

Request for Action
By
Board of Commissioners

Approval of Engagement of Vendor for Analysis of the Impact of Accessibility Requirements on Housing Development

A. SUMMARY OF REQUEST

This Request for Action (“RFA”) is for approval of a vendor to conduct an analysis of the impact different accessibility requirements would have on the development of affordable and mixed-income housing.

B. DISCUSSION

RIHousing has taken a number of steps in recent years to increase the accessibility of the developments it finances, including incorporating additional accessibility features in the updated Design and Construction Standards in 2024, developing an Accessibility Manual to further aid developers in incorporating accessibility features in the developments RIHousing finances and including points in the 2026 Qualified Allocation Plan (“QAP”) for developments that would exceed current accessibility requirements.

For several years, legislation has been introduced in the Rhode Island General Assembly, which would significantly increase the percentage of fully accessible units required in new affordable and/or market-rate housing in the State. The State's new strategic housing plan (Housing 2030) and Olmstead Plan also call for increased accessibility in Rhode Island's housing stock to accommodate the increasing number of older households. There is very little local information available on how increasing requirements for accessible units in housing developments might impact the cost or other aspects of future developments. RIHousing released a Request for Information (RFI) on July 24, 2025, to solicit feedback on how to best structure an analysis of the impact accessibility requirements, like the ones in the bills introduced in the General Assembly, might have on affordable housing development. Two (2) responses were received to the RFI.

Based on the feedback in those responses, RIHousing released a Request for Proposals (RFP) on September 2, 2025 soliciting vendors to conduct an analysis of the impact different increased accessibility requirements would have on housing developments of different types including mill conversions or other adaptive reuse, rehabilitation and new construction of 2-4 unit buildings and new construction of elevated, and non-elevated apartment buildings. The vendor would also provide up to 3 alternative design scenarios which improve accessibility above current state and federal requirements while minimizing negative impacts to the development (such as increased cost, reduction of units or community spaces, etc.).

RIHousing received responses to the RFP from three (3) firms: Utile Inc., Signal Works Architecture, and LDa Architecture and Interiors. A committee consisting of staff in the Design and Construction and Executive divisions has reviewed the proposals in accordance with the criteria set forth in the RFP and recommends engaging Utile, Inc.

Utile is a New England-focused planning and architecture firm with offices in Providence, Boston, and Burlington, VT. For this project, they propose to partner with KMA Architecture and Accessibility for design and compliance matters related to increased accessibility features, and with Tortora Consulting for the cost estimates. Utile worked with RIHousing in 2024 on the update of our Design and Construction Standards and the development of the Accessibility Resource Manual. The Utile proposal was competitively priced and presented a detailed and thoughtful approach to the scope of work. The proposed pricing is up to \$157,000, and the expected completion date is January 2026.

C. RECOMMENDATION

The attached resolution authorizing RIHousing to engage Utile, Inc. is recommended for approval.

D. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Resolution of the Board of Commissioners of RIHousing
- B. Scoring Matrix

Attachment A

**Resolution of the Board of Commissioners
of
RIHousing and Mortgage Finance Corporation**

Whereas: Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation’s (“RIHousing”) enabling act provides it with all the power and authority to make and execute contracts necessary to exercise the powers and functions provided to it under the act (R.I. Gen. Laws §42-55-5(6)); and

Whereas: Staff of RIHousing has identified the need for an analysis of how the implementation of accessibility standards could affect development costs; and

Whereas: RIHousing has solicited proposals pursuant to an open competitive process for vendors to provide such an analysis, and who have the necessary skill sets and capacity to carry out the proposed work; and

Whereas: A selection committee comprised of RIHousing staff reviewed the proposals for these services, evaluated them pursuant to the criteria set forth in the Request for Proposals, and determined that Utile, Inc. had submitted the highest-scoring proposal to RIHousing.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY:

Resolved: that RIHousing be, and hereby is, authorized to enter into a contract with Utile, Inc. to provide an analysis of how the implementation of accessibility standards could affect development costs as set forth in the Request for Proposals and the proposal submitted in response thereto;

Resolved: that such engagement shall be for a one-year term for a cost not to exceed \$157,000;

Resolved: that the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director and Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer, each acting singly, be and hereby is authorized and empowered to take any and all actions necessary or desirable to carry out the foregoing resolutions, including without limitation the authority to negotiate the terms and fees of the engagement as he or she may determine are in the best interests of RIHousing, and to execute any and all agreements or documents as he or she deems necessary to carry out the foregoing and to take such further actions as he or she deems necessary to carry out the foregoing resolutions.

Attachment B

Scoring Matrix

Applicant	Proposal Completeness (5 points)	Capacity to Undertake Work (10 points)	Budget Reasonableness (10 points)	Ability to Meet Time/ Budget Constraints (5 points)	Project Approach (10 points)	Work Experience (5 points)	References (2 points)	Firm Minority Status (2 points)	Total Points (up to 49)
Utile	5	10	8	4	8	5	2	1	43
LDa Architecture & Interiors	5	10	6	4	8	5	1	1	40
Signal Works Architecture	4	8	6	3	3	4	1	1	30