

**Request For Qualifications:
Urban Agriculture in the City of Baltimore**

RFQ Issued: March 25, 2011

Application Deadline: May 6, 2011

Issued by:

Baltimore City Department of Planning

And

Department of Housing and Community Development

For Information Contact:

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REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

The Baltimore City Department of Planning (DOP), in partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), invites Statements of Qualifications (the RFQ) from farmers to participate in the development of a certain selection of pre-identified city-owned vacant and underutilized properties throughout the City of Baltimore for the purpose of urban agriculture. This offering is intended to 1) develop successful entrepreneurial urban farms throughout the City of Baltimore, 2) ameliorate the problem of food deserts in Baltimore City neighborhoods, 3) transform vacant and unused land to achieve economic, social and environmental benefits. DOP and DHCD will select a pool of qualified applicants who will then be eligible to be offered leases with the City of Baltimore for urban agriculture activities on certain properties. Only properties currently owned by the Mayor and City Council, and for which there are no short- to mid-term development purposes will be offered.

In 2010, the Department of Planning identified city-owned vacant land that could potentially be used for successful urban farming ventures. These sites, at a minimum of one acre in size, will be leased to qualified applicants selected through this RFQ for the purpose of urban agriculture. It is the intention of DOP and DHCD to lease up to thirty-five acres of land for this purpose over the next three years. Disposition of specific properties will occur on a site by site basis after qualified applicants are selected.

Qualified applicants can include not-for-profit organizations, for-profit organizations or a partnership between any of these entities. Only those applicants who are qualified through this or a future RFQ will be eligible to be offered leases as part of this initiative.

Qualified applicants will be expected to secure their own financing. Some City funds, including either grants or loans, may be available to support infrastructure costs for urban agriculture projects started through this RFQ.

Applicants must have as a member of their team a person with at least one year of experience in agricultural production, preferably in an urban context. Applicants selected under this RFQ will be eligible to be offered leases for a period not to exceed five years and then may be eligible to renew their lease. Leased land is to be used for sustainable urban agriculture which can be entrepreneurial, educational or charitable in focus. No animal husbandry, including chickens and apiaries, will be permitted in at least the first year of farm production.

A pre-submission conference will be held on Friday, April 8, 2011 from 3:00 – 5:00pm EST at the Department of Planning's Phoebe B. Stanton Board Room, 417 E. Fayette Street, 8th floor. While this conference is not mandatory, interested Respondents are encouraged to attend. Respondents requiring special accommodations for this conference are asked to contact Abby Cocke at 410-396-1670 or abby.cocke@baltimorecity.gov no later than Tuesday, April 5, 2011. Additional questions may also be submitted in writing to Abby Cocke at the email address above. Applications are due electronically by 4:00pm EST on Friday, May 6, 2011 to abby.cocke@baltimorecity.gov. Applications received after this time will not be considered.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definitions

For the purposes of this RFQ, the following definitions are provided:

- **Urban Agriculture** – Land used for the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, plants, flowers or herbs by an individual, organization, or business with the primary purpose of growing food for sale (including for-profit and non-profit enterprises). Urban agriculture should provide economic development and entrepreneurial opportunities in the City’s food system, and provide a source of fresh, local food for food markets. The word “farm” is used interchangeably with “urban agriculture” within this RFQ. While normally urban agriculture could include animal husbandry, no keeping of animals, including chickens or bees, will be allowed on land leased from the City of Baltimore as a result of this RFQ process for at least the first year of production and possibly longer.
- **Farmer** – One who takes a principal role in the on-the-ground operations of an agricultural production venture.
- **Food Desert** – A block group that is more than ¼ mile from a supermarket and with 40% or more of its population living on an income below 125% of the federal poverty level. 18% of Baltimore City is in a Food Desert. [Definition from Johns Hopkins University’s Center for a Livable Future]
- **Applicant/Respondent** – The organization or business submitting the application. This entity may partner with other entities, but takes responsibility for truthfully and completely submitting this RFQ and, if offered a lease for one or more city-owned properties, adhering to the standards, conditions and responsibilities outlined in this RFQ and in any eventual lease. Only one organization or business may be considered the Applicant/Respondent for purposes of this RFQ, and this entity must remain consistent throughout all application materials and documentation submitted in response to this RFQ.

1.2 Background

In recent years, many U.S. cities have explored urban agriculture as a means to job creation, community development, environmental stewardship, and improved food access and food security. Increasingly, policymakers and city planners consider agriculture a means to utilize under-used public land to improve food systems within their jurisdiction.

Baltimore City possesses both many of the challenges and many of the opportunities associated with the nationwide push towards urban agriculture. There are over 30,000 abandoned properties in Baltimore City which drag down property values around them. As of the 2010 census, Baltimore’s population is continuing to decrease. Baltimore is also home to large swathes of food deserts, characterized by inequitable access to fresh produce which contributes to poor public health outcomes. Urban

agriculture can be a piece of the solution to all of these issues by putting vacant land back into positive use and supplying fresh vegetables, fruit and herbs to the citizens of the city.

In recognition of the important role that urban agriculture can play in our city's future, the Department of Planning, in partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development, is issuing this Request for Qualifications to establish new, entrepreneurial urban agriculture ventures on city-owned land in the City of Baltimore. This first RFQ is intended to attract established farmers interested in running a viable business or non-profit organization that will add value to Baltimore neighborhoods in a variety of ways. The goals of this initiative are as described below in subsection 1.3.

1.3 Goals

The Department of Planning and the Department of Housing and Community Development are seeking qualifications of Respondents with the capacity to lease and farm city-owned property in accordance with the goals as stated herein and in compliance with Standards and Controls established for each area and considering other governing rules and regulations. The goals of this offering include but are not limited to the following:

1. To establish high-quality urban agricultural sites that use sustainable farming practices (see subsection 4.2), complement adjacent properties and utilize sound market strategies, understandings and principles.
2. To increase access to healthy, affordable food particularly within food deserts in Baltimore City. For more information on Baltimore's Food Policy Initiative, visit www.baltimorecity.gov, Keyword "food policy".
3. To improve environmental conditions on and around vacant and/or abandoned land as a result of the urban agriculture taking place by the removal of litter, improvement of soil, and the recycling and composting of materials.
4. To provide additional benefits to the surrounding communities, including improved aesthetics, stabilized or increased property values, job training and employment opportunities.
5. To provide financial returns to the City including, but not limited to, incremental tax revenues.
6. To create opportunities for Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises.

1.4 Eligibility

A review panel comprised of representatives from The Department of Planning, the Department of Housing and Community Development and other urban agriculture leaders in Baltimore as selected by DOP and DHCD will review and score applications based on a combination of threshold and ranked

criteria. Standards for ranked criteria are described in section III: Application Evaluation below. Threshold criteria are the minimum standards that a Respondent MUST meet in order to be considered.

Threshold criteria for this RFQ include the following items:

- Participation – either as the Applicant, an employee of the Applicant or a significant partner – of a farmer with at least one (1) year of successful experience in agricultural production.
- No forfeitures or liens filed within the last three years with the exception of mechanic’s liens, in which case the Applicant must provide a list showing who filed judgment, the date of the filing, the amount and the date the judgment was resolved.
- Any outstanding code violations on property(ies) owned by the Applicant(s) should be identified along with an explanation of why the violation was received and the schedule for abatement. An Applicant may be rejected at any time during the application process if unabated Building Code Violations are found, or if the applicant has a long record of receiving Violation Notices.
- No loans that have been defaulted on within the last five (5) years.
- No declarations of bankruptcy within the last three (3) years.

1.5 Timeline

RFQ Issuance: March 25, 2011
Pre-Submission Conference: April 8, 2011
Applications Due: May 6, 2011
Applicant Interviews: On or around May 27, 2011
Anticipated Notification Date: June 17, 2011

II. APPLICATION CONTENTS

Applications should provide a clear and concise demonstration of the Respondent’s capability. Respondents are required to submit the following information in the format described below and in sufficient detail to enable the Department of Planning and the Review Panel to give ample consideration to the application. Applications must include, at a minimum, the requirements listed in this RFQ and may include any background or other supporting information that the Respondent feels necessary. Applications need not and should not be elaborate or costly to prepare. They should, however, be prepared in a professional manner and in the format described in this RFQ.

2.1 Submission Requirements

- a. Applications should all be in the format described herein and should be submitted electronically, ideally in .pdf format, to abby.cocke@baltimorecity.gov. If the Respondent cannot submit RFQ electronically, print submissions will be accepted. All print applications must be typed and printed using double-sided copying.

- b. All applications must have a table of contents and each section clearly labeled. All information requested in subsections 2.2—2.5 below must be included in its entirety.
- c. All required forms, found in section VII below, must be included with the application.
- d. Applications, or unsolicited amendments to applications, arriving after the closing date and time will not be accepted.
- e. Failure to submit the application in the manner described above may result in the application being rejected as unresponsive.

2.2 Farmer Capacity

- a. Provide a narrative statement describing the Respondent’s organizational capacity to respond to this request and any previous relevant experience. Provide specific information on projects that are similar in scale and character to the proposed farm. Emphasize any exceptional or unique qualifications of the Respondent. Specifically, please describe any experience related to “Urban Agriculture”, sustainable development, or other environmentally sensitive projects. Suggested length is one page, maximum length is two pages.
- b. Provide resumes of up to five key team members, if applicable. Resumes should include a description of experience and successful urban agriculture enterprises.
- c. Respondents must provide sufficient financial information to establish the approximate net worth and assets available to the team in order to sustain the farm. Be advised that the analysis of this statement will include a comparison of stated available assets and the estimated equity required for the farm. All financial information will be treated with the strictest confidence among review panelists.
- d. Respondents that are companies or entities not publicly traded must submit accountant prepared financial statements for the most recent fiscal year end.
- e. In addition, not-for-profit entities shall provide a summary of funding sources and confirmation of their 501c(3) designation.
- f. Provide a letter of intent from an insurance company to provide liability insurance upon award of the Site.

2.3 Urban Agriculture Concept

- a. Provide a narrative of the proposed approach for developing an urban farm indicating a concept scope of work, scale, and nature of the farm (i.e. for-profit, educational, charitable, etc.), proposed funding sources, proposed costs, and any and all conditions thereon. Please keep in mind that farming must be practiced sustainably (see subsection 4.2) and, for at least the first

year of the lease (though possibly longer), no animal husbandry will be permitted, including chickens and apiaries.

- b. Provide a proposed timeline for establishing the farm. Farming operations should begin within three months of the signing of a lease agreement for a site.
- c. Describe the design and size of the project, including both the optimal and the acceptable range of size conditions.
- d. If possible, provide a visual representation of the proposed farm and provide plans that include the overall design and layout of the operation. Such visual aids need not be elaborate or costly, but should offer the Review Panel a clear picture of the farm being proposed and the end result.
- e. Indicate elements of the proposed farm that will provide specific amenities and/or benefits to the local community and the City as a whole. Preference will be given to applicants who address access to green jobs, education and/or food access. Examples of such elements include training new urban farmers, donating or reducing the price of food to local communities, including in the farm design green infrastructure and environmental remediation.

2.4 Cost Estimate and Economic Feasibility

- a. Provide a narrative statement explaining the economic feasibility of the proposed farm. Include any market assumptions that support revenue projections, such as projected sales prices and/or anticipated consumer levels. It is suggested that Respondents provide supporting documentation for the market assumptions.
- b. Provide a budget indicating the estimated per unit cost elements.
- c. Provide a “sources and uses” statement (i.e. income and expenses) identifying the estimated amount of debt and equity financing by source, acquisition, and “hard” (i.e. infrastructure) and “soft” (i.e. labor, fees, etc.) costs. Disclosures of terms and sources for all debt must be included. A commitment letter from a lending institution is highly desirable.
- d. If the farm anticipates such sources of funding as equity sources, foundation grants, corporate gifts, or governmental program funds, provide a summary of the source funds that includes a timetable of when applications are available and when awards are made. In addition, describe the applicability of the farm to the goals of the funding source.

2.5 MBE/WBE Participation

- a. Indicate the minority- and women-owned business participation in the Urban Agriculture project, if applicable.
- b. Provide a list of minority- and women-owned businesses, consultants, and employees who will be asked to participate in this work, if applicable.

- c. Indicate any additional steps that will be taken by the Urban Agriculture team to maximize minority and women participation in the various stages of development, operations, and employment while the farm is in existence.

III. Application Evaluation

3.1 Review Panel

An Urban Agriculture Review Panel will be formed to grade applications based on the following criteria, and will be comprised of representatives from The Department of Planning, the Department of Housing and Community Development and other urban agriculture specialists as selected by DOP and DHCD. In order to be considered, applicants must meet the threshold criteria as described in subsection 1.4. DOP and DHCD may select applications at their sole discretion, and even those applicants meeting the criteria will not necessarily be selected or offered leases through this initiative.

3.2 Criteria: Applicant Capacity and Experience

- a. The Respondents have a satisfactory record of past performance as demonstrated by their experience in planning, financing, farming, marketing, and managing farms similar in size and scope of the proposed farm.
- b. The Respondent has demonstrated experience in agriculture. Preference will be given to applicants with at least 1 year of experience in food production.
- c. The Respondent has a track record of successful negotiations with government entities and/or community members.
- d. The Respondent has the ability to obtain and maintain sufficient financial resources to successfully start and complete their Urban Agriculture enterprise in an agreed upon time frame.

3.3 Criteria: Quality of Urban Agriculture Concept

- a. Meeting or exceeding the requirements of the RFQ.
- b. Quality of farm business/management plan proposed.
- c. Contributions to the improvement of the City that include, but are not limited to, training new urban farmers, increasing the supply of affordable healthy food to local communities, including in the farm design green infrastructure and environmental remediation, and other positive contributions to long-term improvements of the City.

3.4 Criteria: Economic Feasibility

- a. Farm is economically sound and based on an established model which is supported by market assumptions.

- b. Ability to leverage funds from a variety of sources.

3.5 Criteria: Opportunities for MBE/WBE Participation

- a. Demonstration of MBE and WBE participation in the project.
- b. Applications that have significant MBE and WBE participation will be viewed more favorably.
- c. An application that has an MBE or WBE as an equity partner will receive additional favorable consideration.

IV. STANDARDS AND CONTROLS

4.1 Site Conditions and Terms

- a. DOP and DHCD will invite selected applicants to develop an agreed-upon site as an urban farm.
- b. It is the intention of DOP and DHCD to award as many properties as qualified applicants. However, DOP and DHCD reserve the right to award only a portion of any site.
- c. The Sites are offered in “as is” condition:
 - i. Any site may contain environmental hazards. Neither DOP nor DHCD has conducted environmental testing of the site and does not make any representation, guaranty, or warranty concerning any of the site’s conditions, including the possible presence of hazardous materials. DOP, DHCD and the City of Baltimore will not bear any responsibility for or expense in the removal or treatment of asbestos, lead, or other hazardous materials. The selected Respondent(s) shall indemnify and hold the City, DOP and DHCD harmless from claims or damages arising out of or in connection with the presence of or removal of such materials.
 - ii. The applicant should expect to develop a farm either on “raised beds” (i.e. certified clean soil) with a barrier between new soil and existing soil or to clean up the site per Maryland Department of the Environment regulations.
- d. If the selected Respondent(s) want to utilize adjacent or adjoining properties for their Urban Agriculture enterprise, the Respondent(s) will be solely responsible for initiating and financing these processes. The Department of Public Works may require start-up or maintenance fees for any existing or future utilities used on the sites.

4.2 Sustainability Practices

In the Baltimore Sustainability Plan under Pollution Prevention, Goal 4 (“Reduce risks from hazardous materials”), Strategy B calls for “a policy in City-owned and leased properties and land to eliminate the use of toxic chemicals using such methods as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and organic landcare.” In recognition of the importance of sustainable techniques for the health of our public lands, the

following practices will be required for any applicants selected to lease city-owned land for the purpose of Urban Agriculture as a result of this RFQ.

- a. **Weed Management**—Farmers are not permitted to use any non-USDA certified organic herbicides to control weeds unless approved in advance by the City.
- a. **Insect Management**—Farmers must understand current pest management methods of control and be versed in Integrated Pest Management (“IPM”), including monitoring techniques such as scouting. IPM is defined as a sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural and physical tools in a way that minimizes economic, health, and environmental risks.
- b. **Disease Management**—Farmers are required to be familiar with plant diseases and be able to identify them. Farmers are not permitted to use any non-USDA certified organic chemicals, fungicides, or bactericides on city-owned land for disease management unless approved in advance by the City.
- c. **Cleaning; Trash Collection; Recycling; Composting**—Farmers must, at their sole cost and expense, clean-up all waste, garbage, refuse, rubbish, organic debris generated by and related to their activities on city-owned land. Farmers must provide proper waste and recycling receptacles throughout the leased property including, but not limited to, providing separate trash containers for recyclable materials. Farmers must make best efforts to compost organic waste generated by their activities.

4.3 Community Participation

It is the goal of DOP and DHCD that any new Urban Agriculture ventures in the City of Baltimore, whether for-profit or non-profit, integrate well with the communities around them. Land to be offered to qualified farmers selected through this RFQ process has been chosen for compatibility with surrounding land uses. In some cases the land will be near or adjacent to residential areas. Qualified applicants will be expected to meet with local community members to discuss the farm management strategy and address concerns raised. Farmers should have the ability to work with citizens as necessary.

4.4 MBE/WBE Participation

It is the policy of the City that minority and women-owned business enterprises should have maximum opportunity to participate in any and all components of the farm, including, but not limited to ownership, financing, design, construction, management, operations, and employment after farm is operational.

For more information about the City’s MBE/WBE program and MBE/WBE certification, visit <http://cityservices.baltimorecity.gov//mwboo>, or contact:

The Minority and Women’s Business Development Office

City Hall, Room 334

100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
(410) 396-3818

4.5 Additional Respondent Responsibilities

- a. The Respondent shall be responsible for obtaining, at its sole cost, all permits, standard regulatory approvals, as well as any required engineering and applicable environmental studies.
- b. All leasing costs shall be borne by the Respondent including but not limited to, ordering of lien sheets, any applicable recordation taxes, or other charges.
- c. Any costs of appraisals, surveys, legal descriptions and any other typical development “soft costs” shall be borne by the Respondent.
- d. Respondents may be asked to make a presentation to the RFQ Review Panel (see subsection 3.1).
- e. Respondents may be asked to respond to follow-up questions from the Department of Planning and/or the RFQ Review Panel.

4.6 Financing Assumptions

- a. Acquisition Price: DOP and DHCD anticipate conveying the sites at a lease rate of \$100/year.
- b. Property Taxes: The City of Baltimore is in the process of studying the feasibility of a Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for qualified applicants.
- c. Financing: Selected Respondents are expected to utilize “raised beds” or other technology to avoid contact with the soil unless brownfields assessment and cleanup are completed as part of their business model.
- d. City Funding: Selected Respondents will be invited to apply for city grant or loan bond funding for any capital projects (i.e. storm water management, irrigation system of fence installation, hoophouse construction, etc.).

V. Development Process

5.1 Land Leasing Agreement and Approval

Selected Respondents will have the opportunity to negotiate a 5-year Land Leasing Agreement (LLA) with a potential 5-year extension (and at least a 2-year notice to vacate) setting forth the terms and conditions of the lease and development of the site. Decisions regarding award of the site and terms of award as described in the LLA may be recommended by DOP and DHCD for final approval. The final acceptance of any proposal and temporary disposition of the property through an LLA is subject to the

approval of the Board of Estimates in Baltimore City. Only following the approval by the Board of Estimates, may DOP, DHCD and the farmer proceed to an agreement on the property.

5.2 Development Oversight

Selected Respondents must agree to the review and guidance of DOP and DHCD in the preparation of plans for the site in conformance with this RFQ and other applicable codes and ordinances of the City of Baltimore.

VI. Administrative Information

6.1 Issuance Information

- a. The issue date for this RFQ is March 25, 2011.
- b. This RFQ is issued by the Department of Planning, Office of Sustainability, 417 East Fayette Street, 8th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, in partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development.
- c. An RFQ pre-submission conference will be held on Friday, April 8, 2011, 3:00 – 5:00pm EST at the Department of Planning’s Phoebe B. Stanton Board Room, 417 E. Fayette Street, 8th floor. While this conference is not mandatory, interested Respondents are encouraged to attend. Questions and inquiries, both verbal and written, will be accepted from Respondents attending the pre-submission conference. Respondents requiring special accommodations for this conference are asked to contact Abby Cocke at 410-396-1670 or abby.cocke@baltimorecity.gov no later than Tuesday, April 5, 2011.
- d. Additional questions may also be submitted in writing to Abby Cocke at the email address above.
- e. Applications are due by 4:00pm EST on Friday, May 6, 2011 to abby.cocke@baltimorecity.gov. Preference is for electronic submission only. If electronic submission is not possible applications will be accepted typed and printed using double-sided copying to:

Department of Planning
Baltimore Office of Sustainability
ATTN: Abby Cocke
417 E. Fayette St., 8th floor
Baltimore, MD 21202

Applications received after this time will not be considered.

Use of the U.S. Postal Service, private delivery companies or courier services is undertaken at the sole risk of the Respondent. It is the Respondent’s sole responsibility to ensure that the proposal is in the possession of the issuing office by the deadline.

- f. The City of Baltimore shall not be responsible for nor in fact will pay any cost incurred by any Respondent in preparing and submitting a proposal or requested supplemental information in response to the RFQ.

6.2 Obtaining the RFQ

The RFQ will be made available free of charge. The RFQ may be picked up at 417 East Fayette Street, 8th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 between 9:00am and 4:00pm, weekdays. It will also be downloadable from the Office of Sustainability's website at: <http://www.baltimoresustainability.org>.

6.3 Revisions and Addenda

Should it become necessary to revise any part of this RFQ, or to provide additional information necessary to adequately interpret provisions and requirements of this RFQ, an Addendum to the RFQ shall be provided to all Respondents who picked up the RFQ in person and provided their contact information. The Department of Planning will also appropriately update the web version of the RFQ should any such revision or addenda be necessary. Because the Department of Planning may not have contact information for Respondents who choose to acquire the RFQ from the website, it is recommended that such entities review subsequent postings periodically to maintain current information about the offering.

6.4 Rights Reserved by DOP and DHCD

The Department of Planning and the Department of Housing and Community Development reserve the right in their sole discretion to recommend the award contract related to this RFQ based upon the written proposals received by the Department of Planning without prior discussion or negotiation with respect to those proposals.

DOP and DHCD reserve the right to:

- accept or reject any and all proposals, at their sole discretion, received as a result of this RFQ, to waive minor irregularities, and to conduct discussions with all responsible Respondents, in any manner necessary, to serve the best interest of the City of Baltimore.
- request additional information from any or all Respondents if necessary to clarify statements or data contained in the proposals.
- reject any proposal as a result of misrepresentation of any information contained in the proposal.

6.5 Public Information Act Notice

The Department of Planning commits to handling all information regarding financial assets and holdings of Respondents in strictest confidence. Respondents should give specific attention to identifying any additional portions of their proposals that they deem to be confidential, proprietary information, or trade secrets and provide any justification why such material, should not be disclosed by DOP or DHCD under the Maryland Public Information Act SS 1-601 et seq. of the State Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland upon request by the public.

6.6 Compliance with the Law

By submitting an offer in response to this RFQ, Respondents selected for awards agree to comply with all Federal, State, and City laws, rules, and regulations, and ordinances applicable to their activities and obligations under this RFQ.

VII. Required Forms

All forms in subsections 7.1-7.3 (see attached document “Urban Agriculture RFQ Forms”) must be included with the Respondent’s application along with all information requested in subsections 2.2-2.5.