



Atlanta BeltLine Partnership Strategic Planning Consultant Request for Proposals

The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership (ABP) is seeking an individual or firm (Consultant) to facilitate the development of the organization's next strategic plan.

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW:

The Atlanta BeltLine Project

As one of the largest, most wide-ranging urban redevelopment programs in the United States, [the Atlanta BeltLine](#) is the catalyst for making Atlanta a global beacon for equitable, inclusive, and sustainable city life. The Atlanta BeltLine project connects 45 neighborhoods to create economically and culturally vibrant, sustainable, mixed-income communities where Atlanta's residents can thrive. It includes 22 miles of light-rail transit in the Atlanta BeltLine corridor, 33 miles of trails, over 1,200 acres of new parkland, several miles of new streets and streetscapes, public art, and brownfield reclamation, as well as the creation of 5,600 units of affordable housing and the generation of tens of thousands of jobs.

Atlanta BeltLine | Project Vision



The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership

The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership is the 501(c)3 nonprofit organization formed in 2005 to work with the City of Atlanta to advance the Atlanta BeltLine. The Partnership **enables** the Atlanta BeltLine project by raising money from the private and philanthropic sectors, **engages** the public through programming, events, and activities, and **empowers** residents through partnerships that bring about positive outcomes in the areas of health, housing, and access to economic opportunity.

The Partnership plays a critical role in delivering the Atlanta BeltLine by raising philanthropic capital to support project implementation led by its partner, Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. (ABI). With the Atlanta BeltLine experiencing unprecedented momentum, the Partnership is nearing completion of its \$175+ million *Advancing the Vision* comprehensive campaign to support the construction of the full BeltLine trail corridor, new parks, legacy resident retention, and its ongoing programs and operations.



Atlanta BeltLine Partnership

Private, non-profit entity
Responsible for raising funds and building partnerships that enable the project, engage the public, and empower residents



Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.

Quasi-Governmental, City of Atlanta Entity
Responsible for overseeing the project's infrastructural design and implementation.

Atlanta BeltLine Vision

The vision for the Atlanta BeltLine is to be the catalyst for making Atlanta a global beacon for equitable, inclusive, and sustainable city life.

Atlanta BeltLine Partnership Mission

To fulfill, protect, and preserve the Atlanta BeltLine vision by raising funds and building partnerships that enable the Atlanta BeltLine project, engage the public, and empower residents in surrounding neighborhoods.

Equally important, ABP manages a robust portfolio of programs to maintain strong, broad-based civic and community support for and use of the Atlanta BeltLine and help BeltLine residents remain in their homes and connect with employment opportunities along the corridor. Most programs are delivered via partnerships with other organizations. A list of ABP's programs is included below.

ABP also plays an important advocacy role. It works with volunteers, residents, businesses and their employees, and many other partners to garner support for ballot measures, legislation, and funding requests that are critical to the Atlanta BeltLine's success.

In 2021, ABP made a strategic decision to move its offices from the [Eastside Trail](#) to [970 Jefferson](#), located on the [Westside BeltLine Connector](#) – reflecting the organization's focus on westside and southside communities along the BeltLine.

Led by a small (7 full-time employees) but very competent core team, The Partnership has accomplished its objectives via myriad partners, a network of specialized contractors, and hundreds of active volunteers. ABP's annual operating budget is approximately \$2.3 million.

Atlanta BeltLine Partnership | Engage

ABP executes its mission to engage the public through these programming, events, and activities.

Fitness:

- Atlanta BeltLine Race Series
- Free Fitness Classes
- Atlanta BeltLine Weekly Run Club
- Atlanta Corporate Challenge

Tours:

- Westside BeltLine Bike Tour
- BeltLine Bus Tour
- Westside BeltLine Walking Tour

Community Events:

- Washington Park Jamboree

Volunteerism:

- BeltLine Beautification
- Program and Advocacy

Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. events: Art on the Atlanta BeltLine, Atlanta BeltLine Lantern Parade, BeltLine After Dark, and Bikefest.

Atlanta BeltLine Partnership | Empower

ABP empowers BeltLine residents through partnerships that bring positive outcomes in the area of health, housing, and economic development. These programs include:

Home Empowerment:

- Free workshops with partners designed to help lower-income legacy residents of Westside and Southside Atlanta BeltLine neighborhoods understand the tools and resources available to them to remain in their home.

Workforce Empowerment:

- Workforce partnerships connect residents, businesses, and training partners to create employment pipelines for BeltLine residents to obtain jobs near home.

Legacy Resident Retention Program:

- A resource for current homeowners to cover the cost of increases in property taxes through the tax year 2030.

CONTEXT FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN:

Now in the final decade of the 25-year Atlanta BeltLine Redevelopment, the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership needs an updated strategic plan to guide the organization’s work through 2030. The plan should address how ABP 1) supports the completion of the BeltLine, with a particular focus on the next 3-5 years 2) assesses and hones its programming to ensure the Atlanta BeltLine delivers its promised benefits to BeltLine residents, and 3) prepares for the organization’s future after the BeltLine is constructed and its partner, Atlanta BeltLine, Inc., is expected to cease operations.

Previous Strategic Plan

The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership completed its last strategic plan in 2017. Guided by that plan, ABP achieved significant milestones within its three-fold mission, including:

ENABLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised over \$100 million in philanthropic donations and helped pass the Special Service District to complete the full mainline 22-mile Atlanta BeltLine trail corridor. • Opened the first phase of Westside Park in partnership with the City of Atlanta, made possible by an approximately \$17 million donation secured by ABP. • Provided philanthropic support to advance other major projects, including the Westside Trail, Eastside Trail extension, Southside interim trail, and Westside BeltLine Connector. • Joined environmentally focused non-profits on Mayor Dickens’ Greenspace Advisory Council to help the City achieve its park and greenspace goals.
ENGAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched a partnership with the Atlanta Track Club to host the Atlanta BeltLine Race Series and weekly run clubs. • Bolstered community wellness through the Westside Trail Community Health Grants, Washington Park Jamboree, bike tours, and Atlanta’s largest free fitness program. • Harnessed community support with 15K+ volunteer service hours through Adopt the Atlanta BeltLine and other volunteer programs • Implemented the Connectors Circle to offer corporate supporters opportunities to partner with ABP through employee engagement, alignment with BeltLine programs and events, and increased brand awareness.
EMPOWER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created the philanthropically funded Legacy Resident Retention Fund to help low-income homeowners remain in their communities and build wealth. • Established a consistent offering of Home Empowerment Workshops to help reduce cost burdens for residents and mitigate displacement in BeltLine neighborhoods. • Supported equitable economic development strategies in partnership with Atlanta BeltLine, Inc., including the Atlanta BeltLine MarketPlace and workforce partnerships.

Atlanta Beltline, Inc.’s Strategic Implementation Plan

As the organization that supports the Atlanta BeltLine vision through philanthropic fundraising, programming, and advocacy, the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership’s strategy is inextricably tied to the overall [Strategic Implementation Plan](#) (SIP) for the BeltLine project led by Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. (ABI). The SIP is a comprehensive strategic work plan that provides an overarching execution strategy for the remaining infrastructure and complementary priorities in the Atlanta BeltLine program, including trails, transit

preparedness, parks, affordable housing, economic development, public art, historic preservation, and more. ABI is updating the SIP, which is scheduled to be completed this summer.

The SIP will include identified projects, sequencing, timelines, and funding scenarios for implementing the BeltLine through 2030. ABP's strategic plan will need to incorporate goals for philanthropic fundraising, programming, and advocacy for public funding and policies that support the implementation scenarios identified in the SIP.

Future Transitions

Of significant importance, the primary funding source for the Atlanta BeltLine project and ABI – the [Tax Allocation District](#) (TAD) – is set to expire in 2030. While the SIP may contemplate an extension of the TAD, it will include recommendations or strategies for transitioning programs (e.g., Art on the Atlanta Beltline, trail maintenance, possible conservancy, annual maintenance budgets, document transition, etc.) at the close of the TAD program. ABP's strategic plan will need to contemplate how the organization prepares to evolve in light of these recommendations.

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REQUESTED SERVICES AND EXPECTED DELIVERABLES:

The Consultant will work with ABP's [board of directors](#) and [staff](#) to develop a strategic plan that includes:

- **Vision, Mission, and Core Values:** The vision for the Atlanta BeltLine has been established. No substantial changes to ABP's mission are expected, but it may need to evolve as the 25-year Atlanta BeltLine Redevelopment approaches its end in 2030. The plan will need to distill and codify the organization's core values.
- **Measurable outcomes and goals:** The plan must be clear on how success in achieving ABP's mission will be measured – and identify outcomes that can be realistically tracked by the organization. Multi-year (short- and long-term) goals should be established for key outcomes and correlated outputs.
- **Implementable strategies:** The plan must identify specific approaches and key initiatives to guide how the organization will spend its time and allocate resources to achieve the desired outcomes. The plan should include a RACI matrix or similar tool to ensure accountability.
- **Clear organizational priorities:** The scale and scope of BeltLine – both geographically and in its array of project components and measures of success – can generate competing priorities and expectations. The strategic plan must define a manageable set of priorities for the organization and include a framework for determining what is most important to do when we cannot do everything.
- **Conditions for success:** There are both internal and external factors that impact the Atlanta BeltLine and whether ABP will be successful in achieving its goals. The plan should identify critical success factors for the organization and assess the greatest risks to the plan.
- **Frameworks for decision-making:** The BeltLine is a complex project, and ABP will need to navigate changing economic, socio-political, and financial circumstances. The plan needs to provide guidance on how strategic decisions will be made and which factors are most relevant to making those decisions.
- **Financial feasibility:** ABP is currently a small organization relative to the scale of the Atlanta BeltLine project and is funded almost exclusively through philanthropic contributions. The strategic plan must contemplate attainable funding models to support growth and new responsibilities.

There are key strategic issues the plan will need to address:

- **ABP's Role:** The plan should clearly define ABP's current role in achieving the Atlanta BeltLine vision relative to Atlanta BeltLine, Inc., government agencies, and other non-profit partners. This should explicitly articulate where ABP has demonstrated it is uniquely positioned to achieve the BeltLine vision while avoiding duplication with other organizations.
- **Organizational Evolution & Capacity Building:** The plan will need to contemplate new organizational structures, operating models, technologies, funding streams, legal agreements, and other areas where ABP will need to build its capacity to achieve the organization's goals.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Under the leadership of its Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer, Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.'s goal is "to implement the BeltLine project in a way that ensures all Atlantans have the chance to participate in and benefit from its economic growth for generations to come." ABP's strategic plan should build on the [foundation established by our partners at ABI](#) and identify actions ABP needs to take to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion are embedded throughout the organization's people, programs, and processes, so the Atlanta BeltLine realizes its potential to break down barriers and connect people, communities, and cultures that have been intentionally segregated for generations.
- **Human Capital:** ABP has leveraged a network of partners, contractors, and volunteers (including board members and pro bono services) to achieve significant results with relatively few full-time staff. The plan should include a decision matrix or other strategic way for the organization to determine the most effective division of labor between full-time staff, contractors/part-time staff, partners, and volunteers/board/pro bono services.
- **Funding:** The plan should identify sustainable, long-term funding strategies to support ABP's programs and operations, including conservative and stretch goals for each and the conditions ABP will need to meet to successfully pursue them. Based on the scenarios presented in ABI's updated SIP, the plan will also need to address the scope and scale of future capital campaigns to support BeltLine implementation through the expiration of the TAD in 2030.
- **Relationships/Partnerships:** The plan should identify key strategic relationships/partnerships that will need to be established – and perhaps formalized through memoranda of understanding (e.g. with the City of Atlanta and/or other entities) – to achieve the organization's goals.
- **ABP's Potential Future Role(s):** Based on the post-2030 needs identified in the SIP, ABP's strategic plan should create a short list of the roles ABP could potentially take on following ABI's planned sunset in 2030. It should then identify the key factors ABP will need to evaluate over the next 2 to 3 years to determine the role(s) it will play, including how it needs to inform, influence, and respond to decisions made by the City of Atlanta and other key agencies (ABI, Invest Atlanta, MARTA, affordable housing organizations, etc.) between now and 2030.
- **Does ABP become a conservancy?** The quality of ongoing maintenance of the BeltLine will be critical to its long-term success. Conservancies have supplemented the City of Atlanta's ability to maintain premier greenspaces like Piedmont Park. ABP faces a critical strategic decision of whether to become a conservancy in the future. The plan should identify what would be

required (funding, staff, skills, equipment, legal structures, board makeup, etc.) – providing multiple scenarios if appropriate – if ABP chooses to become a conservancy. This should be informed by the City of Atlanta’s broader strategies for funding park maintenance, the role of conservancies throughout the park system in alignment with the [ActivateATL Park Master Plan](#), and ABI’s updated Strategic Implementation Plan – and recommend key questions that need to be answered. ABP will use this information to engage key partners and make this strategic decision over the next 2 to 3 years.

The Consultant is expected to review background materials, including but not limited to:

- ABP’s prior strategic plans
- Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.’s Strategic Implementation Plan (to be completed in summer 2023) and any surveys/interviews conducted in connection with it
- ABP’s and ABI’s [annual reports](#)
- [2005 Atlanta BeltLine Redevelopment Plan](#)
- Information about the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership and its programs on www.beltline.org
- Documents, presentations, and existing data on ABP’s fundraising, programs, financials, and other initiatives (to be provided by ABP staff)
- [ActivateATL](#) (City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan)

The Consultant is expected to conduct specific activities that will inform the strategic plan, including:

- SWOT analysis or similar assessment
- Surveys and/or interviews with key stakeholders, including donors, partner organizations, elected officials, neighborhood leaders, community members, board members, staff, and volunteers.
- Comparative analysis of the proposed role(s) of ABP to similarly situated organizations in Atlanta or, if applicable, in other parts of the country.

ABP must be able to operationalize the strategic plan. The engagement does not include the development of a business plan, but the Consultant is expected to provide a foundation that ABP can use to develop its annual business plans. These include but are not limited to the following tools (or equivalents proposed by the Consultant):

- Key Performance Indicators with identified data sources.
- Dashboards that can be used to track progress against the plan.
- Framework for determining the return on investment (ROI) of different programs and evaluating competing programmatic priorities.
- Framework/decision matrix for evaluating the alignment of new opportunities with the strategic plan.

ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURE:

The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership anticipates the following engagement structure, though Consultants have the flexibility to recommend modifications to deliver the best possible plan:

- Duration of 6 to 9 months
- Beginning of project focused on finalizing scope and project plan, absorbing background materials, and securing stakeholder input
- The Consultant should plan to provide regular (at least monthly) written updates outlining work performed for month, progress to date, and anticipated activities for the succeeding month.
- [ABP staff](#) will be actively engaged.
 - Consultant should propose what it deems to be an appropriate schedule of work sessions/meetings as part of its proposal, which will be refined when finalizing the scope and project plan at the beginning of the engagement.
 - ABP's senior leadership team (Directors) will be available to make critical path decisions throughout the duration of the engagement.
- There will be active participation by ABP's [board of directors](#):
 - Executive Committee will serve as a strategic planning committee
 - Committee structure will be used to secure board input on relevant portions of the plan (Existing committees are: Executive, Engage, Empower, Finance, Nominating, Compensation & Human Capital)
 - Consultant to lead a strategic planning retreat with the board and secure input via a survey or other tools
 - Board will provide final approval of the strategic plan
- Consultant will create an Executive Summary of the strategic plan that can be shared with donors, Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. staff, elected officials, community members, and other key stakeholders
- Consultant to handle logistics related to scheduling interviews, preparing for meetings (virtual meeting platforms, physical locations, developing agendas, bringing supplies, etc.). ABP staff will provide contact information for key stakeholders and assist where we have information or materials that the Consultant does not have.

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QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

ABP is seeking a highly qualified Consultant who can meet the requirements outlined in this Request for Proposals. Ideal candidates will:

- Have experience doing strategic plans for non-profit organizations.
- Have experience with complex engagements involving political, community, and public-private dynamics.
- Possess a high degree of familiarity with the Atlanta BeltLine project.
- Have been in business a minimum of five (5) years.
- Demonstrate they have the overall combination of skills, prior work experience, business reputation, and success with community-focused initiatives to provide the requested services.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested firms or individuals should submit a proposal. All materials should be saved as a pdf and sent to proposals@atlblp.org by **5 p.m. on Monday, May 1st, 2023**.

Proposals should include the following:

- Cover letter
- Background information about the Consultant (firm or individual)
- Description of how the firm/individual will perform the requested services
- Relevant experience.
- Resume(s) of individual(s) who would be working with the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership
- If more than one individual will be working with the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership, describe how the firm's staff will be assigned and the responsibilities of key personnel
- Proposed process and schedule
- Proposed fee structure
- Three references

Any questions about this RFP should be emailed to proposals@atlblp.org. There will be a voluntary information session on **Thursday, April 20th at 3:30 p.m.** where interested firms can hear an overview of the RFP and receive answers to pre-submitted questions.

The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership is an equal opportunity agency and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, color, religion, national origin, marital status, veteran status, disability status, sexual orientation, or any other basis prohibited by federal, state or local law. Please let the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership know if you need a reasonable accommodation to perform the essential functions of the position.