MICHIGANST.

Request for Proposals

Facilitated Strategic Planning

I. Introduction

The Michigan Street corridor is one of the city's most vital economic engines, balancing high-volume institutional anchors with a diverse mix of local retail and residential growth. As we navigate evolving infrastructure needs and a growing fund balance, the Michigan Street Corridor Improvement Authority ("MSCIA") has an opportunity to articulate a cohesive strategy that protects the corridor's long-term vitality, advances equitable economic development, and supports a thriving business environment.

II. Current State, Challenges and Opportunities

The MSCIA has reached a meaningful point of organizational growth with a healthy and growing TIF fund balance, creating a financial threshold that allows the organization to transition from routine program management toward more strategic, high-impact capital and economic development investments. This enhanced financial capacity positions MSCIA to act more proactively and assertively in shaping the long-term direction of the Michigan Street corridor.
Michigan Street has the potential to become one of the city's most important economic engines. It is defined by:

- Dense institutional anchors such as healthcare and educational institutions
- High pedestrian and vehicular activity
- A growing mix of local retail, food service, and hospitality businesses
- Mixed-use residential development

These characteristics make the corridor a highly competitive environment for investment and a priority destination for both private developers and community-serving organizations.

At the same time, the corridor faces several emerging opportunities:

- Alignment with large institutional partners seeking district-wide cohesion
- Potential redevelopment of underutilized parcels and vacant storefronts
- Expanded business support and incentive programs
- Growing interest in placemaking, branding, and marketing initiatives

The moment is ripe for MSCIA to adopt a more strategic, future-oriented development role.

III. Background

The MSCIA is committed to fostering economic vitality and aesthetic enhancements within the MSCIA commercial district. To ensure our projects align with the long-term vision of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Development Plan and maximize the impact of TIF capture, we are seeking a strategic professional to run a Facilitator-Led Strategic Planning

Session.

IV. Proposed Objectives

A goal for this facilitated strategic process is to help refine priorities, strengthen organizational alignment, and produce a clear road map to guide decision-making.

- **Project Prioritization:** Identify, Select and prioritize investment opportunities in an operational plan for the most impactful strategic areas for the next 3-5 years. .
- **Infrastructure & Maintenance Alignment:** Strengthen alignment with projects identified in the TIF and Development plan goals, a sustainable roadmap for corridor beautification, and the long-term maintenance of assets (e.g., starting a BID).
- **Economic Resilience & Business Support:** Establish concrete goals for business retention and recruitment strategies for vacant storefronts/parcels, and potential expansion of our incentive programs.
- **Stakeholder & Institutional Synergy:** Ensure coordination with institutional partners and neighboring districts to ensure Michigan Street remains a cohesive, navigable, and vibrant destination.

V. Deliverables/ Desired Outcomes

At minimum, the engagement should result in:

a. Three-to five-year Strategic Roadmap:

This framework will provide the Board and staff with long-term clarity, reinforce organizational discipline, and support transparent communication with partners and the public. It should define a number of priority areas that clearly articulate where the MSCIA intends to invest time, funding, and partnership energy. These priority areas must:

- Guide capital investments, business support programs, and collaborative initiatives with institutions and corridor stakeholders.
- Align with the City of Grand Rapids strategic and equitable economic development goals specifically promoting local ownership, fostering wealth creation, strengthening small business ecosystems, and enhancing accessibility.
- Serve as a decision-making anchor to ensure emerging opportunities, requests, and partnerships are evaluated consistently and strategically.

b. Facilitated Engagement Process

A facilitation approach that supports accountability, helping the group converge toward clear priorities and concrete commitments that are implementable.

- One or more facilitated working sessions involving the Board and staff to build alignment around priorities, constraints, and opportunities.
- Structured conversations designed to surface the core problems, clarify desired future conditions, and evaluate potential strategies and investments.
- Methods that balance vision with realism, promoting creativity while grounding decisions in financial capacity, staffing, and existing plans.

c. Business Development & Support Framework

A defined set of goals to bolster our local economy, including:

- Retention & Recruitment Strategy: Identifying tools to support current small businesses while attracting desired amenities.
- Grant Program Expansion: Evaluating the scaling of façade and other improvement programs.

d. Actionable Workplan & Scorecard:

Clear 3–5-year workplan and scorecard that converts strategy into intentional, sequenced actions. This workplan should include:

- Specific, actionable initiatives that are directly tied to each strategic priority area.
- Clear sequencing and prioritization, ensuring the most impactful and time-sensitive initiatives are advanced first.
- Guidance on moving from strategy to execution, including implementation pathways, required partnerships, anticipated challenges, and resource assumptions.

- Milestones to track progress, measure results, and ensure accountability each year.

VI. Proposal Requirements

Interested applicants must submit a proposal including:

- **Cover Letter** – Briefly describe the applicant's interest and qualifications for the project.
- **Professional Profile** – Provide an overview of relevant experience, key personnel, and past projects.
- **Approach & Methodology** – Outline the proposed approach for working with decision-making bodies to craft strategies.
- **Project Examples** – Include at least three examples of previous strategy session projects.
- **References** – Provide three professional references from past clients or partners.
- **Fee Structure** – Detail the proposed pricing model, including hourly rates or project-based pricing.
- **Availability & Timeline** – Describe availability to facilitate either a single-day session or two half-day sessions.

VII. Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated experience in leading successful strategy sessions.
- Ability to collaborate effectively with decision-making bodies to set priorities and budgets.
- Quality of past work and client references.
- Proposed approach to facilitating strategic planning.

VIII. Proposed Timeline

- RFP Issued: August 31, 2026
- Questions Due: September 18, 2026
- Response to Questions Posted: September 25, 2026
- Proposals Due: October 5, 2026
- Review and Selection: October 15, 2026
- Anticipated Project Start: November 2, 2026

IX. Submission Deadline & Contact Information

Proposal Due Date: September 28, 2026.

- **Submission Format:** Proposals must be submitted in PDF format via email to **info@mistreet.org**
- **OR** in hard copy to:

  Economic Development Department,
  300 Monroe, 9th floor
  Grand Rapids, NW, 49503

- The MSCIA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, request additional information, or negotiate terms as necessary.

X. Terms & Conditions

All costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal shall be the responsibility of the applicant.

This RFP is intended to attract experienced professionals committed to fostering an accessible and vibrant commercial district. We look forward to receiving proposals that align with our mission of improving the built environment for all members of the community.