



WILDWOOD

September 17, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Planning and Parks Committee Members

From: Department of Planning and Parks

Re: **Interview Results from Planning and Design Firms for Town Center Public Space – Village Green (Ward Eight)**

Cc: The Honorable James R. Bowlin, Mayor
Administration and Public Works Committee Members
Economic Development Committee Members
Sam Anselm, City Administrator
John A. Young, City Attorney
Rick Brown, P.E. and P.T.O.E., Director of Public Works
Kathy Arnett, Assistant Director of Planning and Parks
Gary Crews, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation

Background >>>

Earlier this year, at the direction of this Committee, the Department issued a **Request for Proposals (RFP)** for the six (6) acre parcel of ground, just west of City Hall, that was acquired by the City in 2018. This RFP sought qualified planning and design firms to submit their credentials and outline how they would respond to three (3) major tasks identified therein for this public green space. The major tasks are:

1. The assessment of environmental characteristics;
2. The implementation of a public engagement process; and
3. The creation of a preliminary design.

At the deadline for submittal on July 12th, five (5) responses had been received from the following firms:

1. Human Nature, Inc.
2. Planning Design Studio (PDS)
3. Powers Bowersox Associates, Inc.
4. SWT Design
5. TERRA Engineering, Ltd.

At this Committee's August meeting, Members chose four (4) of the firms to invite for interviews. These firms included:

1. Human Nature, Inc.
2. Planning Design Studio (PDS)
3. Powers Bowersox Associates, Inc.
4. SWT Design

The interviews were conducted on September 10th and 12th, with each firm providing additional information on their team, as well as highlighting applicable projects, and then answering questions posed by the interview team (Council Members Bopp and Gragnani, Sam Anselm, Julian Jacquin, Kathy Arnett, and Joe Vujnich). Each of the firms proved competent and highlighted a variety of unique projects in their portfolio.

Interview Results >>>

In reviewing the information provided from these completed interviews, the Department has created a list of the highlights of each firm:

Human Nature: represented by Chris Manning and Ryan Geismar.

Partners in attendance:

- John Falk, from Civil Design, Inc. (CDI), the firm that would complete the civil engineering work, including stormwater management considerations.
- Meridith Perkins and Jacob McMains, from Davey Resource Group, the firm that will conduct any natural resource assessment and forestry work.

Highlights:

- Projects are designed to teach and inspire, while educating on environmental stewardship;
- Firm does not have a signature style; they believe design is about each space and should be a place specific design;
- Process will follow → Awareness -> Exploration -> Vision;
- Civic engagement process will utilize a variety of approaches and include the City team and the overall community. They will then test how requested improvements will work together;
- Consideration will be given to how users will get there, including parking, access, pedestrian connections, etc.;
- Firm uses creative design to resolve conflicts;
- Both partner firms have and are currently doing work within Wildwood; and
- *Timeframe – 6 to 9 months.*

SWT Design: represented by Bonnie Roy and Felipe DeNarvaez.

Partners in attendance:

- Tim Dean, from Intuition and Logic, the firm that would complete the civil engineering work, including stormwater management considerations.

Highlights:

- Sixty percent (60%) of SWT's projects are public open space;
- Strong belief in designing projects that can be built from a financial perspective;
- Process will follow → Discover -> Balance -> Build;
- Believe in flexible green space that draws the community together, but is not overprogrammed;

- Both firms have completed projects within Wildwood; and
- *Timeframe – 6 to 9 months.*

Powers Bowersox Associates, Inc.: represented by Fred Powers, Bill Bowersox, and Matt Ferguson.

Partners in attendance:

- Krista Bentson, from DLANDstudio Architecture + Landscape, the firm that would assist in the design and public engagement components;
- John Guenther, from John C. Guenther Architect LLC, the firm assisting in design;
- John Falk, from Civil Design, Inc. (CDI), the firm that will complete the engineering and stormwater management considerations associated with the project.

Highlights:

- Team has worked together for at least eight (8) years;
- No preconceptions about design or use of property;
- Believes in the use of the property as the hub to connect all areas of the City;
- Is opposed to overbuilding of the site;
- Outlined a variety of mechanisms to use in the public engagement process; and
- *Timeframe – one (1) year.*

Planning Design Studio (PDS): represented by Andrew Franke and Scot Talbert.

Partners in attendance:

- Tom Cissell, from Oates Associates, the firm that would complete the engineering and stormwater management considerations associated with the project.
- *Scott Harding, from SCI, partner firm that will conduct natural resource review (was unable to attend).*

Highlights:

- Firm is focused on parks and recreation projects around the region;
- Believe in tree retention on projects;
- Would try and incorporate dual use improvements, for year-round activity at the park;
- Partner firm conducted engineering work and oversees construction of City's Community Park;
- *Timeframe – 6 to 8 months.*

Firm Recommendation >>>

Again, the interview team consisted of City staff that included City Administrator Anselm, Director of Planning and Parks Vujnich, Economic Development Manager Jacquin, and Assistant Director of Planning and Parks Arnett, as well as Council Members Gragnani and Bopp. Staff would note that any of the firms selected are more than competent and could design a wonderful public space for the City. At the conclusion of the interviews, there were differing opinions by the members of the interview team on which firm should be selected.

The Council representatives both liked Planning Design Studio (PDS). This firm's experience in park projects around the St. Louis Area, and its partner, Oates Associates, made them a suitable choice. Council Member Gragnani also liked Powers Bowersox, based upon their familiarity with Wildwood. Staff also thought Powers Bowersox was a good choice, especially with their partner DLANDstudio, which brings a national reputation, creative design, and solid understanding of the public engagement process to the team. The City Administrator and the Department staff's top pick, however, is Human Nature.

Staff believes Human Nature brings a level of creativity to the process that was easily discernable from the other firms. Its location out of State is not a hindrance and an identical setup to the firm that designed Community Park, which is based in Virginia. Their timeframe is appropriate for this project and its partner firms are both familiar with Wildwood. The applicable projects they highlighted are unique and community-driven and could result in an economic boost for the area directly around the park, as witnessed in Washington Park in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Next Steps >>>

Department staff is seeking the Committee's recommendation on selection of a final firm. Once a firm has been selected, negotiation on the cost of the project would begin. The Department is hopeful the next steps can proceed, starting with firm selection, so the process can get underway prior to the holiday season.

If any of the Committee Members should have any questions or comments regarding this information, please feel free to contact the Department of Planning and Parks at (636) 458-0440. A presentation is planned on this matter at tonight's meeting. Thank you for your consideration of this information and direction on the same.