



**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NH**  
**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS**  
**RFQ # 15-25**  
**The City of Portsmouth Seeks Qualified Consultants to**  
**Evaluate and Update Its Master Plan**

The City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire (“the City”) and its Planning Board (“Board”) individually and/or collectively, are requesting proposals from qualified, multi-disciplinary Consultants (“Consultant” or “Respondent”) to assist the City with the preparation of a new Master Plan, which will necessarily include a comprehensive inventory of the City’s current resources and services. The ultimate scope of work will be subject to negotiation and relevant legal requirements; however, the provision of a robust Existing Conditions Report informed by a review of the current Master Plan and other recently completed plans is an indispensable first step.

The City seeks a Letter of Interest with Statement of Qualifications from Respondents detailing their capacity for and relevant experience with innovative approaches to evaluating and preparing Master Plans in comparable municipalities, placing special emphasis on prior successful thorough public engagement methods.

**Sealed Qualifications, plainly marked RFQ # 15-25, Consulting Services, 2024 Master Plan Evaluation and Update” on the outside of the mailing envelope, addressed to the Purchasing Department, City Hall, Third Floor, 1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH 03801, will be due at 2:00 pm on Monday, November 4th, 2024.**

The deadline for questions and requests for additional information is **Tuesday, October 15th, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.** Requests for additional information and questions will only be accepted in writing and may be submitted to [purchasing@cityofportsmouth.com](mailto:purchasing@cityofportsmouth.com). Answers will not be sent directly to interested parties. Written answers to questions will be posted on the City of Portsmouth Finance / Purchasing Department’s website under the project heading in the form of an addendum by **Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024.**

The City of Portsmouth reserves the right to reject any or all statements of qualifications, to waive technical or legal deficiencies, to request references, to proceed or not to proceed with any subsequent proposal process, or to negotiate without further process any contract as may be in the best interest of the City.

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Settled in 1623, Portsmouth is the nation's third-oldest city with a rich heritage as a working seaport and the home of the State's only deep-water port. Portsmouth lies 60 miles north of Boston, Massachusetts and 50 miles south of Portland, Maine. The City has a land area of 15.4 sq. miles and a population of approximately 22,500 residents. Portsmouth is an economic and cultural hub for seacoast New Hampshire and adjacent towns in Maine. The City's abundance of historical, artistic, cultural, and natural resources, and extensive dining options attract a diverse group of residents and visitors.

Portsmouth's favorable business climate and proximity to educational facilities provide fertile ground for a variety of industries, including technology, finance, biotech and health. In addition, Pease International Tradeport provides more than 10,000 jobs. The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, in adjacent Kittery, Maine, is also a significant employer.

All these positive attributes combine to create a vibrant and dynamic community.

## PROJECT PURPOSE

Under New Hampshire law, the Board is required to prepare and periodically amend and update the Master Plan. Portsmouth's current [Master Plan](#), "Portsmouth 2025" was adopted in 2017 ("current Master Plan"). Since 2017, the City has completed or will complete several other plans and studies, including but not limited to: 1) Climate Action Plan, 2) Market Square Master Plan, 3) Parking Needs Study, and 4) Bike Pedestrian Master Plan. Updates to the [Economic Development](#) and [Housing Existing Conditions](#) reports were prepared in 2014 and made part of the current Master Plan.

The Master Plan preparation process presents an opportunity to take a snapshot of the City now, to consider the ways the City has changed, to hear from a representative sample of constituencies, to identify current visions, goals and priorities, and to use this information to adopt a comprehensive vision for the future which has been endorsed by the community.

The Consultant will work with City staff and the Board to prepare a new Master Plan in accordance with statutory requirements and with the goal of adoption by the Board no more than 18 months after signing of a contract. This project to evaluate and update the Master Plan will:

### 1. INVENTORY EXISTING COMMUNITY METRICS AND PLANS

#### a. Metrics

- i. Existing Conditions Report - provide a robust analysis of the current Master Plan with respect to existing conditions and trends
- ii. Evaluate progress on recommendations contained in the current Master Plan and determine which recommendations remain relevant for inclusion in or exclusion from the new Master Plan
- iii. Consider regional planning efforts from other communities, including the Rockingham Planning Commission's Regional Master Plan and the master plans of abutting towns
- iv. To the extent not covered by the above, update community data regarding:
  1. Demographic Information

2. Environment & Sustainability
3. Land Use & Zoning
4. Recreation & Open Space
5. Arts & Culture
6. Transportation & Mobility [Active transportation and context-sensitive transportation planning]
7. Housing Supply and Trends
8. Commercial & Economic Development
9. Municipal Facilities & Services

**b. Reference and Respond to Findings In:**

- i. Climate Action Plan
- ii. Market Square Master Plan
- iii. Parking Needs Study
- iv. Bike Pedestrian Master Plan

**2. COLLECT DATA & IDENTIFY EMERGING TRENDS AND IMPORTANT AREAS OF FOCUS**

**a. Infrastructure Capacities:**

- i. Water supply
- ii. Sewer collection and disposal
- iii. Energy supplies and transportation adequacies

**b. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:**

- i. Identify areas in need of improvement
- ii. Identify how to improve
- iii. Determine method used to reach out to and gather feedback from specific populations

**c. Complete Streets**

**d. Bicycle-Friendly Community and Walk-Friendly Community Designations**

**e. Climate Change & Sustainability**

**f. Availability of Affordable Housing:**

- i. Low- and middle-income residents
- ii. Those “aging in place”

**g. Development Projects Completed Under the Current Master Plan:**

- i. Public perception
- ii. Future growth patterns

**h. Zoning:**

- i. Evaluate whether to expand the existing form-based or character-based section of the zoning ordinance from the core of the downtown to other areas of the City, or
- ii. Edit and simplify existing code

**3. ENGAGE THE PUBLIC**

**a. Robust Public Input Process**

- i. Engage and involve citizens of many ages and demographic characteristics
  1. E.g., the Board has begun outreach to students from Portsmouth High School to engage them in this process

2. Include the City's Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment and Historic District Commission for their input regarding efficacy of existing regulations and policies
- ii. Combine personal interaction and technological outreach sessions
- iii. Outline proposed methods

#### **4. UTILIZE TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION**

##### **a. Sustainable City**

- i. To the extent possible, the new Master Plan should move the City forward as a sustainable city
- ii. Incorporate a GIS model as a tool to be used in future planning efforts
- iii. Take information from the City's current GIS and add information about land uses at the property level
- iv. Improve zoning models

##### **b. Data Visualization**

- i. The City is looking for advanced, cutting-edge digital technology and visioning
- ii. Creative 3d visioning models that improve upon what the City has on its website
- iii. Smart maps
- iv. Easy access from the website
- v. Provide answers to questions the City and the Board have not asked with respect to technology and innovative solutions
  1. E.g., is the level of technological advancement realistic at the municipal level? If not, can it be scaled?
  2. Provide specific examples of innovative approaches from previous experience that have not been contemplated by this RFP, but may inspire the City and the Board

#### **5. UPDATE THE MASTER PLAN**

- a. Prepare a new Master Plan in full compliance with RSA 674, and as further described herein.
  - i. The Consultant shall provide the effort and resources for all aspects of this project, including:
    1. Public meeting facilitation and presentations
    2. City Committee and Board meeting attendance and presentations
    3. Report writing and revising
    4. Outreach and communications
    5. Respondent should provide concrete examples of successes and lessons learned from failures

#### **SCOPE OF WORK**

The Consultant's role will be to evaluate the current and prepare a new Master Plan pursuant to RSA 674, and as further described herein. The Consultant shall provide specific action

recommendations to achieve the identified vision, goals and priorities as informed by the public participatory process.

City staff and the Board will work closely with the Consultant, providing management, support and supervision as necessary.

### **1) PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN SECTIONS**

Consultant will incorporate public input and other data as described above to work with City staff and the Board to develop preliminary ideas for specific updates and additions to the current Master Plan that will guide future development and growth in Portsmouth. This phase of the work shall also include a discussion, or discussions as required, with City staff and the Board of the optional sections of a master plan as outlined in the statute at RSA 674:2 III. City staff and the Board anticipate, and the Consultant may assume, the likelihood of needing most or all of these statutorily optional sections of the new Master Plan.

### **2) PUBLIC VISIONING AND INTERACTION - STAGE TWO OF ENGAGING THE PUBLIC**

As described above, Consultant should incorporate ideas from a variety of sources: including but not limited to, the public, City Council, key stakeholders (e.g., historical, environmental, or cultural groups), private contractors, etc., to ensure that the City's future planning and development reflects a multitude of perspectives. After collecting data and seeking input, the City expects that Consultant will report its findings and engage purposefully and repeatedly with the public. This stage of the process will allow the City to determine levels of public acceptance of existing and possible new patterns of development for inclusion in the preliminary sections of the new Master Plan. This will require visual representations of concepts surfaced during data collection and evaluation and further developed with City staff and the Board.

### **3) PREPARE FINAL MASTER PLAN SECTIONS**

Consultant will work with City staff and the Board to develop the final sections of the new Master Plan. This process is anticipated to be largely a Consultant team effort, with regular check-ins with City staff and the Board as required to ensure a collaborative final product or set of products. The City is open to Consultant creativity and suggestions on how to effectively implement this portion for the work.

### **4) FINAL PUBLIC AND CITY PRESENTATION**

This will involve a final presentation of the results of the work and the new Master Plan to the public and the City Council. Subsequently, the Board will proceed to adopt the plan.

## **Project Management**

The Consultant shall establish a clear and consistent communication framework for the duration of the project. New Master Plan content draft review will be coordinated with regular updates between the Consultant, City staff and the Board. Contract management details will be coordinated with appropriate City staff.

## **PROJECT SCHEDULE**

The selected Consultant shall begin work within two weeks of contract signing, with a schedule to be established by mutual agreement of City staff, the Board and the Consultant, with a goal of adoption by the Planning Board no later 18 months after signing of a contract.

## **PROJECT DELIVERABLES**

The Response shall specify the deliverables, which shall include at a minimum:

- One (1) reproducible hard copy and (1) electronic copy each in Adobe PDF and MS Word including narrative and graphics
- Graphics in photos and vector-based (such as Illustrator) formats
- Any maps and supporting map data prepared by the Consultant for the report, provided in pdf and GIS format compatible with ArcMap 10.0 and referenced to the coordinate system in NH State Plan, NAD83 (1996) with units in feet
- Spreadsheets and charts in MS Excel format including support data for all tables and graphs included in the report

All information, data, documents, photos, surveys, computer records, and other materials of any kind acquired or developed by the Consultant pursuant to this project shall be the property of the City of Portsmouth.

## **CITY ROLE**

The City will act as the client working on a regular basis with the Consultant and will include the Board in the process. City Staff are responsible for administering the financial aspects of the Consultant's work on this project. City staff will provide information on related studies and planning initiatives and will make available the City's GIS data layers that have relevance to the project scope.

## **RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS**

Responses shall include the following and shall be organized using each of the elements listed below as section headings:

### **A. Cover Page**

1. Title of Response
2. Respondent Organization Name
3. Corporate Status
4. Business Address
5. Business Phone
6. Website
7. Contact Name and Information (email and telephone number) for this Response

### **B. Letter of Interest**

The City seeks a Letter of Interest, not to exceed ten (10) pages, outlining Consultant's qualifications and experience completing master planning efforts, also termed comprehensive and similarly-labeled plans in other jurisdictions.

- C. Firm Description: Provide a brief description of the firm including firm size and area of specialization, location of corporate headquarters, and location of office proposed to handle this project.
- D. Project Team: Provide names and resumes of key staff who will be assigned to the project. Each team member's education, relevant experience and qualifications shall be listed. The project manager shall be clearly identified. If different Consultants will be teaming together, indicate the lead Consultant.
- E. Project Understanding: Provide a statement summarizing how the Consultant and/or project team is particularly qualified for this project.
- F. Scope of Services: Describe the Consultant's approach and technical plan for accomplishing the work listed herein. Consultant is encouraged to elaborate and improve on the tasks listed in the RFP; however, the Consultant shall not delete any requested scope tasks.
- G. Project Schedule: Provide a schedule, itemized by task, for completing the scope of work.
- H. Project Budget: Provide a proposed project budget itemized by task and total project cost stated as a firm fixed fee. Labor and direct costs should be identified by task. Hourly rates for project staff shall also be provided.
- I. Comparable Projects: Description of related project experience and role of key staff.
- J. References: At least three (3) references for similar projects, including current contact name and phone number.
- K. Submission Deadline  
**Sealed Letters of Interest with Statement of Qualifications, plainly marked "REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS #15-25 For Master Plan Update" on the outside of the mailing envelope**, addressed to the Finance/Purchasing Department, City Hall, 1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH 03801 will be accepted **no later than 2:00 pm on Monday, November 4th, 2024**. Late submissions will not be accepted.
  - a. In total, three (3) copies of the submission, including attachments, are required. Two (2) of the copies shall be spirally bound (or other semi-permanent binding method). One (1) copy should be unbound and single-sided to facilitate document reproduction if necessary.
  - b. Pages shall be no larger than letter-size (8 1/2 x 11 inches) or, if folded to that dimension, twice letter size (11 by 17 inches). It is acceptable for the two (2) bound copies to be double-sided.
  - c. The submission shall also be submitted in pdf or pdf-compatible digital format.
- L. The City reserves the right to request financial references and current bonding limits.

## **FUNDING**

The maximum project budget currently available for this project is \$250,000 with a possible increase up to \$400,000 depending on final adoption of the FY2026 Municipal Budget, inclusive of labor and all project expenses, \$10,000 of which is allocated to the Rockingham Regional Planning Commission for assistance with materials including regional data trends. The total proposed budget for the tasks included in this RFQ shall not exceed this amount without prior City approval.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Responses will be evaluated according to the following:

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Responsiveness to submission requirements       | 5 points  |
| 2. Qualifications of firm and project team members | 35 points |
| 3. Previous related work and references            | 30 points |
| 4. Strength of proposed scope of services          | 30 points |

The City, at its discretion, may recommend a Consultant's firm outright or select one or more finalist(s) for additional in-person and/or telephone interviews.

## **CONTRACT DOCUMENT**

Upon selection, the highest-ranking firm will be invited to enter into contract negotiations with the City. When the contract is executed by both parties, the Consultant will be instructed to commence providing the work outlined in the contract. All information, data, documents, photos, computer records, and other materials of any kind acquired or developed by the Consultant pursuant to this project shall be the property of the City of Portsmouth. If the City is unable to reach agreement with the highest-ranking firm, the City may enter into negotiations with the next highest-ranking firm.

## **INDEMNIFICATION AND INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS**

The Contract will require the Consultant to agree to pay on behalf of and hold harmless the City of Portsmouth for all claims arising in whole or in part from its work on behalf of the City. Consultant will be required to maintain insurance in such form as will protect the Consultant from claims and liabilities for damages for bodily injury, including accidental death, and for property damage, which may arise from operations under this contract. Consultant shall also be required to maintain professional liability insurance. Amounts and coverages shall be subject to contract negotiations.

## **RESERVATIONS OF RIGHTS**

The City reserves the right to negotiate a contract for specific tasks identified in this scope of work depending on funding availability.

The City reserves the right to reject any or all submittals, to waive technical or legal deficiencies, to proceed or not to proceed with any subsequent interview process, or to negotiate without further process any contract as may be in the best interest of the City.



The City further reserves the right to undertake such investigation as it deems necessary to evaluate the qualifications of the Consultant and to evaluate its submittal. Firms may be asked to submit releases as part of the investigation and review of qualifications. Failure to provide a release if requested will result in disqualification. All concepts, designs, information and cost-savings ideas that may be generated during the selection process shall become the property of the City of Portsmouth.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Any entity that enters into a contact for goods or services with the City of Portsmouth or any of its boards, agencies and departments and any recipient of city funds shall: implement an employment nondiscrimination policy prohibiting discrimination in hiring, discharging, promoting, or demoting, matters of compensation, or any other employment-related decision or benefit on account of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, age, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or marital or familial status; and shall not discriminate in the performance of the contract on account of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, age, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or marital or familial status.