

UNIVERSITY CIRCLE INC

Request for Proposal

Rebrand and Marketing Campaign
for University Circle Inc.



Introduction and Background

About University Circle Inc.

University Circle Inc. (UCI) is the community service corporation responsible for developing, serving and advocating for University Circle as a vibrant and complete neighborhood. The University Circle Police Department (UCPD) is nested inside UCI as a private police department with up to 25 sworn officers. UCI also owns and maintains property within the district.

Other areas of work include programming events, such as Parade the Circle, YAY! Fall Fun, and Wade Oval Wednesdays; convening and collaborating with institutional partners; and advocating for traffic mitigation, pedestrian needs and general area improvements. UCI recently launched a new strategic action plan that wraps around the three pillars of People, Places, and Stories.

UCI's leadership looks to move forward with a new vision for stewarding growth, community, connection and belonging while continuing to advocate for the incredible institutions that are so spectacular. University Circle is arguably the only place in the world with this compilation of renowned and revered institutions and yet we are adjacent to neighborhoods that lack resources.

Our Mission: Answering the call for connection and community in Cleveland's Circle of arts, culture, wellness, and learning.

Our Vision: The Circle is an extraordinary place where locals belong, and the world is welcomed.

Our Values: Collaboration, Community, Trust, and Integrity.

Our Three Main Priorities Are:

- Connecting the People
- Stewarding the Place
- Telling the Story

History

University Circle Inc. was formed in 1957 under the name University Circle Development Foundation, as a step toward stewarding the growth of University Circle. The primary activity of UCDF was to purchase, hold, and lease or resell land within the roughly 488-acre area it defined as University Circle: bounded by Wade Park Avenue on the north, Fairhill Boulevard-E. 107th Street-Ansel Road on the west, and the New York Central and the Nickel Plate Railroad lines on the south and east.

Secondarily UCDF was to engage in planning and development activities for its member organizations. Founding leaders were from Western Reserve University, Case Institute of Technology and University Hospitals. The intent behind land banking was to preserve opportunities for the growth of the institutions.

In 1970, the organization was reorganized as University Circle Inc. and was charged with increased outreach and broader support of surrounding neighborhoods. A series of plans were developed in 1971 that guided the growth of the organization.

Today, we are at another inflection. UCI is approaching 70 years, and the brand of the place and the organization is complicated. The history of land ownership was both powerful in securing the destiny of University Circle, and divisive in building trust with surrounding neighborhoods.

Target Audiences

- Current and future residents
- Institutions – We have roughly forty nonprofit arts, education, and wellness institutions in this district that both support our efforts and collaborate with our organization.
- Business Owners – This is a necessary growth area for us. Our current business mix is not ideal to serve the audience that we want to attract – and to attract new residents and visitors to the area.
- Developers
- Event Attendees
- University Circle Employees
- Students and Graduates
- Tourists

Campaign Expectations

We understand that we are not just looking for a logo. A brand is a promise, a commitment to follow through, it is the way we show up in this community and with our partners. While we believe that we are an incredible organization with a rich history, there are many ways we can improve, and we want to embrace that truth. As we look toward the next 70 years of this organization, we want to reflect our commitment in our messaging.

Goals

1. Embark on a new era. Programmatically we are shifting, our audience is shifting, and we need to show up with our image, as a new partner.
2. Change prevailing attitudes and beliefs. There is a sense that this place is for an older demographic and that it is geared toward white, affluent residents. We want to bring youth to University Circle and ensure that all neighbors and residents feel welcome.
3. Raise public awareness. There is little understanding of all that University Circle has to offer. While many people are very aware of the individual components of University Circle and there is a definite brand to the place, not many people know the extent of all that this place has to offer. It is unlike anything in the world.
4. Be more inclusive. We want to be more inclusive with our approach and with our messages.
5. Communicate regularly and with purpose.

Objectives

1. Develop a strategic, modernized brand identity that resonates with UCI's mission, vision, and diverse audiences, is evidence based, and data driven. Include UCPD as a sub-brand to UCI.
2. Create a marketing and communications campaign to support UCI's rebrand and attract community engagement.
3. Position University Circle as a top destination for arts, education, healthcare, and cultural tourism in Cleveland.

Outcomes

If we are successful, we should expect to see an increase in the number and types of people who participate in University Circle over time, including ...

- New creative development projects
- New property owners showing interest in the area
- Unique businesses locating in the area
- Decrease in tenant vacancies
- Increase in entertainment options (special venues, culture, live music, etc.)
- Increase in employees that stay in the area after work
- Increase in residents and neighborhood growth
- Increase in event attendance
- Increase in neighborhood participation
- More people waking up on a Saturday morning and thinking “I am heading to University Circle today for ...”

Scope of Work

Research and Analysis

- Conduct an in-depth brand audit and market analysis, including stakeholder interviews and audience surveys, to understand perceptions and brand positioning. UCI recently conducted a detailed audience persona study, which will be provided to the contracted team.
- Research market trends, competitor brands, and positioning within the community.
- Identify and clarify UCI’s unique value propositions.

Brand Strategy & Development

- Develop a comprehensive brand strategy aligned with UCI’s mission and objectives. Identify the best way to include UCPD in UCI’s brand strategy.
- Define UCI’s brand personality, tone of voice, brand pillars, and core messaging to guide all communications. Address UCPD as a sub-brand for UCI.
- Propose fresh “Doing Business As” (DBA) names for UCI that capture the essence of our mission, appeal to diverse audiences, and elevates our presence within the community.
- Identify key brand attributes to align UCI’s identity with its audiences, including residents, visitors, donors, students, and cultural partners.

Visual Identity Redesign

- Create a new logo and visual identity that reflects the redefined brand strategy.
- Develop a style guide that includes color palettes, typography, iconography, and design templates for digital and print media.
- Ensure the visual identity is flexible across various platforms, from print collateral to social media.

Messaging & Content Development

- Craft new brand messaging, including taglines, slogans, and content guidelines that resonate with UCI's target audiences.
- Develop content strategies for website, social media, email marketing, and on-site engagement.
- Provide storytelling assets, including copy and images, for UCI's programs, events, community partnerships, and campaigns.

Digital Marketing & Campaign Strategy

- Outline a comprehensive UCI-focused marcom campaign that spans digital, print, social media, and local media; considers all our audiences; and effectively markets the district overall, including group messaging with University Circle institution partners.
- Develop KPIs and campaign metrics to assess brand awareness, engagement, and audience growth.
- Create a content calendar and execution timeline for each channel.

Website Redesign

- Redesign UCI's website to reflect the updated brand identity and optimize user experience.
- Enhance navigation, accessibility, and mobile optimization to increase visitor engagement and retention.

Public Relations

- Currently we do not use an outside source for public relations but there are times when an expert is very helpful. Please include future work in this area as an option.

Proposal Requirements

- **Executive Summary**

- A brief abstract summarizing the major points of the proposal.

- **Company Background**

- Overview of the agency, experience in rebranding, and relevant case studies. Provide evidence that the agency is capable of performing the work in a timely manner.
- Discuss the number of years of providing services of a similar scope; document expertise in developing and implementing successful campaigns of a similar nature; and give a description of the firm's experience with clients in similar fields.

- **Team**

- Bios of key project team members, specifying their roles. Give a brief description of how the client/vendor relationship will be handled, including the name of the lead contact as well as any other individuals assigned to the account (if available).

- **Project Approach and Methodology**

- Proposed approach for each phase in the scope of work, including deliverables, timelines, and projected milestones.

- **Budget Breakdown**

- Detailed budget, including costs for each project phase and additional expenses. Provide cost estimates broken down by the various deliverables. The price you quote should be inclusive. If your price excludes certain fees or charges, you must provide a detailed list of excluded fees with a complete explanation of the nature of those fees.
- Please provide the hourly wage that we will assume moving forward with ongoing marketing needs or additional projects. While the scope of this RFP is around a rebrand, we are looking for a long-term marcom partner.

- **Timeline**

- This project is expected to take approximately 9 months to complete. Include a proposed project timeline from kickoff through project completion. If a different timeline is suggested, the proposal should explicitly state why more or less time is needed.

- **Portfolio**

- Examples of similar projects in the nonprofit, cultural, or community-focused sectors.

- **References**

- Provide references for no less than three former or current clients.

- **Passion for University Circle**

- You absolutely must have a genuine enthusiasm for this district. Without that passion, you won't really get what we are trying to do, and we won't really get what we need from you.

Submission Guidelines and Key Dates

Timeline

- November 12, 2024 - RFP posted and made public
- December 30, 2024 - Proposals due no later than 4:00 p.m. EST
- January 20, 2025 - Interviews begin for short-listed candidates (virtual or in-person depending on location of agency)
- February 28, 2025 - Final selection announcement

Note: The timeline is subject to change at UCI's discretion.

Submission Process

Format: Only email submissions will be accepted. Please ensure proposals are formatted as a PDF attachment, and are no longer than 30 pages in length.

File Size: If your file size is too large to email, please include a download link (e.g., Dropbox, Google Drive) with appropriate access permissions.

Deadline: Late submissions will not be considered. Proposals received after 4:00 p.m. EST on December 30, 2024, will be automatically disqualified.

Evaluation Process

Final selection of a vendor will be based upon an evaluation by the Marketing Committee, comprised of staff, partners and trustees. In evaluating proposals, we reserve the right to accept or reject all or any part of any response, waive minor technicalities, and select a vendor that best serves our interests.

Disclaimers

UCI retains the right to cancel the contract without cause upon thirty (30) days' notice to the vendor.

UCI shall own all materials resulting from the work performed by the vendor, including but not limited to: art, printed material, web material, video/audio projects, copy, and negatives.

UCI reserves the right to approve all advertising prior to placement and to approve all collaterals and publicity.

The vendor shall release, protect, indemnify, defend and hold UCI and their respective officers, collectively and individually, their subsidiaries, and affiliated corporations, successors and assigns, together with their respective agents, servants, insurers, directors, officers, members, employees, shareholders, attorneys and representatives, harmless from any claim or liability of any kind or nature, including reasonable attorney's fees, relating to the vendor's use of any copyrighted or un-copyrighted composition, secret process, patented or unpatented invention, article or appliance furnished or used in vendor's performance under the Agreement.

The vendor shall release, protect, indemnify, defend and hold UCI and their respective officers, collectively and individually, their subsidiaries, and affiliated corporations, successors and assigns, together with their respective agents, servants, insurers, directors, officers, members, employees, shareholders, attorneys and representatives, harmless from and against any claim, damage, cost or liability, including reasonable attorney's fees, for any or all injuries to persons, property or claims for money damages arising from acts or omissions of the vendor, its employees or subcontractors or volunteers.

Conflict Of Interest. The vendor shall certify that it has not offered or given any gift or compensation to any officer or employee of UCI or others associated with the project to secure favorable treatment with respect to being awarded this Agreement or any order thereunder.

Questions

All inquiries should be directed to Heidi Hudak at heidi.hudak@universitycircle.org. Use the subject line: "UCI Rebrand RFP Questions" to ensure timely responses. We look forward to reviewing your proposal!

Heidi Hudak

Chief Marketing & Experience Officer

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University Circle Inc.

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