



**Town of Exeter, New Hampshire
Planning & Building Department**

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

MASTER PLAN Update

The Town of Exeter is seeking qualification statements from interested consultants to provide professional planning services to update the Town's Master Plan.

Proposal should be mailed in an envelope plainly marked "Proposal for the creation of a Growth and Development Strategy"

Submissions shall be hand delivered or mailed, addressed as follows:

**Town of Exeter
Attn: Dave Sharples, Town Planner
10 Front Street
Exeter, NH 03833**

Qualification statements must be received by 4:00 p.m., Thursday, June 30, 2016.

Telephone, facsimile, or e-mail proposals will not be accepted in response to a Request for qualifications.

The Town reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, or accept any proposal determined to be in the best interest of the Town.

Request for Qualifications packets may be obtained from the Exeter Planning & Building Department, Exeter, NH, Phone: (603) 773-6112 or www.exeternh.gov/rfps.

Background

The Town of Exeter has a long rich history dating back hundreds of years. The Town has seen the rise and fall of the textile industry and is fortunate enough to have many of the old historic buildings still intact. The Town's historic downtown is located where the Exeter River flows into the upper tidal reaches of the Squamscott River and is characterized by a variety of commercial activity, older mill buildings, and private residences. The downtown area is dominated by local businesses at street level and residences above along Water Street and residences in the older mill buildings on the east side of the river. The downtown is home to many of the Town's governmental services that include Town Hall, the Town Offices, the Police and Fire complex, the Recreation Department, the Library, and the Post Office.

Philips Exeter Academy, established in 1781, maintains a significant presence in the downtown area and its campuses and student housing are all within a short walk of the downtown commercial center. Outside the urban core, the Town is characterized by medium and low density residential development on loop roads and cul-de-sacs and a mix of commercial and residential development along arterial corridors that include Hampton Road, Portsmouth Avenue, Epping Road, and Brentwood Road.

Route 101 bisects the town, dividing the more rural portion from the southern, more developed region and provides easy access to both Manchester and Portsmouth. Route 108/Portsmouth Avenue runs north to south along the eastern portion of Exeter. This route serves as a major commercial corridor that runs continuously from Stratham to the north and continuing southward to Exeter's downtown area. Route 108 runs from Stratham through Exeter, including the downtown, and continues south toward Kensington and Seabrook. The remaining land in the Town is characterized by single family detached homes, condominiums, apartments, several large mobile home parks, and open space.

The Town has seen significant changes over the last 40 years. The Town grew rapidly from 1970 to 2000 with the population increasing from 8,892 in 1970 to over 14,000 in the year 2000 according to the US Census Bureau. This represented a 62% increase in population during this time period. Since the year 2000, the population growth has slowed significantly only gaining an estimated 336 people or 2.4% increase over the last 15 years. However, the Town has seen a recent increase in residential construction within the past year with 250 units currently under construction and 281 additional units in various stages of the land use approval process. This represents a total of 531 new residential units being constructed or proposed over the last twelve months. To put this in perspective, for the decade between 2005 and 2014, a total of 429 units were added.

The Town's public water system dates to before the 1880's. The water system was known as the Exeter Water Works until it was purchased by the town in the 1950's. Today, the system covers approximately 70% of the town's population. The town's sewer system was initially constructed in the late 1960's. The town is embarking on the construction of a new wastewater facility, which is mandated through an EPA consent decree signed in 2013. Areas to the north of Route 101, and west on 111A, are still mainly served by private wells and septic systems.

During the 1990's, the Town became dedicated to land conservation and the endeavor proved successful. In 2003, the Town approved a three million dollar conservation bond that resulted in the Town conserving over 1,700 acres of land over the last decade. Adding privately owned conservation land, over 31% of land within the Town is now in some form of conservation.

Many of these areas support highly visited recreational trail networks which contribute to Exeter's vibrant natural character.

In 2014, the Town began more of a proactive role in economic development efforts by adding a full time position of Economic Development Director. This position was hired in August 2014 and has been charged with working to more proactively develop the Town's existing commercial base as well as leading other economic development efforts. These efforts have been part of the Selectboard's goal setting sessions in each of last few years and the Town is now actively participating in economic development efforts including business recruitment and retention. This includes review of zoning regulations, and efforts to develop the Town's last remaining underdeveloped commercial corridor, Epping Road.

The Town is now determined to develop a growth and development strategy and update the Master Plan to reflect the existing characteristics of the Town and advance the desires of the community. This section has provided a snapshot of how the Town of Exeter has developed and where we are today. The following section outlines the goals for the future as we move forward to redefine the Town's growth and development strategy to be well equipped to handle future growth.

Moving Forward

The Town of Exeter, in cooperation with a professional consultant, shall undertake a growth management plan and develop a strategy that defines the issues and choices facing the community and creates a common Vision for the future. The Vision shall recognize the following guiding principles:

- The Vision shall be the result of a well organized public outreach campaign that will seek and receive input from a variety of stakeholders:
- The Vision needs to translate strategic goals into practical plans and designs that are highly responsive to the complex economic, regulatory and community considerations;
- The Vision shall incorporate physical design and planning solutions that recognize the relevant link to the historic, cultural, and environmental context of the community;
- The Vision shall recognize a strategic planning process with the town residents, business leaders and a multi-disciplinary team to unlock the full potential of the community;
- The Vision shall incorporate strategies to address current housing needs while providing for the protection of valuable natural resource areas; and,
- The Vision will incorporate action plans that aim to steer future growth into areas where adequate infrastructure already exists and take advantage of currently underutilized and/or abandoned properties.

Project Goals

The goal of this project is to formulate a well-crafted growth and development strategy. The strategy will incorporate ways to use land more efficiently to meet the future development needs while providing protection for valuable natural resource areas. The final document shall outline a series of goals and desired outcomes after successful implementation of the strategy. This strategy will likely employ a variety of methods that will aim to:

- Provide incentives for infill development;
- Promote the reuse of abandoned and underutilized buildings;
- Examine local and regional housing trends to determine future housing needs;
- Promote the use of multiple transportation options;
- Identify natural, regulatory (federal, state, local) and other constraints impacting the strategy;
- Promote long term growth and stability of the economic base;
- Decrease water and air pollution through the efficient use of land and protection of natural resources;
- Preserve valuable wildlife habitat;
- Promote the historical settlement pattern of Exeter of a dense urban core and rural outlying areas;
- Preserve historic properties and encourage their rehabilitation;
- Protect identified natural resource areas; and,

SCOPE OF WORK

List of Work Products:

Although the final scope of work shall be determined through the Master Planning Steering Committee, it is expected that, at a minimum, the chosen consultant shall provide the following deliverables:

1. Facilitate a “public consensus” building process that results in an articulated “Community Vision”.
2. A well crafted growth and development strategy that addresses all project goals and contains specific actions items that can be implemented to achieve the vision.

Beyond these tasks, the specific scope of services and fee shall be negotiated as outlined in the Selection procedure below.

Project Partners

The following list represents the official boards, committees, and organizations that will be invited to actively participate in the development of the Master Plan Update:

Exeter Board of Selectmen
Exeter Planning Board
Exeter Conservation Commission
Exeter Historic District Commission
Exeter Economic Development Commission
Exeter Heritage Commission

Exeter Zoning Board of Adjustment
The Exeter Historical Society
The Exeter Housing Authority
The Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce
The Exeter School Department (& SAU Administration)
Town Department Heads

This list is not intended to exclude any stakeholders and it is anticipated that local business owners, Exeter residents, and other community stakeholders will actively participate in the formulation of the Vision Statement and strategic actions to achieve the vision.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

The following outlines the information required to be submitted as part of the proposal.

- A brief description of your firm.
- A list of the employee(s) that will be assigned to this project including a resume detailing their qualifications and background.
- A list of similar projects completed by your firm in the past five (5) years with the list of employee(s) involved with those projects.
- Names, addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and contact persons of all clients for which your company has performed similar services during the past five (5) years.
- Estimated work schedule including the estimated date of completion of the project.
- Ability to facilitate public involvement.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

Requests for Information

Any Firm contemplating submitting a response to this request that is in doubt as to the meaning of any part of this RFQ, or finds a discrepancy in or omission from this RFQ, may submit to the Town a written request for interpretation, clarification, or correction thereof. Any interpretation, clarification or correction of documents will be made in writing and issued to any firm that received this RFQ. The Town will not be responsible for any explanations or interpretations of the documents other than those made in writing.

Contract Award

The selected Firm shall enter into a written contract with the Town binding all terms, conditions, and provisions of the proposal, and other terms, conditions and provisions negotiated prior to award of the contract.

Any contract resulting from this RFQ must be approved by the Board of Selectmen if applicable, and is subject to funding.

Town's Use of Material

All material submitted shall become the property of the Town, unless it is clearly marked as proprietary information. The Town reserves the right to use any ideas presented in the submission, without compensation paid to the Firm. Selection or rejection of the submission shall not affect this right.

Insurance Requirements

The selected Firm shall procure and maintain, for the duration of the contract, insurance against claims which may arise from or in connection with the performance of the work by the Firm, its agents, representatives, or employees. Proof and coverage amounts of such insurance shall be received and approved by the Town prior to execution of the contract.

Hold Harmless

The selected Firm shall indemnify and hold harmless the Town of Exeter and its officers, officials, employees and agents from and against all claims, damages, losses and expenses including attorney's fees arising out of performance of the scope of services included herein, caused in whole or in part by any negligent act or omission of the Firm, their officers, employees, agents, representatives or subcontractors, except where caused by the active negligence, sole negligence, or willful misconduct on the part of the Town of Exeter.

Submission Ownership and Costs

Upon submission, responses become the property of the Town of Exeter. The cost of preparing and submitting a response is the sole responsibility of the Firm and shall not be chargeable in any manner to the Town. The Town will not reimburse any Firm for any costs associated with the preparation and submission of a response or expense incurred in making a presentation, participation in an interview, or negotiating a contract with the Town.

SELECTION PROCEDURE

Submissions will be evaluated based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- Responsiveness of submission
- Engagement description and approach
- Qualifications and experience
- Prior experience on engagements similar to this request for qualifications
- Methodology to be used to accomplish the work

In response to the proposals, the Town may select one or more Firms for interviews and an oral presentation. The submission of a response shall not guarantee an opportunity to an interview.

The Town will select a Firm based upon the written response, oral interviews, contact from previous engagements, and any other pertinent information deemed necessary by the Town. The Town will then negotiate a contract, specific scope of services, and fee with the selected Firm. The Town reserves the right to request substitution of any provider identified by the Firm as part of its team. If an agreement cannot be reached with the selected Firm, the Town retains the right to terminate negotiations with that Firm without notice and open negotiations with the next ranked Firm. The compensation discussed with one interested Firm will not be disclosed or discussed with another Firm.

No work shall begin until the Firm and the Town has executed a contract.

Acceptance or Rejection of Responses

The contract may be awarded to the Firm that most closely satisfies the needs of the Town and is deemed to be the most advantageous to the Town. The Town reserves the right to accept or reject any item or group of items in a response. The Town also reserves the right to waive any informality or irregularity in any response.

The Town also reserves the right to reject any and all responses, or portions thereof, received in response to the RFQ, to negotiate separately with any source whatsoever, in any manner necessary, to serve the best interest of the Town. Additionally, the Town may, for any reason, decide not to award an agreement as a result of this RFQ.

Non-acceptance of any response shall not imply that the proposal was deficient. Non-acceptance of any response shall mean that another response was deemed to be more advantageous to the Town and/or more closely satisfied the needs of the Town, or that the Town decided not to award an agreement as a result of this RFQ.

Examination of Proposed Materials

The submission of a response shall be deemed a representation and warranty by the Firm that it has investigated all aspects of the RFQ, that it is aware of the applicable facts pertaining to the RFQ process and its procedures and requirements, and that it has read and understands the RFQ. No requests for modification in the provisions of the response shall be considered after its submission on the grounds that the Firm was not fully informed as to any fact or condition. Statistical information, which is contained in this RFQ or any addendum thereto, is for informational purposes only. The Town disclaims any responsibility for this information that may subsequently be determined to be incomplete or inaccurate.