



**WILLMAR**

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### **Request for Proposal City Branding**

The City of Willmar requests proposals by qualified consultants to research, create, develop, and help generate an implementation plan for a City branding initiative for the City of Willmar. Responses to this Request for Proposals (RFP) will provide the City with the information required to assess, evaluate, and select a consultant based on prior experience, qualifications, methodology, approach, and work performed in similarly sized communities. It is important to note that this is a City branding initiative rather than an initiative to brand any one particular department. Respondents should be aware that this initiative is a priority for the City and that it is a strategic management tool and much more than a new logo or catchy tagline.

The branding program will be used in the following ways:

- The new brand strategy will be the beacon that guides all aspects of how the City presents itself, unifies stakeholders to deploy the brand, and consistently offers superior experiences.
- Build awareness of internal and external stakeholders by providing an established and seamless image across all participating entities.
- Provide a branding icon and a tagline(s).
- Aid in producing tangible results for economic development, tourism, quality of life, etc. The branding platform is meant to harmonize the marketing of businesses, recruitment of employment, special events, City government, tourism, education, and historical and recreational amenities. The intent is to have a unifying theme and message about the Willmar community, which differentiates Willmar from similar cities and serves to attract visitors and businesses to Willmar.

The Consultant selected will be expected to provide multiple branding concepts and be prepared for revisions of the chosen brand concept. The brand identity will need to be effective in representing Willmar in any context, enhance the perception of Willmar, and develop a feeling of community pride and ownership.

Upon project completion, the Consultant is expected to provide the logo and any other materials available in editable files for use in websites, publications, etc. Any logos and materials will be owned by the City of Willmar and its partners and may only be used for the purposes defined in the brand standards.

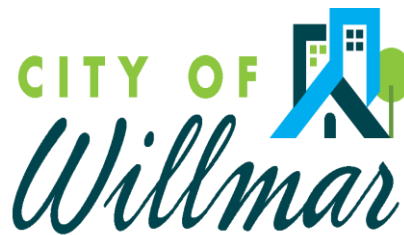
## Introduction

Surrounded by lakes, rolling hills, and rich farmland, Willmar is located 100 miles west of the Saint Paul-Minneapolis metropolitan area. Covering 15.95 square miles, the city has an estimated population of 21,076 and is projected to continue to grow by 2,685 people by 2030.

With all of the friendly neighborliness of a small town, Willmar is the county seat and largest city in Kandiyohi County and is a regional center for business, healthcare, technology, education, and shopping. Willmar is also the fastest-growing multicultural city outside the Saint Paul-Minneapolis metropolitan area. Willmar has a diversified economic base; agricultural production and agri-business are the chief industries of the city and surrounding area. Willmar was also designated an All-America City in 2005 and is a designated Main Street community.

## Branding Overview:

The objective of this branding project is to create a new identity for Willmar and all of the city departments to adopt and utilize one brand for messaging. Below you will find a few of the existing logos that are being used. Additional variations of the logos below are used depending on the department.



The City Council adopted the red "W" logo as the official City logo in the 1990s, and it has been used ever since. Various Department logos were developed independently by each respective department since there were no brand style guide standards when the logo was created. There was not a brand development strategy when the first City logo was created.

**Desired Outcomes:**

The City is interested in developing a brand that truly reflects the City at this stage in its history.

This contract will result in an implementable brand image and marketing campaign that will draw out the unique character and advantages of the community. The brand image shall positively change the perception of the community and create community pride. The brand image will include but is not limited to, logos design, messages, brand platforms, visual graphics, apparel, and other applicable graphics.

The City hopes to solicit opinions and feedback from local and regional stakeholders, city staff, and City Council members throughout this process. Local business owners and residents will also contribute to this project by providing input for the consultant, which will help develop the brand, contribute to its identity, and for them to serve as brand ambassadors. The stakeholder groups identified by the City will be provided to the consultant before the project begins.

The City of Willmar requests a proposal that exemplifies the primary goals and objectives to be achieved by the branding initiative and the process, which are as follows:

- **Uniformity:** The brand should convey a common message and image to audiences within and outside the City of Willmar. All City departments will adopt the new brand.
- **Community Identity/ Pride:** Identify and promote what makes the City of Willmar distinct and appealing in a regionally competitive environment for investors, businesses, retailers, visitors, and residents.
- **Community and Economic Development Promotion:** Promote a healthy economy, attract private investment, attract new businesses, and help retain critical businesses. A defined message that will market the City of Willmar locally, regionally, and statewide as a great place to live, work, play, and do business; the right place for development, redevelopment, and investment; the perfect mix for a business-friendly community.
- **Flexibility:** The brand must be flexible and adaptable in order to meet the needs of a variety of City departments and municipal functions within the City of Willmar as well as groups and businesses within the overall brand. It must be flexible enough to grow and evolve with any changes in the market.
- **Endorsement:** The new City brand must be authentic and resonate with citizens, businesses, employees, and community groups within the City of Willmar and throughout the region in order to gain the broadest possible support for the initiatives. The brand must be relevant to the City of Willmar and reflect the desire to move forward.

In addition to the above-mentioned areas, the City requests that the Proposers include additional ideas for services and/or business opportunities that would benefit the City.

**Project Scope:**

An appointed steering committee will collaborate with the chosen consultant to oversee and consult on the process. The successful partner will have creative excellence in brand research, design, development, and implementation.

The partnering agency will conduct research, develop several branding options, and establish an implementation schedule. Expected services include conducting quantitative and qualitative research, analyzing results, creative development, and identifying a strong, unique, complementary, and differentiated brand that captures both a forward-thinking feel and the historic nature of Willmar. The Data Gathering Process should include the following:

**1. Brand & Message Development:**

- a. The selected firm will create visual elements, messaging, and brand expression that channels voices from the community to capture the uniqueness of the City of Willmar. The selected firm will create a design logo that effectively communicates the identity of the City and messaging that connects with community members in a memorable way. The design logo and messaging should allow for flexibility so that they may be used by all departments and for all programs and services and offer complementary branding options for the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission.

**2. Deliverables:**

- a. Minimum monthly reports outlining significant meetings, discussions, actions, and results.
- b. Visual elements guide and graphic standards, including logo and fonts.
- c. Templates for common needs, such as signage, brochures, PowerPoint, report covers, letterhead, business cards, memos, etc.
- d. Message development, including theme idea and story, including two rounds of revisions.
- e. Creative conception and development, including three brand concepts, including two rounds of revisions.
- f. Creation of brand guidelines.
- g. Implementation matrix for brand identity applications and brand identity maintenance plan.
- h. Detailed implementation plan based on research results.
- i. Detailed budget breakdown for research, design, and implementation.
- j. Presentation of each deliverable.
- k. Final written report outlining project details.

### 3. Strategic Brand Implementation and Community Engagement:

- a. This task will define the activities designed to effectively establish Willmar's new brand identity, as well as identify ongoing strategies for communicating, maintaining, and enhancing the brand's value over the first three years following the introduction. The strategies should:
  - i. Prioritize short-term and long-term strategies and tactics, including a timeline.
  - ii. Employ a variety of communication tools.
  - iii. Engage residents, downtown businesses, and local community leaders.
  - iv. Enable target audiences to connect and interact with Willmar and use feedback to further build Willmar's brand.
  - v. Provide opportunities for target audiences to become advocates.
  - vi. Effectively tell the "Willmar story."

#### Submittal:

The brand identity for the City of Willmar should convey Willmar's assets and unique qualities in a way that is authentic, concise, and memorable. It will describe who we are, what we do, and why we do it. The following should be submitted with all proposals.

1. A formal cover letter including:
  - a. **Firm profile.** The proposal should provide a complete and concise description of the firm's ability to meet the requirements of this RFP.
  - b. **Project understanding.** The proposal should be knowledgeable about the City of Willmar, its amenities, and its relationship with Kandiyohi County, surrounding communities, and partners.
  - c. **Proposal budget.** Include a summary of costs and fees based on the deliverables previously noted above. Provide a budget for each individual task as an independent project and an aggregated budget for the entire project. All overhead costs (including travel and vehicle mileage) should be included in the basic fee. Any optional services the consultant recommends may be included but should be priced separately.
  - d. **Project schedule.** Include a proposed schedule for the product delivery broken down by each of the tasks previously listed above.
  - e. **Minimum Qualifications.** The selected firm must have experience formulating new brands based on research-driven methodology combined with informational insights provided by stakeholders through a public engagement process. Experience working with municipalities and/or government clients is a plus.
  - f. **References.** Include three (3) references and at least two (2) summary samples of completed projects with detailed photographic, print, and digital records.

2. Proposals are due via mail or hand delivered by 3 p.m. on May 8, 2023. Please submit to:

City of Willmar - Administration  
333 6<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Willmar, MN 56201

Requests for documents, questions, or inquiries to:

Kyle Box  
City Operations Director  
320-214-5172  
kbox@willmarmn.gov

The City of Willmar holds no responsibility for proposals received after the deadline due to delays in the mail.

**Project Evaluation:**

The following criteria will be used in the consideration of proposals:

1. Quality and completeness of the proposal.
2. Design firm qualifications demonstrated experience with similar projects and references.
3. Proposed cost for this project and recommended implementation strategies.
4. Project approach, detail of proposed methodology, and ability to produce deliverables.
5. Ability to develop a clean, fresh look that communicates to diverse audiences across multiple platforms.

All firms will be afforded equal opportunity to submit proposals in response to this request and will not be discriminated against in consideration for the award on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, creed, marital status, ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws.

The City of Willmar reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the proposals generated from this RFP to the respondent that presents a proposal that best meets the specifications listed and represents the most beneficial procurement as determined by the City. The City also reserves the right to modify any requirements, terms, or conditions as outlined in this RFP when such modification is in the City's best interest. Issuance of this RFP does not obligate the City to award a contract, nor is the City liable for any costs incurred by the proponent in the preparation and submittal of the proposal.