

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Cobbs Creek Community Greening Plan

Issued by: The Cobbs Creek Community Greening Plan Steering Committee
With Support from: The Water Center at Penn & Clean Air Council

RFP released	September 28th, 2026
Deadline for written questions	October 16th, 2026
Proposals due	October 30th, 2006
Submit to	Jazmin Ricks, <i>The Water Center at Penn</i>
Not-to-exceed budget	\$115,000
Proposal submission method	Submit electronically
Anticipated Project Duration	Approx. 12 months; final schedule will be refined with the selected consultant

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1. Introduction and Invitation

The Cobbs Creek Community Greening Plan Steering Committee invites proposals from qualified consultants and planning firms to lead and facilitate the development of a community-led greening plan for Cobbs Creek Park, its trail system, and the surrounding West and Southwest Philadelphia neighborhoods.

The selected consultant will facilitate a community-driven process and deliver an implementation-ready Community Greening Plan, including priority projects, partnership frameworks, and funding pathways.

The Steering Committee serves as the issuing and deciding body for this solicitation and is composed of long-time Cobbs Creek Park stakeholders representing the park's geographically diverse five-mile length. These leaders have a combined more than one hundred years of service to the park and surrounding neighborhoods, with expertise in civic engagement, and are trusted community voices. The Steering Committee is also working with the Water Center at Penn and Clean Air Council, who serve as administrative support for the project, and each bring over a decade of experience supporting programming, education, events, stewardship, and conservation efforts within the park. In addition, the Steering Committee is working alongside multiple City agencies whose current, ongoing, and future work affects the park and its use by residents.

The effort is designed to serve residents of West and Southwest Philadelphia and bring together community-based organizations, City agencies, and supporting partners to create a shared vision for equitable park access, land and watershed stewardship, and long-term revitalization. Through inclusive community engagement, the process will produce an implementation-ready plan with clear priorities, a recommended organizational structure, and specific funding and programmatic pathways.

2. Background and Context

2.1 Cobbs Creek Park and its community

Cobbs Creek Park consists of 851 acres and spans approximately five miles through West and Southwest Philadelphia and is among the city's most significant natural areas. The park and the neighborhoods around it have a long history of community stewardship, sustained in large part by residents and community organizations who have organized cleanups, programming, and advocacy over decades. That history sits alongside a documented pattern of disinvestment in park infrastructure and maintenance.

2.2 Project funding and structure

The Cobbs Creek Community Greening Plan is supported by funding from the William Penn Foundation with the Water Center at Penn and Clean Air Council serving as administrative partners. The project is intentionally structured on a community-led model: the Steering Committee sets direction and makes decisions, and the consultant serves as facilitator and technical lead.

2.3 Project context and concurrent efforts

Substantial groundwork has already been laid, including formation of the Steering Committee, initial community priority identification, and ongoing coordination with City agencies. The

consultant will build on this foundation while coordinating with concurrent efforts in the watershed to avoid duplication.

- Ecological restoration work within the Cobbs Creek watershed
- Street Projects - PennDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) work
- Multiple trail development projects
- Bike-share network expansion
- Bridge replacement work
- Water quality projects and ongoing environmental monitoring
- Conservation and restoration efforts led by community and agency partners

3. Role Definition and Project Governance

The consultant is the architect and facilitator of the plan development process. The community defines the vision, the priorities, and the final decisions. This distinction is central to how the Steering Committee intends to work with the selected consultant and proposals should reflect an understanding of it.

3.1 Reporting and decision-making

- The consultant reports to the Steering Committee as the governing body for this work.
- The Steering Committee may elect a chair or co-chairs to serve as the consultant's primary point of contact.
- Clean Air Council or the Water Center at Penn will act as the grant intermediary, sharing information between the funder and the project team and hosting Steering Committee meetings.
- Decision-making authority is shared across the Steering Committee, participating City agencies, and the community.

Proposals should explicitly describe how the consultant will facilitate community decision-making, document how community input shapes plan language, and support the Steering Committee in making final decisions.

3.2 Meeting cadence

The consultant will maintain a regular reporting cadence with the Steering Committee with a reporting and presentation structure to be decided by the committee.

3.3 Contracting

The selected consultant will be contracted through the University of Pennsylvania by means of a subaward.

4. Greening Plan Priorities

Six Greening Plan priorities have been identified to date. The selected consultant should be prepared to advance each one and proposals should demonstrate relevant capacity across them. Priorities noted as agency priorities are shared with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR) or the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD).

These priorities reflect community input to date and align with City agency priorities. The consultant will refine and operationalize them into short-, medium-, and long-term goals with specific project pathways.

Park, creek and trail restoration and stewardship

Restoring and protecting the ecological health of Cobbs Creek, the park, and surrounding communities is the foundation for every other priority. Healthy woodlands, wetlands, waterways, and trails are essential to the park's long-term resilience.

Communications, internal and external

Open, transparent communication among residents, organizations, agencies, and stakeholders will strengthen trust and collaboration throughout the planning process. Identified as a PWD priority.

Programming and education

Educational programming should connect residents to the park through environmental education, wellness, history, recreation, and volunteer opportunities.

Forming a resident-led park organization

A strong resident-led organization can provide long-term stewardship, local accountability, and meaningful community leadership. Identified as a PPR and PWD priority.

Environmental justice and park resource advocacy

Park improvements should benefit existing residents while helping preserve the character and diversity of surrounding neighborhoods.

Maintenance and illegal dumping

Consistent maintenance and addressing illegal dumping are critical to protecting the park, improving public safety, and preserving community pride. Identified as a PPR priority.

5. Scope of Services

The selected consultant will be responsible for the following areas of work.

5.1 Process design and project management

- Develop and manage the project work plan and planning schedule
- Coordinate planning activities with project leadership and key stakeholders
- Maintain regular communication with project partners and participating organizations
- Monitor and maintain progress toward project milestones and deliverables

5.2 Community engagement

- Develop and implement a comprehensive community engagement strategy
- Plan and facilitate community meetings, workshops, focus groups, interviews, and stakeholder discussions
- Document community priorities and incorporate feedback throughout the project timeline
- Translate community input into plan language, and develop and present drafts to the Steering Committee
- Ensure meaningful participation from the Steering Committee, Cobbs Creek residents, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders and provide reasonable time to review documents (7+ days)
- Design and implement surveys and focus groups, community meetings, analyze results, and report findings to the Steering Committee as needed

5.3 Public communication and documentation

- Communicate the greening plan and document the engagement process through an ADA accessible, public-facing resource, which may include a website, social media, print materials, StoryMaps, or a comparable platform.

5.4 Technical analysis and assessment of existing conditions

- Compile and evaluate existing plans, studies, and relevant data
- Assess community resources, environmental and ecological conditions, activation points, and areas for improvement, including mapping
- Meet with stakeholders, City and State agencies, and community and nonprofit organizations involved with Cobbs Creek to understand their processes, structures, and planned future work

5.5 Strategic plan development

- Facilitate development of a shared community vision and planning goals
- Develop short, medium, and long-term goals and priorities for the park and watershed
- Identify and prioritize projects based on community input, feasibility, and potential impact
- Provide recommendations for implementation priorities, including identification of possible future funding sources

5.6 Partnerships and implementation framework

In partnership with the Steering Committee, the consultant will develop recommendations for long-term coordination and joint stewardship among City agencies, community partners, and organizations. This includes an implementation framework with priority projects, lead organizations, timelines, funding opportunities, and pathways to capital and program development.

- Coordinate participation among City agencies, community partners and organizations, project team partners, and other stakeholders
- Develop recommendations for long-term planning and for continued coordination, engagement, and joint stewardship opportunities among partners
- Priority projects and initiatives, with recommended lead organizations and supporting partners
- Implementation timelines
- Potential funding opportunities
- Pathways to capital projects and other program development opportunities
- Recommendations for ongoing community engagement and accountability

6. Deliverables

6.1 Implementation-ready project profiles

For each high-priority project, the plan will include: a defined location or corridor; the community-informed issue addressed; a designated lead and core partners; a realistic time horizon (short/mid/long term); and one or more specific funding/program pathways.

6.2 Additional deliverables

- A public-facing online resource hosting the plan
- Draft plan milestones delivered for Steering Committee review at agreed intervals
- Priority recommendations, implementation and funding roadmap
- Additional community-defined items within project scope

7. Consultant Qualifications

7.1 Required

1. Demonstrated experience and track record in community-led planning, with strong community engagement skills. Experience in Philadelphia and West Philadelphia is preferred; other comparable contexts are acceptable.
2. Ability to showcase completed plans, or the processes behind them, that reflect the kind of community greening plan this community wants to see, including examples of previous park or green space strategic plans and evidence of strong community input and involvement.
3. Professional experience or education in urban planning, community development, environmental planning, project or grant management, landscape architecture, or a related field.
4. Demonstrated experience facilitating public meetings and stakeholder engagement processes.
5. Experience coordinating projects across multiple organizations and public agencies.
6. Project management, technical writing, facilitation, and organizational skills.
7. Ability to synthesize technical information and community input into practical recommendations.

7.2 Values alignment

The Steering Committee values alignment alongside technical qualifications. Proposals should demonstrate:

1. Clear equity commitments and a track record of ceding decision-making authority to residents.
2. Demonstrated application of equity in community decision-making.
3. Cultural competency.
4. Transparency and a willingness to collaborate with City agencies, including understanding agency priorities well enough to identify where agency efforts can be leveraged to meet community needs.
5. Cross-sector collaboration skills.
6. Recognition that needs and priorities differ across the geography of Cobbs Creek.
7. High emotional intelligence, strong people management skills, and a skilled participatory approach to collaboration among different stakeholders.
8. A practice of elevating, acknowledging, and respecting community capacity and expertise.

7.3 Preferred

1. Hyper-local firms or teams based in Philadelphia, ideally living in or holding strong connections to Cobbs Creek.
2. Experience preparing or collaborating on other strategic neighborhood plans.
3. Familiarity with community greening planning processes and with the geography of Cobbs Creek Park, the surrounding streets, and the needs of the watershed.
4. Knowledge of grant funding sources, with demonstrated success securing grants and identifying relevant current funding opportunities and initiatives.
5. Experience working with diverse communities, including knowledge of environmental justice, equitable community engagement, and articulating community priorities at the neighborhood level.
6. Experience facilitating collaborative planning processes.
7. Experience developing implementation-ready plans that advance to real funding opportunities or implementation projects.

7.4 Proposal evidence

Proposals should include 2-3 work samples that demonstrate community-led planning, equity in decision-making, and delivery of implementation-ready plans. Two to three references who can speak to the consultant's facilitation, cross-agency coordination, and follow-through to funding or implementation.

8. Budget and Contract Terms

Proposals must include a fixed-fee budget not to exceed \$115,000 with an itemized breakdown (personnel, meetings, materials, travel, subcontractors). If applicable, include optional line items for additional community engagement or technical analysis with hourly rates.

The selected consultant will be contracted as a subawardee under the University of Pennsylvania and will be subject to the University's standard subaward terms including insurance and compliance requirements.

9. Submission Requirements

9.1 Cover Letter and Team Profile

A brief overview of the consultant's qualifications, experience, engagement and collaboration preferences, and interest in the project, including firm profile, team members, bios, roles, and relevant past projects.

9.2 Proposed Approach and Work Plan

A description of the proposed approach to the greening plan process and a skeleton work plan outlining key activities, deliverables, and timelines by phase. The Steering Committee expects to refine this collaboratively with the selected consultant and does not expect a fully fixed plan at proposal stage.

9.3 Work Samples

Two to three relevant work samples, ideally including at least one park, green space, or neighborhood plan (this can include other materials that you deem relevant that best represents your experience, engagement, and expertise in the abovementioned priorities).

9.4 References

Contact information for 2-3 references from agencies and/or organizations with which the consultant has completed comparable work.

9.5 Itemized Budget

A comprehensive itemized budget with a narrative explaining major line items, together with hourly rates for any additional or out-of-scope work and identification of any subcontractors.

[See example budget template here](#)

9.6 Format

Submit proposals as a single PDF (max 5 pages, excluding attachments, work samples, and reference list). File name title: "ApplicantName_CobbsCreekCGP_Proposal.pdf").

Appendix A: Cover Letter (1pg max)

Appendix B: Full Proposal (4pg max)

Appendix C: Detailed budget

Appendix D: Work Samples

Appendix E: Reference List

10. Evaluation Criteria and Process

Proposals will be evaluated by the Steering Committee, with administrative support from the Water Center at Penn and Clean Air Council. Scoring is organized into three domains. The Steering Committee has deliberately structured the rubric so that community priorities and engagement experience carry weight comparable to technical qualifications.

Domain	What is assessed	Weights
Community Priorities	Community engagement track record, local knowledge of Cobbs Creek, approachability and emotional intelligence, experience incorporating community-based leadership into plans, transparent communication, and anti-displacement sensitivity	40%
Technical Skills	Technical analysis of studies, plans, and existing conditions; ecological and stormwater understanding; watershed restoration experience; maintenance planning; and mapping capability	30%
Plan Creation	Engagement planning, draft milestones, final plan production, priority recommendations, implementation and funding roadmap, and long-term stewardship outcomes	30%

11. Timeline

Key dates will be finalized by the Steering Committee prior to public release. For planning purposes, the open submission period is anticipated to be 30 days, with selection and contracting completed within 90 days of RFP release. The grant funded contract term is approximately 12 months with potential flexibility to extend the project.

12. Submission Instructions

All proposals must be submitted electronically as a single PDF via email to watercenter@sas.upenn.edu by Friday October 30th 2026.

Proposal materials must follow the submission requirements described in Section 9. Late or incomplete submissions may not be considered.

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to by October 16th, 2026. Responses to all questions will be compiled and shared with all respondents by October 23rd, 2026.

13. Terms and Conditions

This RFP does not commit the Cobbs Creek Community Greening Plan Steering Committee, the Water Center at Penn, Clean Air Council, or the University of Pennsylvania to award a contract, or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal submitted in response to this request.

The Steering Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received in response to this RFP, to request additional information or clarification from any respondent, to negotiate with any or all qualified respondents, and to cancel this RFP in part or in its entirety.

The Steering Committee and its administrative partners do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, veteran status, or any other legally protected characteristic. Respondents from firms owned by people of color, women, and residents of the Cobbs Creek area are strongly encouraged to apply.

Work products and intellectual property developed under this engagement will be owned by the Steering Committee and its administrative partners, as detailed in the subaward agreement.