

Westchester Land Trust
Request for Proposal: Project Kiana, Cultural and Historic Assessments
December 20, 2024

Executive Summary

Westchester Land Trust (WLT) seeks quotes for cultural and historic assessments for land on the west side of the Hutchinson River Parkway in Mount Vernon, New York. The Project Kiana area (approximately 2.85 acres) is owned by the New York State Department of Transportation and managed as excess land. The assessments, which will focus on the specific parcel of land and its environs, are part of a larger initiative to determine if the potential exists to purchase, protect, or otherwise manage the property to restore the urban riparian forest or provide meaningful community connections and resources.

The NYS DOT granted Westchester Land Trust a permit to access and collect data on the project site. Compliance with the permit is required.

About Westchester Land Trust

Westchester Land Trust is a regional conservation organization that works together with public and private partners to preserve land in perpetuity, and to protect and enhance the natural resources in our communities. WLT was founded in 1988 and is accredited by the Land Trust Alliance. Since 1988 we have protected more than 9,250 acres of land in Westchester and eastern Putnam Counties. WLT owns and manages more than 1,250 acres and more than 75 miles of trails across a nature preserve network of 34 properties, much of which is free and open to the public. Learn more: westchesterlandtrust.org

Project/Property Information

The Project Kiana area is bound to the east by the Hutchinson River Parkway, to the north by the Metro North Railroad, and residential properties on the south and west. The property includes an oxbow of the Hutchinson River. The property is located south of Westchester County's Wilson Woods Park, which can be accessed by walking on an informal foot path along the barriers of the Hutchinson River Parkway. Location & Parcel IDs 40.909674, -73.814436 40° 54' 35", -73° 48' 52" 165.74-4015-1 165.74-4013-41

Introduction

Westchester Land Trust is soliciting bids from qualified professionals or organizations to conduct a comprehensive cultural and historical assessment of Project Kiana land and its environs. The cultural and historic assessments will explore the rich and interconnected histories, cultural practices, and ecological knowledge of African American, Indigenous American, and Indigenous African communities.

The assessments will prioritize the voices and expertise of African American, Indigenous American, and Indigenous African community members to amplify a narrative that acknowledges, celebrates, and honors the ancestral knowledge of the land so that it can be incorporated into the future stewardship of land in the Hutchinson River Watershed.

Scope of Work

The selected consultant or team will undertake the following tasks:

- Identify and document historical and cultural ties of African American, Indigenous American, and Indigenous African peoples to the parcel and surrounding areas.
- Include information on tribal affiliations, ceremonial or spiritual uses, and subsistence practices.
- Research and document settlement patterns, and activities, including agriculture, labor, or community development.
- Conduct a historical analysis of the parcel and its surrounding land, including agricultural, industrial, and residential uses. Focus on traditional ecological knowledge, including land management practices that reflect holistic approaches to ecosystem balance and ecological practices that emphasize harmony with nature.
- Identify cultural landmarks, artifacts, or structures, and assess their relevance to the site.
- Engage with cultural groups, historians, and relevant stakeholders to incorporate oral histories and community insights.

Deliverables

- A final report including maps, historical narratives, photographic documentation, and a summary of findings.
- A presentation of key findings to the Westchester Land Trust and its affiliates.

Anticipated Start Date:

The assessments will begin in February of 2025.

Bid Requirements

Bids must include the following:

1. **Qualifications and Experience**
A summary of the bidder's relevant experience conducting cultural and historical assessments.
Resumes of key personnel, including expertise in African American, Indigenous American, and Indigenous African cultures and history.
2. **Methodology**
A detailed description of the proposed approach, including research methods, community engagement strategies, and deliverables.
3. **Timeline**
A detailed project schedule including reporting structure and timing to Westchester Land Trust.
4. **Budget**
A detailed budget, including all costs associated with research, travel, stakeholder engagement, and reporting.
5. **References**

Contact information for at least three references familiar with the bidder's work on similar projects.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated expertise in cultural assessments and historical research.
- Knowledge of the region and its historical context.
- Quality and feasibility of the proposed methodology and timeline.
- Cost-effectiveness of the bid.
- Feedback from references.

Submission Instructions

Bids must be submitted electronically with the subject line: **Project Kiana Cultural & Historic Assessment BID** in PDF format by **January 21, 2025**, to info@westchesterlandtrust.org. Late submissions will not be considered. Please, no phone calls. Successful applicants will be notified.