

Request for Proposal

2022 Public Relations, Digital, & Social Media Services for Uptown Special Service Area (SSA) #34

About Uptown United and the Uptown Special Service Area

Uptown United is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit economic and community development organization serving the Uptown neighborhood on Chicago's North Side. The mission of Uptown United is to lead efforts to build a strong, unified business environment; facilitate economic development; and strengthen community – all to nurture a diverse, vibrant, thriving and strong Uptown. Uptown United serves as the sole service provider for Uptown Special Service Area #34, a special taxing body that focuses on commercial corridor improvements and marketing efforts throughout the district.

Background

In 2016 the boards of Uptown United and the Uptown Chamber of Commerce along with the Uptown SSA commission agreed that boosting Uptown's image was a key priority. The goal: to change Uptown's perception of being unsafe and run-down, despite drastic improvements to safety, infrastructure, and private development. In 2016 and 2017 the organizations engaged a branding firm to provide background research and develop a new visual brand for our work promoting the neighborhood. The new branding was successful in rallying the community and businesses, however limited budgets prevented further expansion of the brand and associated marketing efforts. Flash forward 4 years. While the 2020-2021 pandemic affected many neighborhoods around the city, it hit Uptown especially hard. Shuttered entertainment venues, as well as racism and xenophobia toward the large Asian-American business community are just a few of the most recent challenges.

Scope of Work

Uptown is optimistic that 2022 will be an even better year. While the pandemic continues to affect the neighborhood, businesses continue to rebound. New establishments are working to open their doors for the first time in our neighborhood. And the landscape will continue to change as new home development makes Uptown a sought-after community in the city of Chicago.

We seek a marketing agency that is ready and excited to grow with us. One that will leverage our "new" brand to drive awareness-of and engagement-with our vibrant neighborhood. And one that can be flexible with the services in an ever-changing pandemic environment. #UptownProud

Objectives:

- *Change neighborhood perception by telling a compelling, authentic story of Uptown's rich tapestry of diverse businesses, positive changes, and vibrant community assets.*
- *Position Uptown United as a trusted, valuable resource for the community.*
- *Engage our key audiences (neighbors/residents, visitors, businesses, and investors) to be active participants within the community.*

Goals:

- *Bring incremental foot traffic to local businesses and organizations in the neighborhood.*
- *Drive program and event attendance throughout the year (whether in-person or virtual).*
- *Attract private investment and new businesses to the community.*





We are seeking a strategic agency partner with a combination of marketing services: (I) Public and Media Relations, (II) Digital/Social Media. Preference is for one agency with the ability to handle both services so that there is some room for flexibility in scope as we continue to understand the impact of pandemic restrictions heading into 2022.

The selected agency will work with Uptown United and our marketing committee to establish long-term strategies and identify areas of executional support.

- Follow Uptown’s existing brand look/feel and messaging guidelines
- Participate in regular meetings with key stakeholders and others at the discretion of Uptown United

Services must be inclusive to the diverse cultures and backgrounds found in Uptown, such as Asian-American and Pacific Islander, immigrant, LGBTQ+, Black, African, and other culturally specific businesses and organizations.

Areas of Focus

We are looking for an agency that will help us evaluate the pandemic landscape and establish a sound integrated marketing strategy for the year. Below is a prioritized list of types of services we anticipate will be needed, based on what we know today. This list may need to be reevaluated as a team upon agency selection.

Priority	Public Relations	Digital/Social
1	Secure earned media placements in local and national print, television, and digital media	Social channel audit, content strategy (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube)
2	Generate press material, including all press releases and press kits	Paid digital/social media strategy, execution, maintenance, reporting
3	Distribute press material to appropriate news outlets	Google Ad Grant (already secured, year 2): keyword strategy, execution and maintenance, reporting
4	Consult on event planning to ensure events are planned to maximize potential media coverage	Website: audit, content evaluation & recommendations
5	Gather media placements for posting on social media	
6	Provide crisis management assistance for negative community press mentions, as appropriate	
7	Plan press conferences and press events, as necessary, to drive coverage	

It will be important that any PR and digital/social efforts are integrated seamlessly. In addition, we will rely on the agency to identify key performance indicators in both channels and monitor/report on program performance throughout the year.

Budget

- \$40K inclusive of agency fees & out-of-pocket costs
- \$10-\$15K additional event-specific budgets may be available during the year for promotional support





Additional Requirements

Firm must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and city ordinances related to performing these services as a subcontractor to the City of Chicago for a Special Service Area. Many relevant City of Chicago requirements for subcontractors can be found in the Uptown United’s 2022 Service Provider Agreement, which can be downloaded at exploreuptown.org/ssa. Firm must be licensed to do business and be in good standing in the State of Illinois.

Proposal Requirements

1. Firm overview and qualifications
2. Overview of approach to the project of proposal
3. Overview of key performance indicators and approach to measuring impact
4. Names, biographies, and experience of all members assigned to project
5. At least 3 examples of related work or client projects
6. At least 3 references for similar work, including media/press samples
7. Statement of agency’s cultural competency, knowing that agency will work with a diverse community that includes large Asian-American and Pacific Islander, immigrant, LGBTQ+, African, and other culturally businesses and organizations. Examples of working with specific clients in those areas and reaching audiences with those backgrounds.
8. Itemized budget including monthly retainer and any additional anticipated costs
9. 12-month (January-December 2022) initial contract terms with option to renew for 2023 (January-December)

Estimated Timeline for Proposals

- RFP Release Date: 09.22.21
- Proposal Due Date: 10.12.21*
- RD2 Agency Discussions: w/o 10.25.21 – w/o 11.15.21
- RD2 Proposals Due: 11.22.21
- Final Agency Selection: December 2021
- Targeted Services Start Date: January 2022

*Please send proposals by 5:00pm on Tuesday, October 12th, 2021, via email to:

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 4619 N Broadway
 Chicago, IL 60640
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 Email: justin@exploreuptown.org

For questions or meeting requests, please email Justin Weidl at: justin@exploreuptown.org

Please note that any questions and answers may be shared with other bidders as well as the SSA Commissioner and public. Qualified firms may or may not be asked to prepare in-person interviews and/or presentations with Uptown United staff and/or Uptown SSA Commission. Uptown United and the Uptown SSA Commission reserve the right to revise timelines and to accept any or no bids.

