

Request for Proposals (RFP) Economic Development Strategy for Soulard and Kosciusko Neighborhoods

Issued by: Soulard Community Improvement District (CID)

Issue Date: November 10, 2025

Proposal Due Date: 5:00 pm CST January 9, 2026

1. Introduction and Purpose

The Soulard Community Improvement District (CID), in partnership with other Soulard neighborhood groups, is soliciting proposals from qualified planning and economic development consulting firms to develop a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Soulard and Kosciusko neighborhoods of St. Louis, MO.

The purpose of this strategy is to deliver a practical and action-oriented roadmap that supports inclusive and sustainable economic growth. It will identify specific infrastructure investments, policy recommendations, and programmatic initiatives to strengthen the business environment, attract and retain diverse commercial uses, and guide redevelopment in key corridors. The strategy should also provide guidance on strategies for balancing the growing residential demand in Soulard with the need for a vibrant, accessible, and diverse business community. This work will provide a shared framework for implementation by local stakeholders and align with current and future citywide planning efforts.

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2. Background

Soulard Neighborhood

Soulard, established in the early 19th century, stands as one of St. Louis's oldest neighborhoods. Named after Antoine Soulard, a French surveyor who settled in the area, the neighborhood showcases a rich architectural heritage with numerous 19th-century brick row houses and historic churches. The iconic Soulard Farmers Market, founded in 1779, is the oldest operating public market west of the Mississippi River and remains a central hub for residents and visitors alike.

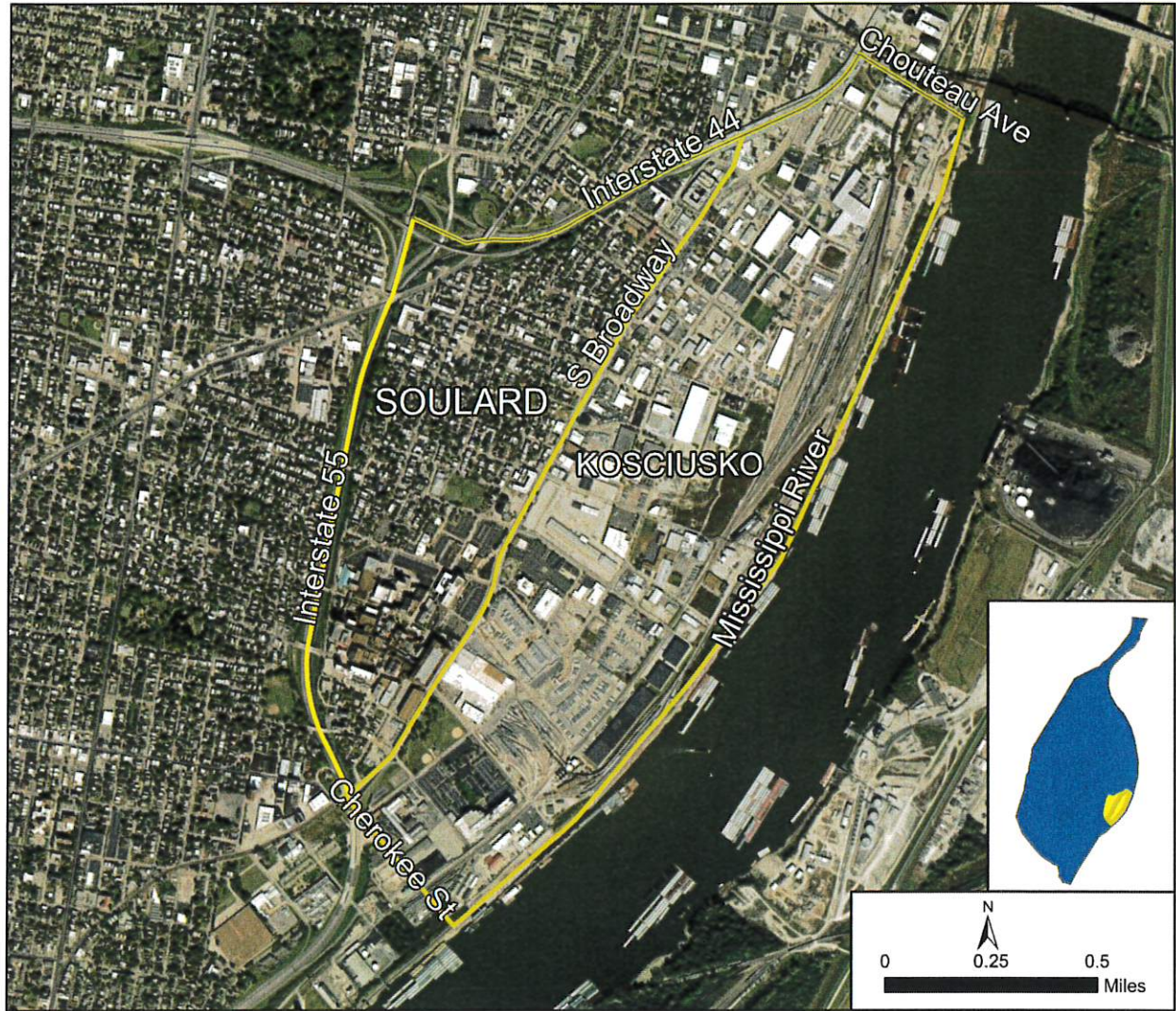
Throughout its history, Soulard has experienced periods of decline and revitalization. After World War II, suburbanization led to population loss and property neglect. However, in the 1970s, dedicated homeowners and developers initiated a grassroots revitalization, restoring historic structures and fostering a renewed sense of community. This effort culminated in Soulard's designation as a federal and local historic district in 1972, ensuring the preservation of its unique character.

Today, Soulard is still acknowledged for its historical significance and architectural preservation but also celebrated for its vibrant nightlife, diverse dining options, and annual events. The neighborhood hosts one of the largest Mardi Gras celebrations in the United States, attracting thousands of visitors each year. Additionally, events like Oktoberfest, festivals, and historic home tours contribute to its lively atmosphere. The area's walkability and historic charm makes it a desirable location for both residents and businesses.

Kosciusko Neighborhood

Adjacent to Soulard, the Kosciusko neighborhood has undergone significant transformations. Originally a dense residential area, it was largely cleared during urban renewal projects in the mid-20th century, transitioning into an industrial zone. Today, Kosciusko is characterized by industrial companies and warehouses, with a notably low residential population. The neighborhood is home to the Mississippi River Floodwall, known as the "Mural Mile," which hosts the annual "Paint Louis" event, attracting artists nationwide to contribute to the expansive graffiti wall.

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Current Dynamics and Challenges

Both neighborhoods face unique challenges and opportunities. In Soulard, the conversion of commercial spaces into residential units has raised concerns about maintaining a balanced mix of businesses and housing. The community values its historic charm and seeks to preserve the architectural integrity while accommodating growth. Parking shortages during peak events and the need for a well-defined commercial corridor are ongoing issues.

Kosciusko's proximity to the Mississippi River presents opportunities for redevelopment and increased commercial activity. However, the area grapples with underutilized spaces and the challenge of attracting diverse businesses, particularly those that can leverage the popularity and traffic-destination character of the Soulard neighborhood. The neighborhood's industrial character offers potential for growth in sectors like logistics, light manufacturing and, possibly, commercial uses, but strategic planning is essential to integrate these developments harmoniously with adjacent communities.

Community Engagement and Vision

Residents and stakeholders in both neighborhoods are actively engaged in shaping their future. Community organizations collaborate to address issues such as socioeconomic diversity, business variety, and infrastructure improvements. The goal is to create a sustainable environment where businesses and residents can coexist and thrive, preserving the unique character of the neighborhoods while fostering economic growth.

This Economic Development Strategy aims to provide a roadmap that addresses these dynamics, leveraging the neighborhoods' strengths and addressing challenges to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future.

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3. Project Goals and Priorities

Soulard and Kosciusko are neighborhoods with active stakeholders and community organizations, each contributing in meaningful ways toward their economic vitality - whether through financial investments, programmatic support, or on-the-ground engagement. However, these efforts often operate independently without a shared vision and framework. To ensure the greatest return on time, energy, and resources, there is a pressing need for a unified roadmap that aligns the macro-planning efforts of the City of St. Louis and the combined micro-planning efforts of the Soulard CID, the Soulard Business Association, the Soulard Special Business District, the Soulard Restoration Group and others. This Economic Development Strategy must prioritize coordination, eliminate redundancies, and provide clear direction for short-term and long-term investments.

The Economic Development Strategy should:

1. Develop business attraction and retention strategies to diversify services and grow the local economy.
2. Assess how residential growth can drive or inform market demand and business viability.
3. Identify infrastructure improvements that support business growth, attract investment, and improve overall quality of life.
4. Promote tourism, particularly leveraging key assets like the Soulard Farmers Market.
5. Provide a clear, actionable roadmap that aligns with community needs and integrates with current and future City planning efforts.

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4. Scope of Work and Deliverables

The selected firm will be responsible for the following deliverables:

1. **Infrastructure Improvement Priorities**– Identification and analysis of critical infrastructure maintenance or upgrades needed to support economic growth.
2. **Business Recruitment Strategies** – Targeted approaches for bringing in businesses aligned with the district's needs and identity.
3. **Retail and Industrial Market Analysis** – Assessment of current conditions and future opportunities for retail and industrial uses.
4. **Business Attraction Strategies** – Broader efforts to enhance the area's appeal to new businesses and employers.
5. **Funding and Incentive Recommendations** – Strategies for leveraging public and private investment, including tax incentives, grants, and public-private partnerships.

Additional expectations:

- Coordination with agencies such as the St. Louis Development Corporation (SLDC), Missouri Department of Economic Development, the Planning & Urban Design Agency, and other relevant entities.

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5. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Proposals should outline a plan for high to moderate engagement that includes:

- Public meetings and workshops
- Stakeholder interviews and focus groups
- Surveys (online and/or print)
- Engagement of key institutions, businesses, residents, and organizations

Efforts should ensure broad and inclusive participation, while offering flexibility to target specific groups for deeper conversations.

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6. Evaluation Criteria for Selection

Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined below. Each proposal may receive a maximum of 100 points. Firms should ensure their submissions clearly address each of the categories and provide evidence, references, or examples where applicable.

Evaluation Criteria	Max. Points	Description
Project Understanding and Approach	20	Demonstrates a strong understanding of the neighborhoods' context, challenges, and objectives. Presents a clear, realistic, and innovative approach to meeting project goals.
Community Engagement Strategy	15	Depth, inclusivity, and feasibility of the proposed engagement strategy, including outreach to residents, businesses, and institutional partners.
Quality of Deliverables and Methodology	15	Clarity and thoughtfulness of proposed scope of work, timeline, and deliverables. Use of data-driven, implementable practices.
Experience	15	Relevant experience with projects that demonstrate an understanding of economic development, community revitalization, and historic areas. Prioritizes firms that can show adaptability, innovative thinking, and ability to work across complex, evolving urban environments.
Local Knowledge and Collaboration Potential	15	Demonstrated familiarity with St. Louis, Soulard, Kosciusko, and regional economic dynamics. Willingness and understanding of need to collaborate with local agencies and partners.
Budget and Cost-Effectiveness	10	Appropriateness of the proposed budget and value offered for the cost. Includes transparency of cost breakdowns.
References and Past Performance	10	Quality of work and client satisfaction on comparable projects, as demonstrated through at least 3 references or case studies.

Total Possible Points: 100

The CID may request additional information or interviews as part of the evaluation process. Final selection will consider both the score and the overall fit with the CID's goals and working culture.

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7. Project Timeline

The proposed timeline for completion is 12 to 18 months, with flexibility for exceptional proposals that demonstrate value over a longer term.

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8. Budget

The estimated budget for this project is \$150,000 with flexibility for exceptional proposals that demonstrate additional value to meet the needs outlined in this RFP. Proposals should include a detailed budget, including any optional or scalable components. Final funding may include contributions from additional partners.

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9. Proposal Requirements

Firms must submit proposals of no more than 30 pages that includes:

- Letter of interest
- Company Background
- Project understanding and approach
- Detailed scope of work and methodology
- Proposed engagement strategy
- Project timeline with milestones
- Team qualifications and relevant experience
- At least 3 examples of comparable projects
- Fee proposal with detailed cost breakdown
- References

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10. Submission Instructions

Please submit proposals electronically in PDF format by 5:00 pm CST January 9, 2026 to:

Mr. Terry Hoffman
Chairman
Soulard Community Improvement District
chair@soulardcid.org
314-315-3443

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11. Questions and Clarifications

All questions must be submitted in writing to Mr. Terry Hoffman at chair@soulardcid.org no later than 5:00 pm CST December 1, 2025. Responses will be compiled and shared with all interested firms.

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12. Reservation of Rights

The Soulard CID reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals
 - Negotiate with any proposer
 - Cancel or modify this RFP at any time
 - Select the firm that best meets the needs and interests of the neighborhoods.
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Attachments:

- Kosciusko Neighborhood Map. <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/planning/documents/kosciusko-nghbrhd-map.cfm>
- Soulard Neighborhood Map. <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/planning/documents/soulard-neighborhood-map.cfm>
- 2022 Soulard Traffic Calming Study. <https://soulardcid.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/traffic-calming-221212-report-final.pdf>