



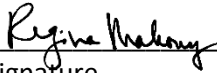
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR COMMUNITY VISION AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN ESSEX JUNCTION, VT

The City of Essex Junction requests proposals from qualified consultants to contract for consulting services to guide a Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan process for the City.

Proposals are to be submitted by 4:00 PM (local time) on Friday, June 23, 2023, at the City Office, 2 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, Vermont, 05452. Proposals shall be marked to the attention of Ashley Snellenberger, Communications and Strategic Initiatives Director. Digital proposals may be submitted via e-mail to asnellenberger@essexjunction.org, but the City assumes no responsibility for formatting or transmission errors.

The complete RFP may be obtained, without charge, on the City of Essex Junction webpage at www.essexjunction.org/news/invitation-to-bid, at the City Office, or by calling (802) 878-6944. Please direct all questions regarding this request for proposals to Ashley Snellenberger, Communications and Strategic Initiatives Director, at asnellenberger@essexjunction.org or 802-878-6944. The City of Essex Junction, through its Authorized Representative, reserves the right to waive any informalities in or reject any and all proposals, in whole or in part, or to accept any proposal deemed to be in the best interest of the City of Essex Junction.

Regina Mahony
Authorized Representative (Print Name)


Signature

5/31/2023
Date

The City of Essex Junction is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to equal opportunity in its contracting process. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

About the City of Essex Junction

The City of Essex Junction is located in Chittenden County, Vermont. The City is a forward-thinking, growing, high-quality-of-life small city in the Greater Burlington metropolitan area. With 4,500 households in 4.6 square miles interlaced with sidewalks and primarily residential streets, the City has a neighborly, tree-lined, family-friendly feel. The community prioritizes investment in education, health/wellness, and recreation. It was incorporated as a Village on November 15, 1892, and became Vermont's 10th city on July 1, 2022. The City operates under the council-manager form of government with five elected city council members and an appointed city manager. The City has eight departments that employ 43 full-time and seven part-time employees.

Background

In 2012 and 2014, the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction engaged in an in-depth community conversation called Heart & Soul of Essex. Through Heart & Soul of Essex, the community engaged in multiple ways to learn their shared values and better understand their collective hopes for the future. Heart & Soul identified six core values:

Education: Essex invests time, energy, and resources to ensure that our highly respected schools meet the needs of everyone in the community. We are proud to support learning that extends beyond the traditional classroom and includes the arts, athletics, and vocational instruction. Community programs and libraries offer diverse and affordable opportunities that prepare residents of all ages for lifelong learning and for work in an evolving economy.

Local Economy: Our residents contribute to a vibrant economy by working for and patronizing a diverse mix of businesses, from small, locally-owned enterprises to international corporations. We are committed to fostering an environment that produces a world-class workforce and a strong economy for years to come.

Thoughtful Growth: We value wide-open spaces and tight-knit neighborhoods, rural roads, and vibrant downtown streets. Essex is a place where we can enjoy a beautiful view, walk in the woods and go out to eat without ever leaving town. We support a diverse housing mix, opportunities for business development, and a transportation system with a variety of options, including a connected network of walking and biking routes.

Health and Recreation: We value public places for outdoor and indoor recreation for all ages and abilities. We treasure Indian Brook reservoir, neighborhood parks, and the chance to connect by bicycle or on foot. Community institutions provide education and programs to support healthy lifestyles.

Community Connections: Our deep connections with each other make Essex special. Neighbors help each other during good times and bad. We value diversity and welcome everyone. We build our sense of community at local events such as the Memorial Day Parade, Five Corners Farmers Market, and Winter Carnival. Our local newspapers and online forums give us plenty of ways to stay in touch. Residents participate in local government and volunteer.

Safety: Essex is a safe place where neighbors watch out for one another. We value an active, visible police force and strong fire and rescue services. Upgrades to our physical infrastructure will allow us to move about our community with comfort and security.

Thoughtful Growth emerged as the most pressing issue in the community and resulted in the Design Five Corners community discussion (2015), and implementation plan (2019), and the Village Comprehensive Plan (2019).

In 2018, the Essex Junction Trustees and Essex Town Selectboard began working on a new plan for merging the Village and Town. In November 2020, the Village voters passed a merger plan and charter proposed by the Trustees. However, in March 2021, Town voters, including those in the Village, rejected the merger plan and charter proposed by the Selectboard, and a reconsideration vote failed again. Before the reconsideration vote, Village voters presented a petition to the Trustees to place a non-binding advisory vote to draft a charter to create the independent City of Essex Junction should efforts seeking a vote for reconsideration on the issue of the merger fail. In November 2021, the Village of Essex Junction passed a City Charter to separate from the Town of Essex. Bill H. 491, an act relating to the creation of the City of Essex Junction and the adoption of its charter, was then passed in the Vermont Legislature and signed into law in April 2022.

Now that we are an independent City, the City Council wants to provide an opportunity for the community to discuss the priorities and vision for the City's future and a five-year strategic action plan.

SCOPE OF WORK

The City of Essex Junction requests proposals from qualified consultants to contract for consulting services to guide a Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan process for the City. The consultant will propose a work plan to develop a Community Vision through public involvement and participation, laying the groundwork for what the residents of Essex Junction would like the identity of the City to be.

The consultant should also examine the previous work done through the Heart and Soul Community Conversations. The six core values determined during this process should be evaluated with the community to see if these areas are still relevant and if this could be a starting point for the Community Visioning process.

The Community Vision should understand the whole community, reflect core community values, address emerging trends and issues, imagine a preferred future, and promote local action. The Visioning process must be inclusive and reach traditionally underrepresented and under-engaged demographics using innovative and inclusive public participation efforts. Various effective approaches must be included to ensure engagement with and participation by a broad and deep cross-section of the community. Then the vision and priorities will be transformed into a Strategic Action Plan with realistic, achievable targets and benchmarks or milestones that measure the City's progress throughout the next five years. The Strategic Action Plan will help the City direct its efforts and resources toward defined priorities over the next five years. The Plan should also include benchmarks or milestones that measure the City's progress.

The City Council desires this process to be completed proactively and transparently with community involvement and acceptance. The process should encourage engagement and excitement among residents, business and property owners, developers, City officials, City committee members, and City staff. The City is also interested in participation from stakeholders who have not actively engaged in previous City activities. Focus groups, stakeholder surveys, and community workshops are some tools the consultant is encouraged to consider. However, the City is open to discussing other techniques.

Phase 1 - Attend Organizational Meeting

- The consultant will meet with a City Council member, the City Manager, and staff to discuss the Visioning Process and Strategic Action Plan.
- The consultant will attend a City Council meeting to discuss, receive feedback, and finalize the visioning project process.

Phase 2 – Analyze Related Planning Documents and Identify Additional Needs

- Collect data and information to become more familiar with the City of Essex Junction. This may include reviewing existing plans (Heart & Soul, Design Five Corners, LDC, and Comprehensive Plan).
- Benchmarking our City with similar-sized cities in the state, region, nation, or internationally.
- Identify and assess the City of Essex Junction's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Phase 3 - Conduct a Community-Wide Visioning Process

- Facilitate a Community Visioning process. Determine where the City is now and help Essex Junction Council, Committee members, staff, residents, and businesses decide what it wants to be in the future. This should take into account the following:
 - What makes Essex Junction unique, and how can the City use these characteristics to prepare for the future?
 - Evaluate existing and future public facilities and services.
 - Generate new ideas and discussions about the built environment, sustainability, sense of place, and the City's overall identity.
 - Recognize economic development potential and ways to diversify the local economy while also considering our urban relatively build-out community.
 - Identify and analyze potential partnerships with other entities.
 - What features are key to the City's continued health, growth, and development?
 - Determine the best way for the City Council and City staff to communicate with the citizens and business owners.
 - Determine how to better engage with the community and support youth, families, seniors, and traditionally underrepresented and under-engaged demographics.
- Help stakeholders reach a consensus on a vision and priorities for the next five years that will serve as a framework for the Strategic Action Plan process.

Phase 4 - Develop the Strategic Action Plan and Draft a Report

- Transform the vision and priorities from the visioning process into a Strategic Action Plan with realistic, achievable targets and benchmarks or milestones that measure the City's progress throughout the next five years.
 - Facilitate the development of a process to keep the City Council, City Committees, and staff involved and engaged in a continual strategic planning process, including strategic discussions, feedback loops, and periodic reviews of the Action Plan.
 - Develop a system to measure the effectiveness of the City Council, City Committees, and staff in meeting the objectives of the Strategic Action Plan. Ensure the measures are linked to the overall vision of the City.
 - Develop a public involvement program that keeps residents, business leaders, and staff engaged in the implementation of the Action Plan as the Council and staff meet targets.
- Present the final Strategic Action Plan to the City Council and staff at a City Council meeting.

TIMELINE AND PROCESS FOR SELECTION

Timeline

Friday, June 23, 2023 – Deadline for RFP Submittal

Proposals are to be submitted by 4:00 PM (local time) on Friday, June 23, 2023, at the City Office, 2 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, Vermont, 05452. Proposals shall be marked to the attention of Ashley Snellenberger, Communications and Strategic Initiatives Director. Digital proposals may be submitted via e-mail to asnellenberger@essexjunction.org, but the City assumes no responsibility for formatting or transmission errors.

August 9, 2023 – Anticipated Consultant Selection and Contract Award

August 14, 2023 – Anticipated Project Start Date

The project length is anticipated to take approximately four to six months; with results available to help inform the FY25 budget. However, the City is open to adjustments if necessary for a better product.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

The selection committee will select consultant(s) from the proposals received. This process will include a review of proposals, references, and other information as necessary. The City may conduct interviews with potential candidates if applicable. In making this selection, the City reserves the right to request from any responding entity clarification of its proposal or to supply any additional material deemed necessary to assist in evaluating the proposal within the timeline requested by the City.

To be considered, interested parties must submit by the deadline a proposal package that includes the following:

- Letter of interest – must be no more than two pages long and include contact information and signature.
- Summary of qualifications, experience, and availability. It should summarize qualifications, relevant experience (including experience engaging traditionally underrepresented and under-engaged demographics, and availability to participate in the RFP process and provide services to the City.
- Project team – identify who will participate in this project and include a brief resume of project team members identifying their qualifications and experience.
- Proposed approach to the process, including a proposed schedule and description of proposed public involvement. If there are any proposed changes to the scope of work outlined in the RFP, please explain these changes.
- Proposed budget - The contract amount for the proposed work shall not exceed a maximum of \$30,000 for project completion, including all expenses.
- List of three clients – The client name, contact person, telephone number, and email for at least three clients for whom you have completed a similar project in the past.
- A minimum of three examples of relevant written work related to Visioning and Strategic Planning, at least one of which will represent a strategic plan prepared on behalf of a City or comparable entity.

Interviews to Discuss Proposals

If deemed necessary, a short list of qualified consultants may be selected from those who submitted proposals for informal oral presentations. Oral presentations, if requested, will take place at the City of Essex Junction offices and may be done in person and/or remotely.

All proposals become the property of the City of Essex Junction upon submission and are public documents. Preparing, submitting, and presenting a proposal is the sole expense of the Consultant. Proposals must remain valid for at least 60 days.

Any information requests and/or questions shall be submitted in writing by email to Ashley Snellenberger, Communications and Strategic Initiatives Director, at asnellenberger@essexjunction.org

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The City of Essex Junction’s selection committee will review and evaluate all properly submitted proposals received on or before the deadline. The selection committee will first review each proposal for compliance with the mandatory requirements of the RFP. Failure to comply with any mandatory requirements may disqualify a proposal. The selection committee shall participate in the analysis of RFPs, the interview process (if applicable), and the final recommendation of the selected consultant for the project.

Proposals will be evaluated by the City of Essex Junction selection committee as set forth below:

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHT
Project Management	The consultant’s experience with similar projects and references of its clients. Ability to perform and complete the work in a professional and timely manner.	10 pts
Engagement Experience	The consultant has demonstrated qualifications and experience in public participation efforts through various approaches.	25 pts
	The consultant has demonstrated the ability to involve and engage stakeholders in traditionally underrepresented and under-engaged demographics.	5 pts
Approach	The consultant’s understanding of and approach to providing RFP services. Responsiveness and completeness of the proposal. The degree to which the proposal offers a clear, comprehensive, and collaborative process.	30 pts
	The consultant’s approach achieves the public participation goals of reaching traditionally underrepresented and under-engaged demographics.	10 pts
Cost	Cost or cost-effectiveness and resource allocation.	15 pts
Value Added	The consultant included other related information that will produce a better product.	5 pts
TOTAL		100 pts

The City of Essex Junction Rights

The City of Essex Junction reserves the right to modify or issue changes to the original RFP. Any change will be distributed to all those who originally issued the RFP. The City of Essex Junction also reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received as a result of this solicitation, to negotiate with any

qualified source, to waive any formality and any technicalities, or to cancel the RFP in part or in its entirety if it is in the best interest of the City of Essex Junction. This solicitation of proposals in no way obligates the City of Essex Junction to award a contract.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The Consultant shall comply with the applicable provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, Executive Order 11246 as amended by Executive Order 11375, and as supplemented by the Department of Labor regulations (41DFR Part 60). The Consultant shall comply with all the requirements of Title 21, V.S.A., Chapter 5, Subchapters 6 and 7, relating to fair employment practices to the extent applicable. A similar provision shall be included in any and all subcontracts.

Insurance

The Consultant shall meet the insurance requirements of the City's Purchasing Policy. Also, all contracts for services shall contain indemnification and hold harmless language as required by the City's Purchasing Policy.