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# News

news@liberalfirst.com

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## Downtown ...

Continued from Page 1 systems, infrastructure, streetscape, and public spaces to support connectivity and placemaking goals.”

Quotes were received from Confluence for \$94,750 and RICK Engineering for \$93,810 for the work. At the most recent Liberal City Commission meeting, the commission gave approval to negotiate a contract agreement with Confluence, whose work Young said came highly praised.

“In looking at both firms and the quality of work they do, and speaking with some of the references from cities they’ve worked with in the past, we felt most comfortable recommending Confluence. We felt they had the best review from the others we’d talked to, and they said the plans that have been developed by Confluence were practical and fully functional for those communities,” Young said. “They also do a really good job when it comes to public engagement, and when you look at the details between, Confluence definitely takes more time in doing good and thorough public engagement, which we will need in order to move forward with anything downtown. Confluence also does great 3D modeling and visualization, which is another



This artist’s rendering shows an overhead view of one of the many concepts presented in recent years for Downtown Liberal. The City of Liberal recently agreed to negotiate a contract with Confluence to help put together a redevelopment master plan. Courtesy drawing

major component to being able to make an informed decision on what will serve us well in the long term. Then, in looking at the examples they provided in their portfolio, we felt they had the best to offer for our plan.”

Young said Confluence will be gathering necessary data through multiple means.

“With RICK Engineering, they wanted to host three to five Steering Committee meetings, the members of which would be selected by city leadership,” Young said. “The RICK Engineering also included a project Web site using a mapping tool called Social Point, and they shared multiple examples of how that was used. Whereas with Confluence, they plan to host multiple stakeholder meetings, and they also wanted to do up to 20 interviews with people in the community who would have a lot of involvement in the downtown area and what happens there. I feel like those interviews would give us some really good information because sometimes, ideas do get

lost in the shuffle of a room full of people. Those one-on-one interviews should be really powerful, and in terms of the general public, they’ll be able to participate through Social Point where people can leave photos and reviews and tell us what they think. Confluence will also have available an interactive idea board where people can submit ideas from other communities to be able to specifically enhance a certain space. There will also be small format surveys that are very easy to complete. Confluence will also do image voting – once they get to a point where they want to share some initial concepts, they’ll do so and allow people to rank them. After seeing what they’ve done with other communities, Confluence definitely did the best job in that regard.”

And the community engagement will not stop there, Young said.

“Beyond all of that,

Confluence is also looking at two in-person focus groups and then once there’s a draft concept plan, they want to bring that back onsite and do an open house where everyone can take a look at everything,” Young said. “I really feel Confluence will go well beyond in getting us what we would need in terms of the level and the degree of community involvement. Not every resident will want to come to a town hall meeting or open house event, but maybe they’ll be more comfortable taking a quick survey or voting on the concept design they like best. We also know there are people who are very entrenched in the downtown area and have a lot of ideas, and they’ll be perfect for those one-on-one interviews. There will be multiple methods for people to participate, and we will share those. It’s going to all be very collaborative.”

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