



**Request for Qualifications:**  
**A Marketing Plan for Northampton, MA**

**Release Date:** Friday, February 23, 2018  
**RFQ Due Date:** Friday, March 16, 2018 by 4:00PM  
**Delivery Information:**

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## **Request for Qualifications**

### **A Marketing Plan for Northampton**

The City of Northampton, acting by and through the Mayor, in accordance with M.G.L. c.30B, invites qualified consultants to submit their qualifications to assist the city in developing a plan to market and promote Northampton's nationally acclaimed arts, cultural, entertainment and retail offerings. The deadline for submission of proposals is Friday, March 16, 2018 by 4:00PM.

### **Consideration and Award Process**

Qualification submissions will be reviewed by the Casino Mitigation Marketing Committee, an ad-hoc committee of five Northampton residents with marketing and business backgrounds formed by Mayor David J. Narkewicz to advise him on the process. After this review, a Request for Quotation will be issued to the firms that the committee determines are best qualified to carry out Northampton's marketing and promotional plan project.

### **Geographic Location**

The City of Northampton is situated in Hampshire County, Massachusetts, located 100 miles west of Boston and 45 miles north of Hartford, Connecticut. Northampton occupies 35.5 square miles and the 2010 population was 28,549. The city is bordered by Holyoke, Easthampton, Hatfield, Westhampton, and Williamsburg.

### **Background on Northampton**

Northampton is one of the most popular visitor destinations in New England and beyond. Its vibrant downtown offers 232 retail stores and restaurants along with five musical entertainment venues such as the [Academy of Music](#) and the [Calvin Theater](#). Northampton has three hotels and three inns totaling 340 hotel rooms which generate a minimum of 93,000 visitors annually. Over 1.6 million will visit Northampton annually as one time or frequent visitors. The [3 County Fair](#) will welcome over 125,000 visitors annually to a variety of equestrian, agricultural and carnival events including the [Paradise City Arts Festival](#). The [Smith College](#) campus is located on the western end of downtown Northampton offering its 2,450 students walkable access to a diverse range of retail stores. Along with Smith, there are four nearby colleges: Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Hampshire College and the University of Massachusetts Amherst, all of which generate significant levels of economic, employment and intellectual value to this region. Northampton also includes the village of Florence which has its own 62 storefront downtown featuring a unique combination of both well-established and new businesses. Florence is also home to the 150 acre [Look Memorial Park](#), a popular city and regional attraction drawing over 500,000 visitors annually.

### **Marketing Plan Background**

On September 28, 2017, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission awarded Northampton a \$100,000 grant from its Casino Mitigation Fund to create and implement a marketing and advertising plan to attract MGM Springfield casino visitors. The grant [application](#) is available here. This \$100,000 award segments up to \$35,000 for a marketing plan and \$65,000 for implementation with the city exploring the potential of raising additional funds locally. While the casino will attract hundreds of thousands of new visitors to Springfield, who may also visit Northampton, a [2013 Camoin Associates report](#) commissioned by the city, determined that Northampton could experience a \$4 million to \$8 million loss of recreational spending once the casino opens.

## **Marketing Plan Background – cont’d**

Although downtown Northampton has maintained a consistent and modest retail vacancy rate averaging 6% since 2016, the level of loss estimated in the Camoin report could tip the scale of financial viability for many small Northampton businesses. Also of note is that over the past five years, meals tax revenues, which reflect important consumer spending, have been reliably consistent with no large increases or decreases. Hotel room revenues reflect healthy room occupancy and positive room revenues. See: [Downtown Indicators](#) for additional information.

## **Economic Importance**

Northampton’s arts, cultural, entertainment, retail and lodging establishments not only offer residents a high quality of life but also generate or strengthen several forms of important economic value. 1. Northampton possesses a regionally high residential tax base of \$2.7 billion which is strengthened by the attractions Northampton offers its residents. 2. Northampton’s 232 downtown retail businesses and six lodging establishments conservatively employ over 1,000 people. 3. Locally important spending on meals and beverages was \$94.6 million in 2016 ([see Downtown Indicators](#)). 4. Smith College cites the arts, cultural and retail attractions of Northampton as an advantage in their student and academic staff recruitment efforts. 5. Northampton’s six lodging establishments will attract approximately 93,000 guests spending \$14 million on lodging and also generating \$4.8 million in locally important consumer spending.

## **Scope of Work for the Marketing Plan:**

The city seeks qualifications from a consultant to prepare a marketing plan for Northampton which will promote the city’s attractions in order to maintain and grow visitorship and commerce. The scope of the plan will include, but is not limited to:

1. **Data Collection and Analysis.** Working with the city’s Economic Development Director, collect and analyze readily available information from a variety of data sources including the Hampshire County Regional Tourism Council to guide plan preparation.
2. **Geographic Markets.** Analyze the value of marketing to surrounding geographic areas including the Springfield MGM casino and also fertile markets locally (Hampshire and Franklin counties), Connecticut region (Hartford, Windsor, Enfield), eastern Massachusetts (Worcester, Cambridge, Boston), southern Vermont and the Berkshire region.
3. **Marketing Methods Analysis and Recommendation.** Offer a marketing plan that reviews and analyzes all forms of appropriate messaging ranging from traditional advertising, website presence, social media, digital advertising and visitor experience platforms such as TripAdvisor and Yelp. Present recommendations on the best methods to use.
4. **Advertising Cost Estimates and Budgeting.** Identify cost estimates for applicable traditional advertising, website creation and social media platforms. Based on marketing recommendations, prepare budgetary estimates for a one year or multi-year marketing effort.
5. **Logo and Brand Name Consideration.** Analyze and recommend whether Northampton should adopt a logo, brand name or centrally themed message. Northampton is currently conducting a Wayfinding Directional Study which can be compatibly patterned with a city-wide promotional initiative.

## Scope of Work for the Marketing Plan – cont'd

6. **Visitor Incentives and Discounts.** Provide analysis on the value of offering incentives, discounts or “rewards” to encourage return visitors like the new Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce local shopping app “[Valley Placemaker](#)”.
7. **Staffing and Implementation.** Offer analysis with recommendations on the time demands and staffing levels necessary for the implementation of a one year or multi-year effort.
8. **Input During Plan Preparation.** During the plan preparation process, the consultant will be asked to communicate and meet with one to two focus groups, key stakeholders, and the Mayor’s Casino Mitigation Marketing Committee to hear input on their views. After this review, with input included, a final report will be issued for public consumption.

### Submission Timeline:

The deadline for submission of qualifications is no later than Friday, March 16, 2018 by 4:00PM.

### Submission Contents:

- A description of the organization that includes years of operation, a history of the firm’s direct experience in preparing marketing and promotional plans for cities and downtowns over the last 3 to 6 years.
- Resumes of all project team members with any substitutions during the plan process subject to city approval.
- A list of references with contact information that includes at least one to three prior marketing projects over the last one to six years. References should be able to speak to the completed marketing plan and results after implementation of said plan.
- Submission of one to six marketing plans completed for previous clients.

The city is an Equal Employment Employer and encourages proposals from Massachusetts certified minority and/or women-owned businesses.

### Additional Information

Questions regarding this Request for Qualifications should be directed to:

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