

Request for Proposal (RFP)
Town of Essex Municipal Site – Design Phase
February 2, 2024

I. Overview

The Town of Essex (“Town”) seeks qualifications and proposals from consultants to create a master plan and concept plans for two adjacent parcels, 80 and 90 Upper Main Street (“Upper Main” or “Site”), which were recently acquired by the Town using federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The 32-acre site presents an excellent development opportunity for multi-use development, including the Town’s municipal office building, fire station, library, and community space, as well as potential housing, commercial uses, and outdoor recreational opportunities. The Town now wishes to move forward with the next phase of site planning.

II. Background

In 2022, the City of Essex Junction separated from the Town of Essex, leaving the Town’s municipal offices located within a different municipality. In November 2023, using a portion of the Town’s ARPA funds, the Town acquired two adjacent vacant parcels in the Essex Town Center (“ETC”) area. The purchase gives the Town a location where it can site future municipal facilities and support additional development in the ETC.

The purchase of the site came after the Town underwent due diligence of the parcels’ development constraints and potential. This included a Phase I Environmental Assessment, a Natural Resources Assessment, and a Preliminary Traffic and Access Evaluation. The Phase I Environmental Assessment flagged a potential contamination concern that was ruled out with further investigation. The Natural Resources Assessment identified floodways, two streams, wetlands, and primary agricultural soils. Subtracting the stream, wetlands, and floodway area, the remaining approximately 18 acres is considered developable. The Site has VT Route 15 frontage, but currently does not have a formal curb-cut. The Town has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with an adjacent parcel owner to gain access at an existing signalized intersection. The Town also received preliminary approval from VTrans to access VT Route 15 from the midpoint of the Site.

As part of the due diligence phase, the Town retained Wiemann Lamphere Architects, who prepared several concepts of site layout to accommodate the proposed Town development and other potential development. These concepts will be available for the selected consultant.

In 2023, Wiemann Lamphere Architects developed a high-level facilities space assessment for all town departments.

In 2021, the Town completed the ETC Next Plan Master Plan (“Plan”). This Plan encompasses these Upper Main Street parcels and calls for lively, walkable, mixed-use centers in close proximity to greenways, trails, recreation land, forests, and farmland. In short, a better connected and more cohesive community.

The Plan supports establishing an identity for this part of Town, which can be realized through tangible elements such as wayfinding, architecture, and streetscape, combined with less tangible aspects of creating a “gateway” to the area.

The Plan proposes a zoning change for this area identified as the “Mixed-Use North (MU-N)”. This is a neighborhood that functions in concert with the adjacent Mixed-Use South (MU-S) neighborhood but with greater emphasis on diverse residential and mixed residential / commercial uses. Anticipated uses include retail, housing (single, duplex, and multi-unit), accommodations (hotel), civic, and commercial spaces (professional services, incubator, and office). Target densities in this neighborhood would be higher than existing zoning, enabled by the considerable regional connections afforded by the VT Route 289 interchange, VT Route 15, proximity to the transit line, and bike and pedestrian networks. The Town hopes to acquire a New Town Center state designation for this MU-N and the MU-S areas, which will help promote and develop a dense, walkable community center.

The Town will be working with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) on developing an Official Map that will reflect the conceptual master plan to be prepared as described below. This will help the Town lay out the proposed roads, paths, any other public uses (like a park/path around the wetlands on the site). The Official Map is a requirement for a state New Town Center designation.

III. Project Description and Scope of Work

The Town now wishes to move forward with the next phase of site planning. This will include creating a master site development plan that will include the Town’s proposed buildings and uses and other complementary development and concept plans that best promote the Town’s goals for the municipal buildings and the site. The vision for this site is to have a dense, walkable town center with multi-story buildings, mixed uses, and pedestrian and streetscape amenities.

Separate Contracted Consultant

Gail Henderson-King from White + Burke Real Estate Advisors, Inc. (W+B) will assist during this conceptual planning phase and will coordinate with the selected consultant team and the Town. Their work will include the following.

- 1) Provide overall project management services including managing the work of the selected consultant team and managing the project timeline.
- 2) Identify potential financing / funding mechanism and options for the buildout of the site. This will involve working with the selected consultant team and the Town on potential phasing along with identifying local and state grants/loans, TIF option, etc.
- 3) Identify private development options for the buildout of the site. Where areas have been identified for future development beyond what the Town will need, identify options for how the site could be made available to other entities through such mechanisms as public private partnerships, subdivision / sale of lots, lease, etc.

This Scope of Work shall include the master planning and conceptual design including architectural and landscape architectural design, civil engineering, cost estimating, recommended zoning changes, and schedule for implementation. The master planning work shall be for the entire site and include both public (Town) and private uses. The conceptual design work shall be for the public (Town) development only.

Throughout this phase of work, there shall be regular team meetings (i.e., weekly or bi-weekly) with the Project Team (e.g., W+B, Town staff) throughout this work to provide updates, review materials, discuss and resolve outstanding issues, and revise plans as necessary. Work during this phase shall include but is not limited to the following.

A. Conceptual Master Plan Refinement

- 1) Prepare up to four draft conceptual master plans for the site to include new Town buildings and the remainder of the site. The Wiemann Lamphere Architects concepts should be the starting point for this work. The conceptual master plan should reflect the Town's needs and identify areas / buildings for other development. The master plan concepts should include the following:
 - a) Identified space needs programming building on the Wiemann Lamphere Architects concepts.
 - b) Prepare a list of preferred uses that could potentially be included on the site. It is already known that the Town plans on locating new municipal facilities on the site. Additional use analysis should reflect the Town needs / wants on the site in addition to other uses that could complement these such as multi-family housing, commercial uses, recreational access, public spaces, etc.
 - c) Full color master plans showing proposed land uses, proposed Town and private buildings, parking, site access, parks / open space, and transportation network and cross-sections by type (streets / sidewalks, paths, etc.).

- d) Identify water and wastewater needs for the master plan site buildout.
 - e) Identify and show conceptual locations for public utilities including water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure to serve the entire site, and rights-of-way widths for each concept;
 - f) Prepare a narrative description of map elements, including any additional requirements or goals.
- 2) Meet with the Project Team to review conceptual master plans and materials.
 - 3) Present conceptual master plans to the public and Selectboard at public meetings.

Through a public involvement process described below, a final conceptual master plan will be selected and will be the basis for the concept designs.

B. Space Needs Programming

- 1) Review and refine the programming work and architectural drawings that were prepared during the due diligence phase.
- 2) Conduct a minimum of two (2) meetings with Town staff to review, verify, and amend the previous programming work.
- 3) Determine preliminary programming requirements for the new Town buildings based on the input above.

C. Concept Design

- 1) Prepare a boundary survey of the site to include the boundary, topography, natural features, etc. The natural resource mapping from the due diligence phase will be available to the selected consultant.
- 2) Develop several concept plans to include site and building configuration options for the identified new Town buildings. Work with the Project Team to narrow to two options.
- 3) Prepare basic building plans for the conceptual Town buildings to the level of design and analysis needed for high level cost estimating.
- 4) Identify the public infrastructure needed to serve the proposed development including but not limited to: roadways and sidewalks, water, wastewater, stormwater, traffic access and improvements. Determine sizing of utilities and rights-of-way that will be needed. The Town Public Works will be doing a sewer capacity study beginning in July 2024 which will be shared with the consultant team.
- 5) Work with an independent cost estimating firm to provide high-level order of magnitude estimates for each option based on the conceptual site and building

configuration plans and shall include infrastructure needs, site improvements, access, etc. for the Town buildings. A separate cost estimate of the infrastructure needs for the entire conceptual master plan shall be prepared.

- 6) Attend at least two (2) meetings with the Project Team to review concept plans.
- 7) Prepare presentation materials to include colored, labeled drawings and charts for public presentations and website including sketch level 3D renderings.

D. Phasing

- 1) Prepare project phasing and timeline for implementation for the Town buildings and development. This should include strategies, priorities, and budget estimates for each phase. Identify potential phasing to be considered with prioritized recommendations for short-, mid-, and long-term options and a capital projects priorities process/ranking system. Work with the project team on phasing of the different uses to be considered. For example, the fire station may be constructed at an earlier date than the municipal offices and the library.
- 2) Create development estimates for the various phases of implementation and coordinate with W+B to identify funding sources.

E. Zoning Changes Needed

- 1) Using the final conceptual master plan and concept design, identify what changes would need to be made to the Town Zoning Regulations, that are in line with the ETC Next Plan, to allow for the desired site buildout.

F. Public Participation

- 1) Include a public participation process for informing the public and gathering input throughout this work. This should include a final public process/engagement report.
- 2) Conduct a robust public participation process to gather public input to develop and refine the conceptual master plans and concept designs.
- 3) Presentation(s) to the Selectboard at key points to be identified.

IV. Deliverables

Project deliverables are identified below.

- 1) Up to four conceptual master plans and a preferred conceptual master plan with recommended land uses that must be the result of a community-driven public participation process.

- 2) Two concept plans for proposed Town buildings including public infrastructure needed.
- 3) High level order-of-magnitude cost estimates for two concept plans to include based on the conceptual site and building configuration plans, infrastructure needs, site improvements, access, etc. for the Town buildings, with an itemized breakdown of the cost estimates.
- 4) A water and wastewater capacity needs estimate for the entire site buildout based on the conceptual master plan and concept plan.
- 5) A separate cost estimate of the infrastructure needs for the entire conceptual master plan.
- 6) Phasing and implementation strategy
- 7) A thorough and innovative public outreach/engagement program that involves the community, Town staff, Selectboard, and Planning Commission.
- 8) Identified zoning regulation changes needed for proposed site development.
- 9) Submit a process for formal adoption of the master plan.

V. **Proposal Evaluation and Submission Requirements**

The consultant(s) is expected to have experience in planning, design, master planning, cost estimating, public participation processes, and civil engineering.

All responses to the RFP shall include the following information:

- 1) **Cover Letter** – A letter of interest and a summary of qualifications, recommended approaches, scope of work, processes, and deliverables for the project.
- 2) **Project Approach** – Provide a thorough explanation of the approach and scope planned for this project. Identify key deliverables during each phase.
- 3) **Project Cost** – Provide a not-to-exceed cost proposal, itemized by project component, and including current hourly rates, unit pricing, and reimbursable expense detail.
- 4) **Proposed Schedule** – Provide a schedule that includes completion of work tasks and deliverables including key meetings and complies with the timeframe provided below. Please note the schedule below is the ideal one. If there is a need to adjust this, please provide a revised schedule with an explanation.
- 5) **Qualifications and Staffing** – Provide a qualifications profile of the lead consultant and sub-consultants, including indication of the lead consultant, the role of each consultant on the team with organizational staffing chart and percentage of time devoted to the project by each consultant. Also provide

detailed information on each consultant, including contact information, the name of the firm, year established, a description of relevant experience on similar projects for each firm, and listing of their individual work experience in this role on similar projects.

- 6) **References** – A minimum of three (3) professional references for whom a similar project has been completed within the last ten (10) years.
- 7) **Optional** – Any proposed modifications or refinements to the project approach and components listed above.

VI. Schedule

One (1) pdf copy of the proposals should be submitted by e-mail to the Town of Essex Community Development Office (contact information below) by **4:30 PM on February 23, 2024**.

Expect a confirmation email following receipt of the proposal. If you have any questions about this project or the RFP, please address them in writing via email to the point of contact no later than February 16, 2024. Other than very routine questions, all questions will be answered in writing and posted on the Town's website.

Contact Information

Katherine Sonnick
Community Development Director
81 Main Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
(802)-878-1343
ksonnick@essex.org

Submittal Schedule

- Proposals are due on Friday, February 23, 2024, by 4:30 pm
- Consultant interviews the week of March 4, 2024
- Consultant selection will be announced by March 15, 2024
- Project work will begin by April 1, 2024
- Cost estimates for the preferred conceptual master plan and Town building(s) concept plans by November 1, 2024
- Work completed by December 13, 2024