



Midtown Detroit, Inc. Comprehensive Rebrand + Website Development

Request for Proposal Questions Response

How will MDI define success for this rebrand—both at launch and looking ahead one year post-launch? What does success look like one-year post-launch? Are there specific outcomes MDI is prioritizing? How do you define the success of any new brand and website?

Project success post-launch includes new branding and website that accomplishes the goals of engaging our community and visitors in a new, more direct way and is representative of our community culture and unique assets, as well as clearly communicating what MDI does as an organization. This is a foundational and strategic infrastructure for future marketing and activation efforts. The rebrand and website redevelopment establish the platform — direct quantitative outcomes will be influenced once the work is publicized and supported by programming and marketing investment.

One year post-launch the specific quantitative tracking outcomes to this end include, but are not limited to: increased website and social media traffic and engagement; increased small business traffic and revenue; more foot traffic in commercial corridors and increased event attendance; and increased participation with our stakeholders.

Why do you need an evolved or new brand to perform?

Our current brand identity, color palette, etc. is dated and does not fully capture the culture of the communities we serve. There is an opportunity to realign the branding with the community and make it more fun, creative, engaging, and celebratory. Our websites are out-of-date, lack intuitive connection and functionality. Moreover, MDI is going through an evolution itself — including the shift away from managing a real estate portfolio and toward public space stewardship, activation, and small business support. The brand needs to reflect that shift in focus and the growth happening across the district.

Are neighborhood identities expected to function primarily as placemaking/wayfinding tools or as standalone marketing brands?

Neighborhood identities are expected to be utilized for placemaking/wayfinding tools.

What level of community engagement is expected to directly influence brand decisions versus inform the process?

Community engagement is intended to meaningfully inform the strategic direction of the rebrand. The goal is to better understand the unique identity, culture, history, and future aspirations of the district and the stakeholders we serve.

Ultimately, community engagement will inform MDI’s decision-making — but the selected firm is expected to synthesize that input into a clear strategic framework and creative direction. We are looking for a process that is informed by the community, not dictated by it. The strategic rigor of the engagement process should lead to a stronger and more informed brand outcome.

Does MDI have existing research, stakeholder input, or brand insights that proposers should build upon? Has MDI conducted any recent surveys, listening sessions, or research that could inform the discovery phase?

Yes, MDI has existing data on community needs, priorities, and baseline research of current existing MDI platforms, in addition to qualitative feedback. In addition, our public relations representation is in process of completing a communications audit to establish benchmarks for our current communications presence. Upon audit completion, our PR team will further refine our communications strategy. This audit includes: a review of our communications tools, materials, messaging, and tactics; our general media presence and public perception; our impact/focus/operational areas; and our digital plans and metrics. The selected contractor for our rebranding project will coordinate with our PR firm as appropriate.

Which components are considered most critical for initial launch versus candidates for phased rollout? What deliverables are considered “core” vs. “aspirational” within the \$75–100k budget? Which collateral items must be completed at launch vs. phased later?

The most critical factors for initial launch are the brand identity system, website redevelopment, and most basic and critical collateral assets. The most basic collateral items include: Business cards, letterhead, envelopes, and presentation template; Neighborhood illustrated maps; Landscaping and cleaning scope maps; and general Midtown Detroit brochure.

MDI is open to a phased approach within the \$75–100k ceiling, prioritizing the brand identity system and foundational website work. Additional marketing collateral and enhancements may be scoped for later phases if recommended.

Also note that proposals will be evaluated based on strength of strategic thinking — even if certain secondary deliverables are phased. We understand the balance of matching scope and budget realistically and are open to thoughtful phasing, while keeping the ceiling intact.

What website CMS is currently used, and is there a preferred platform for the new site?

The existing websites are built on WordPress. We would expect the new site to be built on WordPress or another widely used such as Squarespace, easily editable CMS that allows for internal updates without heavy reliance on developers.

Is the request for professional photography and videography expected to be part of this initial scope of work or an add service?

The priority is the storytelling framework and creative direction. Photography and videography may be included within scope if feasible, but agencies may propose use of existing assets with a plan for future production as a separate phase.

For the nine neighborhood sub-brands, is MDI envisioning nine distinct logo marks, or a single, flexible system that can be applied across neighborhoods with variations? How many neighborhood/event sub-brands are expected in Phase 1?

We will work with the selected contractor to determine which neighborhoods, parks, and events require standalone logos that align with the broader Midtown identity brand, and which should be a part of a more flexible system. Ultimately, it will be a mix of both. At minimum, we have identified the following as must-haves for logos: Midtown Detroit, Inc.; Midtown; Cass Corridor; New Center; New Center Park; North Cass Community Garden; and Noel Night. We expect the selected firm to provide strategic guidance on how the sub-brand system should be structured — whether distinct logos, a flexible system, or a hybrid model — in the best interest of Midtown long-term.

Are there any existing perceptions of MDI or the district that the organization is hoping to shift, clarify, or strengthen through this rebrand?

Yes. We are seeking to communicate and clarify our stewardship geography breadth, underscore and celebrate the unique assets in each community both individually and together. It is also critical to clarify what MDI does as an organization, and the shift in our mission with the disposition of our building real estate portfolio, and emphasis and refocus on public space improvement and activation through urban planning and stewardship activities, in addition to our small business support services.

What level of stakeholder or community engagement does MDI anticipate during the discovery and strategy phase (for example, interviews or workshops), and will MDI help facilitate access to participants?

MDI will facilitate community engagement and stakeholder access with the selected consultant. Access to board members and key stakeholders for interview and/or workshop will be selected by MDI in consultation with the selected consultant. A public survey will also be utilized.

Are there specific stakeholder groups—such as residents, business owners, artists, institutions, or partners—that MDI would like proposers to prioritize during discovery?

All of the above in varying capacities and intensities, with a special focus on small business owners, anchor institutions, and longstanding community members.

The RFP notes that the organizational site and Visit Midtown site may be consolidated unless there is a strong reason not to. What factors would MDI consider when evaluating an alternative recommendation?

The primary consideration will be user experience and clarity of communication. We are open to a strong, strategic recommendation if there is a compelling reason not to consolidate. Any alternative recommendation should clearly outline the rationale, user journey implications, operational considerations, and long-term communications benefits within the proposal.

What should proposers assume about the current state of website content—will most content be provided, require migration, or need to be newly developed?

Most website content will need to be newly developed. MDI has recent photos and verbiage about our organizational activities to build upon. Listings for small businesses, cultural assets, activities, and points of interest are contained in the Visit Midtown website, but this information is very dated and requires a refresh as well as many edits and additions. It will be a good place to start, but ultimately this particular public-facing information will need to be crafted or recrafted.

The expectation is a new design and CMS framework, and MDI staff can support phased content population post-launch under the agency's direction if needed. If necessary, agencies may recommend a phased content rollout approach that prioritizes core pages at launch.

Can you share more about expectations for the events calendar, such as anticipated submission volume, review and approval needs, and whether it should integrate with any existing systems? Is event submission expected to be public-facing with moderation, or internal only?

The event submissions can be internally completed, but most will be public-facing for small business, cultural institution, university, community events, etc. The events listings portal should have a standard input system with information and visual submission fields. This submission notification should be sent to our team via email so that they may review, approve, or follow up. Anticipated submission volume is high. The consultant should recommend a platform based on usability and internal MDI capacity.

Is MDI open to a phased approach, where core foundational work is delivered within the stated budget and additional elements are scoped as future phases if funding allows?

Yes.

For storytelling work, is MDI expecting photography and video production to be included in the base scope, or would it be acceptable to develop the storytelling framework and creative direction first, with production scoped separately?

The storytelling framework and creative direction are the priority in this phase. Production may be scoped appropriately based on alignment with budget and recommended phasing.

Are there any specific milestones, events, or organizational moments that are driving the project timeline and should be considered during planning?

Yes. We are celebrating the 50th year of the organization later this year. We aim to be fully launched to prior to a late fall event. While this event is not yet scheduled, we are aiming to host it in October.

What does the review and approval process look like across the project, and who will be the primary decision-makers at each stage? How many stakeholders will be involved in approvals? Is there a single decision-maker or committee-based sign-off?

The primary decision makers are the Executive Director and Board of Directors Executive Committee. Early review processes and approvals will be by the Executive Director. Final branding options will be presented to the Executive Director and Executive Committee and select stakeholders for feedback. Final approvals will be by the Executive Director with Executive Committee review.



Who will own content population MDI or the agency?

MDI.

Is production expected to include editing, motion, and captioning?

If production is included within scope and intended for use on the MDI website or other digital channels, we would expect completed and fully edited deliverables consistent with the proposed creative direction, including appropriate formatting for digital use.

Is the stated budget fixed, or is there flexibility based on phased recommendations?

There is budget flexibility based on phased recommendations.

Would MDI consider separating brand and website into sequential contracts?

We would consider a phased approach to completing the full scope of work. At a minimum, we expect the foundational neighborhood branding system and initial website framework to be completed in this phase.

If additional website enhancements or expanded functionality are recommended beyond the core launch framework, we are open to structuring those as future phases — provided the strategic foundation is established in this engagement.

We expect firms to provide guidance on how best to structure that sequencing within the stated budget.

For firms intending to submit a proposal collaboratively, is there a preferred format or partnership structure? If applicable, should one firm be identified as the lead and the other as a subcontractor?

For collaborative teams, one firm should be identified as the lead organization that will have subcontractors work under them.

What is your long-term vision for the Midtown Neighborhood? What is your long-term vision for Midtown Detroit, Inc.? What are your organizational priorities for 2026?

This will be discussed with the selected contractor for this scope of work.



What are some aspirational neighborhoods for Midtown Detroit and why?

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What are some aspirational brands and why?

MDI is open to exploring examples that reflect the level of cohesion and cultural integration we admire. A few examples of integrated placemaking, programming, and identity:

Quartier des Spectacles <https://www.quartierdesspectacles.com/en>

Dallas Arts District <https://www.dallasartsdistrict.org/>

New Louisville <https://www.nulu.org/>

Meatpacking District <https://meatpacking-district.com/>

Please note that these are not templates to replicate, but examples of cohesive execution and activation.