COMPREHENSIVE PLAN/DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Date Issued: June 20, 2022
Due Date: July 22, 2022
PROJECT SUMMARY

The Town of Matthews, North Carolina is seeking submittals from qualified planning professionals (individual firms or teams of consultants) for a new Comprehensive Plan. The Plan will serve as a regular reference guide for Town staff, officials, and partner organizations as they make decisions for the future of the community.

The Town is interested in firms that are capable of providing professional services including: research and analysis of historic, present, and future land use patterns; limited market analysis; mapping; creative and diverse methods of public engagement and community visioning; development of recommendations for successful plan implementation; and document preparation.

Either in conjunction with or parallel to the comprehensive planning process, the Town would also like to develop a new Downtown Master Plan. The first downtown plan and design guidelines were adopted in the 1990s. Since that time, the Town has updated the Master Plan and completed a Downtown Streetscape Improvement Plan, Downtown Mobility and Parking Study, and a Downtown Streetscape Pattern Book. The new Downtown Master Plan should synthesize the existing documents, develop new design guidelines, and recommend specific implementation strategies. (See Page 4 for additional information.)

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Located in the southeast corner of Mecklenburg County, Matthews is a thriving community of approximately 30,000 residents. With its vibrant downtown, small-town feel, and access to big-city amenities, Matthews is one of the most highly-desired locations in the greater Charlotte, North Carolina region. As the popularity of communities like Matthews—with its small-town living combined with an urban feel—continues to grow, the Town is facing unprecedented development pressure. With municipal limits of just 17 square miles and little greenfield left, the Town is looking for strategies for managing growth, redeveloping where appropriate, and keeping the small-town charm that draws people to the community.
RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

The Matthews Land Use Plan was most recently updated and approved in 2012. While that plan addressed many issues that remain relevant today, there have been dramatic changes in the world in the past ten years, and the needs of the Town and its citizens continue to evolve.

Since the adoption of the current Land Use Plan, the Town has continued to develop small area plans and location-specific studies. These plans and studies should be evaluated for incorporation into the new Comprehensive Plan.

In 2018, the Town held a public meeting to kick off a visioning process. More than 100 residents participated in identifying positive and negative future outcomes for Matthews. Over 500 ideas, concerns, and issues were identified and ranked by citizens. The ideas were reviewed for common themes and further refined into a series of Vision Statements. (Our Town, Our Vision) The Vision Statements have since been expanded to include objectives, initiatives, and measures of progress. These Vision Statements should form a solid foundation for the work of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Town has engaged with the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute to develop a housing needs assessment that is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2022. It is expected that results from the study will be incorporated into the Plan. The housing assessment will address:

- Who needs affordable housing in Matthews and how well does the current stock of housing options serve this population? What are the gaps and opportunities?
- What does “affordability” mean for the Town of Matthews and for towns like Matthews across the country? How do residents understand and describe the need for affordable housing in the Town of Matthews?
- What housing policies and programs in other communities could inform the Town of Matthews as they consider next steps?
- What interconnections between affordable housing, transportation and land use policy should the Town consider in developing a future comprehensive plan?
A successful Comprehensive Plan will include the following:

• Market Study. As part of the existing conditions report the Consultant should conduct a limited market study for the Town. The market study should be used to link land use and development recommendations to existing and future market realities. What are the best opportunities for Matthews?

• The retail centers in Matthews include “big box” retail, and given retail trends, occupancy of, as well as demand for, such large-scale retail spaces may decrease over time. In addition, US 74/Independence Boulevard (where the majority of the Town’s retail is located) is transitioning to an expressway/toll lane within the expected planning horizon of the Plan. The Town wishes to be proactive in considering the future evolution of some sites along the corridor. What will remain open and what will be redeveloped in the coming years? How can these sites be reinvented? What form will redevelopment take? How can the Town facilitate the transition to ensure that portions of the corridor remain viable business locations?

• Because the Comprehensive Plan will serve as a regular reference guide for Town staff, officials, and partner organizations, it should include an implementation plan. Plan recommendations should identify short-term actions, long-term policy decisions, potential sources of funding, implementation mechanisms, and implementation partnership opportunities, where possible.

• The Town is along the future Silver Line corridor, with four stops located within the community. The line is intended to open in roughly 2036. How does this figure into the Town’s growth strategy? How do we take advantage of this transportation investment that connects Matthews to the greater Charlotte region? (See the Lynx Silver Line Transit Oriented Development Study for information on the Silver Line.)
**DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN (OPTIONAL ELEMENT)**

Either in conjunction with or parallel to the comprehensive planning process, the Town would like to develop a new Downtown Master Plan. The first downtown plan and design guidelines were adopted in the 1990s. Since that time, the Town has updated the Master Plan and completed a Downtown Streetscape Improvement Plan, Downtown Mobility and Parking Study, and a Downtown Streetscape Pattern Book. The new Downtown Master Plan should synthesize the existing documents, develop new design guidelines, and recommend specific implementation strategies.

If submitting a stand-alone Downtown Master Plan proposal, please follow the project management guidelines on Page 6 and the submittal instructions on Page 7. Consultants interested in the Downtown Master Plan only are welcome to suggest an alternate phasing plan.

**Key Topic Areas for Downtown Plan**

- The Lynx Silver Line will feature a station located in the heart of downtown. How should downtown grow and adapt to this significant change?
- Stumptown Park is located on South Trade Street and currently functions as a small central park where all major Town events and festivals are held. The Town also has several facilities in the area, including the Matthews Community Center and the McDowell Arts Center. Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools plans to tear down and rebuild the existing Matthews Elementary School (which is also in the area), and preliminary conversations indicate a willingness to partner with the Town to fulfill a vision for a larger Town park on the site. The Town wishes to create a large-scale vision for this area of downtown that will see significant changes over the next few years.
- In addition to multiple downtown studies, the Town has a Historic Urban Core zoning district and a larger Downtown Overlay district. Determining which rules apply where can be confusing. The Consultant should provide analysis and critique of current ordinance language and recommend specific text changes.
REQUIRED SCOPE OF SERVICES

It is the Town’s expectation that the selected consultant will fully lead this process. To achieve this goal, all expectations below must be identified within the consultant’s proposal.

Phase 1

Organization and background research

- Initial meeting with Town staff to review the project timeline, schedule meetings, and begin the process of data acquisition.
- Review all existing plans, maps, documents, data, and other materials relevant to the project.
- Conduct initial meetings with key elected and appointed officials, and steering committee.
- Present initial findings.

Phase 2

Develop and implement an extensive and innovative community engagement program that will provide input from community members of all ages and backgrounds. This should include a variety of workshops and participatory events of different types and sizes. Online community engagement software/tools may also be used to provide a well-rounded community engagement program. At a minimum, the community engagement program should address the following:

- Identification of stakeholders groups.
- Engagement strategies and activities geared to reaching all identified stakeholder groups.
- Timeline for community engagement activities.
- Communication methods for sharing information.
- Strategy for effective and consistent messaging across platforms and messengers.
- Meaningful involvement of lower-income and underrepresented populations.

Phase 3

- Develop Plan goals, objectives, and implementation strategies based on technical data and public input.
- Draft materials for review and comment by the Town.
- Analyze consistency of current Town ordinances and policies in relationship to the Plan goals and objectives.
- Prepare draft documents for public review and comment and present to the Planning Board and Town Board of Commissioners.
- Prepare final documents and present at all associated meetings for adoption of the plan. (This will include a public hearing, Planning Board meeting, and Board of Commissioners meeting.) The plan should be presented in a format and language that is user-friendly and easily understood by the general public.
PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Consultant will manage the project and coordination of any subconsultants and all project activities, including meetings with staff and stakeholder groups. The Consultant will identify a project lead from their team to act as the direct point of contact for town staff.

Throughout the project, the Consultant will be responsible for the following:

• Creation of maps necessary for the project, including working maps and maps of potential and final preferred land use in ArcGIS format. (Existing town data layers will be provided to the Consultant as needed.)
• Electronic copies of all flyers, hand-outs, and other materials used to announce events and/or gather input from the community (in both pdf and native formats)
• Materials and partial staffing needed for community engagement activities. (Town staff will also be involved in engagement activities.)
• Creation of, and content for, any on-line engagement tools used for the project.
• A minimum of bi-weekly updates, primarily via e-mail or telephone/video and occasionally in-person, to update Town staff on project status, discuss issues, and review drafts.
• Periodic written status reports and limited status update presentations may also be required to the Planning Board and Town Board of Commissioners. (Updates may be handled via Zoom.)

TIMELINE

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue RFP:</td>
<td>June 20, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responses Due:</td>
<td>July 22, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Responses:</td>
<td>July 25-August 5, 2022</td>
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<td>Interviews:</td>
<td>August 9-August 19, 2022</td>
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<td>Board of Commissioners Action</td>
<td>August 22, 2022</td>
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<td>Project Kick-Off:</td>
<td>September 2022</td>
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It is anticipated that the project duration will be approximately 12 months from the time a contract is awarded to the Consultant to the presentation of a draft Plan for adoption by the Board of Commissioners. Responses should include any recommended deviations from this approximate timeline.
SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS

Submit an electronic copy of the proposal in PDF format to Jay Camp, Planning Director, (jcamp@matthewsnc.gov) and Nadine Bennett, Senior Planner (nbennett@matthewsnc.gov). All responses must be received by 5:00 pm on Friday, July 22, 2022. Questions should be directed to Nadine Bennett.

Responses should be limited to a maximum of 20 pages, not including resumes. Responses exceeding 20 pages may be removed from consideration. Examples should be provided via web links.

Responses must include the information listed below:

1. Cover letter

2. Qualifications: A description of the firm with emphasis on work related to Comprehensive Plans (and/or Downtown Master Plans) for towns of similar size. A list of recent projects (with links to completed plans) on which principal staff have worked and description of their responsibilities. For the key project team members (Project Manager and Key Project Staff), include the following information:
   • Professional background, experience on similar projects and years of experience
   • Primary office location
   • Role each individual will take on the project

3. Statement of Project Approach, including the following information:
   • Overall approach to the project.
   • Scope of work.
   • Project schedule.
   • Innovative community engagement.

4. Detailed outline of Consultant’s management plan, including proposed staff, availability, roles/responsibilities.

5. If the team includes subconsultants, a detailed explanation of the responsibilities of each firm.

6. Project references, with names and phone numbers of contact persons.

7. Consultant’s expectations of the Town, including a brief description of the services and tasks that the Consultant would expect the Town to provide.

8. Provide firm’s current rate sheet along with a proposed cost to complete this project based on your understanding of the RFP. The cost should be broken down into the sub-projects (such as the market study and Downtown Master Plan if proposed as a part of this project) and should include expenses (printing, travel, etc.)