

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to solicit proposals from qualified consultants to provide professional services for the City's ten-year Comprehensive Plan. The document describes the task requirements and deliverables for this study. All services are for the City of Frostburg.

Objective

The Consultant will assist Frostburg in providing the policy direction that will be articulated in the Comprehensive Plan through an extensive and broad-based public process. This is a public document that can be used by City staff and the Mayor and City Council to guide policy changes or pursue projects intended to protect the unique qualities of Frostburg: small-town character, economic opportunity, recreational assets, and natural amenities. The Comprehensive Plan will also serve as a guide to property owners and developers to help them understand the vision of the community, predict what uses could occur both on and near their properties, set the expectations for the physical form of development, and make informed land-use decisions.

Background / Context

City Overview

Founded in 1812, Frostburg, Maryland is a vibrant, energetic community, with approximately 8,000 full-time residents and Frostburg State University students, all of whom reside in an area of 3.348 square miles. Frostburg is located in the western portion of Allegany County and is home to Frostburg State University, a destination on the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, and a Trail Town along the Great Allegheny Passage.

The City operates under a commission form of government, in which each Commissioner is responsible for their respective department(s). The Mayor is the head of the government and presides over Council meetings, comprised of the Commissioner of Finance, Commissioner of Public Safety, Commissioner of Public Works, and Commissioner of Water, Parks, and Recreation. The Mayor and Council appoints a City Administrator, who is responsible for the daily management of the City. The City values professional and highly responsive government service and is committed to active citizen engagement and fostering a collaborative municipal environment.

Frostburg is a desirable place to live due to its beautiful mountainous surroundings, Frostburg State University and excellent public school system, and abundance of recreational opportunities. The City's tagline, "It's Just Cooler Here!" winks at the town's "cool" name and reputations for snowy winters and temperate summers, but really speaks more to Frostburg's unique and interesting people and places. Frostburg has the upbeat energy of a college town with authentic Appalachian small-town charm. Its residents are well-known for active engagement in bringing the City's signature annual events, like Storybook Holiday, Cruisin' Main Street, and the Arts Walk, to life.

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The Frostburg Comprehensive Plan is an officially adopted policy document that establishes the City's goals for the future and provides direction for decisions affecting the use and development of land, preservation of open space, housing and transportation programs and systems, partnerships with other organizations, economic growth, the expansion and maintenance of public facilities and services, and the relationship between land use patterns and fiscal policies.

The Comprehensive Plan is not the same as the land use code. It does not change existing regulation, nor does it create new regulations. It is an advisory document that recommends and provides guidance changes to the land use code. The Comprehensive Plan is written to provide general policy direction while also providing enough detail to set priorities and guide decision-making.

Frostburg's Challenges

In many ways, Frostburg is the ideal small mountain town. It is compact, surrounded by predominantly open lands, has easy access to mountains and rivers, and enjoys expansive views in all directions. The watersheds are healthy, the air is clean, and it is overall a resilient community. The town is small enough to navigate easily by foot or bicycle, and many residents integrate outdoor activities into their daily lives.

Throughout Western Maryland, there are many towns that manage to share these outstanding physical qualities. What makes Frostburg unique is its welcoming atmosphere, the compassion and generosity of its residents, its close-knit communities of local church congregations, school-based organizations, and youth sports leagues, the artistic and intellectual creativity, the quirkiness, the regular gatherings and community events, and the environmentally sustainable ethos. Additionally, Frostburg State University is the City's largest employer and a major driver for economic development, which complements the City's reputation as a desirable community to live. There is an infectious passion for Frostburg that sets the City apart from other towns that may seem similar.

Because Frostburg is extremely well-loved by its residents and by the region as a whole, it has become a place of civic engagement, small-town democracy, and debate about its future. In spite of Frostburg's beloved reputation regionally, it has experienced a population decline, with a loss of 1,975 residents, nearly 22%, between the 2010 and 2020 census; however, the population data is likely negatively skewed by the difficulty in capturing the Frostburg State University student population, resulting in fewer residents being counted. Existing housing stock is aging and inadequate in both the owner-occupied and rental housing realms, and there is a significant lack of market-rate housing, both within the municipal boundary and in Allegany County as a whole. Additionally, there is a shortage of developable land within City Limits, and existing infill development programs are underutilized.

Core Values, Goals, and Strategies

The Consultant should be mindful that, above all, the Comprehensive Plan should reflect the core values of the City of Frostburg and its residents. Within the Plan, special consideration should be given to Frostburg's unique values and qualities:

1. The City's role as a University town, incorporating analyses and strategies for strengthening the Town-Gown relationship and synergy;
2. Addressing the housing shortage and lack of residentially-zoned land primed for development, incorporating specific strategies and/or recommendations for policy updates where necessary and appropriate;
3. Providing opportunities for enhanced public input and community engagement in order to provide municipal services that address and reflect the values, lifestyles, preferences, and social/civic capacity of the residents and the workforce;
4. Emphasizing the preservation of the natural environment and historic resources, with special attention paid to sustainable practices;
5. Analyzing the community's long-range fiscal conditions, business capacity, and individual wealth and economic opportunity, incorporating the arts and outdoor recreation tourism as drivers for economic development;
6. Evaluating the City's transportation network and gaps in connectivity.

Consultant Requirements

1. To be considered for award, a Consultant shall meet or exceed each of the following minimum requirements. Failure to meet a requirement will result in the disqualification of the proposal, and consequently, the proposal will not be considered for award.
 - a. The Consultant Organization or its principals shall have a minimum of five years' documented experience in preparing Comprehensive Plan documents for a government agency, which includes a public participation element.
 - b. The Consultant or its principals shall have knowledge of the content requirements for Comprehensive Plans as dictated by the Maryland Land Use Article.
 - c. The Consultant shall have human, managerial, and fiscal resources to complete the project within an 18- to 24-month time period.
 - d. The proposed Project Manager shall have at least five years' recent demonstrated experience working with public agencies in comparable Comprehensive Planning processes.

Guiding Principles & Processes

The Plan should integrate the framework and organizing principles as identified by the State of Maryland's required elements of the comprehensive plan. The Consultant's process and product should reflect an understanding and incorporation of the key principles, processes, and attributes identified in Section 3.05.d.1 Content Requirements Land Use Article.

Required Principles

- **Goals and Objectives:** This section establishes goals and objectives that serve as a guide for the development and economic and social wellbeing of the City. The goals and objectives tell the world how the community wants to function and look in the future.
- **Land Use:** The land use element outlines the most appropriate and desirable patterns of growth and development. Maps are particularly helpful for this section and can show areas targeted for different types of development; revitalization; priority corridors or areas; and preservation areas.
- **Housing:** The housing element assesses a community's housing needs and addresses housing affordability for workforce and low-income households. Affordability levels are based on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Area Median Income (AMI). The housing element may include goals, objectives, policies, plans, and standards for the community.
- **Transportation:** The transportation element describes and presents transportation patterns and includes the entire spectrum of transportation facilities (transit, roads, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, and transit-oriented development) applicable to Frostburg. It is important to note that the Maryland Land use Article specifically requires jurisdictions to address bicycle and pedestrian facilities in their comprehensive plans.
- **Community Facilities:** The community facilities element identifies the location, character, and extent of public and semi-public buildings, lands, and facilities.
- **Mineral Resources:** The mineral resources element identifies land that can be used to provide a continuous supply of minerals, post-excavation uses, and land use policies to balance mineral resource extraction with other land uses.
- **Development Regulations:** The development regulations section identifies development tools that are the best available mechanisms to implement the plan, including streamlined review.
- **Areas of Critical State Concern:** This section includes recommendations for the determination, identification, and designation of areas that are of critical State concern.
- **Sensitive Areas:** The sensitive areas element sets goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards to protect sensitive areas from the adverse effects of development. The Maryland Land Use Article requires jurisdictions to protect streams and their buffers; the 100-year floodplain; habitats of threatened and endangered species; and steep slopes, wetlands, and agricultural and forest lands intended for resource protection or conservation. Jurisdictions are also empowered to identify and protect other sensitive areas as well.
- **Implementation:** Recognizing the importance of designing land development regulations that implement the Plan, this section is supposed to address recommendations for land development regulations; the use of flexible development regulations to promote innovative and cost-saving site design and protect the environment; and economic development in areas designated for growth.
- **Development Capacity Analysis:** This is sometimes referred to as a "build-out analysis" or "buildable lot inventory," and is also required in the comprehensive plan. This is an estimate of the total amount of development that may be built in an area under a

certain set of assumptions, including applicable land use laws and policies (e.g., zoning), environmental constraints, etc.

- **Municipal Growth:** This element requires municipalities to identify areas for future growth consistent with its long-range vision. The element is developed based on population projections and identifies needs for land and infrastructure. Consultation is required with Allegany County before this element can be adopted.
- **Water Resources:** This element identifies drinking water supplies needed by projected population. It also identifies suitable receiving waters for wastewater and stormwater management to meet needs presented by development as proposed in the land use element.
- **Optional Elements:** Comprehensive Plans may also include additional elements, which include, but are not limited to: Community Renewal; and Transit- and Pedestrian-Oriented Development. The Consultant should be comfortable conducting specialized analysis and/or reports in any of these areas, or any other area as requested by the Frostburg Planning Commission and/or Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

Desired Processes

Although not listed as a requirement, public interest and understanding of the Plan helps to establish public trust and support for the plan, and ultimately makes implementation of the plan easier. In order to accomplish this, the City desires the following processes to be incorporated into the development of the Plan:

- i. **Authentic Participation:** Ensure that the planning process actively involves all segments of the community in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes. We define authentic participation to include:
 1. Shared vision for the future
 2. Dialogue to balance competing goals
 3. Plan for and protect public investments
 4. Decision-making guidance
 5. Effective outreach and consultation
 - a. Framing questions for meaningful feedback
 - b. Sharing knowledge – data on existing conditions and trends
 - c. Collect and synthesize feedback
 - d. Utilize existing networks and build on them
 - e. Go to where people are
 - f. Provide multiple ways to engage in a variety of mediums
- ii. **Accountable Implementation:** Ensure that responsibilities for carrying out the Plan are clearly stated, along with metrics for evaluating progress in achieving desired outcome.

Desired Attributes

In order to be effective, the Plan and information therein must be coherent and well presented, while articulating persuasive visions and clearly communicated goals and ideas. The following two attributes embody these traits:

1. Consistent Content

- a. Assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- b. Establish a fact base.

- c. Develop a vision of the future.
- d. Set goals to support the vision.
- e. Set objectives in support of the goals.
- f. Set policies to guide decision making.
- g. Define actions to carry out the Plan.
- h. Use clear and compelling features to present the Plan.

2. Coordinated Characteristics

- a. Be comprehensive in the Plan’s coverage.
- b. Integrate the Plan with other local plans and programs.
- c. Be innovative in the Plan’s approach.
- d. Be persuasive in the Plan’s communications.
- e. Be consistent across Plan components.
- f. Coordinate with the plans of other jurisdictions and levels of government.
- g. Comply with applicable laws and mandates.
- h. Be transparent in the Plan’s substance.
- i. Use plan formats that go beyond paper.

Staff Capacity

The Community Development Department will have limited staff capacity in the comprehensive planning process. The Consultant will work closely with the City of Frostburg’s Director of Community Development and Planning and Zoning Specialist as primary points of contact.

Community Engagement

Respondents to the RFP should provide a basic proposed Community Engagement Plan which, at minimum, incorporates the elements below. The Consultant should detail how they propose to create feedback loops from community outreach activities and display how that information will impact the Comprehensive Plan. The selected consultant will be provided with a preliminary list of community groups and contacts to facilitate the organization of community input events.

The ideal Consultant will have completed multiple projects that have included innovative public engagement opportunities to reach residents that typically do not participate in City government but have strong feelings about the future of their town with regard to development, equity, infrastructure, and sustainability. Public engagement is considered central to the process, as opposed to an add-on. It should draw from residents’ hopes and concerns for the City’s future and ensure that all voices are heard. Input from engagement will be synthesized into a clear set of choices, gaining feedback from the Steering Committee, Engagement Ambassadors, City staff, and public surveys. Selected options will ultimately lead to goals, strategies, and objectives.

Equity and Inclusion

The City is seeking a Consultant/Consulting Team that will establish an “Equity and Inclusion Approach” document with procedures, tools, and strategies to integrate and promote racial and economic equity and inclusion throughout the Comprehensive Planning process. There should also be intentional outreach to populations not typically involved in City processes, including, but not limited to: low-income populations, racial and ethnic minorities, renters, residents of public housing, college students, school-aged students, families with children, people with low

mobility, people with technological challenges, and people who have low proficiency in English or people in which English is not their primary language. Experience working with diverse populations is highly advantageous.

Steering Committee

A dedicated group of 12-15 citizens whose role provides support and guidance to the Consultant Team. The City will appoint members to this Steering Committee and invites the Consultant to propose options for Steering Committee member appointments, roles, and responsibilities. Ideally, the members of the Steering Committee should be comprised of a broad spectrum of individuals from within the community, and membership should not be based solely on social, economic, and professional status. Part of the Consultant's Community Engagement Plan should include defining a clear role for Steering Committee members that ensures that the Committee will be properly utilized in the Consultant's process. The City invites the Consultant to propose options for Committee member appointments, roles, and responsibilities; however, with support from the Consultants, Steering Committee members will be expected to contribute, at a minimum, the following elements to the Comprehensive plan process:

1. Provide assistance in ensuring that everyone in the Frostburg community is represented in the process;
2. Act as liaisons to the groups they represent, social networks and local online communities, and to their neighborhoods;
3. Provide guidance on community engagement events, when needed; and
4. Option to volunteer to help in facilitating community engagement events.

Quarterly Comprehensive Plan Listening Sessions

The Frostburg Planning Commission, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and representatives from the Engagement Ambassadors will meet on a quarterly basis (approximately 4-6 sessions over the course of the project). At these meetings, the Consultant team will provide updates on the Comprehensive planning process. These meetings will also serve as public listening sessions for feedback on the process. The Frostburg Planning Commission, and ultimately the Frostburg Mayor and City Council, must adopt the Comprehensive Plan at the end of the process according to state law. Additionally, the goal is that the Mayor and Council endorse the Comprehensive plan to indicate support in overall municipal goals and priorities.

Accommodations

The Consultant is expected to evaluate the need for accommodations for specific engagement activities and coordinate with City staff to provide services when appropriate. Accommodations may include language translation, American Sign Language interpreters, refreshments, childcare, compensation, and transportation to meetings.

Outreach Tools (not limited to)

- Comprehensive Plan webpage on City of Frostburg website: www.frostburgcity.org (detailed in the following section)
- Online surveys
- Social media: engagement activities and advertising events

- Community meetings, possibly hosted by City Council members, City staff, etc.
- Opportunities for community members to provide visions of Frostburg’s future
- Other innovative mechanisms designed by the Consultant for robust community participation

Work Schedule, Process Phases, and Deliverables

Work Schedule

The City of Frostburg is targeting an 18-24 month timeframe for completion of the project from notice to proceed. Respondents to the RFP should provide a proposed project schedule, which shall be finalized according to a mutually established agreement between the City and the Consultant afterward. The Plan will be based on a 10-year planning horizon.

Sample Process Phases & Deliverables

For reference only, below is our estimate of proportional cost for different segments of the Comprehensive plan and an estimated timeline. **RFP Respondents should understand the following should only be considered a “Wish List,” and we invite proposals that vary from the information provided below.**

Pre-Planning (~4 months)

1. Deliverable: Final Work Plan

The first draft of the work plan must be included in the bid response. The Consultant Team will work with the Community Development Department staff to further refine the work plan after the notice to proceed is issued. A clear work plan (with key dates, activities, and milestones) will be finalized.

2. Deliverable: Final Community Engagement Plan

The first draft of the community engagement plan must be included in the bid response. The consultant team will work with Community Development Department staff to further refine the work plan after the notice to proceed is issued. A clear engagement plan (with key dates, activities, and milestones) will be finalized.

3. Meet with all Department Heads and City Administrator to understand work underway, current issues and opportunities, recent plans, and current and long-term City priorities. Leads on each plan will meet with the consultant team separately and brief them on the plan.

4. Deliverable: Final Equity and Inclusion Approach

Consultant team will develop a 1-2 page “Equity and Inclusion Approach” document with procedures, tools, and strategies to integrate and promote racial and economic equity and inclusion throughout the Comprehensive Planning Process. It will be reviewed by the Mayor and Council.

5. Deliverable: Comprehensive Plan Webpage

Displays key background data graphically (maps and visual data)

- Shows upcoming events
- Updated weekly or promptly following significant milestones
- Hosts ongoing engagement, utilizing tools such as: interactive maps,

surveys, and other feedback tools

- Reports on results of engagement efforts, meeting summaries, and identification of any next steps

- Topic-specific pages will be produced during the “Topic-Based Recommendations” phase

- Access accounts to the City’s MuniCode website will be provided to Consultant Team staff, and City staff retain the right to edit any Consultant-generated content for any reason; however, the Consultant Team will be primarily responsible for this webpage, including any responses to community member inquiries or ideas generated through any means associated with the webpage.

6. Deliverable: Challenges and Opportunities Analysis

Generate demographic data and trends, population projections, regional and local growth scenarios, and fiscal pressures of municipal government. Assess challenges and opportunities based on this information. Utilize and share key background data to develop a shared understanding for vision recommendations. Share report on the website.

Visioning (~4 months)

1. Plan Kick-Off

Event and/or an engagement campaign to signal the start of the planning process. Among other things, this kick-off event should provide the public with a general summary of key findings learned during the various pre-planning tasks (demographics, issues/opportunities, City priorities, etc.), a general roadmap of the Comprehensive Plan process, and a clear set of expectations and opportunities for future public engagement options. Creation of multi-media and videos for outreach and engagement is a plus.

2. Visioning Engagement Campaigns and Events

Social media engagement, surveys, events, and pop-ups. Train and work with Engagement Ambassadors to help with outreach efforts and events. Community engagements events should be organized in a manner that intentionally captures, or maximizes access for, marginalized groups. When possible, pop-up stalls and community engagement events should be coordinated with existing City events to maximize participation.

3. Small Group Conversations

Visioning focus groups to engage specific groups of people and key stakeholders. Intentionally includes individuals and groups typically not involved in City processes, but should also include recognized civil associations, such as merchant associations and civic groups.

4. Deliverable: Produce Vision Statements

The Comprehensive plan’s Vision Statements should capture the aspirations of Frostburg residents for the future of the City. Vision Statements should be very broad in their scope, but clear enough that the key topics of importance to the City are clearly stated in the Vision Statements and that

numerical goals and strategies for action can be generated from them with further community input. Get feedback on the vision statements and incorporate feedback into the draft.

- 5. Present final vision statements during listening session to the public, Planning Commission, and Steering Committee**

Topic-Based Recommendations (~9 months)

- 1. Topic Based Engagement Campaigns and Events**

Social media engagement, surveys, events, and pop-ups. In the development of the topic sections, the consulting team will need to help the community set goals in the presence of different (and sometimes conflicting) interests. Get input from the public about the thematic map (described below). Work with Engagement Ambassadors for engagement and help with outreach efforts and events.

- 2. Cross-Cutting workshops on Pertinent Topics**

Cross-cutting and cross-disciplinary topic-based events to engage key stakeholders and applicable groups. Intentionally engage key stakeholders, applicable groups, and individuals typically not involved in City processes.

- 3. Consult City Department Heads about pertinent topics.**

- 4. Deliverable: Set Goals and Topic Sections**

Base goals to address critical issues raised from topic sections, City visions, Challenges and Opportunities, and community feedback. At least one measurable objective should be included in each Topic Section. Get feedback on the goals and topic areas including presenting at a quarterly Listening session.

- 5. Deliverable: Propose Strategies**

Identify strategies based on City vision statements, goals, and to address challenges and Opportunities. Get feedback on the strategies, including presenting at a quarterly Listening Session.

- 6. Deliverable: Thematic Map**

Develop areas of the City to Conserve, Enhance, and Transform, based on staff and community engagement. Get feedback on the final map, including presenting at a quarterly Listening Session.

- 7. Deliverable: Draft of Topic Sections with Goals, Strategies, and Objectives**

In each topic section, include the topic-specific barriers, gaps, and opportunities between existing policies/regulations as compared to the topic's defined long-term goals and objectives. Examples may include: a prioritized list of new zoning tools and other changes; identify key urban design principles that should guide new development for various settings in the City; identify policy changes or other steps that will be necessary to realize the plan recommendations; identify new programs and programmatic changes that will facilitate the vision.

- 8. Presentation to public on Topic Sections and Thematic map**

Get feedback

9. **Presentation of Final Section draft and Thematic Map to Steering Committee, Planning Commission, and other appropriate boards and commissions.**
10. **Incorporate feedback into final topic section draft.**
11. **Get approval on Topic Sections from the Steering Committee and Planning Commission.**

Planning for Implementation

1. **Deliverable: Implementation & Action Plan Draft**
 - a. **Strategy and phasing:** Budget implications; Estimate order-of-magnitude costs of capital projects and budget implications of operational initiatives; identify potential funding sources at the local, state, and federal level, including third-party sources.
 - b. **Roles and Responsibilities:** Identify leaders and other participants who will be responsible for each action step, both within City government and with outside partners.
 - c. **Development of Indicators:** Develop a set of indicators that are specific to the goals and objectives resulting from the citywide plan to allow the City to effectively measure Plan performance, implementation, or need for re-evaluation over time. This includes the establishment of baseline measurements based on previous research. Monitoring methods should be described and visualization and reporting methods to present indicators to the public and elected officials.
 - d. **Action Plan Document:** Translate the vision and plan recommended goals and objectives into specific action steps with short, medium, and long-term projects and initiatives, taking into consideration current priorities, funding, and capacity of Town and other partners. Phasing should include targeted progress towards each measurable goal.

2. **Meet with all impacted Department Heads and Supervisors and the City Administrator to discuss the implementation plan and Action plan.**
3. **Deliverable: Comprehensive Plan Summary (1-3 pages)**
4. **Deliverable: Webpage for tracking progress**
 Manage a webpage that is set up to track progress on the Comprehensive Plan implementation. This will be set up by City staff on a City-hosted webpage and template. The Consultant will provide all text, graphics, and linked materials
5. **Deliverable: Complete Comprehensive Plan Document and appendices, native files (GIS, PDF, photos, Adobe files, engagement responses, data, contacts, etc.).**
 The document should include all the previous deliverables.
6. **Deliverable: Reevaluation Schedule and Guidance**
 Establish a schedule for re-evaluation of strategies and objectives over the 10-year time horizon of the Plan.

7. **Get feedback from the Steering Committee and city staff on the tracking webpage and re-evaluation plan.**
8. **Presentation to the public on implementation.**
9. **Presentation to the Steering Committee, Planning Commission, and other appropriate Boards and Commissions.**
10. **Incorporation of input in implementation draft.**
11. **Seek approval of the final Comprehensive Plan from the Planning Commission.**
12. **City to submit to the State for final approval.**

Evaluation Criteria

Respondents can consist of a single planning firm or a consultant team containing sub-consultants.

Minimum application requirements

1. Work Plan, including a proposed plan development timeline
2. Engagement Plan with Equity and Inclusion Approach outline
3. Staffing Plan
4. 3 reference or reference contacts
5. One Comprehensive Plan work sample
6. Proposed billing schedule
7. Short Answer Questions

Please limit responses to 500 words or less.

a. Does the lead consultant, or do any proposed sub-consultants, have experience working with resident groups and experience designing and undertaking creative, robust, and inclusive public participation processes? Explain and include any relevant work samples.

b. Does the lead consultant, or do any proposed sub-consultants, have experience working in communities with conflicting interests to create vision statements and goals? Does the consultant have particular skills building consensus? Explain and include any relevant work samples.

c. Does the lead consultant, or do any proposed sub-consultants, have experience working with diverse populations and/or utilizing procedures, tools, and strategies that promote racial and economic equity and inclusion throughout a planning process? Explain and include relevant work samples.

Comparative evaluation criteria

The Selection Committee will recommend the firm (or project team) to the City Council that best meets the following criteria (in no particular order and with no particular weighting):

- A. Criterion:** Overall quality and breadth of proposal and understanding of the complexity of the task.

- **Highly advantageous:** Application is clear, well-organized, and expands upon the content of the RFP to indicate a superior understanding of the issues involved and shows a strong grasp of the Maryland Land Use Article’s requirements for a Comprehensive plan.
 - **Advantageous:** Application is generally clear, reasonably well organized, and indicates a reasonable understanding and grasp of the issues involved, and shows a grasp of the Maryland Land Use Article’s requirements for a Comprehensive Plan.
 - **Not Advantageous:** Application is overall unclear, not well-organized, and fails to indicate a full understanding and grasp of the issues involved. The application somewhat or does not show a grasp of the Maryland Land Use Article’s requirements for a Comprehensive Plan.
- B. Criterion: Work Plan – Completion of a work plan.**
- **Highly Advantageous:** The respondent proposes a thorough and detailed approach to the work plan. The plan includes a timeline, meets or exceeds the minimum deliverables, and provides a superior opportunity to achieve plan goals. The respondent weaves the Maryland Land Use Article’s requirements for a Comprehensive plan throughout their approach to the work plan’s processes and activities.
 - **Advantageous:** The respondent proposes an acceptable approach to the work plan. The plan includes a timeline, meets the minimum deliverables, and provides an opportunity to achieve plan goals. The respondent somewhat demonstrates the use of the Maryland Land Use Article’s requirements for a Comprehensive Plan throughout their approach to work plan processes and activities.
 - **Not Advantageous:** The respondent does not propose an acceptable approach to the work plan, goals, or deliverables. The respondent does not demonstrate the use of the Maryland Land use Article’s requirements for a Comprehensive plan through their approach to work plan processes and activities.

Experience & Implementation

- C. Criterion: Relevant Experience** A demonstrable record of success in completing municipality-wide Comprehensive Plans of similar scope and scale. Prior client satisfaction with the working relationship, project management capabilities, and technical expertise in developing similar projects. Work samples demonstrate innovative and creative approaches to graphic design, engagement, and solutions to problems. The references exhibit the consultant’s ability to maintain communication on plan development and completing projects on time.
- **Highly Advantageous**
 - Firm or team has completed three or more municipal Comprehensive plans. The respondent has included at least one project of similar scope and scale to Frostburg as work samples that superiorly demonstrate the above criterion.

- Three or more clients consider the consultant’s services to be satisfactory or better. Proposal clearly demonstrates how communication on plan development will be maintained. References demonstrate the consultant team’s ability to complete projects on time.
- **Advantageous:**
 - Firm or team has completed 1-2 municipal Comprehensive plans. The respondent has included two projects of similar scope and scale to Frostburg as work samples that adequately demonstrate the above criterion.
 - At least two clients consider the consultant’s services to be satisfactory or better. Proposal demonstrates how communication on plan development will be maintained. References demonstrate the consultant team’s ability to complete projects on time.
- **Not Advantageous:**
 - Firm or team has completed no Comprehensive Plans. The respondent may have or may not have included projects of similar scope and scale as work samples.
 - Clients do not consider the consultant’s services satisfactory or better, or less than three references are submitted. Proposal does not demonstrate how communication on plan development will be maintained. References do not demonstrate the consultant team’s ability to complete projects on time.

Professional Criteria

- D. Criterion: Staffing Plan** The plan includes professional qualifications of all project personnel with particular attention to training, educational background, and relevant professional experience. The Principal in Charge, Project Manager, other key personnel, and any consultants to be assigned to the project, and demonstrates expertise and experience working on Comprehensive Plans.
- **Highly Advantageous:** The staffing plan is comprised of highly qualified individuals with significant relevant experience that apply to the scope of work. The lead consultant has an established track record working with their proposed team members.
 - **Advantageous:** The staffing plan is comprised of at least some key individuals who are highly qualified with significant relevant experience that apply to the scope of work. The lead consultant has worked with most of the proposed team members previously.
 - **Not Advantageous:** The staffing plan is comprised of individuals who are minimally qualified with relevant experience that apply to the scope of work. The lead consultant has not worked with most of the proposed team members previously.

Community Engagement

E. **Criterion: Community Engagement Plan and Equity and Inclusion Approach**

outline: Completion of the Community Engagement plan with an outline for the Equity and Inclusion Approach document.

- **Highly Advantageous:** The respondent proposes a thorough, innovative, and detailed approach to the community engagement plan that details how the team will utilize and coordinate with Engagement ambassadors. The team proposes creative and inclusive engagement activities and approaches to achieve plan goals. The respondent also proposes an outline for the Equity and Inclusion Approach document which has well thought out procedures, tools, and strategies to integrate and promote racial and economic equity and inclusion throughout the Comprehensive planning process. The respondent weaves the Maryland Land Use Article's required elements for Comprehensive Plans throughout their approach to activities and processes.
- **Advantageous:** The respondent proposes an acceptable approach to the community engagement plan that adequately demonstrates how the team proposes to utilize and coordinate with Engagement Ambassadors. The team proposes engagement activities and approaches to achieve plan goals. The respondent also proposes an acceptable outline for the Equity and Inclusion Approach document that adequately demonstrates procedures, tools, and strategies to integrate and promote racial and economic equity and inclusion throughout the Comprehensive planning process. The respondent somewhat demonstrates the use of the Maryland Land use Article's required elements for Comprehensive Plans through approaches to activities and processes.
- **Not Advantageous:** The respondent proposes an acceptable approach to the community engagement plan but fails to show how they propose to utilize Engagement Ambassadors or suggest specific community engagement activities and approaches. The respondent also proposes an acceptable outline for the Equity and Inclusion Approach document but fails to adequately show procedures, tools, and strategies to integrate and promote racial and economic equity and inclusion throughout the Comprehensive Planning process. The respondent does not demonstrate the use of the Maryland Land Use Article's required elements for Comprehensive plans through their approach to work plan processes and activities.

Proposal Procedures

The City of Frostburg is seeking proposals for professional services to develop a municipal Comprehensive Plan through a multifaceted public engagement process. Competitive sealed proposals are invited in accordance with the provisions of the City of Frostburg Procurement Policy.

Procedures under this invitation require separate and confidential submission of pricing and a separate submission of a technical proposal. Technical proposals will be evaluated without knowledge of prices by a committee appointed by the City of Frostburg's Procurement Officer. The Procurement Officer will

determine the most advantageous proposal after taking into consideration the evaluation of technical proposals made by the committee together with a consideration of prices.

Selection Committee

A Selection Committee shall be established by the Procurement Officer and the Director of Community Development to select the Consultant, ideally consisting of a smaller subset of the Steering Committee (if established prior to selection), or staff and members of the community that have experience with Comprehensive Planning and the consultant selection process. The Selection Committee shall apply the Evaluation Criteria, set forth above, to each proposal. Based on the presentation and written proposal submitted, the Selection Committee shall rate each proposal as: highly advantageous, advantageous, or not advantageous.

Following reviews of the Proposals, the Selection Committee may, at its discretion, schedule individual interviews with any or all of the proposers for the purpose of further evaluation of a proposer's qualifications and ability to provide the required services. It is anticipated that these interviews will be conducted remotely.

Based on its review of the Proposals, interviews, and Price Proposals, the Selection Committee will make a recommendation to the Procurement Officer and Director of Community Development for the award of a contract to the most advantageous proposal.

RFP Response

a. Proposed Schedule

i. The following dates are proposed by the City; however, the dates and times may be changed as the needs of the City change. It is solely the responsibility of the application to stay informed on the dates and times.

1. RFP release date: January 31, 2024
2. Final date to receive written questions: February 13, 2024
3. Release date for answers to written questions: February 20, 2024
4. **RFP closing date – Friday, March 15, 2024, at 2:00 P.M. local time**
5. Proposer interviews/presentations/demonstrations, if requested: March 18-20, 2024
6. Anticipated award of contract: April 16, 2024
7. Anticipated project start date: March 17, 2024
8. Anticipated project completion date: No later than April 17, 2026

ii. Delivery of Proposals

1. Proposals must be sealed, clearly marked, and should be submitted to:
City of Frostburg
ATTN: Bethany Fife
37 Broadway
PO Box 440
Frostburg, MD 21532
2. **IMPORTANT:** Price proposals must be kept entirely separate from technical proposals. Failure to follow this instruction will result in rejection of the proposal.

3. It is the sole responsibility of the Proposer to ensure that the proposal arrives on time at the designated place. **A proposal will not be considered for award if received after the official closing date and time, regardless of when or how it was received by the City.**
 4. Three (3) hard copies of each proposal, as well as a digital copy in the form of a PDF document on a USB thumb drive (max file size of 100 MB), shall be submitted as follows:
 - a. Technical proposal shall be submitted in a sealed envelope marked:
Proposal Envelope A- Technical Proposal
City of Frostburg Comprehensive Plan:
Bidder's Name: _____
 - b. Price proposal shall be submitted in a sealed envelope marked:
Proposal Envelope B - Price Proposal
City of Frostburg Comprehensive Plan:
Bidder's Name: _____
 5. The City will not consider facsimile (fax) or electronic submission of a proposal.
- iii. There will be no pre-proposal conference.
 - iv. After the review of the Technical Proposals, the Committee may, at its discretion, schedule interviews with any or all of the proposers for the purpose of further evaluation of the proposer's qualifications and ability to provide the required services. Based on the presentation and written Technical Proposal submitted, interviewees will be rated: highly advantageous, advantageous, not advantageous, or unacceptable.
 - v. Proposals may be held open for a maximum period of 30 days after the proposal submission date, unless award is made sooner, or the time for award is extended by consent of all parties concerned. Award, payment, and performance obligations shall depend on the availability of appropriation of funds. Award of a contract is subject to the approval of the Frostburg Mayor and City Council.
 - vi. Questions Concerning RFP
 1. Questions, inquiries, suggestions, or requests concerning interpretation, clarification, or additional information concerning any portion of this RFP should be made in writing via email and sent to the below named individual who will be the official point of contact for this RFP.
 - vii. RFP Point of Contact:
 1. Submit questions to:
 Bethany Fife, Director of Community Development
 Email: bfife@frostburgcity.org
 2. Failure by a Consultant to ask questions, request changes, or submit objections by the dates indicated above shall constitute the Proposer's acceptance of all of the terms, conditions, and requirements set forth in this RFP.

3. No answers given in response to questions submitted shall be binding upon this RFP unless released in writing as an addendum to this RFP.
- viii. Proposer's Representative
1. If you intend to respond to this RFP, promptly provide the name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address of your liaison person to the Point of Contact above in order for the City to send any communications regarding this RFP.
 2. Applicants should designate within their proposal package an individual acceptable to the City to act as the project management liaison between the consulting firm and the City's designated representative(s) regarding the performance of service(s) under the terms of the proposed contract.

Execution of Agreement

The city will prepare and submit to the selected Consultant a contract that will incorporate by reference the consultant's proposal. Before an agreement is executed, the successful proposer should be registered to do business in Maryland and will be required to submit a certificate of tax compliance in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland.

Terms and Conditions

1. The City reserves the right to reject any and all responses to this RFP, and even if the City does elect to begin negotiations with any firm that responds to this RFP, the Project Description described above is in no way binding on the City.
2. The City shall not pay any costs incurred by any responding company for time and/or materials used to prepare the response or make any presentation(s) related to this RFP.
3. Any submitted responses become the property of the City of Frostburg. The City of Frostburg and its agency partners will review the responses and investigate the qualifications of the team members and the demonstrated ability to perform satisfactorily, as well as the financial stability of the firms submitting the responses. The City of Frostburg reserves the right to require either telephone, video, or personal interviews with each firm submitting a response. The City of Frostburg reserves the right to reject any or all responses in any order or combination, accept or reject any portion of a response, make modifications to the project after submission of the responses, and waive any formalities in responses if they deem it is in the best interest of the City of Frostburg to do so, without liability on the part of the City.
4. Neither this Request for Proposals nor the City's consideration of any proposal shall create any contract, express or implied, any contractual obligation by the City to any respondent, or any other obligation by the City to any respondent. The City makes no promise, express or implied, regarding whether it will enter into an agreement with any respondent or regarding the manner in which it will consider the submitted responses to this RFP.
5. Applicants should note that freedom of information statutes give any person ("a requesting party") the right to obtain government documents unless the documents (or portions thereof) are exempt from disclosure as specifically enumerated in the applicable statute. The City does not intend to release proposal documents until such time as a development agreement is entered into with the successful applicant, as such earlier release may cause substantial harm to

bidders' competitive positions. Information that is exempt from disclosure includes, for example, trade secrets and confidential commercial and financial information. Applicants are solely responsible for marking the applicable portions of their proposals as "confidential". Failure to designate information as confidential or making substantial portions or the entirety of a bid submission as confidential in an arbitrary manner may result in disclosure to a requesting party.

Other Conditions

1. American Rescue Plan Act Funding. The entirety of the Project will be funded with American Rescue Plan Act funding received by the City of Frostburg. The contract provisions to follow must be incorporated into the contract to be executed by the Frostburg Mayor and City Council and the Proposer.