

# Request for Proposals (RFP)

## Downtown Urbandale Brand System

City of Urbandale, Iowa

**Issue Date:** Monday, December 22, 2025

**Proposal Due:** 3:00 PM on Friday, January 9, 2026

**Anticipated Award:** Monday, January 26, 2026

The City will be conducting interviews with the finalists on Thursday, January 22, and/or Friday, January 23. We kindly request that you make the necessary arrangements to accommodate these dates in your schedule, so as to expedite the process in case your firm is chosen as a finalist. This is an important step in our selection process, and we look forward to meeting with each of the candidates.

Project	Brand platform, naming/architecture, modular identity system, templates/toolkits, and rollout plan.
Procurement type	Professional services; fixed-fee proposals with milestone-based payments preferred.
Primary contact	Derek Zarn, Director of Marketing and Communications, 515-380-1741, dzarn@urbandale.org
Submission method	Email to dzarn@urbandale.org

### 1. Background

The City of Urbandale is advancing a long-horizon effort to establish a true downtown experience in Urbandale. Downtown activity is currently concentrated in two early opportunity areas often referred to as the Big Block and the Little Block. As redevelopment and placemaking progress, the City seeks a downtown brand system that can scale with the district over time and support investor confidence, tenant recruitment, resident pride, and partner adoption.

### 2. Project Intent

This RFP seeks a design/branding partner to create a durable, flexible downtown brand system using a hybrid approach:

- Consultant builds the foundational strategy and brand system (operating system).
- City (Marketing/Communications Department + Economic Development Department + Community Development Department + City Manager's Office) retains stewardship, approvals, and ongoing execution.

- Work must be practical, easy to deploy, and designed to grow as new development areas, projects, events, and partners emerge.

### 3. Goals and Success Criteria

- Clarify downtown’s position and promise in plain language (what it is, who it is for, why it matters).
- Establish a naming and brand architecture that can evolve from Big Block/Little Block into future districts and programs. (Note: Downtown Urbandale, Big Block, and Little Block are names we have been using internally—we’re not opposed to these names, nor are we committed to them.)
- Deliver a modular identity system that avoids being overly rigid or quickly dated and works across digital, print, and light placemaking applications.
- Enable adoption: provide templates, partner co-branding guidance, and style guide.

### 4. Scope of Services

Proposers should assume a collaborative process with City staff. The scope below is outcomes-focused; proposers may recommend refinements.

#### Phase 1: Discovery and Alignment

- Kickoff with City project team; confirm decision-makers, stakeholders, schedule, and constraints.
- Stakeholder discovery (recommended): interviews and/or workshops with City elected officials and staff, key property owners/businesses, residents, and internal departments as appropriate.
- Synthesis of findings into strategic implications and a clear problem statement.

#### Phase 2: Brand Platform

- Downtown brand platform: promise, pillars, personality, key messages, and proof points.
- Brand architecture: how the umbrella brand relates to sub-areas, programs, and events over time.
- Naming approach: criteria and logic for naming sub-areas/places; generate name candidates for early development focus areas (Big Block/Little Block) and a lightweight validation approach.

#### Phase 3: Identity System + Deployment Kit

- Modular visual identity system (more system than logo): typography, color system, motifs/patterns, icon style, photo/visual direction, and lockups.
- Core application set (initial templates): social, event flyer/poster, banner/sign placeholder, simple map/wayfinding placeholder, partner co-branding lockups.
- Partner toolkit: plain-language usage guidance, do/don’t examples, and asset handoff.

#### Phase 4: Rollout Plan

- Guidelines for extensions/partner use to prevent drift.
- Public art considerations: identify how public art and place-based storytelling can naturally align with (and reinforce) the brand system.

## 5. Deliverables

- Brand Platform (PDF)
- Brand Architecture + Naming Framework (PDF) and 2–4 naming options for each early development focus area with rationale
- Visual Identity System + Mini Brand Guidelines (PDF)
- Template set (editable files in both Adobe Illustrator and Canva) and partner toolkit package
- Governance + rollout plan (PDF)
- Final handoff: working files + export packages (AI/PSD/INDD as applicable, plus common formats such as SVG/PNG/PDF)

## 6. Out of Scope (Explicit Exclusions)

To maintain a short, fundable engagement, the following are out of scope unless proposed as optional add-ons:

- Engineering-level wayfinding plans, fabrication specifications, or construction documents
- Procurement/fabrication/installation of signage or built elements
- Ongoing agency-of-record services beyond the defined project period
- Full website redesign/build (light landing-page guidance is acceptable)

## 7. Proposed Schedule

The City anticipates an 12-week engagement from kickoff to final handoff. We encourage you to refine the proposed scope and timeline below. Your insights are invaluable in ensuring that our objectives are met efficiently and effectively.

Proposers should provide a realistic schedule with milestone review points.

Milestone	Target timing	City review/approval
Kickoff + discovery plan	Week 1-2	1 working session
Brand platform + architecture draft	Weeks 3-4	Review + direction
Naming options + validation plan	Weeks 4-7	Decision checkpoint
Identity system + templates draft	Weeks 7-10	Review + revisions
Final toolkit + rollout + governance	Weeks 10-12	Final approval + handoff

## 8. Proposal Requirements

Proposals should be concise (recommended 10 pages or fewer, excluding work samples) and include:

- Team and roles (including who will lead strategy and who will lead design).
- Relevant experience (place branding, district branding, public-sector or multi-stakeholder work).
- Proposed approach and phased work plan.
- Deliverables list (confirm what is included; identify any optional add-ons separately).
- Budget: fixed fee preferred; show milestone-based payment schedule.
- 3 references for comparable work and 3-5 work samples (links or PDF excerpts).

## 9. Evaluation Criteria

- Demonstrated experience with place/district branding and multi-stakeholder facilitation.
- Strength of proposed methodology (clarity, practicality, adoption orientation).
- Quality and scalability of system thinking (architecture + templates).
- Ability to work alongside city staff and transfer ownership to City staff.
- Cost competitiveness and budget clarity (including option tiers).
- The City has \$25,000 budgeted for this work. The City will assess the value of each proposal (firm experience, understanding of City needs, and likelihood of success compared with fee) in making a selection.
- Schedule feasibility and team capacity.

## 10. Submission Instructions

- **Please submit proposals to Derek Zarn at [dzarn@urbandale.org](mailto:dzarn@urbandale.org) by 3 PM on Friday, January 9, 2026.**
- Questions or requests for clarifications must be submitted in writing no later than 3 PM on Friday, January 2, 2026, to Derek Zarn at [dzarn@urbandale.org](mailto:dzarn@urbandale.org). All submitted questions may be included as an addendum to this RFP on the City's website bid portal.
- The City may request interviews, clarifications, and/or best-and-final offers.

## 11. Terms

- The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive informalities, and request additional information.
- All work products developed under the contract will be owned by the City upon full payment, including editable working files.
- Proposers should identify any subcontractors and any anticipated additional costs.
- Final scope, schedule, and terms will be negotiated with the selected proposer.

*End of RFP*