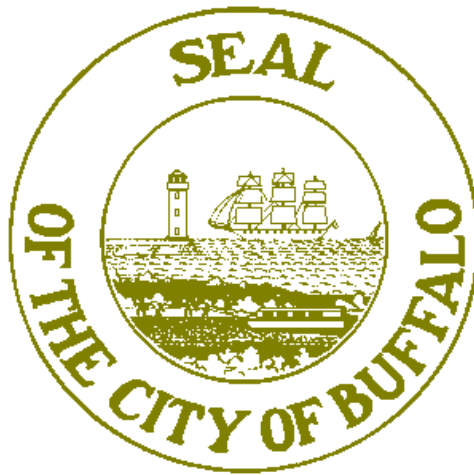


REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

CITY OF BUFFALO CITYWIDE LAND USE PLAN
AND ZONING/LAND USE REGULATIONS UPDATE

Honorable Byron W. Brown, Mayor



October 1, 2008
Office of Strategic Planning

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

The City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning requests qualifications from firms to complete a Citywide Land Use Plan and Zoning Code/Land Use Regulations Update. This effort will include activities needed for implementation, such as required environmental SEQRA/NEPA analysis, and formal adoption by required boards, including the Planning Board and Common Council.

Submissions will be received until 4:30 PM, Eastern Standard Time, on October 31, 2008.

The City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning reserves the right to waive irregularities and to reject any and/or all submissions.

Date: October 1, 2008

PART I – Municipal Background

The City of Buffalo, New York is on the eastern shore of Lake Erie, one of five Great Lakes that contain about 84% of North America's surface fresh water. It is also a riverfront city, located along the eastern shore of the Niagara River, which forms an international border with Ontario, Canada.

Buffalo is strategically located within a bi-national urban region sometimes known as the "Golden Horseshoe", stretching from Toronto along Lake Ontario into the Niagara Peninsula and across Western New York into Rochester. This region forms the fourth largest urban region in North America and is the second fastest growing major urban region on the continent.

Buffalo has many assets. These include thriving neighborhoods (for example, the Elmwood Village, which was designated as one of 10 Great Neighborhoods for 2007 through the American Planning Association's *Great Places in America* program), an extraordinary system of Fredrick Law Olmsted-designed parks and parkways, an impressive array of historic architecture, and enormous waterfront resources. However, the City and region's industrial economy has been restructuring for decades, which has led to stagnant employment levels and reductions in population and prosperity. Exacerbating these trends is unabated sprawl into formerly unurbanized areas at a rapid pace, leaving portions of the City in desolate condition. In particular, this disinvestment has had a dramatic impact on the City's older housing stock, of which 58% -- nearly 84,000 units -- were built prior to 1940.

As of the 2000 Census, the City itself had a total population of 292,648, a decline of about 50% since the 1950 Census. Still, Buffalo remains the state's second-largest municipality (after New York City) and is the county seat of Erie County.

Buffalo is also the economic, administrative, and cultural center of a two-county region comprising Erie and Niagara Counties, which also serve to define the Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area, the population of which is approximately 1.2 million people.

In addition to its natural features, strategic position, and leadership functions within the metropolitan area, Buffalo offers an extraordinarily rich quality of life, as evidenced recently by its ranking as the top city in America for cost of living standards (Forbes, 2007) and as the 39th best city to raise a family of 257 cities analyzed in the United States (Best Life, May 2008). For more information, you are invited to www.visitbuffaloniagara.com.

PART II – Project Purpose

A. Key Project Objectives

1. To develop a Citywide Land Use Plan.
2. To develop a Zoning/Land Use Regulations Update.
3. To obtain all assistance and documents necessary for implementation/adoption of the above-mentioned items, including required environmental SEQRA/NEPA analysis and formal adoption by the required boards, including the Planning Board and Common Council.

B. Need for a Zoning/Land Use Regulations Update

In February 2006, the Buffalo Common Council adopted *The Queen City in the 21st Century: the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan*. This Comprehensive Plan is the first master plan adopted by the City in over 30 years. It is the preeminent legal document guiding future development in the City of Buffalo, as well as providing the policy framework and principles for future planning initiatives.

The City's current set of zoning and land use regulations are outdated and do not align well with the new Comprehensive Plan. Currently, Buffalo has a multi-layered set of land use regulations that include zoning, overlay districts and urban renewal plan areas. The existing base Zoning Ordinance dates back to 1951 and is of a traditional (Euclidian) composition. The foremost and basic implementation task mandated by the Comprehensive Plan is the update of the City's Zoning Ordinance and related land use regulatory documents.

C. Need for a Citywide Land Use Plan

The Buffalo Comprehensive Plan provides the fundamental planning and land use guidance for the redevelopment of the City. In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, there have been a number of other recent planning efforts that provide land use direction for specific areas within the City. However, there are many areas that lack the detailed analysis and specific vision required for codification. For example, portions of the City, especially east of Main Street, include neighborhoods that have been severely depleted. Such areas are in need of complete restructuring and an in-depth land use analysis that builds off existing planning.

A citywide land use plan is needed that will draw from the vision and principles expressed in the Comprehensive Plan and subsidiary planning efforts. In addition, a citywide land use plan will add the detailed analysis (where needed) that is necessary from which to base an updated Zoning Ordinance.

Integration of a Transportation Strategy

Closely related to developing a citywide land use plan is the need to analyze the transportation infrastructure that connects the various neighborhoods and places within the City and region. Better coordination between transportation and land use is called for in the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan.

Transportation modes, infrastructure, and design reflect the conditions and trends of the time they are decided upon and built. Yet the effects of transportation decision are wide-ranging and long-lasting. The design of the built environment, how it functions and where different types of developments are located are all heavily influenced by the nature of the transportation network. At the same time, different types of development influence the modes of transportation that people choose to access them. For instance, Main Street mixed-use development encourages pedestrian and transit use, while strip malls encourage auto travel.

With this inextricable relationship in mind, a transportation strategy must be integrated into the development of the citywide land use plan to ensure that transportation infrastructure and design can satisfy and facilitate the goals of the citywide land use plan.

A fresh look at transportation infrastructure consistent with today's needs and best practices is required.

D. Additional Considerations

1. Vacant Land Reclamation

Large portions of the City have been substantially depleted over the past several decades. In many of these neighborhoods, there are only a few structures remaining on entire City blocks. A land use strategy needs to be prepared to provide a roadmap for reclamation and redevelopment in these depleted neighborhoods.

2. Housing and Residential Neighborhoods

The condition of the City's neighborhoods varies widely. Some are in good shape, attractive and very competitive. Some are in deteriorated condition, with numerous dilapidated structures and vacant lots amongst scattered habitable homes. Other neighborhoods are somewhere in-between.

Much of the City's housing stock is both old and in poor condition. According to the 2000 Census, approximately 58 percent of the City's housing units were built prior to 1940 and nearly 16 percent were vacant. In addition, there were over 10,000 vacant lots and approximately 8,700 vacant structures. The vast amount of vacant land in specific areas of the City, compounded by the multitude of abandoned and dilapidated homes in these areas, is one, if not the most, vexing issue facing the City. This situation has left the City with a substantial clearance and reconfiguration challenge/opportunity. Mayor Brown has recently announced a "5 in 5" *Demolition Plan* to demolish 5,000 housing units in 5 years to alleviate the crisis that vacant homes create in neighborhoods.

The citywide land use plan will chart out a strategy for the reclamation of these hollowed-out areas of the City. In addition, the plan should anticipate the demand for a variety of housing/neighborhood products/options, analyze what is currently available and identify housing needs/opportunities.

3. Rail Corridors

Consideration should be given toward developing long-term strategies for the City's abandoned rail corridors. While some former rail properties may justifiably be utilized as development sites in the near future, in the long-term many of these established courses could again serve as critical transportation and infrastructure corridors that support the future development and function of the City. Uses such as greenbelts and or bike/pedestrian trails may be considered in the interim.

4. Economic Development

The City must prepare land for economic development purposes, including assembling parcels, remediating brownfields and coordinating required transportation/infrastructure improvements.

The Comprehensive Plan identifies three strategic investment corridors that offer significant available land for Buffalo's 21st Century economy, including:

- Waterfront/ Tonawanda Corridor
- South Park/ Eastside Rail Corridor
- Main Street/ Downtown Corridor

The citywide land use plan and zoning initiative will build off the Comprehensive Plan to develop more specific and strategic approaches toward reclaiming available land for economic development purposes. In addition, the initiative will provide flexibility in the zoning code, to encourage mixed-use development where appropriate.

5. Green Infrastructure

The City of Buffalo enjoys an extraordinary park and parkway system designed by Fredrick Law Olmsted that, along with Joseph Ellicott's radial street plan, plays a profound role in defining the structure of the City. Despite the presence of Olmsted's six major parks, Buffalo is substantially under-parked according to park standards. There is a need to both add parkland and strategic green linkages to complete the City's green infrastructure system. In particular, viable connections need to be made to waterfront areas and to better link neighborhoods to the park system.

6. Sustainable and Smart Growth Principles

Two of the key principles within the Comprehensive Plan are sustainability and smart growth. These guiding principles seek to redevelop the City in a sustainable manner, protecting and restoring our environment while growing the economy. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Plan calls for the adoption of the 10 basic principles of smart growth.

7. Innovative Code Approaches

New codification techniques such as form-based code or Smartcode have been recommended by a number of civic and community groups for part, if not all, of the City. Such code applications are considered particularly effective at:

- Promoting quality development that will fit better contextually within our urban environment,
- Encouraging mixed-use development,
- Facilitating the types of development that have been planned, and
- Providing a more user-friendly format than a traditional zoning code.

Analysis is needed to determine which parts (if any) of the City are appropriate for form-based code and what areas are appropriate for other land use code treatments such as traditional neighborhood development (TND), transit-oriented development (TOD), hybrid zoning, etc., as well as traditional zoning.

PART III – Submission Requirements

All submissions shall include the following minimum information:

A. Cover Letter with Submission

Each Consultant Team submission to this RFQ shall be accompanied by a cover letter signed by an officer empowered by the Lead Consultant Firm to sign such material. (Definition: A "Consultant Team" may be a single consulting firm or a group of firms which have teamed up to work on a project.) Provide an email address to which an email confirming receipt of the submission will be sent.

B. Project Understanding and Approach

Provide a discussion of the intended approach to the project that demonstrates an understanding of the issues and tasks and how the Consultant Team plans to address them.

C. Description of the Consultant Team, Management and Team Members

Clearly identify who will be the project manager and the day-to-day contact person, as well as those individuals who will contribute substantial work on the project. Describe the anticipated roles of each Consultant Team organization and key project personnel.

D. Organization Qualifications

Provide a summary of each Consultant Team organization's qualifications indicating relevant background experience and capabilities for this work. Indicate the qualifications of proposed Consultant Team members who will work on the project.

E. References, Related Experience and Examples of Work

Provide at least three (3) client references with contact information regarding relevant work. Specify the client, location, Consultant Team members and participating individuals and role on Team, type of work, implementation results or status, and other relevant information as needed. Provide examples of completed projects that are similar to that described in this RFQ.

F. Current and Planned Project Obligations

To confirm availability of Consultant Team members, information on project obligations and their anticipated time frames are needed. Specifically, a list of major projects, both ongoing and planned to which the Consultant Team members are committed should be provided. Include the staff resources devoted to those projects and the status of the projects.

PART IV – RFQ RESPONSE SELECTION PROCESS

The intent is to select three (3) to five (5) Consultant Teams that will be invited to submit a project proposal for this citywide land use plan and zoning initiative.

Responses to this RFQ will be judged in several critical areas, as follows:

RFQ Response Selection Criteria

1. Completeness of the Submission
2. Ability to Demonstrate a Satisfactory Level of Project Understanding

The consultant team's demonstrated understanding of and approach to the project overall, including the diverse and unique land use challenges and opportunities in the City of Buffalo, trends and status of the region, and other aspects of the project as

discussed and referenced in this RFQ.

3. Ability to Carry Out and Manage the Project

The demonstrated ability to bring about a successful completion of the project. Qualities and indicators that will receive consideration include the breadth of related project experience with similar communities; the provision of references for such projects; experience, expertise, and accessibility of the proposed Project Manager and other key personnel; the demonstrated ability to work with community members as well as governmental bodies; understanding of applicable laws or regulations that relate to the project; and the ability to manage a project of this scale, including realizing timetables and quality control objectives.

4. Qualifications of Consultant Team Organization(s) and Individuals

The capabilities of the organization(s) and individuals that will be engaged in the project. Qualities and indicators that will receive consideration include the individual professional, technical, and educational achievements of each organization and individuals involved; the applicable experience of the proposed staff, and the specific experience gained on similar projects.

5. Current Workload of the Consultant Team

The ability of the Consultant Team to devote the necessary human resources, technical expertise, and management attention to the project will be made. Qualities and indicators that will receive consideration include the number and size of the projects presently being performed by each organization and the assigned staff; the status of existing projects; and the past ability of the organization to deliver projects on a timely basis.

6. Experience With Encouraging Sustainable Development

The Consultant Team's ability to encourage sustainable development. This may include creative approaches to encourage urban stormwater best management practices, LEED for neighborhood development, renewable energy applications, etc.

7. Ability to Promote Project as an Economic Development Activity

Ability to promote the project as an economic development activity, including the incorporation of City of Buffalo-based firms into project work, as well as minority and women owned businesses; building local capacity of civic, public and private sectors; making the economic case for code changes (versus merely the aesthetic improvements); tying zoning/land use proposals to larger planning analysis, including tax base analysis; evaluating industrial land use/zoning needs/opportunities, including potential to develop shovel-ready land and leverage existing infrastructure and other assets for industrial development.

8. Ability to Develop an Effective Community Consultation Program

Ability to establish and maintain a comprehensive community consultation program including public and specific stakeholder meetings at critical project milestones; project communication program including web-based reporting; visualization tools including

utilization of GIS mapping, aerial imagery, visual projection software and other graphic renderings helpful for public understanding of key land use/zoning proposals.

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive. Additional criteria may be added by the Selection Committee at a later date.

PART V – Living Wage and MBE/WBE

The City of Buffalo Living Wage ordinance requires that employers with service contracts of over \$50,000 and employing more than 10 employees pay the living wage of \$9.90 with health insurance or \$11.11 without health insurance, and all prospective City contractors must complete an “Application for Contract” which certifies its intention to pay the living wage if awarded the contract.

All submissions to this RFQ must include a statement indicating that the firm issuing the submission will work toward a business utilization goal for minority business enterprise of 25% for the project and women business enterprise of 5%. Additionally, a statement must be submitted indicating that the bidder will work toward a business utilization goal for minority business enterprise of 25% for the project and a women business enterprise of 5%.

PART VI – Submission Expenses

Expenses incurred in the preparation of submissions shall be borne by the Consultant Team with the expressed understanding that the firm(s) may not apply to the City of Buffalo for reimbursement.

PART VII – Reference Information

Many of our recent planning efforts provide excellent direction and a sound basis for the City of Buffalo Citywide Land Use Plan and Zoning/Land Use Regulations Update.

Related documents include:

1. Existing Zoning Ordinance
1. The Queen City in the 21st Century: the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan
2. The Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo
3. Queen City Waterfront: Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative, a Strategic Plan for Transportation Improvements
4. Local Waterfront Revitalization Program
5. “5 in 5” Demolition Plan
6. Blueprint Buffalo: Regional Strategies and Local Tools for Reclaiming Vacant Properties in the City and Suburbs of Buffalo
7. Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy 20-Year Plan
8. South Buffalo Brownfield Opportunity Area
9. Good Neighbor Planning Alliance Plans
10. Urban Renewal Plans
11. GBNRTC 2030 Long Range Plan
12. Erie-Niagara Framework for Regional Growth

13. UB 2020

For up-to-date RFQ-related information, please go to:
www.city-buffalo.com/landusezoning.

PART VIII – Submission Information

Estimated Consultant Team Selection Timeline:

Estimated Timeline	
Request for Qualifications Posting	October 1, 2008
RFQ Responses Due	October 31, 2008
Request for Proposal sent to each Consultant Team selected via the RFQ process	November 17, 2008
RFP Responses Due	December 19, 2008
RFP Interviews	Week of January 12, 2009
Consultant Team Selection Notification	January, 2009
Expected Start Date	February, 2009

NOTE: Expected Start Date is contingent on results of this RFQ/RFP process. All other RFP dates and timeframes are offered as a tentative guideline only.

Submission Details/Deadline: Ten (10) copies along with a PDF version included on CD-ROM of the submission, clearly marked with the project description “Citywide Land Use Plan and Zoning/Land Use Regulations Update” should be delivered no later than: October 31, 2008 4:30 PM Eastern Standard Time
Provide an email address in the submission cover letter to which an email confirming receipt will be sent.
No faxed or emailed submissions will be accepted.

Submission Addressed To: Office of Strategic Planning
Room 920 City Hall
Buffalo, New York 14202

Questions Regarding RFQ Should be Directed To: Mr. Andrew M. Eszak, AICP, City Planner
Office of Strategic Planning
Phone (716) 851-5035
Email: aeszak@city-buffalo.com