**Municipal Planning Grants, RFQ**

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS**

***Seeking Consultation Support for 2019 Northfield Town Plan Update***

***Northfield*, Vermont**

***01-09-18***

**RFQ Due on *February 5, 2018***

***.*PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Overview**

*The Northfield Planning Commission is seeking a consultant to assist in the update of the Northfield town plan. Specific areas of assistance will include: The generation of maps charts and data to assist in the facilitation of, and as a product of, public participation. Special focus will be given to the revitalization of the central historic village centers, prevention of forest fragmentation and meeting the state statutory goals of reduction in fossil fuel use.*

**Context and Background**

*The Town of Northfield has three distinct primary activity centers. State Route 12 is the main transportation corridor through the town and intersects the three activity centers. Northfield Falls, Downtown Northfield, and Norwich University, each has their own unique character and collectively provide the social, economic, and cultural mix that contribute to the vibrancy of Northfield.*

*The primary issues that face the Town of Northfield are establishing land development policies that incorporate the strengths and amenities of each activity center to strengthen their identities without competing for the community’s limited resources.*

*Northfield Falls*

*Northfield Falls is primarily a residential area that is characterized by single family homes on smaller lots. There is also a manufactured home park that provides affordable housing options to Northfield’s residents. Properties are served by municipal water and utilize individual on-site wastewater disposal. There are several businesses that front on State Route 12. Pedestrian facilities are limited in this area and the only strong physical connection to the rest of the community is State Route 12. Northfield Falls has great potential for development, with a few long-time businesses as well as the newly renovated Northfield Falls General Store that draws clientele from beyond Northfield, and four covered bridges in close proximity.*

*Downtown Northfield*

*Northfield’s downtown provides the community with residential, commercial, and civic uses including the Brown Public Library, Northfield Municipal Building, and the U.S. Post Office. There is compact development and efforts to revitalize the downtown have led to improved pedestrian facilities, façade upgrades, and the reuse of existing buildings around the community green. The downtown is surrounded by residential development that is primarily single family.*

*Norwich University*

*The southern activity center is dominated by Norwich University. This provides an academic and cultural component to the community. The university provides significant positive economic benefits to the community, but challenges related to student housing, alternative transportation options, and limited taxable property are issues that need to be considered when determining future development patterns for the community. (The Vermont Air National Guard.) is also on campus*

*These three centers make up the primary development areas within the Town of Northfield and are the locations where the community wants to focus future growth and development. Ensuring that each area maintains its unique character while still being able to expand and thrive without competing with the other areas will be a primary issue to address through the goals, policies, and more specifically, the implementation actions that will be needed for the municipal development plan update.*

*Outside of these activity centers, the Town of Northfield enjoys a rural setting that is characterized by active farms and forests. Protecting this rural landscape from development pressure and possible fragmentation is key to ensuring the activity centers remain the focus of Northfield’s future development. Identifying steps to protect these rural areas and support our local farmers will be critical to the future vibrancy of Northfield’s activity centers.*

**Funding**

A total of $*14,000* is available for consultant services from the Municipal Planning Grant Program administered by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the town of Northfield will contribute $2,000 towards this total for this project.

**Work Plan**

**Organize a Steering Committee**

A steering committee will be formed to guide the update process. It is anticipated that the Planning Commission will serve in this capacity; however, additional members of the community may be asked to participate in order to have additional input in the process. Steering committee is formed and a timeline for completion of the municipal plan update is developed.

**Review of Statutory Updates**

Consultant will provide a review of changes to statute since the last plan. This will include information on required updates and potential updates --- to include enhanced energy planning through Act 174, where municipalities can receive “substantial deference” before the Public Utility Commission if specific criteria are met.

**Update Priority Sections**

Key: economic development, village center designation, housing, transportation, natural resources – priority forest blocks, energy, land use, implementation program. Specific changes related to these elements will be critical. Compliance with Act 174 and Act 171 is needed. Economic development will help direct growth to the designated village centers and support the work that has been done to strengthen the downtown. Draft updates to priority plan sections are presented to the public for comment including any required maps. Appropriate changes are discussed with the working group for amendments.

**Update Remaining Plan Sections**

Consultant will provide draft language to steering committee to remaining plan sections

**Conduct Public Outreach**

Throughout the process, consultant will work with the steering committee to identify and establish outreach activities. The public outreach should be robust, and a calendar for activities will be established early in the process. This may include surveys, open houses, workshops, community forums, or other methods of increasing public participation. A search for ways to increase community vitality, the well-being of residents, and the tax base should be among the objectives of public outreach.

**Timeframe**

*Work with the consultant would begin in Late March of 2018. Strategies for encouraging public engagement would be developed and implemented during the period of late spring through the summer and into the Fall. Concurrent with this effort would be the development of specific actionable steps that could be presented to the public for consideration and deliberation. For example, what will we need to do to comply with Act 174 and reduce energy consumption by 90% by 2050. What choices do we make in the prioritization of our resources to achieve a more economically vibrant, socially exceptional, community centers. What are the policy prescriptions that allow for rural development while protecting critical soils, habitat connectivity, surface waters, and rural character?*

**Deliverables**

*A written draft of the Northfield Town Plan, that is approved by the Planning Commission will be the final deliverable.*

*The consultant will have a key contact from the Planning Commission, who will help coordinate communication among the parties.*

**SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

All responses to the RFQ shall include the following information:

1. **Cover Letter** - A letter of interest for the project.
2. **Statement of Qualifications and Staffing** – Provide a qualifications profile of the lead consultant and sub-consultants, including indication of the lead consultant, the proposed role of each consultant on the team. Also provide detailed information on each consultant, including the name of the firm, year established, and contact information.
3. **Summaries of relevant projects** – Describe relevant experience on similar projects for each firm and list the work experience of the individuals expected to be involved in the project. Include a minimum of three (3) professional references for whom a similar project has been completed within the last ten (10) years.
4. **Page Limit** - The proposal, encompassing items 1-3 above, shall not exceed 15 double-sided pages (30 total pages) including cover letter, project lists and contacts.

All information submitted becomes property of the *Town of Northfield, VT* upon submission. *Northfield* reserves the right to issue supplemental information or guidelines relating to the RFQ as well as make modifications to the RFQ or withdraw the RFQ.

**Submission Requirements**

Respondents should submit one (1) digital copy (PDF) and *6)* printed copies of the proposal by *March 12, 2018* to:

**Municipality/Local Project Manager Contact Information**

*Laura Hill-Eubanks, Chair of the Northfield Planning Commission*

*51 South Main St. Northfield, VT 05663*

*802-485-6121*

[npc@northfield.vt.us](mailto:npc@northfield.vt.us)

Please expect a confirmation email upon receipt of the qualifications by *Town of Northfield*

If you have any questions about this project or the RFQ, please address them in writing either via U.S. mail or email to *Planning Commission Chair Laura Hill-Eubanks.* We will respond to all questions in writing as soon as possible. Both the question and response will be shared with the other consultants.

**Selection Process** Qualifications will be reviewed by a selection committee comprised of representatives of the *Northfield Planning Commission.* A short-list of consultants will be selected to submit detailed proposals for the project with a project approach, scope of services, schedule and budget with details on staffing, hourly costs and overhead.

**RFQ Schedule Summary:**

Qualifications due *February 5, 2018.*

Consultants will be selected for short-list at the *February 12, 2018 Planning Commission meeting and notified the following day.*

Proposals due *by March 12, 2018*

Consultant selection by *March 19, 2018 Planning Commission meeting*

*Interviews will be conducted if necessary*

Project work to begin *as soon as practical*

Complete project on or by February 1, 2019

**Evaluation of Qualifications**

Respondents will be evaluated according to the following factors:

1. Consultant Qualifications (experience with similar projects, ability to work with municipalities to attain desired outcomes, and knowledge of the topic) - 85%
   1. Experience with *working on Vermont town plans.*
   2. Ability to *form a team with expertise across subject areas – renewable energy to infrastructure, housing to community organizations].*
   3. Knowledge of current state statutes related to town and regional planning
   4. Proven ability to work with committees, conduct public meetings and translate public opinion into specific actionable steps to achieve goals
   5. Availability to begin work on project start date and to compile and present data in a public forum
2. Quality, completeness and clarity of submission - 15%

**Interview Framework**

The *Northfield, VT* reserves the right to select the top two to three highly scored consultants and invite them for an interview. In this process, the selection committee may ask the respondents to give an oral presentation of their respective proposals. The purpose of this oral presentation is to provide an in-depth analysis of qualifications, experience in performing similar services, and an opportunity for the consultant to clarify or elaborate on their qualifications without restating the proposal.

The interview and presentation is merely to present facts and explanation to the review committee and allow the selection committee to ask targeted questions of the consultant team. The interview and presentation, if deemed necessary by the review committee, will be held at the *Municipal town offices* in *Northfield* Vermont. The day and time will be notified to the respondents at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting. All costs and expenses incurred in traveling for the purpose of interview and presentation shall be the responsibility of the consultant.

**Final Consultant Selection**

Following the selection process, one team will be selected to negotiate a final contract for services. The final scope of work with specified deliverables may be modified through negotiation of the final contract. The final project team may also be modified through negotiation of the final contract. Any expenses resulting from the interview and proposal process will be the sole responsibility of the consultant.

**Contract Requirements**

The consultant contract will be subject to the terms of Attachment D of the Municipal Planning Grant Agreement (Procurement Procedures and Other Grant Requirements).