



OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU
One Visitors Center Circle, Manteo, NC 27954
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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Dare County Tourism Board is interested in receiving proposals from qualified firms to provide site feasibility and economic impact services for use in developing property located in Nags Head, North Carolina.

Goal for Property

To increase overnight visitation to the Outer Banks, particularly during non-peak seasons, while also remaining true to the character of the area.

Study Objectives

To reset the Tourism Board's long-term vision for the property it owns in Nags Head, evaluating demand generating options and determining the most appropriate course of action.

Background

The Dare County Tourism Board d/b/a the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau is the Destination Marketing Organization responsible for promoting Dare County's Outer Banks. The Outer Banks welcomes millions of visitors annually and celebrates a local tourism industry in excess of \$1.1 billion in direct spending. Approximately 70% of that business, however, occurs during the three summer months of June, July and August. Much of the Board's attention, then, is directed at growing the other months of the year.

One strategy to increase visitation during the other seasons is events. The Board has supported local event development in a variety of ways -- extensive advertising and promotion, grant funding and the dedication of an owned property (The Soundside) to serve as event site.

The Soundside is a 10-acre upland, 5-acre wetland site located in the town of Nags Head on the shores of the Roanoke Sound. It was purchased in 2007 at a time when few large parcels remained on the Outer Banks. The property was secured for the possible development of a multi-use facility or conference center. An economic feasibility study was conducted in 2011 and it stated that a small conference center with an adjoining hotel and restaurant offered the best return on investment.

The Board at that time failed to reach consensus for the vision laid out by the study's recommendation, though. Some had concerns regarding the aesthetics of a large building and how it might disrupt the natural setting. Others were not convinced that the building would attract the associations and meetings business claimed in the study. And still others were discouraged by the expense and lack of financial partners, which would place the sole



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responsibility on the Tourism Board and their inadequate funding stream for a project of this magnitude. These risks and hurdles led the Board to an alternative, which was to dedicate the property's use to that of an event site for at least the next 10 years. We are currently almost 6 years into that commitment. Phases of development have occurred to improve The Soundside's functionality and attractiveness as an event location. While it has enjoyed a degree of success and currently hosts some of the largest events on the Outer Banks, The Soundside also faces challenges.

The number of available on-site parking spaces has proven insufficient at times depending on the event's layout and size. Once our lots are full, spill-over has sometimes occurred creating issues for neighboring businesses. Consequently, now event developers are forced to secure off-site parking and provide shuttles for visitors. Not only does this add cost and complexity, but the shuttles also serve as a deterrent for the guest.

The weather presents another fundamental challenge as the site has no enclosed structure. The event developer must shoulder the high cost of tents and ultimately gamble on whether conditions will cause their event to be a financial success or failure. The cost of other infrastructure, such as, porta-potties, traffic cones and barricades are replicated with practically every event and are again shouldered by the event developer.

The Board has the opportunity to expand the contiguous acreage through additional land purchases, either by adding 2.5 upland acres or 5 upland acres to the existing site.

Scope of Work

As we consider the options before us – constructing a building for events, perhaps pursuing a use other than or in addition to events, or adding acreage to the property – we recognize the need for expert guidance and quantitative support. The scope of work is expected to focus on three main areas: market feasibility, economic impact and site feasibility.

The hired company will offer its assessment of potential tourism demand-generators for the site, including but not limited to events, and in consideration of our market's specific strengths and weaknesses.

The company will also provide a detailed review of how the top demand-generators are affected, if at all, by the addition of acreage (i.e., the current 10-acre site, a 12.5-acre site and a 15-acre site).

Designs for building and/or parking are not within the current scope of work, but recommendations regarding different types of site usage must be made with explanations of how those recommendations conform to current ordinances and code within the town of Nags Head.



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In other words, the recommendations must be feasible in terms of the site's capacity.

With market demand and site feasibility recognized, the Board would like to understand the economic and fiscal impact of the top option(s) – how much will it cost to build and operate, what kind of economic impacts are expected, what is the return on investment?

Finally, the hired company is expected to advise a path forward in terms of strategic partnerships with other local governments and/or private enterprises to share in funding and operating the final use of the property, if outside partners are needed.

Additional work beyond that stated in the resolution may be required, such as environmental impact and/or soil studies, and will be negotiated independent of this agreement.

Proposals (9 copies)

- Overview of your company, including bios for the key staff likely to be involved with our project.
- 3 relevant examples of your company's work, preferably highlighting a range of site use types. Please describe the project challenges, the process utilized, the development's funding construct (not amounts) and the outcome.
- A description of the process you recommend for our project.
- Proposed cost and timing.
- Approximately three references, and if appropriate, one in which client was advised against developing a facility.

Selection Process

Proposals submitted will be reviewed by the Dare County Tourism Board Steering Committee. Top candidates may be interviewed.

The Board reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive technicalities, and to be the sole judge of suitability of the services for its intended use and further specifically reserves the right to make the award in the best interest of the Board and budget available.

Proposals are due to the Executive Director at One Visitors Center Circle, Manteo, NC 27954 no later than 4:30pm on Wednesday, October 24, 2018. Any questions related to this request for proposals should be directed to Lee Nettles, Executive Director or Diane Bognich, Director of Administration at 252-473-2138 or rfp@outerbanks.org.