REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Operation: Storefront

Date Posted: September 24, 2010
Proposals Due: November 22, 2010

I. Opportunity Summary

Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, Inc. (DPOB) seeks proposals from individual artists and artist teams, established or aspiring retailers and restaurateurs, and creative entrepreneurs, nonprofits or companies to occupy, activate, and utilize empty first floor space for creative enterprises. DPOB also welcomes proposals from landlords with available storefronts who are interested in putting their site back into active usage. Operation: Storefront is designed to match individuals or groups seeking space with available first floor spaces in Downtown, thereby putting Downtown storefronts back into “operation”. Successful applicants will receive grants of up to $10,000 to support costs associated with the occupation of, and operation at, a selected vacant first floor space. Tenant applicants may, and are encouraged to, include proposals for a specific site, or applicants can work with Downtown Partnership staff to determine an appropriate no or low-cost space after their bid has been chosen.

II. Background Information

With 40,000 residents, 107,000 employees, and 11.4 million annual visitors, Downtown Baltimore is the activity center of the region. Downtown Baltimore has long been home to many cultural centers and entertainment venues, and an increasingly active and diverse retail scene, including a mix of hometown favorites and national chains. Yet, between the great destinations and eclectic districts, there are blocks and corridors of disconnect where pedestrian traffic is discouraged by dark, inactive storefronts.

This program seeks to turn these vacant spaces into opportunities by matching capable and creative individuals and groups with landlords of buildings with inactive first floor spaces. The program is intentionally designed to be flexible: tenants seeking spaces, tenants with a pre-determined location, and landlords with sites in the defined Downtown area are encouraged to apply for the funds to support a myriad of costs associated with the operation of a successful storefront. Operation: Storefront will benefit Downtown, the landlords, and the prospective tenants in numerous ways:

1. Program will create lively storefronts and engaging street level presence at inactive sites. These active spaces will increase connectivity and drive pedestrian traffic to, and through, underutilized areas.
2. Free or low-cost space provided to tenants can act as an incubator or temporary showcase space. The program will allow entrepreneurs to test their product and launch their business; and established businesses to test and showcase their wares or services to new communities and demographics.
3. Landlords will benefit from the activation of their site, and showcase of their space. A tax write-off for donated space may also be possible, and can act as an additional financial incentive for landlord.
4. Program will help to grow artist and business interest in Downtown Baltimore.

III. Focus Area

DPOB will consider site proposals for buildings within the geographical area of the Downtown Management Authority, an area roughly bounded by Center Street to the north, President Street/Jones Falls Expressway (I-83) to the east, Pratt and Conway Streets to the south, and Greene Street to the west, with an additional artery along Howard Street, Eutaw Street, and Park Avenue from Saratoga Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard/Mt. Royal Avenue. Please see map for exact boundaries.

DPOB has also identified “priority” areas, where efforts for site activation will be concentrated, and wherein proposals for sites are encouraged and will be given favorable consideration. DPOB has selected these sites based on space availability and the need for site activation, but also where existing strengths are prevalent so as to allow tenant and program success. Priority areas are as follows:

1. Charles Street, between Lombard Street and Franklin Street
2. South Calvert Street, between Lombard Street and Baltimore Street

IV. Funding Usage and Parameters

Operation: Storefront is designed to be flexible, as different concepts and different sites will require different usages of funds. Grant money can be used for the following purposes, but any reasonable use of grant money as pertains to start-up and operation of tenant concept will be considered.

1. General Liability Insurance
2. Utilities
3. License or permit costs
4. Space build-out or fit-out costs, including fixtures
5. Exterior improvements, including signage

Certain sites may be eligible for Façade Improvement funds. Separate application process will be required. See www.godowntownbaltimore.com for Façade Improvement Program details.
6. Promotional activities
7. Business start-up costs, materials, and other costs as relates to operation of specific concept

In many cases, proposed budgets may change based on selected site and condition of site. Downtown Partnership staff will work with tenant to determine best use of grant money.

In addition to a grant, selected applicants will receive assistance from Downtown Partnership staff for site selection (if applicable), business permitting and navigation of City processes.

V. Eligibility and Selection Criterion

Operation: Storefront is open to any person, group, organization or company with an engaging, destination-oriented concept, and a solid business plan. Art galleries, creative event/performance space, retail pop-up shops, food concepts, and other creative uses are encouraged to apply. Tenant applicants will be judged on the following:

- Overall concept and quality of project proposal
- Project feasibility, including proposed use of funding
- Utilization of space, including how well concept or specific plans will drive visitation and activate space
- Applicant merit, qualifications and professional record, including previous or current business successes
- Applications including a site proposal that has been negotiated with landlord will be given favorable consideration. Proposed site will be judged on (a) whether site is located in DPOB priority areas and (b) the need for street level activation at particular site.

This program is also open to landlords wishing to utilize grant funds to bring active retail and arts concepts to their Downtown space. Landlords applying for this grant will be judged on the following:

- Location of landlord site, including whether site is in priority area, and need for activation at proposed site
- Proposed use of funds
- If landlord has already selected a tenant, then application will be judged on additional criteria:
  - The quality of tenant, including tenant concept, qualifications and professional record
  - How well tenant concept will drive visitation and activate site

A panel organized by Downtown Partnership staff will review qualifying applications for the above criteria. Outstanding applications chosen for finalist status will be asked to interview in person with panel members.

VI. Information Sessions

Information and question and answer sessions covering program details will be held at the following two times at the Downtown Partnership, 217 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD, 21201:

Monday, October 4, 2010
5:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 7, 2010
11:00 a.m.

Attendance is strongly encouraged. Please RSVP to Mackenzie Paull, mpaull@dpopb.org.
VII. Submission Requirements

Applicants applying as a prospective tenant are required to submit the following documents:

- A detailed proposal including a description of proposed concept and usage of space
- Anticipated timeframe for occupation of site, and hours of operation, including any proposed special events
- Images of artistic work or wares, or other visual representation of product or concept (digital images will be accepted)
- Resumes for each contributing team member
- A preliminary budget for use of grant funds, and private funds
- Description of site needs, or if site has been selected, include address, approximate square footage, and signed letter of intent with landlord signature or executed lease

Applicants applying as a landlord are required to submit the following documents:

- Address, brief description of space to be utilized, and current photographs of building exterior and interior of space for activation
- Proof of building ownership, such as copy of recorded deed or SDAT information clearly linking landlord to property ownership
- An itemized budget for use of funds, with attached cost estimates where applicable
- If a tenant has been identified and selected for space, then application must additionally include:
  - A detailed proposal from tenant including a description of proposed concept and usage of space
  - Information on tenant timeline for occupation of space, and proposed hours of operation, including any proposed special events
  - A letter of intent signed by tenant and landlord, stating the tenant’s intent to occupy landlord space, or an executed lease

DPOB will not be limited solely to the information provided by the respondent, but may utilize other sources of information useful in evaluating the capabilities of the respondent.

Proposals must be received by end of day Monday, November 22, 2010. Electronic submissions may be accepted if prior arrangements are made with administrator, Mackenzie Paull. Otherwise, submissions should be mailed or hand delivered to:

Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, Inc.
217 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
Attn: Mackenzie Paull

Questions should be submitted in writing by Monday, October 11, to Mackenzie Paull, Economic Development and Retail Manager, at mpaull@dpob.org.
VIII. Timeline

Date of issue: September 22, 2010
Information sessions: October 4, 2010, 5:30 p.m.
          October 7, 2010, 11:00 a.m.
Due date for all written questions: October 11, 2010
DPOB response to written questions, if necessary: October 15, 2010
Proposals due: November 22, 2010
Panel finalist decision and notification (pending interviews): mid-December, 2010

IX. Rights Reserved

1. DPOB reserves the right to cancel this RFP, in whole or in part, at any time.

2. Should it become necessary to revise any part of this RFP, provide additional information necessary to adequately interpret provisions and requirements of this RFP, or respond to written inquiries concerning the RFP, DPOB reserves the right to issue an Addendum to the RFP to all respondents who received the initial RFP.

3. DPOB reserves the right to extend the due date by a reasonable time.

4. DPOB reserves the right to require additional documentation and information from any or all applicants, if necessary, to clarify that which is contained in the proposals.

5. DPOB reserves the right to deny grant funding for proposals if an appropriate site or tenant cannot be located.

6. The amount of grant money awarded to an applicant is determined at the discretion of DPOB with guidance from the review panel. DPOB reserves the right to issue additional funds to a selected grantee if it is determined, at DPOB’s sole discretion, that applicant’s proposal or selected site require additional monies.

7. DPOB reserves the right to reject any responses to this RFP that do not meet the selection criteria. DPOB also reserves the right to refuse any proposals that are not suitable or desirable in its opinion. DPOB reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals, at its sole discretion, received as a result of this RFP, to waive minor irregularities, and to conduct discussions with any and all respondents, in any manner necessary.

8. DPOB accepts no financial responsibility for any costs or expenses incurred by any applicant in responding to this solicitation.

9. All submissions may be kept by DPOB and may be disclosed to third parties at DPOB’s discretion.