



# Request for Proposals: Downtown Activation and Beautification 2024

The City of Bellingham seeks proposals for projects and programming to activate and beautify downtown.



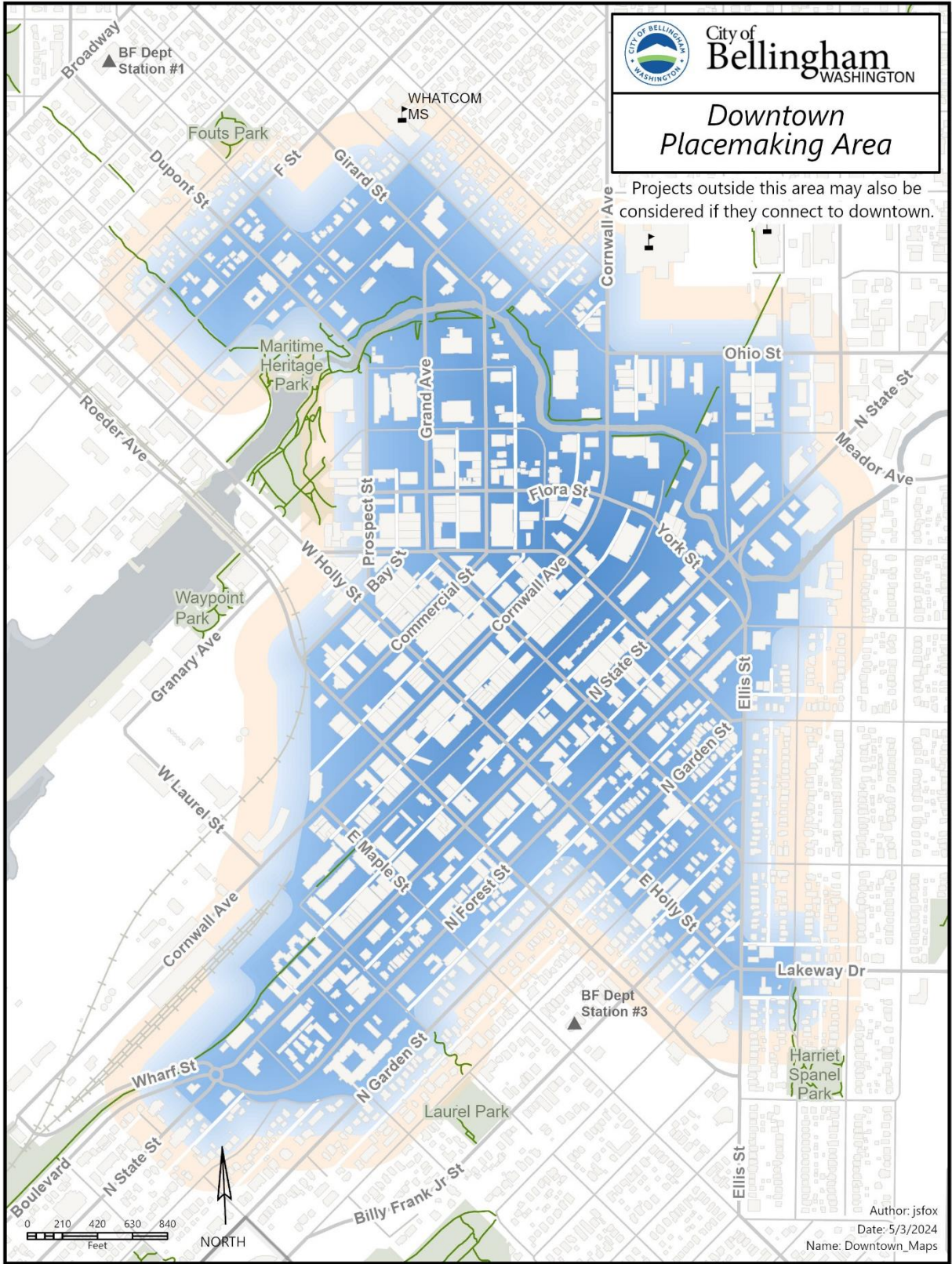
*Commercial Street Night Market. Photo by Aaron Brick*

## I. BACKGROUND

Downtowns define cities. They are the heart of community connection, tourism, culture and economic activity. Impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, rapidly increasing housing prices, and opioid addiction have strained the community, resulting in an increased need for social services and economic support, particularly in downtown. In addition to a suite of actions to address community safety and well-being, the City has invested significant resources to promote a beautiful and lively downtown, including this request for proposals.

*Funding is restricted to projects or programs on public streets, sidewalks, plazas, parks and properties or activities or events within private buildings or properties within the downtown district shown in the map below. Projects outside of this boundary may be considered if they have a strong connection or influence on downtown activation. See Figure 3-1 for the location of public opportunity sites.*

*NOTE: Funding may not be used for permanent improvements to private property.*





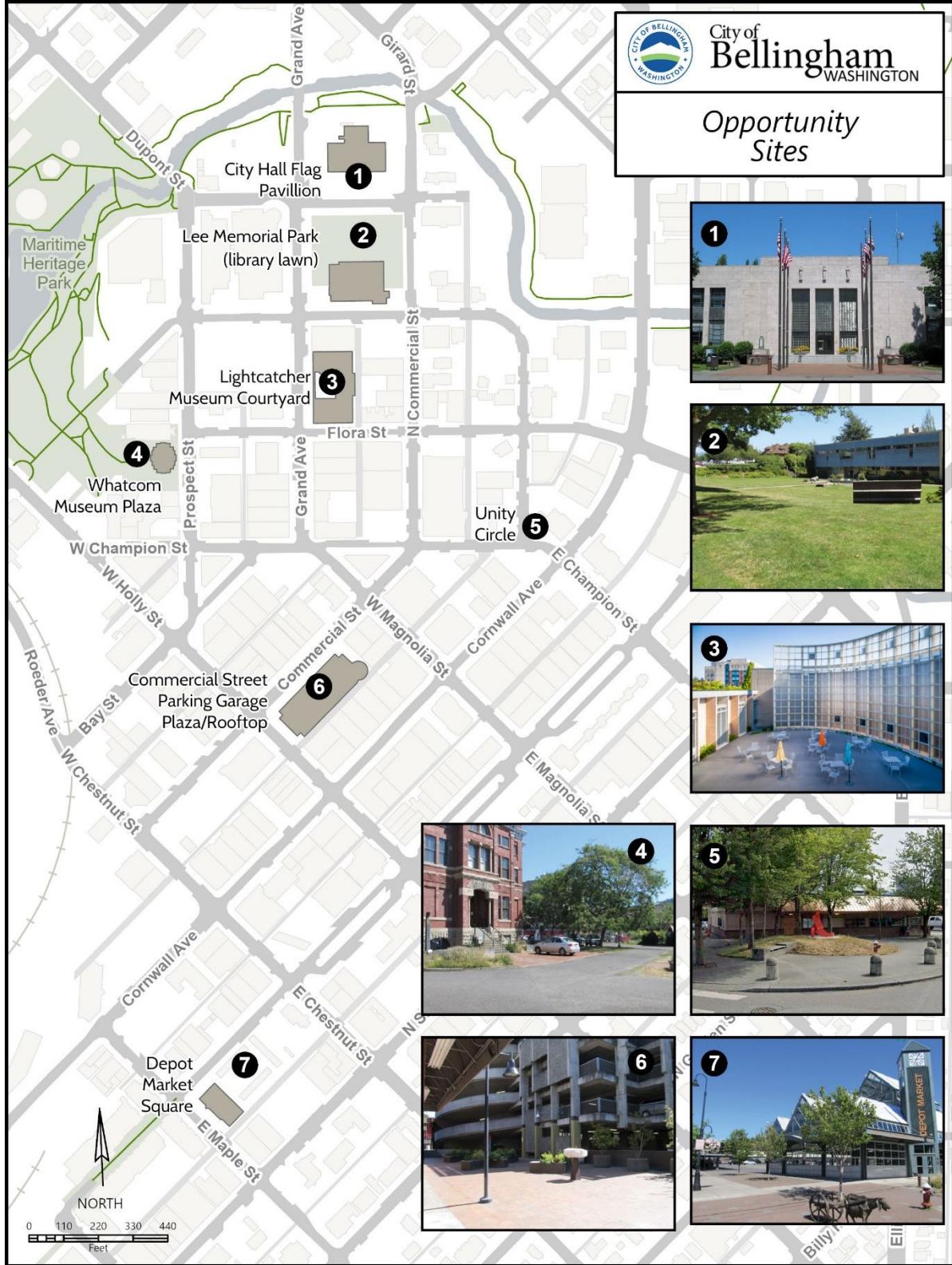
## II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Enhance aesthetic appeal, district identity and “Instagram-worthy” opportunities.
- Create a more enjoyable experience for pedestrians (“surprise and delight”) to encourage exploration, longer stays and increased foot traffic.
- Activate public streets, sidewalks, plazas, and parks to promote use of underutilized spaces, foster community connections and a sense of belonging, and showcase local talent and cultural diversity.
- Attract visitors and create new and memorable experiences to enhance the City’s brand as a tourism destination and boost revenue and economic growth.
- Encourage connections between downtown and surrounding areas (waterfront, Old Town and residential neighborhoods).
- Foster engagement of downtown stakeholders and community members to improve the experience of joy, sense of safety, and pride and interest in the downtown neighborhood.

## III. DESIRED PROPOSALS

- Add beauty and aesthetic appeal to the pedestrian experience: street art, murals, landscaping, lighting, signage, public art, or other interactive opportunities.
- Activate public and vacant spaces: block parties, busking, classes, performances, games, festivals or markets featuring local food/drink, music, interactive/performance/visual art or cultural events, particularly those that engage or highlight underrepresented groups or appeal to diverse audiences.
- Attract and retain visitors: build-on or complement other tourism-related events and/or local tourism assets.
- Make connections: pathways, artwork, signs, wayfinding, interactive challenges or activities to draw people from surrounding neighborhoods into downtown.
- Foster community engagement: entice businesses, cultural institutions and/or organizations to create new offerings in the public realm, invite community co-creation of artwork or experiences, interactive activities or creative input.

**Figure 3-1: Opportunity Sites on Public Property**  
 (NOTE: Other streets, sidewalks, parks and public properties are also eligible for consideration)



**IV. AVAILABLE FUNDS**

\$250,000 in lodging tax funds for projects and programs with regional tourism impact  
\$100,000 in general funds for activation and beautification projects

Proposals may request any amount of funding within these limits. Funding may be used for project development and design, materials, fabrication, marketing/promotion, installation, service or artist fees and/or insurance. Final funding decisions will be based on rankings and recommendations of the review teams.

Successful proponents will enter into a Services Agreement or other similar contract with the City of Bellingham.

Funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis for work performed or costs incurred. The project Proponent is responsible for fronting all costs associated with the work.

Applicants may request multi-year funding, which will be considered depending on the nature of the proposal. In addition, a separate RFP for projects or programs occurring in 2025 will be issued October 2024.

**V. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS**

To be considered for funding, the proponent must meet the following criteria:

- Experience designing and implementing projects and/or programs;
- Ability to provide or secure the expertise, supplies, materials, equipment, staffing and all other aspects necessary to carry out the project or program;
- Ability to provide proof of insurance and endorsement listing the City as additional insured, showing the insurance as primary and non-contributory and waiving subrogation for the duration of the project. Coverage shall include but is not limited to:
 

○ Workers Compensation	Statutory Amount
○ Automobile Liability	\$1,000,000
○ Broad Form Comprehensive Liability	\$1,000,000/occurrence \$2,000,000 aggregate

**VI. SUBMITTAL DEADLINE**

Proposals must be submitted electronically via PDF to Taylor Webb, Development Specialist: [tkwebb@cob.org](mailto:tkwebb@cob.org) **before noon on June 7, 2024.**

*A second RFP will be issued in October 2024 for projects occurring in late 2024 or 2025.*

**VII. PRESUBMITTAL RESOURCES**

Questions regarding this RFP should be directed to:

Darby Galligan, Senior Planner  
Planning and Community Development Department  
[dgalligan@cob.org](mailto:dgalligan@cob.org) / (360) 778-8389

Projects and programming in the public right-of-way may require a Special Event permit or Temporary Right of Way Use permit. Visit the City of Bellingham website for additional information:

[Special Event Permit - City of Bellingham \(cob.org\)](#)  
[Commercial Right-of-Way \(ROW\) Use Permits Guide \(cob.org\)](#)

The City will host two question and answer sessions for proponents who would like assistance with proposal feasibility prior to the submittal deadline.

Session 1:	May 16, 2024 9:00-10:00	Session 2:	May 20, 2024 2:00-3:00 PM
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Location: Permit Center  
Main Floor, City Hall  
210 Lottie Street

These sessions are optional, but attendance is highly encouraged for proposals on City properties or within the public right-of-way. Consultation will be provided in 15-minute increments on a first-come first-served basis.

**VIII. SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

To receive full consideration, proposals must include each of the following elements:

- 1) Proposal Cover Sheet, below.
- 2) Project or Program Description.  
Location (include address, maps or photos if necessary).  
Detailed project description.  
Proponent team. List the names of the people responsible for implementing the project or program, with a summary of their qualifications and experience and their primary duties/role.  
List of steps to implement the project or program, with timelines and responsible person.  
Inspirational or example images that illustrate the final project or program (optional)  
Letters of support (optional)
- 3) Project Evaluation. Explain which goals and objectives from Section II will be achieved by the project or program. How will the proposal bring visitors downtown, lead them to linger downtown, or build local tourism resources? How will it activate and/or beautify downtown?

- 4) Detailed Budget. Provide a list of all revenues and expenses required to implement the project. Include estimated costs and anticipated vendor(s). Indicate which items are proposed to be paid with grant funds. List the total program cost and the total amount of grant funding being requested. Sample Budget Form, attached.

**Proposals may not exceed 10 single-sided pages (excluding the cover sheet and budget).**

**IX. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Evaluation Criteria	Weight
How well does the project achieve the goals and objectives of the RFP?	20
What is the aesthetic and/or artistic quality and appropriateness of the project to the location (including support from surrounding stakeholders)?	20
Does the project team have demonstrated experience & expertise with implementing projects?	20
What will be the positive impact(s) on downtown, including visibility, duration, anticipated number of participants and intended audience?	20
Is the project feasible, including likelihood of approval, realistic fees /costs, completeness of budget and timeline?	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 points</b>

***The City of Bellingham promotes equal opportunity and shall not discriminate against any person or proposal based upon race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, nationality or disability.***

**X. EVALUATION PROCESS**

- 1) Proposals will be vetted by an internal team of departmental experts to identify possible regulatory or procedural issues that may affect the feasibility of project implementation.
- 2) A review committee composed of Bellingham/Whatcom County Tourism, Bellingham Tourism Commission, Downtown Stakeholder(s), City Planning and Community Development and Mayor’s Office staff will independently score each proposal and review scores collaboratively to develop funding recommendations to the Mayor. Oral interviews, additional questions or information may be requested at this stage.
- 3) The Mayor will assess the review committee recommendations and make any changes or adjustments for the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC) to review.
- 4) The LTAC will review and make a decision on the Mayor’s recommendations, which will be presented to the City Council for final approval.



# Downtown Activation and Beautification RFP Proposal Cover Sheet

## PROPOSAL SUMMARY

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Project/Program Title:

Contact Name/Title:

Organization Name (if applicable):

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Phone:

Email:

Organization Status (if applicable):

Non-Profit

Public Agency

For-Profit

Grant Amount Requested: \$

Total Project/Program Budget: \$

Installation/Event Dates (if applicable)

Is the event open to

the public and free of  
charge (if applicable):

Yes

No

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Are you requesting any logistical support from the City to support this project or program (e.g. staffing, fee waiver, equipment, traffic control, etc)? If so, describe below:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

By signing you acknowledge all required documents and information has been provided and required qualifications to be considered for funding have been met.

5/7/24



## SAMPLE BUDGET

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### BUDGET SHEET

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Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_

BUDGET ITEMS	TOTAL EST. COST	GRANT PORTION
1.	\$	\$
2.	\$	\$
3.	\$	\$
4.	\$	\$
5.	\$	\$
6.	\$	\$
7.	\$	\$
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$	\$

Eligible operational expenses are limited to venue rentals (i.e., conference rooms), equipment rentals (i.e., cones, traffic signs, etc.), contract labor, a portion of rent (must be proportionate to the event), and/or the purchase of goods/supplies with prior approval by the City. For example, payroll, travel, alcohol, any expense that may trigger prevailing wage and equipment expenses are NOT allowed. Final decisions by the City on allowed operational expenses will be identified in the contract and pre-approved. All expenses must be incurred and paid during the contractual period with appropriate back-up documentation available, including proof of payment.

## **2024 Downtown Activation and Beautification RFP Marketing Meeting Template**

A pre-contract and post-event marketing meeting with Bellingham/Whatcom County Tourism will be required for any successful applicants.

- If your proposal is approved for funding, the Proponent or designee will be required to meet with Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism (BWCT) marketing staff prior to contracting with the City of Bellingham. Funding will be withdrawn if you do not complete this required step. A sample of the pre-contract Marketing Meeting template is below.
- All recipients are required to conduct a post-event marketing meeting with BWCT to review their draft final report. The purpose of this meeting is to support your event/program and ensure your marketing strategy is effective at bringing visitors to Bellingham. The post-event final report will include BWCT's signature that you completed this required step. Failure to do so will be reported to LTAC. This post-event marketing meeting is in addition to other required elements in a final report – this template will be included in the contract.

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**Project Name:**

**Brief Project Description:**

**Date of Activity/Event/Installation:**

**Indicate how funds will be used specifically:**

**Projected Overall Attendance/Reach:**

**Projected number of tourists (visitors from beyond 50 miles and or/across Canadian Border):**