



*como friends*

TOGETHER WE GROW

## **RFP for Strategic Planning Services**

### Request for Proposal for Strategic Planning Consultant

Como Friends seeks a consultant to lead the Board of Directors and key staff through a strategic planning process during 2012 to plan areas of focus for the organization during a time of expected growth over the next 3 – 5 years.

The strategic planning process will engage Board members, staff and stakeholders on proposed future priorities; examine the benefits to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory of proposed future priorities; and build consensus with Board members and key staff on identified objectives.

Como Friends intends to complete the strategic planning process in 2012.

### Organization Background

Como Friends is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote, support, preserve and enhance Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Como Friends was incorporated in 1999, resulting from the merger of four separate nonprofit organizations that had previously supported Como Zoo or Marjorie McNeely Conservatory. It has a twenty-three member Board of Directors, 7.5 FTEs fundraising and administration staff, and 8.0 FTEs gift shop staff.

Como Friends is the nonprofit partner of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Its activities focus on raising money from the community to invest in programs and improvements at Como Zoo and Marjorie McNeely. Fund raising programs include:

- **Individual Giving:** Como Legacy Circle supporters with annual gifts of \$1000 +, household memberships with gifts of \$35 -\$500, animal and garden sponsorships with gifts of \$35+, donor bricks and donor benches. Net revenue from individual giving initiatives is approximately \$350,000.
- **Fund Raising Special Events:** Sunset Affair is a summer gala that draws 430 community leaders. The event is held at Como and includes a social reception, silent auction, program and dinner. Net revenue from Sunset Affair is approximately \$100,000. ZooBoo is a family-friendly event that draws 20,000 guests over five nights for a Halloween festival with trick-or-treating and activities on the

grounds of Como Zoo. Net revenue from ZooBoo is approximately \$95,000. Bouquets is a wine tasting event that draws 350 guests each winter for a wine tasting experience in the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory. It nets approximately \$20,000.

- Institutional Support: Como Friends seeks grants, sponsorships and gifts from members of the business and corporate sector as well as grants from public and private foundations. Institutional support accounts for approximately \$200,000.
- Retail: Como Friends operates the gift shops at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Annual sales gross approximately \$1,000,000 and net \$240,000.

Since 1999, Como Friends has donated over \$30 million to Como for capital improvements, program expansions, annual programs and an endowment fund.

### Scope of Work

Como Friends seeks to develop a three-to-five year strategic plan that builds on the past decade of fund raising growth and accomplishments in identifying strategy for the future.

The strategic planning process will focus on the below scope of activity:

- Evaluate the results of Como Friends fund raising programs in terms of their net financial success and effectiveness at engaging donors.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of donor cultivation activities and marketing strategies in supporting fund raising programs.
- Identify fund raising initiatives with the best potential for future growth and detail specific strategies for increasing net revenue.
- Evaluate Como Friends' retail operation and benchmark it against retail operations at other zoos and botanical gardens nationwide as well as other museum gift shops in the Twin Cities using these measurements: gross margin, sales per square foot, net sales per transaction, shrinkage rate.
- Detail strategies for growing gift shop sales based on knowledge gained from the comparison to other retail operations and identify strategies for growing sales that are not dependent on attendance at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.
- Evaluate the current structure and relationship with the City of St. Paul and identify strategies for preparing Como Friends if future changes are needed.
- Evaluate Como Friends current role in advocacy/lobbying for public sector dollars or policy initiatives at both the MN State Legislature and the City of St. Paul.
- Detail future advocacy/lobbying strategies for Como Friends.
- Identify strategies for funding future fund raising initiatives, gift shop growth and advocacy/lobbying strategies.

The strategic planning process will NOT address the below items:

- The current operations, maintenance or management of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.
- The need for new exhibits or improvements to existing exhibits at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.
- The evaluation of any programs managed by Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, including education programs, rental programs, volunteer service programs, conservation programs.
- The evaluation of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory's vendor partnership with Lancer for restaurant service in the Visitor Center, catering services in the Visitor Center, concession sales on the grounds of Como Zoo or the operation and management of ComoTown.

### How to Submit

Interested persons should submit a complete proposal to Como Friends by 5:00 p.m. on February 23, 2012 to:

Jackie Sticha, President  
Como Friends  
1225 Estabrook Dr  
Saint Paul, MN 55103

The proposal submission must include the following items:

- Contact information including name of firm, consultant, mailing address, telephone number and website.
- Cover letter describing interest in working with Como Friends.
- A written proposal detailing the proposed approach to the planning process, proposed steps to accomplish the Scope of Work and a timeline to accomplish the strategic planning process.
- Qualifications and background with strategic planning processes including detail on similar projects undertaken with other nonprofit organizations.
- List of current/previous nonprofit clients.
- Proposed fee to accomplish the strategic planning process.