

Background/Introduction

The City of Laramie, Wyoming, is a municipality of approximately 31,000 residents in the Rocky Mountain West, and is located along the I-80 corridor, just 45 miles west of Cheyenne, WY and in close proximity to many of Colorado's major cities (Fort Collins: 1 hour; Boulder: 1.5 hours; Denver: 2 hours; Colorado Springs; 4 hours). Laramie is home to the University of Wyoming, the Albany County Campus of the Laramie County Community College and WyoTech. At an elevation of 7,220 feet and with 300 days of sunshine, Laramie's residents and visitors enjoy year-round outdoor recreation including hiking, running, biking, skiing, and fishing. And, as home to the University of Wyoming, which has enjoyed unprecedented state and private investments and unparalleled growth over the past several years, Laramie residents and visitors are exposed to a diverse array of top-notch cultural and sporting events.

City of Laramie's ability to provide basic services to citizens is dependent on two revenue streams: sales and use tax and state-shared revenue. In 2013, sales and use tax provided thirty-four percent (34%) of local revenue and state-shared revenue provided twenty-six percent (26%). In the next biennium, the city estimates that 33% of General Fund revenue will come from sales tax and 20% from state-shared income. Due to a historic plunge in the state's primary revenue sources (coal and gas), state-shared revenue sources are estimated to decrease, perhaps significantly, in the next fiscal year and beyond. City of Laramie's budget development is based in large part on estimates of these revenue streams using historical data. The assumption for the past several years has been that as economic recovery ensues nationally, local sales tax revenues will also increase, but this has not been the case. Last year, in fact, the larger of Laramie's two home-improvement stores closed its doors resulting in a noticeable dip in revenues. In the coming weeks, another small regional retailer will be closing due to a corporate bankruptcy.

Further retail losses of this size, paired with the state revenue decreases described above would, may devastate city services. Likewise, any stagnation in retail sales revenue streams threaten to hinder the City's ability to keep pace with inflation.

The flipside to this discussion is that some of Laramie's residents fear a "big box invasion" would force unfair competition with small, locally owned existing businesses or otherwise tarnish the unique character of the community. An eclectic mix of top-quality retailers and dining venues (making up 42% of the 253 businesses in the historic district) call Downtown Laramie home. These one-of-a-kind businesses working in close partnership with the nationally recognized Laramie Main Street Alliance and the Downtown Laramie Business Association have created one of the state's most vibrant downtown districts, which is bustling with activity around the clock and throughout the year. Specialty bicycles, hiking gear, antiques, flowers and boutique jewelry can all be purchased in Downtown Laramie. However, many residents express frustration because basic items – business attire, men's and maternity clothing, building products, bedding, etc. - are either nonexistent in Laramie or too uncompetitively priced for residents to reasonably shop locally. Recruiters from both the University of Wyoming and the Laramie Chamber Business Alliance report that potential recruits and trailing spouses or partners are equally conflicted on this topic; they are thrilled by Laramie's unique identity which exists in part to its lack of a big box presence, but lament the lack of shopping choices and competitive pricing.

The City of Laramie's Community Development Department fields an estimated 24 calls annually from big box and other chain stores looking for available properties, however, less than 50% of those calls result in any additional contact. Likewise, direct outreach to specific retailers by the Laramie Chamber Business Alliance has been unsuccessful. It has long been suspected that there is little activity beyond preliminary calls because of a lack of suitably-sized and competitively-priced land. Meanwhile, direct recruitment efforts may fall flat for these same reason and may also be compounded by demographic data which, at first glance, reveals comparatively lower incomes. This data, however, is misleading because factors like Laramie's higher than average student population may falsely skew median income levels.

Important components of the Retail Recruitment and Retention Analysis and Action Plan are therefore identifying ways in which Laramie can overcome real and perceived impediments to attracting new retailers while at the same time assuring the health and growth of existing businesses, especially those that are unique to Laramie. The successful firm/individual will therefore understand "there's more to local data than meets the eye" and will be mindful of the important balance between attracting new and growing existing retail throughout the planning process.

In September 2015, the Wyoming Entrepreneur Market Research Center, which is a partnership of the Small Businesses Development Center, University of Wyoming, and the Wyoming Business Council developed a detailed market analysis of the community using Claritas and ESRI, including:

1. City of Laramie Data

- a. Major Marketplace/Retail Location
- b. Overall Market Analysis
- c. Laramie Psychographics
- d. Population and household Trends: 2010 vs. 2015
- e. Laramie Unique Retailers
- f. Competition: Cheyenne & Fort Collins Markets

2. Retail Data

- a. Retail Marketplace Profile: Albany, Laramie, and University of Wyoming Campus
- b. Laramie Consumer Spending Reports: 2015 and 2020
- c. Cheyenne Consumer Spending Reports: 2015 and 2020
- d. Fort Collins Consumer Spending Reports: 2015 and 2010
- e. Retail Stores Opportunity Gaps
- f. Retail Sectors where Laramie has Competitive Advantage: Tourism
- g. Laramie Retail Areas Not Meeting their Full Potential
- h. Retail Trends: Strengths and Weaknesses

The detailed report along with other plans and studies listed under the heading "Review of Applicable Studies / Plans / Materials" within this RFQ, can be downloaded via City of Laramie's website, www.cityoflaramie.org/plans.

Scope of Services

The three-pronged scope of services for this project includes **A)** a detailed assessment of existing retail conditions, **B)** a thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses impacting retail growth, and **C)** a goal-oriented, action-ready retail retention and recruitment strategy to facilitate retail growth.

(NOTE: Much of the information needed to satisfy the scope of services has already been developed by the Wyoming Entrepreneur Market Research Center in September 2015 as described above. In addition, the consulting firm, CBD (Michael Fabrizio and David Milder) provided additional analyses for the City of Laramie while under contract for this same study. Lastly, the Laramie Main Street Alliance has recently commissioned a retail market analysis building and business inventory. Market Research Center and Laramie Main Street reports along with other pertinent plans can be downloaded or viewed at: www.cityoflaramie.org/plans. CBD analyses will be provided to the successful firm. Respondents to this RFQ and selected consultant should not seek to replicate or duplicate any of these reports. Instead, respondents should analyze this data to determine "what this means for Laramie" and to identify other data needed

to fully understand factors impacting existing retail and opportunities related to future retail growth.) Moreover, because this foundational retail and community data has already been collected, *the major focus of this study should be in retail development as detailed below in Item C, titled "Goal-Oriented/Action-ready retail retention and recruitment strategy to facilitate retail growth". To that end, respondents with a strong track record for both recruiting new retail and growing existing retail and present a solutions focused approach will receive special consideration and higher points as detailed in the "Scoring and Evaluation" section of the RFQ.*

A. Assessment of existing retail conditions:

1. Evaluate viability of existing retail.
2. Evaluate threats to existing retail including quality, customer/shopping trends surrounding demographics, on-line or regional competition shifting population centers, ownership, etc.
3. Identify locations and retail sectors where the City of Laramie has a regional advantage.

B. Analysis of strengths and weaknesses impacting retail growth

1. Clearly define marketable trade area and buying power taking factors such as pollution swells due to activities like college sporting events, shoppers from adjacent rural communities, etc into consideration
2. Project future retail demand in the region by type and geography. Estimate the amount that could be captured in the City of Laramie.
3. Identify areas of the city where retail growth should be encouraged by incentives and possible infrastructure investment.
4. Determine how to facilitate the most effective and sustainable retail development patterns over the long term.
5. Recommend policies and ordinances (including land use designations) and implementation measures to accommodate retail needs, and specify appropriate location criteria for new or infill commercial.
6. Recommend new policies and ordinances to facilitate reuse of available, vacant, and/or underutilized properties.
7. Identify opportunities for mixed-use retail to facilitate neighborhood integration and revitalization.
8. Examine the effect of development quality, appearance and design on long-term viability of retail and recommend policies/procedures to improve appearance of retail sites.
9. Identify barriers to recruitment (e.g. marketing, parking, property ownership issues, insufficient infrastructure, etc.) and recommend solutions.
10. Develop strategies and policies to encourage local retailers (to increase multiplier effects)

11. Assess the retail potential of available sites in the community
12. Identify local resources or processes (infrastructure, planning/zoning, land availability, etc.) that either support or hinder retail growth.
13. Provide information to understand the value of residents and surrounding households when considered as a workforce

C. Goal-Oriented and *action-ready retail retention and recruitment strategy to facilitate retail growth.*

1. Match the customer profiles with specific retailers that would likely consider Laramie for a location or expansion.
2. Prepare custom marketing packages for each of the major retailers identified and provide contact information for individuals within companies who make real estate decisions.
3. Provide specific recommendations, action plans, goals and timelines for the City of Laramie and each of its partners a (namely, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, Laramie Main Street Alliance, and the Downtown Laramie Business Association) to conduct meaningful activities that will help to increase customer traffic, promote the community as a shopping destination, and ultimately grow sales tax.
4. Develop strategies to mitigate further retail sales leakage, and where possible to recapture from adjoining markets (i.e. Shop Local campaigns).
5. Identify national trends in and local opportunities to promote and increase “destination shopping.”
6. Provide the information required to attract and retain high value, high wage jobs by analyzing how the City benchmarks against competing cities
7. Identify training needs (customer service, marketing, etc) and recommend training opportunities for existing retailers.
8. Make other recommendations as pertinent to the recruitment and retention plan.
9. Provide an online database and marketing tool to assist recruitment efforts
10. Provide on-going support to the City throughout the recruitment process
11. Provide long-term partnership—unlimited access to GIS and staff to help optimize your marketing efforts
12. Provide information to understand residents’ access to services, retail, healthcare, municipal assets, and other attractive amenities for overall quality of life benchmarks

Scoring and Evaluation

Respondents will be assigned points based on the following scoring matrix:

Criteria	Score
Extent to which the respondent can provide a detailed assessment of existing retail conditions utilizing information already available along with additional resources as deemed appropriate (<i>Refer to Scope of Service, Item A</i>)	10 points
Extent to which the respondent can develop a thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses impacting retail growth (<i>Refer to Scope of Service, Item B</i>)	10 points
Extent to which respondent can demonstrate a clear vision for a goal-oriented, action-ready retail retention and recruitment strategy to facilitate retail growth. (<i>Refer to Scope of Service, Item C</i>)	60 points
Respondent track record and experience	20 points
TOTAL	100 point

Public Meetings

1. Introductory and intermediary interactive review meetings with stakeholders regarding planning aspects, vision and direction of the plan.
2. As part of the project, staff will assemble a Retail Strategies Committee (RSC) to provide input regarding the plan. Four (4) meetings with the RSC are anticipated).
3. A minimum of four meetings (2 meetings each with Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, Laramie Main Street Alliance, and City Staff are anticipated during the planning process). Meetings shall include a progress update to the City Council and a final draft presentation to the City Council.
4. Staff will handle all logistics (venues, notice, etc.) for all meetings.

Review of Applicable Studies / Plans / Materials

Review applicable studies, codes, and plans that pertain to retail and economic development within Laramie. The plan will summarize applicable aspects of each planning document and/or code and identify findings and recommendations and how each affects the plan. Review will include the following documents at a minimum:

- a. Wyoming Entrepreneur Market Research Center, Retail Analysis, August 2015
- b. Retail Market Analysis Building and Business Inventory, Downtown Laramie, November 2014
- c. Comprehensive Plan
- d. Major Street Plan
- e. Turner Tract Plan
- f. Laramie Main Street’s 2012 Downtown Development Plan
- g. Laramie Municipal Code including the Unified Development Code
- h. Cirrus Sky Technology Park

Each of these documents are available for download at the City of Laramie's website at www.cityoflaramie.org/plans.

Minimum End of Project Deliverables

1. Twenty (20) bound copies and two (2) unbound paper copies, of the adopted plan that include all reports, text, maps, exhibits and other appendices.
2. Custom marketing package for specific retailers identified within the plan and contact information for individuals within companies who make real estate decisions.
3. One electronic copy of the adopted plan, supporting documents and maps in the following formats: MS Word, PDF, or other formats as applicable. One PDF version of the plan will include all reports, text, maps, exhibits and other appendices as a printable document comparable to the bound copies provided.

Data Availability and Collection

The City of Laramie and participating stakeholders will provide and make available to the consultant for its use the plan, all maps, property descriptions, surveys, previous reports/historic data (as described here) and other information within its knowledge and possession relative to the services to be furnished. All data and materials furnished to the consultant shall remain the property of the City.

Qualifications

Consultants should have the technical and professional experience needed to prepare a retail analysis, recruitment and retention plan. The ability of the consultant to prepare the plan's visions, goals and recommendations will be key. Past work on similar planning documents and updates are highly desired by the community. Additionally, consultants should be able to demonstrate that goals and implementations can be achieved by the community.

Submittal Requirements

Each submittal must include seven (7) hard copies and one (1) electronic version of the written proposal for this RFQ containing the following information:

1. Identify proposed fees, charges and costs associated with the scope of work described above and include the cost proposal in a separate sealed envelope (no digital version required).

2. Submissions of qualifications should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:
 - Overall vision the plan and how your firm believes it is the most qualified to prepare the Retail Recruitment and Retention Analysis and Action Plan. The vision given should incorporate key aspects included within the scope of services and should focus on solutions.
 - A narrative describing your firm and the team assigned to the project.
 - Background credentials that include previous and current projects handled by this team and individual members, as well as each member's anticipated role in this project.
 - Examples of similar work performed for similar areas (preferably Mountain West and/or similarly sized college towns) and related outcomes.
 - Identify the individual who will be in charge of contractual arrangements and/or managing contracts (i.e. project manager).
 - Any anticipated sub-consultants (indicating approximate percentage of work that will be carried out by each sub-consultant) should be identified.
 - Descriptions of current (i.e. no older than 5 years) relevant experience and client satisfaction/dissatisfaction with previous projects. Professional discipline or reprimand of the firm or team members, or any suspected conflict of interest should also be thoroughly explained.
 - Identify any additional deliverables or studies that may need to be done based on your professional opinion that were not identified by staff.
 - Ownership of the firm to the stockholder level should be provided.
 - In the form of a chart or diagram, outline the interrelationship between tasks and steps to complete deliverables, including anticipated schedule.
 - References, including, if possible, clients in the Mountain West, and/or similarly -sized college towns.

Candidates will be evaluated based upon both the firm's individual team members' experience and expertise relevant to the above-mentioned scope of work, time frame for completion and cost. A committee will evaluate proposals and select a firm based on their ability to complete the scope of work. Consultants may be contacted if selected and an interview time and date may be arranged. The team identified in the submittal will be comprised of the actual persons involved in the work. There shall be no replacement of team members without prior approval from the City of Laramie.

This Request for Qualifications is designed to select the best overall firm/consultant as determined by the selection committee through an objective scoring process. The process is not driven by fees, but rather overall qualifications to complete the project scope through multiple criteria and ranking.

The City of Laramie seeks to integrate energy efficiency practices into all aspects of day-to-day operations, from capital construction to staff behaviors, to ensure economic and environmental sustainability. The City encourages consultant submissions that 1) enhance to efficiency of City projects and ongoing operations, and/or 2) consider all energy types, including traditional and renewable sources.

Preference is hereby given to materials, supplies, equipment, machinery and provisions produced, manufactured, supplied or grown in Wyoming, quality being equal to articles offered by competitors outside the State, as provided in W. S. §§ 16-6-101 through 16-6-119.

Questions about the Request for Qualifications can be directed to:

Janine Jordan, City Manager at: jjordan@cityoflaramie.org 307-721-5226

Sarah Reese, Grants Analyst at: sreese@cityoflaramie.org 307-721-5201

Send Proposals to:

City of Laramie

Attention: Sarah Reese

P.O. Box C

Laramie, WY 82073

[Street Address: 405 Grand Avenue, Laramie, WY 82070]

Consultation Selection and Project Completion Timeline

Responses are due by 5:00 p.m. (Mountain Standard Time) on November 7, 2017. Interviews (via Skype, conference call, or in person) may be scheduled during the week of November 14th as appropriate and consultant selection will occur approximately ten business days following RFQ deadline. A contract for services will be executed as quickly as possible thereafter. The final plan should be completed approximately six to nine months from contract execution.