
CITY OF READING



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

ISSUED: August 24, 2018

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: September 14, 2018

Submissions must be received no later than 4:00 PM on Friday, September 14, 2018 via email, AND 3 hard copies via mail or hand delivery to:

Patrick Ross
Safety-Services Director
City of Reading
1000 Market Street
Reading, OH 45215
513-733-3725
pross@readingohio.org

Late submissions will not be accepted.

I. PURPOSE

The City of Reading (hereinafter referred to as “City”) is soliciting Request for Qualifications (RFQs) from a qualified planning consultant or team (herein referred to as “Consultant”) to lead the City in the preparation and adoption of an update to the 2008 Comprehensive Master Plan. The City seeks a consultant that will guide the creation of a community vision, growth and development policies, and implementation strategies. The Comprehensive Plan Update (hereinafter referred to as “Plan Update”) should provide clear and defined guidance and serve as a framework for the development of future land use and zoning policies.

The purpose of this RFQ is to provide guidelines for the submission of qualifications. The process to establish the Plan Update will be critical to its successful implementation and must ensure that the final document reflects the desired vision for the City as determined by citizens, elected/appointed officials and other key stakeholders. Qualifications must reflect the ability of the Consultant to provide a full range of expertise in all areas needed to develop a complete Plan Update. Qualifications must identify experience with public outreach and facilitation of public meetings/forums.

The Plan Update should be designed in a way that allows for it to be used to update the City's Planning and Zoning Code in order to ensure that the goals of the Plan Update can be accomplished. The update to the City's Planning and Zoning Code is not a part of this RFQ.

II. BACKGROUND

The most recent comprehensive plan for the City was completed and adopted in October 2008. A copy of it can be found at <http://www.readingohio.org>. The proposed project is to update the 2008 City of Reading Master Plan.

Located in southwest Ohio, about 20 miles north of Cincinnati, the City of Reading is home to approximately 10,385 residents and 280 businesses. The City benefits from its strategic location along Interstates I-75 and I-71 and Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway (S.R. 126). Reading Road (U.S. 42) is the City's major commercial corridor. Approximately 41,000 cars travel daily through the intersection of Reading Road and Benson Street. Reading's ideal location provides easy access to amenities and services in the Greater Cincinnati Metropolitan Region.

Reading was settled in the late 1790s primarily by German immigrants. It was one of the first settlements established in the Mill Creek Valley with the earliest property subdivision being recorded in 1798. By 1851 Reading was incorporated as a village and the town continued to grow and prosper as more and more industries located in Reading. Population reached a peak in 1976 with about 15,500 residents. Since then the City has seen a gradual decline in population to 10,385 residents today.

The City of Reading is the definition of a working class city traditionally rooted in manufacturing and industry. It is primarily comprised of low-to-moderate income residents in Census Tract Number 232.01. Reading is a First Suburb community characterized by deteriorated infrastructure, underutilized buildings, and vacant Brownfields. The City is landlocked with no potential to grow its industrial base. These conditions leave the City vulnerable to the continued influx of underutilized land uses that will detract from the City's physical appearance and erode the tax base. An updated master plan is critical to provide reasoned, data-based planning and zoning recommendations to ensure Reading's livability and sustainability now and into the future.

Reading's tagline, "From Bridal to Biotech" recognizes the City's two unique market niches. The Reading Bridal District, the largest bridal district in the U.S., features approximately 40+ bridal-related stores primarily located along W. Benson Street. Another major economic "engine" is the 50-acre Reading Life Sciences Campus, one of the largest biotechnology centers in the Midwest employing 1000 research and support jobs. Several other international companies are headquartered in Reading including Standard Textile and General Tool Company.

III. MAJOR AREAS OF TRANSITION

The 2008 Master Plan established target areas and neighborhoods that are transitioning in the areas of transportation, the economy, cultural and environmental conditions, and urban design. Although many of the recommendations made in the 2008 Master Plan have been implemented, the document is woefully outdated. Namely, it does not reflect major community and economic development changes that have occurred in the marketplace over the past ten years. An updated plan will offer recommendations to respond to these changes in a manner that enhances the City's position for future growth and redevelopment and to make sure that as Reading continues to redevelop, it also improves.

The City of Reading is currently partnering with other agencies and jurisdictions to help plan for redevelopment of three major areas that have significant future impact to the City. The first partnership includes the redevelopment of the former 33-acre Dow chemical plant in the northwest section of the City. When the 2008 Master Plan was developed, the Dow site was an active tax-generating business. In 2014 the facility closed resulting in the loss of a \$4 million annual payroll. The City is working with US EPA and OH EPA to conduct environmental studies that will lead to the redevelopment of the site. Hamilton County Community Development Division and Metropolitan Sewer District are also partnering with the City to improve access into the site.

A second area slated for potential changes and improvements is along the South Reading Road Corridor. Since 2017 the City of Reading has been partnering with Hamilton County Planning + Development, Amberley Village, City of Cincinnati and Sycamore Township to develop a plan to enhance the Reading Road Corridor within or near these jurisdictions. A major recommendation is for the jurisdictions to update planning and zoning along the Corridor.

A third trigger for the Plan Update is the new consolidated school campus being built by the Reading Community City Schools. As a result of this project two school buildings will be vacated and demolished in spring 2019 paving the way for redevelopment.

Other important planning needs that need to be addressed in the Master Plan Update include continued flooding in the Mill Creek Valley; development of an interjurisdictional bike trail along the Mill Creek; the probability that Duke Energy will locate a gas pipeline through the City; the continuing expansion of the Reading Bridal District; and the redevelopment of the 14-acre Reading Life Sciences Expansion site and the 40-acre Hill Street property.

IV. SCOPE OF WORK

The following section describes the minimum components which should be included in the scope of work. City staff will finalize the scope of work with the selected consultant prior to contract authorization. The City is open to suggestions other than those items listed which the consultant believes will be of value in producing a comprehensive plan that will have practical applications for day-to-day planning and economic development activities.

1. Review the current Master Plan and identify relevant sections that should remain, be reviewed or removed. In addition, review existing plans and studies to determine what goals or topics can be implemented in the Updated Plan.
2. Themes of the Update Plan may include, but not be limited to the following:
 - Existing conditions of the built environment including flood areas;
 - Community character including architecture, design, public spaces, etc.;
 - Future land uses;
 - Infrastructure including utilities, roads, pedestrian/bike connectivity, etc.;
 - Housing including trends, needs and future demands;
 - Economic impact of recommendations, and;
 - Implementation strategies and priorities.
3. Provide a broad-based participation plan to solicit input from the public. (See Section V “Community Engagement” for detailed information).
4. Define a feasible land use plan for future development within the City
5. Identify viable redevelopment areas within the City including infill development and adaptive reuse of underutilized and/or Brownfield sites, and determine redevelopment strategies for redevelopment.
6. Provide special emphasis on the following areas in the review and study for the comprehensive plan:
 - Reading Road (U.S. 42) Corridor with focus on Reading Road south of Galbraith Road
 - Galbraith Road commercial district
 - Benson Street/Jefferson Avenue Bridal District
 - Hill Street property (38 acres)
 - Reading Life Sciences Expansion Site (14 acres)
 - Former Dow /Cincinnati Drum/Pristine site (33 acres)
7. Determine an implementation plan for short and long-term actions. Prepare priorities, goals and objectives and make recommendations for policies and strategies for plan implementation.

V. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It is the City's desire that there be meaningful community participation in the preparation of the Plan Update. The City is seeking a consultant that will engage the public, stakeholders and elected/appointed officials through various methods including working with a steering committee appointed by the Mayor, presentations to community groups, workshops and social media. The consultant shall present the plan to the Reading Planning Commission and Reading City Council for their review and approval. The Consultant shall develop a public involvement/engagement and public relations campaign with suggestions for outreach opportunities, meeting concepts and information gathering techniques.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS

All statements of qualifications should include, at a minimum, the following information:

1. **Project Team Composition** – Provide a description of the team that will be assigned to the project including resumes for all team members. Identify the capacity in which team members will be used and identify the Project Manager who will be the point of contact during the comprehensive plan update process. Any work intending to be subcontracted must be disclosed including the name of the subcontractor and specific tasks that will be subcontracted. The City expects that the principal staff person(s) listed will not change and will follow through the entirety of the project.
2. **Firm Background** – Provide a brief description of the firm including the range of professional services, office locations and staff size. This shall also apply to all subcontractors.
3. **Firm Experience** – Outline the experience of the firm and other credentials that illustrate qualifications to undertake this project. Provide at least three examples of comprehensive plans that your firm has completed within the last five years. Plans may be submitted electronically. Plans should be based on similar-sized communities. Also, list recent projects on which the principal staff have worked and describe their responsibilities. List any past work performed for the City of Reading.
4. **References** – Provide a minimum of three references for services comparable to this project. Include a contact person, title, address, telephone number and email address. In addition, provide the time period when the services were rendered and a description of services rendered.

VII. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

For evaluation purposes, each submission shall include, at a minimum, the following items in the order listed below:

1. **Letter of Interest** – This letter will summarize, in a brief and concise manner, the Consultant's understanding of the scope of work.

2. Qualifications as stated in Section VI above.
3. Approach to the Project – Provide a brief narrative describing the Consultant’s approach to accomplishing the project.
4. Timeline – Provide an outline of an expected timeline and major milestones for the scope of work. The completion date for the Plan Update is June 1, 2019. The estimated start date is October 1, 2018.
5. Cost and Compensation – Provide a detailed outline of cost for completing the scope of work. This should include hourly rates, estimated number of hours, -material and supplies costs, and a not-to-exceed figure. The City is using the proceeds of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Planning Mini-Grant to conduct the Plan Update.
6. Please submit three (3) hard copies and one electronic copy.

VIII. SELECTION PROCESS

The City of Reading will select a consultant based upon a thorough review of the merits of the submissions received, references and costs. The consultant will be selected based on their ability to best meet the overall expectations of the City.

After evaluating the submissions, the City will select the top 2-3 consultants for follow-up interviews. Key consultant members who will be directly responsible for the work should participate. Based upon results of the interview, the City will select a consultant.

Upon selection, the Consultant will be contacted to finalize a contract, which will include fee structure, project time frame, and any additional scope of services that may result from the interview.

The City reserves the right to reject any and all submissions.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS

Questions and clarifications regarding the RFQ must be submitted in writing via email to Patrick Ross, Safety Services Director, at pross@readingohio.org. All questions must be submitted no later than 4:00 PM on September 10, 2018. All questions will be answered by email within two (2) business days after receiving the questions. All questions and answers will be posted on the City’s website at this link: www.readingohio.org/masterplan

Consultants will not be reimbursed for any costs associated with the preparation of the RFQ.