

Brooklyn Village & Walton Plaza Master Developer Solicitation

Mecklenburg County

Request for Qualifications Q&A

Based on questions asked during the pre-bid meeting on November 3, 2015, and those submitted online, Mecklenburg County and HR&A Advisors have prepared the below answers to assist Respondents in their completion of responses to the Request For Qualifications for the Brooklyn Village and Walton Plaza sites. Please note that questions may be paraphrased or condensed to retain the spirit of questions asked and provide the most robust possible answers.

Will the County share past plans and data, including information about existing conditions and structures on the sites?

The solicitation website ([located here](#)) is the data repository for this process, and most publicly-available information is also linked directly from the RFQ. Please check the website regularly for updated information.

Regarding existing conditions, structures, and anomalies on the sites: The County aims to provide ample information on the website to support due diligence. In particular, potential Respondents should be aware of:

- A cellular tower on the north side of the Brooklyn Village site, which may need to be either developed around or factored into future development.
- The former Board of Education office building on the Brooklyn Village site, which the Master Developer will be required to demolish.
- A stormwater drainage system that runs diagonally across the Brooklyn Village site, and other potential utilities which may be present on the site or sites.
- The existing Walton Plaza office building, which the Master Developer can choose to demolish or renovate.

There are also improvements that may be desired by the City, including the turnaround behind Walton Plaza, which was a through street prior to construction of I-277. The County does not currently have plans to act on this improvement, but it is an opportunity the City would like to leave open.

Regarding past planning efforts: Respondents should view the Second Ward Master Plan, past zoning plans, and other plans as guidance to achieve a vision in line with the County's objectives. The County is aware that plans will not be developed as they were drawn previously, and that terms will vary from past plans or proposals. The prior zoning plans for the Brooklyn Village site, which can be found [here](#) (linked from the solicitation website), provide detail on the site's topography and existing conditions.

Regarding future plans: The County encourages Respondents to take as much of a "blue sky approach" as possible to future plans, respecting the various public sector interests on the site (these include, for instance, pedestrian and roadway connections that may involve review by DOT and open space and affordable housing that is required by the Interlocal Agreement.) In particular, the County is looking to understand how these elements will relate to each other and produce a vibrant mix of uses on the sites.

Please also note that Respondents should specify in the RFQ whether they have a preference for one site or the other, or both. While the strongest opportunity here may be to transform the area through one unified vision for the sites, the County would entertain other options.

Are the affordable housing requirements provided online or elsewhere?

The Interlocal Agreement that allows for the County to assemble and sell the Brooklyn Village parcel, and requires affordable housing, is available on the solicitation website. Disposition requires a minimum of 30 units of affordable housing at 80% of AMI, which should be viewed as a minimum. Additional guidance on this income threshold is available online and as an appendix to the RFQ.

As developers propose new, innovative ideas for development on these sites, how will Respondents' intellectual property be protected?

The County is looking for new, innovative thinking here, incorporating the principles and priorities described in the RFQ. For instance, each of the city's four wards should have its own park, and the open space preserved here could be the central park for the Second Ward, but we are flexible on where this park goes, how it behaves, and how it can enhance street level activity.

To the extent that there is legal protection or confidentiality provided for these ideas, the County will maintain that protection and not publicly release response information. Moreover, the RFQ evaluation process will be conducted by a small group of primarily County and City staff, who will use their discretion as appropriate. However, the County is also bound to comply with open records law requests.

While respecting the need to protect Respondents' intellectual property, the County encourages Respondents to be bold in the RFQ responses, which will provide them with the best chance to move forward to the RFP stage.

Does the County anticipate mixing and matching ideas between proposals?

The County does not intend to share ideas between development firms, but will engage in an iterative process with finalists to determine the appropriate program, level of public participation, and elements of the development (program, architecture, open space design, etc.) that may result in a mixing of public and private sector ideas to arrive at a successful final product.

What is the weighting given to responses in evaluation?

The evaluation process and weights for criteria are described on page 17 of the RFQ document. Respondents' approaches to site redevelopment are the most heavily-weighted area of the scores for the RFQ, as the County is most focused on emphasizing the quality and timing of development, as well as the proposed stakeholder engagement process. In order, the County will then look to each team's experience and past project qualifications, and the financial soundness and capacity of each team.

What charitable groups or other stakeholders should Respondents consider for outreach or might have an interest in this project?

The Second Ward Alumni Association, Center City Partners, and the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority may all be interested in the outcomes of this project. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education and CMS, and their staff and family, will certainly be interested in the old Metro School parcel, as well as development of the open space on the Brooklyn Village and Walton Plaza sites. With regard to the Aquatic Center, major users of that facility may be interested, and while the conversation around creation of a second bowl (pool) is ongoing, it is not part of the plan for the old Metro School site.

Will the County accept responses to the RFP from a team that did not participate in the RFQ?

The County has intentionally structured this process so that the RFQ is the first step in a two-step process, to which all RFP participants must have responded. This approach is also intended to preserve developer resources, by first requesting qualifications and preliminary information from a wide set of Respondents, and only asking those who have demonstrated the goals of the plan and the financial wherewithal to move forward to spend resources on creation of a response to the RFP. This is intended to be as transparent a process as possible, while respecting each Respondents' work and resources.

What is the potential for a connection between the two sites being offered?

Walton Plaza is located at Stonewall and McDowell Streets. Brooklyn Village is bounded by Martin Luther King and 4th Streets, and Davidson and McDowell Streets, with the First Baptist Church property behind it. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education owns two parcels in between the sites, including the Metro School, a K-12 school for students with significant disabilities, and the site of the old Metro School. The south side of the sites is occupied by the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center, which is currently undergoing renovation and scheduled to reopen in the spring of 2016.

Respondents to the Brooklyn Village and Walton Plaza RFQ may also consider acquiring the old Metro School site, which sits between the Metro School and Aquatic Center. It is unoccupied and not currently in use, and may be sold, leased, or otherwise redeveloped by the Board of Education. Based on the County's initial conversations with the Board of Education and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' leadership, the County believes that they would be willing to be part of this process. The County believes that there is a great opportunity to incorporate the redevelopment of this middle site into redevelopment of the whole area.

How certain must Respondents be that they have cooperation of the Board of Education, ahead of submitting the RFQ?

The County does not require certainty around plans for the Board of Education site in this phase. For the RFQ, Respondents need simply to demonstrate that creating this connection would strengthen their proposal and provide any information about support they request to move forward with that transaction.

Are there any particular uses desired for the old Metro School site?

The County does not desire particular uses on this site, but would guide Respondents to think about the streetscape and pedestrian network through this site and the sites offered.

Please also note that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools currently uses this site as overflow parking, so shared or publicly-available parking may be desirable on the site, though this is dependent on future conversations. Please see additional information on parking below.

What is expected from Respondents in terms of providing public parking or parking for surrounding government and civic uses?

Providing parking for County or public use on the Brooklyn Village or Walton Plaza sites is not a requirement of this RFQ. However, the County sees an opportunity for parking on these sites, and potentially on the old Metro School site (if incorporated), to serve multiple uses, potentially including County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and general public parking for events at the Aquatic Center or other events, through shared parking strategies.

Given the size of the parcels and desired mix of uses, this parking will likely not be accommodated in a single parking structure or pad. The County recognizes that this parking, and especially parking used for public events, may constitute a burden on the overall value of this development, and is open to public participation for the creation of government-used parking. It will be up to Respondents to propose the structure for, and type of, participation. The County encourages creative thinking on these strategies, which may include: shared parking for a variety of uses and at different times of day, mechanisms for financing garage development, and/or support during operations of any garage.

With regard to the Aquatic Center: The Aquatic Center is currently a major attraction for regional and national events, and the County is moving quickly to reopen to accommodate the “UltraSwim” meet. Currently, the Center uses Walton Plaza for overflow parking. A successful Respondent may want to consider offering some fee-based public parking for these occasions in their plans.

With regard to the old Metro School site: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools must, by statute, be compensated at fair market value for their property, whether through payment or some sort of in-kind contributions, such as parking. Since the school system does not currently charge any of its employees for parking, they may be willing to discuss strategies for continuing to accommodate overflow parking on their site.