



**Draft**

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **City of Columbus Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance Rewrite (Chapter 114 and 90)**

***RFP Release Date: January 21, 2025***

***RFP Due Date: February 21, 2025, 4:30 PM***

***Submit one digital copy to:  
MKornmann@ColumbusWI.gov***

***City of Columbus Department of Community and Economic Development***

## **A. Background Information**

Columbus, Wisconsin (population 5,448), has a rich history that makes it a desirable place to live. The City of Columbus, through its Request for Proposals (RFP), is seeking qualified planning and zoning consultants, multi-disciplinary firms or teams to undertake a complete zoning and subdivision ordinance rewrite project. The new zoning and subdivision code must be easy to read, understandable by the public, and enforceable by the City. The project is NOT a simple update to the existing ordinance.

The original zoning code was written in the 1970's with one minor update in 2008. Parts of the code are no longer consistent or follow state statutes. Effective code review by staff becomes difficult when working with developers who are used being very efficient. The existing code does not function in an era of technology that provides fast answers and overly burdensome standards and processes. While Municode may still show stormwater and erosion control ordinances as part of the zoning code, they have recently been amended and relocated to their own respective chapters within the municipal code.

The main thrust of the project is to establish a new zoning code that is easy to read, understandable by the public, and enforceable by the City of Columbus. The ordinance should consider form-based or context sensitive applications, creating design and infill standards for development in the City's downtown district, the business and industrial parks, as well as growth areas that, as identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Columbus would like to establish zoning regulations that are more reflective of the character of newer development while preserving the historic characteristics of an older city that is an exurb of a metropolitan area.

## **B. Project Overview and Objectives**

Broad objectives for this project include, but are not limited to:

1. Build-off the work completed as summarized in the prior section to update the Zoning and Subdivision Codes in a manner consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and other plans.
2. Strengthen opportunities to diversify the City's housing stock, including thoughtful missing middle housing, affordable rental and homeowner units, accessory dwelling units, and mixed-use developments appropriate within the context of Columbus.
3. Strengthen opportunities to practice gentle density reforms while maintaining general compatibility with historic development patterns, including but not limited to reducing lot area, lot width, lot setbacks, street width, minimum open space, and minimum off-street parking and increasing dwelling units allowed by right and through conditional use permits.

4. Improve walkability and non-motorized transportation within zoning and subdivision regulations.
5. Identify opportunities to consolidate existing zoning districts and reduce the need for requests for Planned Unit Development approvals or unnecessary conditional use permit requirements.
6. Improve the manner in which the City regulates permitted and conditional uses within residential, industrial, and commercial zoning districts. Create new ways that are user-friendly and reduce the need for City Staff to make interpretations for uses not listed within current use tables. Consider what types of uses merit CUP vs those that could be allowed as permitted or special use permits. Develop recommended zoning uses, design and performance standards for use consistent with the comprehensive plan. The sign ordinance specifically needs attention with an options for supporting downtown revitalization.
7. Streamline development review processes, including allowances for administrative review and approvals for smaller site or building additions, modifications, or accessory structures. Parking standards for all uses is especially needed.
8. Review and revise the historic preservation ordinance ensuring fairness and consistency in processing designation of landmarks and certificate of appropriateness. Include permitting processes that streamline approvals. Ensure that proposed code maintains the City's Certified Local Government status and provides for appeals in alignment with state statutes.
9. Review and revise conditional use permit code to be consistent with state statutes.
10. Improve and consolidate site and building design review standards. There may be site and building design guidelines from sub area plans that could be generally applied throughout the City, minimizing the need for multiple design overlay districts.
11. Improve the user friendliness of the zoning and subdivision codes. Improve and modernize definitions reducing interpretation issues and conflicting definitions. Incorporate the use of tables, graphs, figures, color, and illustrations to explain key zoning regulations. Improve the overall organization of the codes, reducing or eliminating the need to consult multiple sections of the zoning code to address basic use, dimension, and performance standards and exceptions. Incorporation of Landscaping and Lighting Standards within the Zoning Code.
12. Review and propose revise shoreland zoning ordinance.
13. Improve and standardize public hearing and adjacent property owner notification requirements for various zoning permits to meet or exceed minimum Wisconsin State Statute requirements.
14. Update zoning and subdivision ordinances to be consistent with applicable Wisconsin State Statutes. The City expects that the selected consultant team will make recommendations that are

consistent with Wisconsin law and regulations. City staff will consult with the City Attorney if legal questions arise as the ordinance is rewritten at City staff's discretion, and the attorney will be involved in codifying the final product to make sure it meshes properly with other City ordinances. However, the consultant team should not have the expectation that the City Attorney will be actively involved as the new ordinance is drafted.

15. Develop a new official zoning map, including overlay districts, based on the work completed for adoption by the Plan Commission and City Council as part of the repeal and adoption of the new zoning and subdivision codes.
16. Utilize input from a broad set of community stakeholders including various City committees/commissions/board, City staff, residents, property, business owners, real estate and development professionals. City staff will coordinate public input meetings. It is expected that the consultant help prepare materials for use at public input meetings. Consultant will not be expected to attend public input meetings.

## **C. Scope of Work and Deliverables**

The selected Consultant will provide a full range of municipal planning services required to create the new Zoning and Subdivision codes. The desired services include, but are not specifically limited to the following:

1. Plan Review & Background Analysis. The consultant will review the pertinent policies, strategies and actions within the City's Comprehensive Plan and Outdoor Recreation Plan.
2. Code & Zoning Map Diagnosis. The consultant will work with City staff in assessing the advantages and shortcomings of the existing codes. This assessment should include the following:
  - a. Provide an analysis of the City's existing zoning and subdivision codes, highlighting its strengths and shortcomings based on the consultant's experience, review of national best land use practices, City adopted plans and project objectives.
  - b. Complete an analysis of existing nonconforming lots, uses, and nonconforming primary structures using available GIS data.
  - c. Identify and categorize actual existing lot sizes, lot widths, lot depths, floor area ratios, setbacks, etc. to understand the existing built environment and inform subdivision and zoning reforms.
  - d. Evaluate conditional uses and advise as to what conditions, if any, should apply to warrant designation as a conditional use vs a permitted use.
  - e. Identify components that could provide barriers to achieving mixed uses, affording housing, and housing diversity (such as separation of uses, large building setbacks, low densities, excessive parking requirements, excessive lot size, depth or width requirements, excessive street design standards, etc.)

- f. Provide a summary report of the code and map diagnosis for use in public and Plan Commission meetings.
3. Guidance regarding Best Practices. The consultant will be expected to provide guidance regarding modern best practices regarding zoning and subdivision codes relevant to communities like Columbus, as allowed under Wisconsin laws and regulations. This should include the use of visualize tools to explain proposed ordinance regulations and the benefits to achieving City land use goals for public and Plan Commission meetings.
4. Staff Meetings. The consultant should anticipate a sufficient number of meetings with City staff to develop the new zoning and subdivision codes. Consultants will need to present to the Plan Commission and City Council.
5. Public Outreach & Community Input. The proposal should incorporate key input session for City staff to receive community input.
6. Committee Meetings. The consultant should budget for an appropriate number of meetings with the Plan Commission to review key elements of the code development. The purpose of the meetings will be to establish project objectives, discuss alternatives, provide direction and review progress. The consultant shall clearly communicate how the regulatory effects of the proposed Ordinance may differ from the effects of the current Ordinance. Background information regarding subjects addressed in the new Ordinance, which are not addressed in the current Ordinance, should be provided. The consultant shall attend the public hearing on the adoption of the new codes and the City Council meeting to consider their adoption.
7. Drafting the new Zoning and Subdivision Codes and Maps. The consultant will prepare drafts of the zoning and subdivision codes for review by staff, Plan Commission and applicable committees, culminating in a final version to be acted upon by the Plan Commission and City Council. The consultant will prepare draft and final zoning maps, including applicable overlay zoning districts. The consultant shall provide a map to illustrate properties proposed for up or down zoning as part of the adoption of the new zoning code and map. The final ordinances shall be compatible with Municode, including formatting. The final zoning map shall be parcel based and compatible with ESRI.

These are the general requirements for the creation of new zoning and subdivision codes and are not intended to be an all-inclusive list of every task necessary to complete the project. It is expected that consultants will submit proposals that provide the City with more specific recommendations for approaches, tasks, and deliverables based on their expertise from past work on similar projects. Innovative approaches that meet the intent of the Plan Objectives and Scope of Work are welcomed, these could be presented as additional services or additional approaches in the consultant response if desired.

The City Council is expecting a not to exceed proposal.

The selected Consultant shall complete a final Zoning Code, Zoning Map and Subdivision Code that contain at a minimum those items described in the final Scope of Services. Format the documents to be incorporated as chapters within the existing City Municipal Code of Ordinances maintained by Municode. Easy to use charts, tables, checklists, graphics, images and photos within the ordinance are expected when necessary. The Consultant shall provide the City with electronic copies of any text, charts, tables, checklists, graphics, images and photos in their original file format.

The selected Consultant shall provide the City with an electronic copy of the final ordinance in Microsoft Word and PDF versions, including bookmarks and searchability features. The selected Consultant shall provide the final Zoning Map in a PDF format. The Consultant shall provide the City with an editable copy of all GIS data and a GIS map package of the Zoning Map using an ESRI platform. Zoning shapefiles or geodatabases shall be at the individual parcel level. Draft deliverables may be provided in Word or PDF format.

Throughout the entire process, extensive interaction is expected with City and contracted staff. The detailed schedule for the project shall be included in the consultant's proposal, and should bridge the 2025 and 2026 fiscal years. We are expecting to complete about half the project in 2025 and the other half in 2026.

#### **D. Existing Ordinance**

The City of Columbus Zoning Code of Ordinances include Chapters 114 of the City's Municipal Code. Related

The consultant will be expected to complete a comprehensive, independent review of the Zoning Ordinance. Below is a list of the overall ordinance elements that the consultant will be expected to update and review independently:

#### **Reference Links**

##### **City of Columbus Municipal Code**

[https://library.municode.com/wi/columbus/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=MUCO\\_CH\\_114ZO](https://library.municode.com/wi/columbus/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=MUCO_CH_114ZO)

##### **Comprehensive Plan**

<https://www.cityofcolumbuswi.com/DocumentCenter/View/3287/Columbus-WI-2040-Comprehensive-Plan>

##### **Outdoor and Recreation Plan**

[https://www.cityofcolumbuswi.com/DocumentCenter/View/3695/ColumbusOutdoorRecreationPlan\\_2021](https://www.cityofcolumbuswi.com/DocumentCenter/View/3695/ColumbusOutdoorRecreationPlan_2021)

## **E. RFP Requirements**

Consultants are asked to respond to this RFP by developing a proposal to fully meet the work associated with this project. Consultants are asked to submit a concise proposal describing their capacity to manage the project and their experience with similar projects. Samples of zoning ordinances/rewrites and public participation plans are expected. The proposals should include a clear outline of how the consultant will meet the objectives of the project.

The City of Columbus does not have a specific proposal format; however, the City expects the following information to be included with the proposals:

1. **Contact Information:** Consultant's name, address, phone number, email, along with the name and signature of the authorized agent and contact person.
2. **Firm History:** Brief history of the firm, including short case studies of similar projects carried out by the firm.
3. **Project Statement:** Statement of overall project understanding and general approach to meet project objectives and tasks of the project, description and modifications or expansion of the information provided.
4. **Time Schedule:** A detailed project time schedule for accomplishing the expected tasks and services, including start dates, major project milestones and anticipated completion dates. Time schedule should specifically identify how and when outreach to the public, staff, and elected officials occurs. The timeframe for project completion should be approximately twelve (12) months.
5. **Examples:** Demonstrate related projects that were completed for other communities that are similar to the City. Emphasis placed on projects include logical graphics and imagery within or as a supplement to a zoning ordinance should be emphasized.
6. **References:** A list of client references for whom the consultant has provided similar services including name, address, e-mail and phone number of a contact person for each reference. Indicate the type, scope and duration of the work done for each client.
7. **Project Manager Qualifications:** A statement indicating the qualifications of the key person who will be assigned as the project manager by the consultant and their responsibilities within the scope of services.
8. **Budget Proposal:** A proposed budget with level of effort for each member of the team and for each major task.
9. **Fee Schedule:** A fee schedule for personnel involved with the project.

## **F. General Selection Process**

A selection committee comprised of the City Attorney, Director of Economic Development and Planning, Zoning Administrator, and the City Planner will review the proposals based on the following criteria:

1. **Qualifications:** Qualifications and previous related work experience particularly related to similar sized communities.
2. **Understanding:** Demonstrated understanding of project objectives, tasks, and services.
3. **Price:** The proposed price/cost will be considered.
4. **Related projects:** Examples of related completed and in-progress projects.
5. **Proposal Quality:** Quality of requested submission requirements, including sample materials and proposal package.

The City of Columbus will select a short list of applicants to meet with the selection committee to clarify submitted proposals, provide supplemental information, confirm proposal representations and answer any questions.

## **G. Terms**

The City of Columbus reserves the right to accept or reject all proposals or parts thereof and reissue the RFP without stated cause. Upon selection of a consultant, the City of Columbus shall attempt to negotiate and reach a final agreement. If the City, for any reason, is unable to reach a final agreement with the selected consultant, the City then reserves the right to reject the selected consultant and negotiate with others.

The City of Columbus is not bound to accept the proposal with the lowest cost, but may accept the proposal that best meets the needs of the City.

## **H. RFP Schedule**

1. RFP Issued:
  - a. January 21, 2025
2. Questions due to the City (sent via email to [mkornmann@columbuswi.gov](mailto:mkornmann@columbuswi.gov))
  - a. By February 7, 2025
3. Proposals due to the City:
  - a. By February 21, 2025.
4. Possible interviews with finalists:
  - a. March 2025
5. Plan Commission Consultant Selection:
  - a. March/April 2025
6. Common Council Consultant Selection:
  - a. April 2025

## **I. Project Budget and Contract**



The consultants for this project will be retained by the City. Interested parties should provide a total cost to prepare the zoning ordinance to include hourly rates and estimated expenses associated with the project. The proposal shall include a not to exceed cost.

**J. Contact and Questions**

This Request For Proposals has been distributed by the City of Columbus Community and Economic Development Department. All questions or inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to:

Mike Kornman, Director of Community and Economic Development  
920-350-5894  
mkornmann@columbuswi.gov