

## **City of Ithaca Request for Proposals 400 Block of College Avenue Streetscape**

The City of Ithaca requests proposals for professional services to lead a public engagement and design process and produce final construction documents for improvements to the 400 Block of College Avenue in Ithaca's Collegetown neighborhood.

Proposals from interested firms are due by January 12, 2024. Your proposal will be reviewed, and you may be requested to interview with a committee of staff before a final selection is made. It is expected that a consulting firm will be selected, and a Professional Design Service Agreement awarded, in February/March 2024.

**Contact:** Email questions to Tom Knipe, Deputy Director for Economic Development, [tknipe@cityofithaca.org](mailto:tknipe@cityofithaca.org)

### **Background/ Project Objectives:**

The City of Ithaca has approved funding for a capital project to re-design the 400 Block of College Avenue from the intersection of Dryden Road approximately to the intersection with Oak Avenue (see attached map for boundaries). The 100, 200 and 300 blocks of College Avenue were recently rebuilt to help accommodate development and the undergrounding of the electric and telecommunications facilities. Utilities in the 400 block were undergrounded some time ago and the sidewalks and street amenities are now in a state of advanced disrepair (see attached document titled Challenges & Opportunities Facing Collegetown). Some recent work was done at 409 College Ave, in the traffic island, and in the plaza between the Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts and the sidewalk.

This block is a gateway to Cornell University and a densely developed mixed-use urban environment. Because of the density of student housing in Collegetown, it is one of the most heavily used blocks by pedestrians in the city.

The City seeks a consultant who will investigate design alternatives and management strategies that will balance the needs of pedestrians, bikes, transit, loading and (possibly) short term parking while incorporating green infrastructure, street trees, bike racks and other amenities all within the limited ROW. Creative, innovative, and beautiful approaches will be needed, therefore teams led by thoughtful engineers with strong landscape architecture and urban planning team members are preferred.

Other amenities: The project should also investigate the feasibility of design alternatives that would allow the street to be easily closed to automobile traffic on a temporary basis for events and festivals. Finally, the project should analyze the potential in this corridor and adjoining intersections for 'gateway' treatment(s) to help create a strong identity for the Collegetown neighborhood.

## Scope of Work

### Phase One

1. **Inventory and Updated Survey:** The City will provide a survey (.dwg file) produced by Delta Engineering, Architects and Surveyors in 2020. The consultant will produce an updated survey delineating the right-of-way boundaries from the intersection at Dryden Road to the Stone Bridge over Cascadilla Creek. The consultant will work with City GIS and other staff to produce base mapping showing existing drainage, utilities, parking, loading and other public features and amenities.
2. **Data Collection:** Monitor pedestrian, vehicular, delivery traffic and parking occupancy to determine peak times and volumes. Due to the student population, peak times may differ from the standard am/pm weekday peaks. Document and inventory lighting, barriers to accessibility, transit stops, and pedestrian crossings. Collect and analyze 1-2 pavement cores.
3. **Public Engagement & Agency Coordination:** Lead a two-phase public engagement process starting with gathering feedback from residents, transit providers and riders, nearby Collegetown business and property owners, and Cornell University. Among other things, the process should gauge the willingness to reduce or remove on-street parking. The second phase of outreach will elicit feedback on conceptual designs. The consultant should provide a detailed outline of plans for public engagement.  
Coordinate with Affected Public Agencies by gathering input from Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT), emergency services, Public Works staff, Planning and Engineering staff, and other interested parties such as Ithaca Car Share and Ithaca Bike Share.
4. **Design Development:** Develop three (3) conceptual designs and related management tools that maximize the limited ROW and meet project objectives. The City will choose one conceptual design to bring into preliminary design which will include lighting, pavement, and drainage analysis.
  - Designs should consider and be harmonious with recent improvements to Dryden Road and the 100-300 blocks of College Avenue.
  - Ease of maintenance and access to underground utilities should also be addressed in the designs.

### Phase Two

5. **Construction Documents.** Upon selection and approval of the preferred conceptual design, construction documents will be produced. Construction documents will include plans, specifications, and estimates. Drawings and specifications must reflect NYSDOT standard specification; unit price engineer's estimate will be required.
6. **Construction Support.** The City of Ithaca Engineering Division will oversee bidding and construction. The consultant is requested to provide construction support, including submittal review/approval, pay app review/approval, management of design changes during construction and production of as-built drawings. Further, as an additional supplemental scope of work, the City is interested in understanding whether the consultant has the capability to provide inspection services.

## **Tentative Schedule:**

RFP Responses Due: Friday, January 12, 2024, by 3:30pm

Selection process: January 12, 2024 – January 30, 2024

Award Contract: February/March 2024

Phase One: 1) Inventory, 2) Data Collection, 3) Public Engagement, and 4) Design Development to be completed to a level to which a preliminary cost estimate can be identified by July 2024. Full preliminary design and cost estimates to be completed in Fall 2024.

Phase Two: It is expected that 5) construction drawings and project bidding will be done in December 2024 and 6) construction will take place in 2025.

## **Submission Requirements**

Please submit the following:

1. Lead Consultant Information
  - a. Firm name
  - b. Mailing address
  - c. Telephone
  - d. Website
  - e. Contact name, email, phone number
  - f. Form of Organization (partnership, corporation, sole proprietorship, etc.)
  - g. Where Organized
  - h. Names of principals, officers, and directors
2. Additional Consultants:
  - a. Firm name
  - b. Mailing address
  - c. Telephone
  - d. Website
3. Key Personnel. For key personnel to be involved in the project, please provide names, titles, period of service with the firm, and a resume or description of experience. Please limit responses to no more than one page per person.
4. Detailed Project Proposal. Description of how the project team will approach each of the major tasks described above. Include a description of how the team will be organized, who will perform each of the tasks, amount of time the team expects to expend on each task and what the finished product will be.
5. Budget and Timeline. Please provide a detailed timeline for all phases and tasks and a proposed budget for each.

6. **Statement of Availability.** Provide a brief statement on the availability of key personnel to undertake the proposed project, within the preferred schedule beginning in early 2024 and ending in early 2025.
7. **List of Relevant Projects** Provide a brief description of no more than eight projects equivalent in size or nature to the proposed project that have been successfully completed within the last seven years by the consulting firm, consulting team or key personnel. Please include the project budget.
8. **Three References.** Provide names, telephone numbers, and emails of persons to be called for references regarding past performance of the consulting firm, consulting team, or key personnel on similar projects.

## **Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Experience and expertise planning and designing urban streetscapes (20%)
2. Creativity and innovation (20%)
3. Experience in designing and implementing effective public engagement processes (20%)
4. Experience completing projects on tight deadlines, within budget, and in a professional and thorough manner (20%)
5. Clarity of proposal (20%)

## **Attachments**

- Map of Study Area
- “Challenges & Opportunities Facing Collegetown”
- Collegetown Design Guidelines - <https://www.cityofithaca.org/DocumentCenter/View/5801/Collegetown-Design-Guidelines---March-2-2017?bidId=>
- Collegetown Urban Plan - <https://www.cityofithaca.org/169/Collegetown-Urban-Plan>

## **Submission Schedule**

Please submit three (3) hard copies and one (1) electronic copy of your response to this Request for Proposals no later than 3:30 PM Friday, January 12, 2024.

Send to:

Department of Planning & Development



108 East Green Street

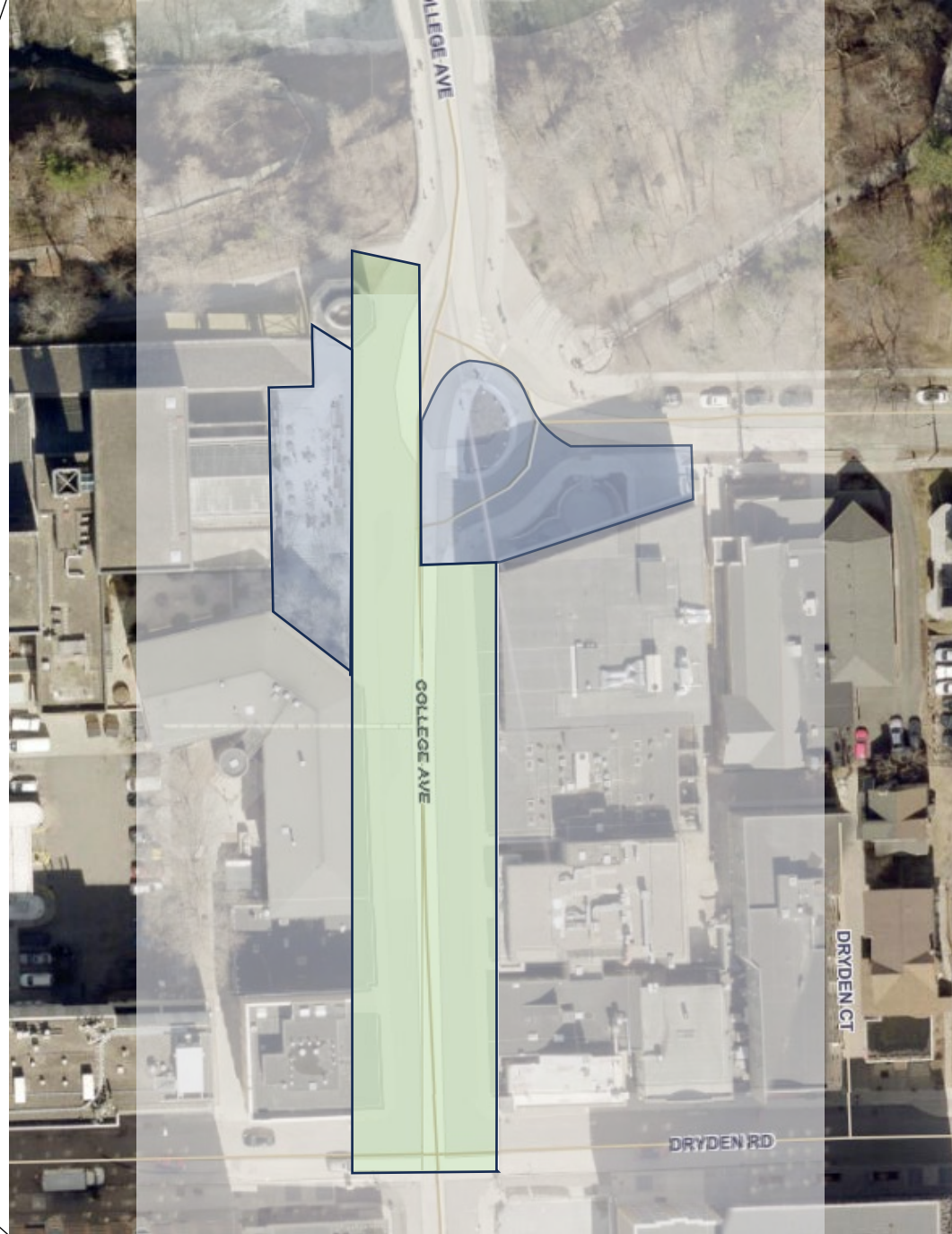
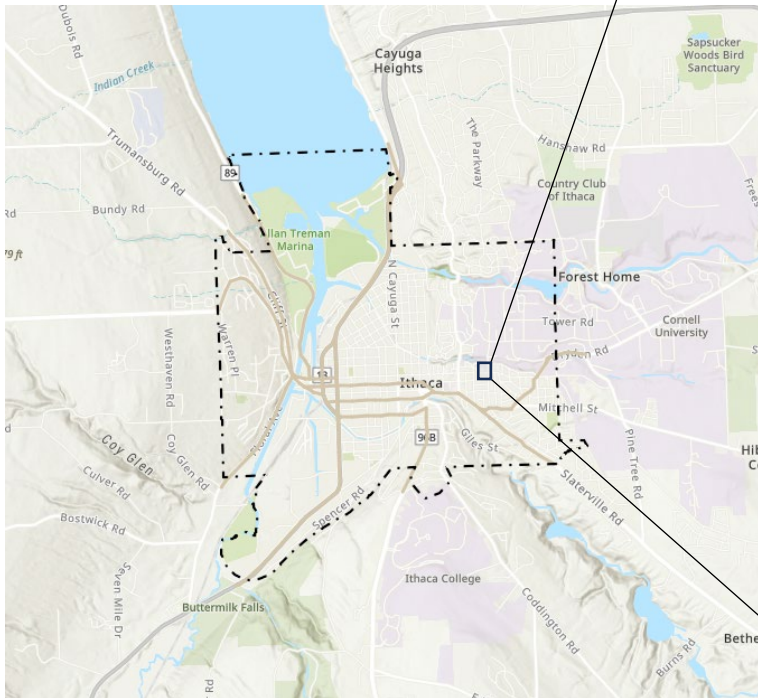
Ithaca, NY 14850

Attn: Tom Knipe, Deputy Director for Economic Development

Email electronic copy to Tom Knipe, Deputy Director for Economic Development,  
[tknipe@cityofithaca.org](mailto:tknipe@cityofithaca.org)

# City of Ithaca Request for Proposals 400 Block of College Avenue Streetscape

-  Primary area of design for RFP
-  Recently redesigned areas to be knitted with new design.







**Our Mission:**

- To encourage Collegetown identity, pride, and beautification
- To work with our neighbors to build a vibrant, year-round, inclusive, and happy community
- To #ShopSmall and grow together

## Challenges and Opportunities Facing Collegetown

To review at the October 26th, 2021 Mayor's Economic Development Meeting

Presented by the Collegetown Small Business Alliance (CSBA) leadership team:

CSBA Co-Founder Marty Johnson (Uncle Marty's Shipping Office | [marty@askunclemarty.com](mailto:marty@askunclemarty.com))

CSBA Co-Founder Annie Quach (Hai Hong and Vietnam Restaurants | [annievanquach@gmail.com](mailto:annievanquach@gmail.com))

CSBA Member Jorge Bouras (Dos Amigos | [jbourasa@gmail.com](mailto:jbourasa@gmail.com))

### Overview

Overall, we are very optimistic about the future of Collegetown. While there are significant challenges facing the neighborhood, its legacy and potential are bright, and we feel that each challenge we have identified can be paired with opportunities to make the area better.

Collegetown is a unique and important business district and neighborhood in the City of Ithaca, serving as the grand entrance corridor to Cornell University, as well as home to many of its students. Lately, many local Ithacans seem to perceive Collegetown as “run down,” “full of empty storefronts,” “a mess of construction,” and “a neighborhood with no parking that’s just for students,” but we hope to change those perceptions, brighten up our streets, and encourage locals to patronize our district more often.

Over the last few years, significant development in Collegetown has been disruptive, but we know that the future growth that it drives is important. We hope that development will continue and projects growing neighborhood density in both residential and office space, as well as improved storefronts to encourage more diverse retail options, will be considered. When the new College Avenue streetscape is completed (hopefully in the summer / fall of 2022), we envision a revived grand entrance corridor to Cornell, which we hope will make a much better first impression on future visitors and potential Cornell students and staff—those important groups who are major drivers of the greater Ithaca economy. We recognize that the 400 block of College Avenue isn’t included in the current plans for streetscape revival, and hope that could be reconsidered—or added as a future capital project—so that block too could be consistent with the rest of the street, be safer, and reflect the image necessary for growth.

We’ve spoken with some local business owners (including Lisa Cary at Big Red Barbershop, Kody Crispell of Collegetown Wine & Spirits, Djamal Sensei of Fennec Fox Tech Repair, Mia Coleman of Four Seasons, Alvin Mai of UTea, Zaw Lin of Oishii Bowl, the team at Campustown Pizza, the team at Starbucks, as well as a few other business operators) to try to pinpoint some of the most commonly acknowledged challenges facing our neighborhood, as well as ideas for opportunities to meet those challenges.

We appreciate this opportunity to bring Collegetown once again to the attention of our friends at City Hall and hope we can check in quarterly with this group to continue a conversation on Collegetown’s needs, improvements, and goals.

## Challenges & Opportunities

### Challenge: vacant storefronts

- Many commercial spots remain unrented (i.e. former Green Café space, vacant over 10 years)
- **Opportunity:** incentives for property owners to either redevelop or rent these spaces, versus keeping them vacant for the tax write-offs
- **Opportunity:** incentives for small businesses and/or chains to open locations in Collegetown and to seek those businesses out (ideas include a 24-hour gym, yoga studio, 24-hour greasy spoon-style diner, full-service laundry and/or laundromat, tanning salon, nail salon, skincare spa, massage studio, nightclub, wine bar, fine dining, florist with balloons, etc.)

### Challenge: poor lighting at night on the 400 block of College Ave

- Many of the liquor store employees and clients feel unsafe
- **Opportunity:** updated streetlights on the 400 block of College Avenue, which we hope could be included in the 2022 College Avenue streetscape project so the entire street—the entrance corridor to Cornell—is consistent in design and safely lit

### Challenge: lack of green space / parks

- **Opportunity:** restart previously held discussions with Cornell about creating a linear park behind the Schwartz Center and/or a park created in the Eddy Gate area
- **Opportunity:** encourage developers to create park-like spaces and courtyards at entrances and behind their new buildings

### Challenge: parking (lack of, public perception and awareness, and loading zone misuse)

- Public perception of "lack of parking in Collegetown" discourages locals from visiting and doing business in Collegetown
- Many Collegetown employees can't afford to park in the Dryden Road garage (EDIT as of 2023 the "worker's special" discounted pass is \$167.47 per month, or just over \$2,000.00 per year!) and therefore those workers take up most of the on-street parking in the Belle Sherman neighborhood and also fill up the loading zones when they know those zones are not being enforced
- Many shoppers and diners visiting Collegetown also park in the loading zones for way too long because they either don't know about the Dryden Road garage or they think the fees are too steep there (that garage costs significantly more than any other garage in the city)
- **Opportunity:** a much more affordable "worker's special" pass for Collegetown employees to use the Dryden Road garage, getting their vehicles off the street and out of the loading zones
- **Opportunity:** better signage for the Dryden Road garage and on-street parking options
- **Opportunity:** a free first hour of parking in the Dryden Road garage for patrons of Collegetown restaurants and businesses
- **Opportunity:** better signage for the loading zones saying something like, "active loading / unloading only," "must use flashers," and/or "strictly enforced"
- **Opportunity:** better enforcement of the loading zones to prevent people from staying there longer than 30 minutes
  - o Needs to be 24/7, as after 4pm on weekdays (and all weekend) is when the loading zones fill up as people have learned that parking enforcement officers are not out during those times. We believe this increased enforcement would pay for itself many times over and generate revenue for the City of Ithaca with parking fines and tow fees.
- **Note:** see City website for Parking Garage Rates & Fees to show disparity in fees between the Collegetown garage and others: <https://www.cityofithaca.org/709/Garage-Parking>

**Challenge:** broken pavers and sidewalks

- Some sidewalks have been redone and we know some others are being saved for the 2022 College Avenue streetscape project, but work still remains as there are still many broken / missing / hazardous pavers between the sidewalks and the streets (i.e. 100 block of Dryden Road, 300 and 400 blocks of Eddy Street, and 400 block of College Avenue)
- **Opportunity:** continue sidewalk improvements by reassessing them annually with city sidewalk improvement projects and include paver replacement as well as sidewalk updates
- **Opportunity:** include the 400 block of College Avenue in the 2022 streetscape project to update many broken pavers on it, particularly in areas between sidewalks and streets, around trees, benches, and the like where pavers are broken / missing / hazardous.
- **Note:** see photos at the end of this document

**Challenge:** trash (overflowing trash cans and excessive trash in streets, under benches, etc.)

- Rather than using dumpsters and designated trash spots, many tenants put their household and business garbage on or around overflowing street garbage cans, particularly on the 300 and 400 blocks of College Avenue and 100 block of Dryden Road
- **Opportunity:** replace open-top cans with Bigbelly trash cans that are closed-top and can't overflow, which we should have budget for with Collegetown beautification efforts
- **Opportunity:** better communication to tenants (commercial and residential) and property owners about garbage pickup days, policies, and information on how they can use alternative dumpsters / collection points
- **Opportunity:** more frequent garbage collection and monitoring on Collegetown streets
- **Opportunity:** increase street cleaning, asking crews to check under benches, etc.
- **Opportunity:** better vigilance by enforcement to fine those who litter
- **Opportunity:** continue to encourage business operators to clean up their entrances and outside areas regularly

**Challenge:** lack of neighborhood branding / cohesion / identity

- We have already successfully implemented a banner program to officially and cohesively brand our neighborhood as "Collegetown" through sponsored light pole banners
- We have also worked on other branding efforts, including designing and ordering new red metal benches that say "Collegetown" across the back
- **Opportunity:** continue to encourage businesses to use the "Collegetown" moniker in their campaigns, signage, and references
- **Opportunity:** continue to look for places to brand our neighborhood on business signage, in public art, on City of Ithaca signage, and in local reference guides
- **Opportunity:** "Welcome to Collegetown" signs placed on the south end of the 200 block and north end of the 400 block of College Avenue incorporated into the 2022 College Avenue streetscape project, as well as identical signs made to place on the east end of the 200 block of Dryden Road and south end of the 200 block of Eddy Street (or wherever official borders of the neighborhood are determined to be)

**Challenge:** increase public art and therefore neighborhood interest, vibrancy, character, and charm

- We have already worked with Ithaca Murals to identify new spaces for murals
- **Opportunity:** continue to encourage property owners to allow their walls and courtyards to be used as spaces to bring color, interest, and diversity through art to Collegetown
- **Opportunity:** identify more City of Ithaca-owned areas to install public art, such as has been successfully done in the Dryden Road garage



## A Bid for a BID

The Collegetown Small Business Alliance (CSBA) is a group of a few concerned business owners in the neighborhood who want to do what they can to make improvements and network together. Because we are all volunteers and primarily consumed with running our own businesses, we struggle to find time and resources to put into projects that we'd like to see happen in Collegetown. Because of this, we'd love to see research done about a possible Collegetown BID (business improvement district), similar to the DIA (Downtown Ithaca Alliance), but on a smaller scale. We don't know if this would make sense for our district, but we do believe it would be worth researching so we have information on how it might work, what the tax levy would be for it, and what it could mean for the neighborhood if it existed.

## New Streetscape Considerations

With the College Avenue streetscape project in 2022, we hope the following things will be considered, ***in addition to including the 400 block in the plans or in a future capital project***, for consistency, safety, and encouragement of future growth: better lighting with poles fixed to support Collegetown banners, Collegetown-branded benches and Bigbelly trash cans, green space, sidewalk replacement, and "Welcome to Collegetown" signage.

## Photographs

These photos were taken on Tuesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and show some of the damage to pavers on the 100 block of Dryden Road, 300 and 400 blocks of Eddy Street, and 400 block of College Avenue.

