

THE MAGNIFICENT MILE[®] ASSOCIATION

MICHIGAN AVENUE DISTRICT | CHICAGO

Magnificent Mile Wayfinding & District Brand Systems – Phase II

Issued by:

The Magnificent Mile Association – SSA #76

Chicago, Illinois

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Proposal Due Date: March 13, 2026

1. Project Overview

The Magnificent Mile Association invites proposals from qualified, multidisciplinary design teams to advance and extend the district’s wayfinding and brand system. This engagement builds upon a substantial body of prior assessment, analysis, and conceptual work previously undertaken for the corridor and is intended to move the district toward deployable, cost-aware, and adaptable wayfinding solutions appropriate for one of Chicago’s most complex and high-profile urban environments.

This RFP includes both digital and physical wayfinding considerations and explicitly encompasses static, fixed, and environmental signage within the public realm. The Association is seeking a team capable of translating prior assessments and conceptual frameworks into an integrated system that balances functional clarity, spatial storytelling, operational feasibility, long-term adaptability, and brand coherence. The resulting work is expected to guide district investments over multiple years and across varied physical contexts.

2. Project Context

North Michigan Avenue functions simultaneously as a global visitor destination, dense mixed-use residential neighborhood, major employment center, civic and cultural corridor, and highly regulated public realm involving overlapping public and private stakeholders.

Wayfinding along the corridor must address multiple audiences and scales while responding to evolving conditions related to development, mobility, programming, tourism, and public safety. The selected consultant will be expected to consider prior corridor assessments and fieldwork already completed for the district and to build upon that foundation rather than duplicate earlier efforts. Particular attention should be paid to balancing clarity and consistency with flexibility for future change.

3. Project Goals

The goals of this engagement are to translate existing assessments and wayfinding concepts into a cohesive, scalable, and implementable system; clarify spatial hierarchy and legibility along North Michigan Avenue and adjacent areas; support everyday navigation and experiential discovery; rationalize and simplify a comprehensive multi-modal signage system; align brand expression with physical space and context; and establish phased, maintainable solutions grounded in operational and funding realities.

The Association is particularly interested in solutions that improve first-time visitor orientation while also enhancing daily usability for workers, residents, and repeat visitors.

4. Scope of Work

The selected consultant team will advance the district's existing wayfinding and brand framework into an implementable, phased, and context-responsive system. This work will build directly on prior assessments and materials from The Magnificent Mile Association and relevant City planning and public-realm documents.

The scope includes synthesizing existing inventories and evaluations of signage, refining a multi-scale wayfinding system that supports corridor-level orientation and sub-district navigation, and developing a coherent family of physical and static signage typologies integrated with architectural and landscape contexts.

A key task is to assess current signage conditions and identify opportunities to remove, consolidate, or simplify elements that hinder clarity, contribute to visual clutter, or detract from district identity.

The consultant will also deliver an implementation framework outlining phasing strategies, high-level cost ranges, maintenance considerations, and core design outputs—such as iconography, visual language, and branding elements—sufficient to prepare the system for future deployment without producing final fabrication drawings.

5. Qualifications & Experience

Responding teams must demonstrate proven experience delivering complex urban wayfinding systems in dense, high-visibility environments, including experience with static and physical signage programs. Multidisciplinary expertise spanning architecture, urban design, industrial design, branding, and landscape architecture is strongly preferred.

Teams should demonstrate experience working with public-realm stakeholders, regulatory frameworks, and district-based governance models such as special service areas or business improvement districts. The selected team must show capacity to translate assessments and conceptual work into cost-aware, operationally realistic systems and to communicate effectively with non-design stakeholders, including boards, task forces, and public agencies.

6. Desired Approach & Philosophy

The Association seeks a team that prioritizes systems thinking over isolated interventions and strategy before form. Wayfinding should be conceived as an integrated spatial, experiential, and operational system rather than a collection of individual signs.

Proposals should reflect an iterative, evidence-informed design process that builds upon prior assessments, incorporates stakeholder input, and balances creative ambition with pragmatic constraints related to deployment, cost, regulation, and long-term maintenance. Teams should demonstrate sensitivity to the architectural and cultural significance of North Michigan Avenue.

7. Governance, Coordination, and Engagement

The project will be guided by The Magnificent Mile Association in coordination with Special Service Area governance. Oversight will be provided through either a dedicated Wayfinding Task Force or the Association's District Impact Task Force, representing both SSA and Association interests.

Proposals must include a clearly articulated engagement plan describing how the consultant will coordinate with the task force, Association staff, and key stakeholders throughout the engagement. Engagement should be structured, purposeful, and scaled appropriately to the scope and budget of this phase. While broader engagement requirements will ultimately be refined through future BID documentation, this phase must include sufficient engagement to inform system logic, signage rationalization, branding outputs, and implementation feasibility.

8. Submission Requirements

Proposals must include: an overview of the team and key personnel; examples of at least three relevant projects involving urban wayfinding and physical signage systems; a statement of design philosophy; a proposed methodology and work plan; a detailed engagement plan; a proposed schedule; a fee proposal; and professional references associated with comparable projects.

Respondents should note that the anticipated budget for this engagement is approximately \$50,000, but the budget can be amended by 20% if necessary. Proposals should be scoped accordingly.

9. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on demonstrated understanding of district complexity, relevance of experience, ability to build upon prior assessments, strength of systems thinking, quality of engagement approach, interdisciplinary capability, clarity of methodology, and overall value.

Fee proposals will be evaluated for reasonableness in relation to scope, expertise, and deliverables rather than lowest cost alone. The Association reserves the right to request interviews, modify scope, reject proposals, or negotiate fees.

10. Anticipated Schedule

Project Start: April 2026

Engagement Duration: Approximately four (4) months

Anticipated Completion: August 2026