



GRAPHIC DESIGN RFP

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) seeks a graphic design firm to maintain and enhance its current brand and to produce visually compelling print and digital designs and templates for in-house use by CNU staff for our annual Congress and Charter Awards, as well as designs for occasional special projects for the organization, such as collateral materials and a possible information brochure. The final products should offer CNU staff the flexibility and agency to produce high-quality materials in-house through relatively simple design and production, in addition to full-service designed materials that would transmit seamlessly from the designer to production.

An especially critical part of the deliverables is detailed branding and style guidance that supports the work of a busy, DIY-oriented nonprofit staff with varying levels of design experience, giving us the ability to confidently execute simple projects online and in print (usually as downloadable PDF format rather than actually printed).

All deliverables should highlight vibrant, thoughtfully designed places that embody the principles of New Urbanism and feature enjoyment of those places by racially, age- and ability-diverse people.

In accordance with organizational best practices, CNU seeks to rebid outside contracts every five years. With this RFP, CNU is looking for a designer to build upon the work done in the past five years on (1) Congress branding and materials, (2) Charter Awards branding and materials, and (3) the organization's brand identity and occasional special projects. Designs, materials, and templates should confirm and enhance CNU's current brand identity and expression across print and online platforms. Each area's collateral materials should have a unique brand, yet a complementary visual style.

This contract would establish a five-year relationship with the vendor chosen, from Autumn 2019 until Autumn 2024. The contract would be evaluated annually and is eligible for renewal in 2024. Individual projects will still be subject to negotiation throughout the term of the contract. Awarding of this contract does not guarantee or constitute prior agreement to any fixed prices for deliverables.

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) is an international nonprofit organization working to build vibrant communities where people have diverse choices for how they live, work, and get around. We believe that well-designed cities, towns, and neighborhoods are crucial for our health, economy, and environment. **We build places people love.**

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Through 26 years of advocacy, CNU has changed the national conversation from a debate over sprawl to a discussion on how to reinvest in our cities and towns. As Americans both young and old are demanding walkable lifestyles, the market is growing in every region for unique, pedestrian-scaled, and equitable places with excellent transportation choices, a range of housing options, diverse commercial and civic uses, public space, and green space. Through our projects, innovative tools, events, membership, and programs, we empower people to deliver those places.

CNU's current and prospective audience includes professionals and academics in the architecture, design, engineering, planning, and development communities—but also elected officials, local advocates, business leaders, and municipal employees. Our materials often must cater to one subset, a combination, or all groups at once.

CNU is a 501(c)3 headquartered in Washington, DC. As an equal opportunity employer with fulfilling careers in design, placemaking, innovation, leadership development and administrative support, CNU views diversity as a critical source of strength. Different racial backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, ages and points of view contribute to our effectiveness as an organization. That's why we actively seek to create an inclusive workforce and workplace. This commitment extends to our vendors: firms whose workforce and practices reflect diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply to this RFP.

BACKGROUND

CNU's graphic identity is modern, clean, colorful, and always focused on how people use and enjoy the places where they live and work. CNU's website, designed in a Drupal framework, emphasizes color photography and our signature blue, paired with black. This visually rich website highlights real projects designed, championed, and built by CNU members.

CNU is seeking to (1) continually strengthen and refine its brand, (2) support a complementary but distinct identity for its signature event, The Congress, and (3) support the distinct but complementary identity of the Charter Awards program. (See Attachment for additional information on our current brand).

Audience

CNU's audience includes a wide range of placemakers, including urban designers, architects, pedestrian and bike advocates, engineers, urban planners, historic preservationists, real estate developers, bankers, businesses, health professionals, government officials, and everyday people who care about how their communities are designed and built. Both our approximately 2,000 members and the thousands of individuals that make up the New Urbanist movement share the same goals: steering America's cities and towns away from sprawling development to revitalize, design, and build more walkable, people-oriented places with a wide range of housing and transportation choices. CNU's audience is a highly visual group with strong opinions about the organization's brand and how we present ourselves visually.

CNU's materials must be tailored to widely different audiences at different times—from top design professionals to local government employees. Audiences also vary somewhat by project.

Communications should be clear and specific to the particular task's audience. For example, the Charter Awards are given to and followed by architects and planners, primarily; so the aesthetic we have been using is classic and very design-oriented. On the other hand, the Congress is a widely embracing event that attracts more than 1,500 people from all walks of life, so the Congress graphics are more down-to-earth and playful).

Challenge

One of the major challenges of the organization is to overcome certain biases and preconceived notions of the organization and New Urbanism movement. For many, the term New Urbanism conjures images of an approach that is not “new” at all: quaint master-planned communities and traditional neighborhood development. In fact, CNU and its members frequently work in existing communities rather than “tabula rasa” developments. CNU members also work at all scales of planning and development, from small, incremental projects that develop over time in existing neighborhoods and small-town Main Streets, to innovative regional plans and public policy.

A challenge to the design process is to communicate this variety and diversity without alienating an audience that is committed to traditional architecture and traditional town design. The tagline that CNU is currently using to overcome the perceptual barrier and summarize the direction of the organization's branding efforts is: “Building Places People Love.”

Design Context of Selected Allies and Competitors

For examples of the branding and positioning of allied groups that work in the space of community design and community improvement, we suggest looking at the design choices of the following organizations. We are not including many large-scale planning, architecture, design, or development organizations such as American Planning Association, American Institute of Architects, Urban Land Institute, or Urban Institute because urbanism represents a very small part of their overall message.

The inclusion of these does not represent an endorsement or request; merely awareness of the design identities of organizations that also deliver part of the message of New Urbanism or urbanist philosophy:

[AARP Livable Communities](#) (dominated by AARP brand in most places except on social media)

[Incremental Development Alliance](#)

[National Town Builders Association](#)

[Project for Public Spaces](#)

[Smart Growth America](#)

[Strong Towns](#)

[The Gehl Institute](#)

Opportunity

Our visuals are critical to communicating CNU's mission and achievements; they have enormous potential to convey the ethos of both an influential urban design movement and its nonprofit arm. In a field as complex and multi-disciplinary as New Urbanism, it's really true that a picture—and a fine design—are worth a thousand words.

If done correctly, articulating the full breadth of our members' work and the influence of the New Urbanist movement will help to engage former, current, and future CNU members...and create new allies. The opportunity exists for our design approaches to convey the dynamic, vital, and diverse range and impact of our members' work.

PROJECT SCOPE

The following section covers the three areas of need for graphic design services.

Annual Congress

CNU is currently very satisfied with its branding for CNU's annual Congress. Visual materials for each Congress have become an effective tool not only for promoting the event but for strengthening CNU's brand while showcasing some of America's great places.

Held in a different city each year, the Congress is the nation's leading forum dedicated to advancing urbanism and promoting alternatives to sprawl. Marketing materials for each Congress emphasize the unique character and challenges of that year's host city, and its ties to national and international themes. Design will reflect this local uniqueness, while adhering to a common vocabulary that is consistent from year to year. For example, CNU 25.Seattle emphasized the ways in which Seattle is at the edge of technology and innovation, even as it has a celebrated quality of life and a breathtaking natural setting. The color palette chosen for that year was a set of greens, and the graphics combined beloved landmarks with natural features. CNU 27.Louisville focused on the city's history as a transportation hub and its present as a signer of the Compassionate Cities charter, and used warm earth tones that evoke down-to-earthness (and the bourbon that the city is famous for!).

There are three main points that need to be clearly communicated when designing CNU Congress materials:

- 1) CNU Congress (number)
- 2) Location (and dates)
- 3) Host city's unique character

Although we do not see a need to vary greatly from the branding already in place, some helpful Congress design tips include:

- The Congress is CNU's most visible, widely public event, with the broadest audience of any of our activities.
- Keep a clear hierarchy of information, image, and color. All of the main points (Congress number, location, and images/graphical elements that communicate host city character) should be able to be read separately.
- While special colors can be used to communicate the theme or location of a particular Congress, using only two main colors and their variations adds to the clarity of the information.
- Select a main visual that clearly communicates the theme (for example, the current cartoon "grid" showing elements of design from the host city).
- Choose strong recognizable elements that will carry across all of the materials relating to the Congress (to provide variety and consistency).

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- Keep online way-finding and navigation in mind when designing supportive elements such as icons and mini-logos (example, we have used small icons throughout the Congress program to indicate the type of programming an event is, whether a tour, a ticketed event, or a reception).

(See Appendix B for a list of deliverables and this link at Dropbox for examples of previous Congresses: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e5kh90nncwv6bak/AAA9Qg-v8j9Ax6Bt1uoxe_NOa?dl=0.)

Annual Charter Awards

Every year during our Congress, CNU announces the winners of the Charter Awards—honoring the most outstanding achievements in architectural, landscape, urban, and regional design worldwide. Charter Award winners are showcased in an attractive Charter Awards book, distributed at the annual Congress and to the winners, and presented with a Charter Award certificate. These are the only tangible awards presented, and they represent important keepsakes to the firms and agencies that win them.

The Charter Awards Book is CNU's most visually distinctive publication, centered on professional-quality photos, renderings, and sketches of the winning projects. Its target audience of leading design and development professionals necessitates sleek and up-to-date presentation.

During the next five years, CNU does not anticipate major changes to the Charter Awards brand, and minimal involvement of any new design. We have included the Charter Awards design in this packet primarily for informational purposes, to show the range of our brand vocabulary. A list of the major pieces that are part of the Charter Awards program is attached (Appendix B). Samples are at this link at Dropbox: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e5kh90nncwv6bak/AAA9Qg-v8j9Ax6Bt1uoxe_NOa?dl=0.

Brand identity and expression across print and online platforms

One of the most challenging aspects of CNU's design work during the past two years has been establishing consistent design identity across online and print channels. A relatively small amount of our correspondence and collateral takes print form, yet we do have strategic needs for print materials that express our brand. At the same time, maintaining brand is sometimes challenging as we move across email, the NationBuilder member and supporter relations platform we adopted in 2018, our web sites and blogs (CNU, Public Square, and Build a Better Burb), and social media. In particular, our brand is weak in daily email correspondence and the blogs. We also need a strengthened style guide to help direct our numerous staff very specifically on use and presentation of the logo and brand. Our current Brand Guide and materials can be found on the accompanying Dropbox folder:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e5kh90nncwv6bak/AAA9Qg-v8j9Ax6Bt1uoxe_NOa?dl=0

In the area of print collateral, CNU needs a suite of design choices for stationary that is easily usable in electronic and print form, with a page 2 that works in both formats; business cards and notecards; and brand materials that can be used in other print projects, including merchandise. This suite of choices should be flexible and adaptable for projects we cannot yet anticipate.

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In communicating with our members, we emphasize a clear, stripped-down visual style that focuses on telling the story of New Urbanism's power and promise, as well as professional opportunities and major issues in the field of placemaking. We tend toward a visual style that is warm, accessible, not overly technical, people-focused, emotionally resonant—and that always features excellent design and beauty in the built environment. All aspects of CNU's design, from photo selection to font choice, should follow this style.

A note about scope of work

The awarding of this contract is a signal that CNU is entering into a dynamic relationship with the designer for the period of five years, during which we may make adjustments to the existing projects. In addition, CNU anticipates that occasional special projects may arise, which will need to be added to the scope of work. In the past, a Statement of Work and estimate was submitted for each project or major group of projects prior to work beginning. This gives both CNU and the designer the best of both worlds: a consistent, stable professional relationship, and flexibility to adjust and respond to new needs as they arise.

An example of a potential special project during this five-year period is a print informational brochure, perhaps accompanied by a complementary design that can be used for 8.5x11 fact sheets. This brochure is meant to expand the CNU narrative to inform potential members and allies that it does far more than host a major international gathering each year; that, in fact, CNU is a source of information and action toward creating more livable, equitable, and walkable/bikeable communities. The primary audience would be both the private sector of designers and developers and the public sector of government officials and employees.

EXPECTATIONS & DELIVERABLES

1. Designer is conscious of CNU's image and keeps that image in mind when designing or updating materials for each area of need. (This doesn't mean that creativity is restricted, just that certain things remain consistent).
 - a. Designer incorporates and expands upon previously used fonts, colors, graphic elements, etc., relying on Google fonts across platforms.
 - b. Designer create materials that are contemporary in feel and conducive to new media sensibility and use, while suited to print in key cases specified by the client.
2. Designer uses photos that exemplify the principles of New Urbanism, with people and well-designed places, in marketing materials (in most cases, CNU will provide photos).
3. Designer creates a logo for CNU Congress that can remain consistent, but be adaptable from year to year (see past Congress logos for examples). We have been happy with our current Congress branding, so the designer can adapt from that approach.
4. Designer is comfortable with large amounts of text that are subject to changes during design phases (CNU will provide the editing, but projects sometimes must be designed with editorial changes embedded in the process).
5. Designer is able to set and meet deadlines.
6. Designer is responsive, flexible, and available. Certain times of year are busier than others (the annual Congress and Charter Awards typically take place in the late spring or early summer and deadlines overlap). CNU will try to clearly identify those times beforehand.

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7. Designer has knowledge of website and print design and can show examples of work.
8. Designer has experience with event marketing or sales and can show examples of work.
9. Designer has some experience with nonprofits and working on a nonprofit budget.
10. Designer has a willingness to use sustainable products when possible (e.g., to recommend recycled papers, sustainable ink choices, and other environmentally aware production choices).
11. Designer delivers materials as outlined and illustrated in Appendices A, and B of this RFP.
12. Designer clarifies its policies with regard to predicting and fulfilling timelines for projects, including clear information about the procedures for handling time and cost overruns, should they arise.

Please refer to CNU's website for ideas about our design identity: www.cnu.org.

To assist in your proposal, feel free to access this Dropbox folder of previous Congress, Charter Awards, and membership materials:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e5kh90nncwv6bak/AAA9Qg-v8j9Ax6Bt1uoxe_NOa?dl=0

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENT

Firm Background & Philosophy

Please include firm's name address, contact information, biographies of key staff members, and firm history. Please also include who will serve as primary point of contact.

Please include a statement of your firm's design philosophy and approach to working with clients. As part of this statement, we would like to hear how your firm approaches diversity and inclusion, both in its design sensibility and in its hiring practices.

Project Approach

Please provide a brief overview of how you will approach this project.

Experience/Work Samples

Please include a summary of your firm's completed projects of a similar scale and/or for clients similar to CNU. Please include at least one in-depth case study with work samples.

Example of Client Style Guide(s)

Please include a recent example of how you communicate design expectations and instructions to your clients.

Cost Proposal

This contract will be performance based. Proposals must include an estimated cost for all work related to tasks and deliverables outlined in the proposal, specifically materials outlined in the Appendix. A total estimate for all deliverables is required. Proposals should clearly outline how time and cost overruns would be handled, including how the designer alerts the client and negotiates unanticipated changes or delays.

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DEADLINE/TIMELINE

March 15, 2019

5:00 PM Eastern Time

Note: Submissions will be reviewed immediately following the deadline. Applicants will be notified of selection by the week of May 6, 2019.

SUBMIT TO / CONTACT

Please send your proposal to:

Lisa Schamess (Project Leader)

Communications Manager

lschamess@cnu.org

312.551.7300

Abigail Sheridan

Deputy Director

asheridan@cnu.org

If applicable, send hard copies to:

CNU

Attn: Lisa Schamess

1720 N Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036

APPENDIX: MATERIALS CALLED FOR AS DELIVERABLES

ORGANIZATION MATERIALS

1. CNU Letterhead, notecard design, large shipping label design, envelope design
2. Special projects may include but not be limited to
 - a. Design for a print informational brochure that complements membership and outreach
 - b. Updating of our current templates for reports, including possibly distinguishing them by type (internal research, council/summit reports, etc.)
 - c. Creating a template for project/initiative 1-page'ers or brochures
 - d. Branding and production files, including templates for in-house use, for online and print technical assistance training materials/leave-behind resource booklets
 - e. Developing templates for certificates not previously anticipated in this RFP
 - f. A full rebranding effort is possible during the course of this 5-year contract, although not planned at this time

CNU is open to new concepts and formats, including interactive, online marketing materials. The “typical” size and format information is merely given as reference.

CONGRESS MATERIALS

In order of importance:

1. Congress Style Guide, suited to use by a non-designer. Please see the current Congress brand and its style guide at this link:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hl76y0sl80btoon/AAA3OQon-niikwyS0uhXzrTga?dl=0>.
2. Logo and color palette for each year, to include files that are scaleable to small and oversize uses, plus a range of file choices that will include AI and InDesign files, .eps, .jpg, .png, and the like)
3. Inclusion of purchase license within designer's estimate for use by up to 12 users of any fonts needed (*note: we overwhelmingly prefer low- or no-cost fonts such as Google fonts; we wish to make sure that any fonts we use or purchase will translate easily to recipients' desktops in a Word file or be usable or mimic-able in NationBuilder, our online email and member management system, which uses Google fonts exclusively*)
4. Congress Program - *subject to CNU's decision to proceed with a print program for the next five years*
 - a. Congress-at-a-Glance calendar (pdf, interactive if possible)
 - b. Map of Congress site, including main hotel and all venues (typically located in a scattered pattern around the main hotel, in keeping with our members' expectation of experiencing a city on foot).
 - c. Narrative program of all sessions and activities, including session descriptions and speaker lists (text-heavy and iterative; we go through several weeks of updates during which the designer must be both designer and, to a point, editor of incoming text).

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- d. Approximately 2 to 4 pages of front and back matter that may include, but not be limited to, lists of supporters and sponsors, staff list, Congress committee list, in-memoriam announcements, and the like)
 - e. Cover includes full-color photo for next year's Congress on the inside back cover
5. Templates for:*
- a. Sponsorship brochure (typically 8x11, double-sided, full color, printable PDF)
 - b. Congress postcard or leave-behind (full color. CNU provides text and image direction)
 - c. Congress addendum (typically 8x11, double-sided, black and white, printable PDF)
 - d. Continuing Education Credits sheet (typically 8x11, double-sided, black and white, printable PDF)
 - e. Signage
 - f. Badges and tour tickets
6. Congress app splash page

CNU is open to new concepts and formats. The “typical” size and format information is merely given as reference.

**In addition to yearly materials, CNU would like the selected designer to develop a set of graphic templates in the first year of contract. These templates will allow CNU staff to develop specific standard materials after the first year of contract, with support from the designer. CNU is suggesting the use of templates as a cost-saving measure but is open to other recommendations from the designer.*

CHARTER AWARDS MATERIALS

These deliverables may not be called for but are included in the interest of full information. In order of importance:

1. Minor adjustments as called for to Charter Awards book template (1st year only, InDesign file, typically larger than 8.5 x 11)
2. Updates, as needed, to Charter Awards Style Guide, suitable for use by both non-designer and a staff member with design experience
3. Inclusion of purchase license within designer's estimate for use by up to 12 users of any fonts needed (*note: we overwhelmingly prefer low- or no-cost fonts such as Google fonts; we wish to make sure that any fonts we use or purchase will translate easily to recipients' desktops in a Word file or be usable or mimic-able in NationBuilder, our online email and member management system*)
4. As needed, advice and selection of color palette each year upon selection of photos, for five years
5. As needed, updated template for Awards certificates
6. Source working files for all graphics and publications, including .ai and/or .eps files and .indd files

CNU is open to new concepts and formats. The “typical” size and format information is merely given as reference.

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