Published	June 22, 2026
Question Deadline	June 29, 2026
Addendum posted with answers to questions	July 6, 2026
Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) Due Date <i>*Submissions received after the deadline will not be accepted for consideration*</i>	July 13, 2026 3:00 p.m.
Selection Committee Evaluation	July 14, 2026 – July 21, 2026
Firm Interviews	Week of July 27, 2026
Notification of Preferred Firm(s)	Week of August 3, 2026
Scope and Fee Negotiation	August 2026
City Council Contract Award Authorization - If Needed	TBD
Finalize Contract	TBD

*All times shown as Eastern Time

6.2 Questions

All questions should be directed to Linda Painter, Director of Planning & Development, at linda.painter@wilmingtonnc.gov with a copy to Aoriental Fullwood, ariental.fullwood@wilmingtonnc.gov. Answers to questions received by the deadline identified in Table 6.1 will be posted in an addendum to the RFQ on the City's website.

6.3 Amendments and Addenda

All clarifications, corrections, or revisions to this RFQ will be documented in an addendum, which will be publicly published on the City website. The City reserves the right to revise the RFQ prior to the submission deadline. Revisions shall be documented in an addendum and publicly published on the city website.

6.4 Non-Warranty of RFQ Information

Due care and diligence have been exercised in the preparation of this RFQ, and all information herein is believed to be substantially correct. However, the responsibility for determining the full extent of the exposure to risk and verification of all information herein shall rest solely on those parties making Proposals. The City, its representatives, and its agents shall not be responsible for any error or omission in this RFQ, nor shall they be responsible for the failure on the part of any Proposers or their representatives to verify the information herein and to determine the full extent of that exposure.