PROCUREMENT SERVICES

Request for Information:

Development of USF Golf Course and Undeveloped Campus

Please mark all proposal submission envelopes with the following information:

RFI 2021-01-GC

All questions must be received by Friday, April 30, 2021 at 5:00 pm

All responses must be received by Monday, May 24, 2021 at 3:00 pm
Introduction

The University of South Florida (“University” or “USF”), Tampa, Florida, is soliciting INFORMATION ONLY responses to this Request for Information (RFI) from firms and other entities that may be interested in submitting a technical and cost proposal to provide USF with options for a project with a potential long-term ground lease or other contractual arrangement to develop the approximate 769 acre parcel, comprised of the USF golf course and undeveloped forest preserve, known as the northern property (“Northern Property”), part of the USF campus (see USF Tampa campus maps below).

The Northern Property is one of the largest remaining undeveloped parcels along I-75 and presents many transportation advantages to developers and their clients.

Note below the possible 118 acres of upland along Fletcher Avenue within the Northern Property.
The primary goal of this RFI is to explore options available to the University to develop the Northern Property of campus, to benefit from the prior experience of others in developing this type of property for public universities, to obtain cost estimates for this type of development, and to better understand commercial solutions for the challenges with developing the site.

This RFI is intended solely for the University to gauge interest and obtain information that the University may use to consider the best strategy for the potential project.

This RFI is for informational purposes only. This RFI is not intended as a formal offering for a future negotiated transaction. However, USF may select one or more ideas or plans described in one or more of the responses submitted by entities to this RFI as an idea/plan/project best suited for further consideration.

All information submitted is subject to Chapter 119 F.S., Public Records. If any information provided is believed to be confidential and proprietary, please mark it accordingly. Such marking will not exempt the information from Chapter 119 F.S. if the information does not fall within any exemptions available under Chapter 119 F.S. The University reserves the right to determine in its sole discretion its obligations under Chapter 119 F.S.
USF does not intend to award a contract as a result of this RFI. Nor does USF guarantee that a formal solicitation will be issued as a result of this RFI.

No reimbursement will be made for any costs associated with providing information in response to this request or any follow-up information requests. This document is a Request for Information (RFI), not a solicitation for proposals, and will not result in a contract, but may be used by USF for informational and planning purposes only in future procurements.

**Tampa Overview**

Tampa is a top 20 metro area. A location in Tampa offers many advantages to parties seeking an outstanding opportunity to grow and prosper:

- A focused economic development effort in industry clusters including distribution and logistics, information technology, life sciences and health care, and finance and professional services.
- A talented workforce spurred by a higher education system ranked #1 three years running per *U.S. News and World Report*. This has fostered growth in innovation, partnerships, and business formation.
- A favorable business climate with lower labor costs, favorable corporate tax rates, no personal income tax, and stable, pro-business leadership.
- Connectivity is another Tampa advantage. With a multi-modal transportation system that supports nearly 21 million residents and 126 million visitors annually, the Tampa Bay region is Florida’s hub for distribution and logistics. This includes the largest seaport in Florida in terms of tonnage and geographic area, handling over 34 million tons of cargo per year.
- A place to thrive. The lifestyle and affordability of the Tampa Bay region make it easy to attract and retain top talent. Tampa was recently named the most livable city in American by the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Additional advantages offered by a Tampa location can be found at the Tampa Bay Community Overview from the Tampa Bay Economic Development Council [https://tampabayedc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Tampa-Bay-Community-Overview.pdf](https://tampabayedc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Tampa-Bay-Community-Overview.pdf)

**University Overview**

The University of South Florida, established in 1956 and located in Tampa Bay on Florida’s west coast, is a high-impact, global research university dedicated to student success. USF is comprised of three campuses located in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee. Together, these campuses serve more than 50,000 students and offer undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees. The University has an annual budget of $1.8 billion and an annual economic impact of $4.4 billion. USF ranks in the top 25 nationally for research expenditures among public universities, according to the National Science Foundation. In 2018, the Florida Board of Governors designated USF as a Preeminent State Research University, placing USF in the most elite category among the state’s 12 public universities. USF maintains Aa2 and AA issuer credit ratings with Moody’s Investors Service and Standard and Poor’s, respectively.

USF offers 244 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, specialty and doctoral levels, including the Doctor of Medicine. During the 2019-2020 academic year, USF awarded 10,303 bachelor’s degrees,
3,399 master’s degrees and 787 specialty and doctoral degrees. In its 64-year history, USF has awarded more than 400,000 degrees and more than 100,000 alumni live in the Tampa Bay area. The University’s Tampa location is home to USF Health, including the Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health and Pharmacy.

The University of South Florida's campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Sarasota-Manatee are comprised of 1,646 acres, 1,562 of which are located at the campus in Tampa, including the USF Research Park. The University facilities consist of 284 buildings that exceed 11.9 million gross square feet.

For any additional information about the University of South Florida, please visit the University’s web page at: www.usf.edu.

**Land Use – Property Information**

The Northern Property of the USF campus is comprised of approximately 769.3 acres along Fletcher Avenue north of the USF Tampa campus in Hillsborough County. The property is part of the Tampa campus of the University of South Florida. Apart from the golf course, the forest preserve portion of the property is undeveloped and includes designated wetlands.

The forest preserve is roughly a square mile of land, located north of Fletcher Avenue, between the golf course and Riverfront Park. The forest preserve has been protected for many years by being incorporated in the USF Master Plan.

The forest preserve is used for student and faculty research. More than 70 research papers in peer-reviewed literature have been focused on the forest preserve, as have more than 20 M.S. theses and Ph.D. dissertations.

A portion of the property within the forest preserve immediately east of the golf course has been designated as wetlands on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory. The property borders on the banks of the Hillsborough River and is the most prominent natural resource within University property.
The three examples of wildlife, which may be categorized as "Special Animals", in evidence within the forest preserve are the gopher tortoise, the eastern indigo snake and Florida quail. State and Federally listed threatened species are the short-tailed snake, osprey, limpkin, and Sherman's fox squirrel. The gopher frog would also appear to fit into this category. Within the forest preserve are found sandhills, small scrubs, and a Xeric hammock (an evergreen forest on well-drained sandy soils). Also, within the forest preserve are blackwater streams, a floodplain swamp and floodplain forest. The unique natural features found in this area are virgin swamp timber stands, the Cypress Creek drainage basin, and a scenic vista overlooking the Hillsborough River where the forest preserve terminates at its eastern extremity.

Restrictions for the development of the forest preserve can be found in USF’s [2015 -2025 Campus Master Plan](#) (see link), specifically under the Goals, Objectives, and Policies, Section 8 Conservation Requirements and in the Data Collection and Analysis, Element 8 Conservation. The City of Tampa has designated the forest preserve part of its urban forest; thus, Tampa Codes and Ordinances and restrictions will likely apply to any development. The mitigation of wetlands pursuant to a development order or approved plan is subject the requirements of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, and the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission.

The University has provided the above information as background, but any respondent should not rely on the above. Respondents should undertake their own independent research and due diligence, at their sole cost and expense.

**Purpose of RFI**

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to gather information about development options that would be suitable and attractive for USF. The options should be appropriate for a public institution that is a high impact research university.

While the University could develop the Northern Property for its own use, as it has with certain parts of the Tampa campus, USF is most interested in exploring options from the private sector that require little or no upfront capital expense or commitment from the University. Additionally, the University seeks benefits that would allow pursuit of greater successes in serving students, faculty and staff over a long-term period.

The information received in response to this RFI may assist the University’s consideration of options for a potential project with a long-term ground lease or other similar contractual arrangement for development of the Northern Property. The respondent may tailor their response with the entire parcel in mind or separately for the golf course or the upland within the forest preserve.
USF may request additional information from those providing information.

This RFI is not intended to result in a contractual relationship.

Submittals should consider options to mitigate the wetlands, protect special animals and preserve unique natural features.

**Scope of Work**

The University seeks information about options for a potential project with a long-term ground lease or other similar contractual arrangement to develop one of the largest remaining undeveloped tracts along I-75 in a metro area in Florida.
Primary RFI Deliverable

- A concise, complete, and well-written response to the RFI will help the University develop next steps in this development process, and assess the respondent’s level of interest, rationale, capability and commitment to implement any of the ideas submitted.

The response should contain the following information:

Company Information

- Legal/registered name of the company
- Brief description of the company and website
- Identify the primary contact (include address, email address, and telephone number), responsible for all queries made during the intake and processing of the response
- Identify the office location
- If including partners, include all firm names, the type of services to be provided by each company, and the primary contact for each

Project Development / Concept

- A general description of the type of project envisioned
- Approach to completing the project
- Identify considerations USF needs to address to achieve its objective of the development of the property on the campus
- Discuss benefits to the University, such as amenities for students, faculty and staff, and revenue sharing opportunities
- Discuss necessary mitigation requirements
- Provide timeline for the development of the proposed use, taking into consideration the potential need for rezoning / mitigation
- Describe relevant experience and qualifications, including similar successful projects. Of special interest are projects with public sector entities and universities
- Describe value added services: Inclusion of small, women, veteran, minority-owned businesses, sustainability tie-in, student research opportunities etc.

Response Requirements

- Submissions should not exceed a total of 30 pages, using a minimum type size of 11.
- The respondent shall submit a “high quality” digital PDF.
- The original PDF response must contain the signature of the authorized person.

Responses to the RFI must be emailed to:

George Cotter, Director Procurement Services at gcotter@usf.edu
Process

USF will review and analyze the information received from this RFI to determine the best option(s) to address USF’s needs. Responses to this request will be reviewed for informational purposes only and will not result in the award of a contract. Entities submitting a response to the RFI are not prohibited from responding to any related subsequent solicitation. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future procurement, if any is issued.

- All questions must be received by April 30, 2021 at 5:00 pm
- Responses to questions will be provided by May 7, 2021.
- All responses must be received by May 24, 2021 at 3:00 pm

USF may request clarifications from respondents.

USF reserves the right to extend the timelines shown.

Questions

Questions regarding this RFI shall be submitted in writing by email to George Cotter at gcotter@usf.edu. Verbal questions will NOT be accepted. Questions will be answered by responding to questions via public posting. Accordingly, questions shall NOT contain proprietary or classified information. All questions must be received by April 30, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. EST. Responses to questions will be provided by May 7, 2021 by close of business unless otherwise indicated. All questions and responses will be posted to https://www.usf.edu/business-finance/purchasing/public-bids/index.aspx.

Public Records

All information obtained shall become the property of USF upon receipt and will not be returned. Any information received will be subject to Florida Public Records laws per Florida Statute 119. Respondents must indicate which portions, if any, of the information being provided is proprietary or confidential by clearly segregating and marking each page upon which such information appears (for example, materials may be placed in a separate electronic file including the word “confidential” in the file name). Briefly describe in writing the grounds for claiming exemption from the public records requirements, including the specific statutory authority citation for such exemption. Failure to do so will result in all information submitted being subject to public disclosure in accordance with applicable rules and laws. The University reserves the right to determine in its sole discretion its obligations under Chapter 119 F.S. The information request may be used to develop specifications for a solicitation.

Vendor Costs

Respondents are responsible for all costs associated with the preparation and submission of this RFI. USF will not be responsible for any respondent’s related costs associated with responding to this request.
Addendum

Any clarification or additional information that may substantially affect the outcome of this RFI will be provided in the form of a written addendum. All addenda will be posted on the USF Purchasing Services website at: https://www.usf.edu/business-finance/purchasing/public-bids/index.aspx

Appendices

USF Conservation Holdings Map

USF Campus and Golf Course and Forest Preserve Map

USF Tampa Campus Map and Northern Property Map

USF Boundary and Acreage Map – Wetlands and Highlands (highlighted)

USF Campus and USF Forest Preserve Map

USF - Forest Preserve Boundary

USF Forest Preserve and National Wetlands Inventory Map
USF Conservation Holdings Map

USF Campus and Golf Course and Forest Preserve Map
USF Tampa Campus Map and Northern Property Map

USF Boundary and Acreage Map – Wetlands and Highlands (highlighted)
USF Campus and USF Forest Preserve Map

USF - Forest Preserve Boundary Map
USF Forest Preserve and National Wetlands Inventory Map