

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL:
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE
FOR THE
TOWN OF NISKAYUNA
(Schenectady County, New York)

TO: Qualified Professional Planning Consultants

FROM: Jaime Puccioni, Town Supervisor

RFP TIMELINE: Release Date: January 23, 2024
Proposal **Due** Date: **February 13, 2024 at 3:00 PM**

VIRTUAL CONSULANT INFO MEETING: **February 5, 2024 (Virtual- via Google Meet)**
Please request login prior to February 2, 2024 at 3pm

MAILING ADDRESS: Town of Niskayuna
1 Niskayuna Circle,
Niskayuna, NY 12309

PROJECT MANAGER CONTACT: Laura Robertson, Town Planner
TELEPHONE: 518-386-4531
EMAIL: lrobertson@niskayuna.org

ALTERNATE CONTACT: Clark Henry, Assistant Planner
TELEPHONE: 518-386-4539
EMAIL: chenry2@niskayuna.org

The Town of Niskayuna (hereinafter referred to as “the Town”) is soliciting proposals from qualified professional planning consultants for assistance with the completion of an implementable, action-oriented 10-year Comprehensive Plan update for the Town of Niskayuna, which is situated in Schenectady County, New York.

A copy of the Request for Proposals (RFP) is attached. A letter of interest along with a proposal and other required documents must be submitted to the email or mailing address listed above **no later than February 13, 2024 at 3:00 PM.**

The submitting party acknowledges the right of the Town to reject any or all proposals, or parts thereof, and to waive any informalities or irregularities in any proposal received. The award of proposal will be based on presentations and negotiation between the Town and submitting party. **All proposals shall remain valid and in full effect for a period of ninety (90) days after the deadline for submission of proposals.**

The Town encourages Minority/Women/Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (M/W/D/BE) to respond to this advertisement.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL:
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE
FOR THE
TOWN OF NISKAYUNA
(Schenectady County, New York)

1. Background Information

Status of Town Comprehensive Plan Project

In 2014, the Town completed their “2013 Comprehensive Plan” that set out broad goals and objectives for the immediate and future preservation of valued community characteristics, while allowing for the enhancement of smart and sustainable growth. Encouraging diverse housing, ensuring adequate open space and recreation, examining traffic and transportation, preserving historical, cultural, architectural and archaeological heritage, strengthening Niskayuna’s connection to the Mohawk River, maintaining commercial and retail economic areas, and encouraging Climate Smart growth comprise a major portion of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan goals, which has played a key role in development in the Town in the last 10 years.

The Town of Niskayuna is a suburban community located in the easterly portion of Schenectady County adjacent to the City of Schenectady. The appeal of the Town lies in its livability factors – a strong school district but also parks, open spaces and natural areas, walking and bike paths, traditional tree lined neighborhoods, historic areas, and easily accessible and diverse shopping areas.

In May 2022, the Niskayuna Town Board appointed a Comprehensive Plan Committee tasked with updating the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Committee has been meeting monthly since the summer 2022. As of this date, the Committee has researched best practices for comprehensive plans, reviewed the Town’s 2013 comprehensive plan and analyzed the plans for several surrounding communities. Additional accomplishments include the establishment of a Google work space environment for sharing ideas and uploading pictures, drafting a vision statement, launching an outreach survey to gather input from residents, conducting in person meetings to gather public comments, and the creation of a list of topics that should be addressed in the revised plan. They are currently working on revisions to the parks and open space chapter.

- 2. Purpose** – The Town is seeking proposals from qualified professional planning consultants with considerable experience in the area of comprehensive planning and zoning to provide assistance to the update of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan.

The goal for the consultant should be to review the community input gathered, to incorporate changes that have occurred both within and outside of the Town in the last 10 years, propose updates and additions to the goals and objectives, and refine an

action-oriented implementation plan that represents the Town residents and is acceptable to the Town Board.

3. Town Links and Resources:

- a. Town of Niskayuna Website: www.niskayuna.org(current)
- b. *2013 Town of Niskayuna Comprehensive Plan*
- c. Complete Streets Maps and priority project list
 - i. CDRPC Study on Balltown Road North Corridor
- d. Niskayuna Street Tree Master Plan (DRAFT)
- e. Mini-Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)
- f. Park Master Plan
- g. Historic Homes Survey 1983 and Historic Preservation Code updates
- h. Town of Niskayuna Budget (2024)
- i. Climate Smart Communities Certification (NYS): PE6 Action – Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements
- j. Capital Project Priority Lists (Water / Sewer / Highway)
- k. Schenectady County Plans
 - i. Schenectady County Mohawk Revitalization Plan
 - ii. Schenectady County Economic Development Plans
- l. Chapter 220 of the Niskayuna Town Code, Zoning and other chapters as required.
- m. 2020 Census data

4. Scope of Work

General Description: The Town seeks a qualified professional planning consultant capable of assisting with the completion of the “2025 Comprehensive Plan”. The 2013 Comprehensive Plan will serve as the basis for the selected consultant to work with the Town and the Comprehensive Plan Committee to create the 2025 Comprehensive Plan. The 2025 Comprehensive Plan must be updated in accordance with current generally accepted planning principles (American Planning Association).

For purposes of this Request for Proposals, the Town has outlined a specific list of tasks to be undertaken by the consultant:

A. Community Involvement / Engagement – review current outreach data and assess if more outreach is needed. The engagement process should educate the public and stakeholders on the purpose and importance of the Comprehensive Plan and give participants a chance to meaningfully participate in shaping the vision and goals. The Town’s participation program should incorporate local knowledge and experience and include outreach tailored to historically underserved communities and neighborhoods within the Town. The Consultant should:

- a. Ensure the Town has input/participation documented from the following stakeholders:
 - 1) Residents

- 2) Education sector (public, private)
- 3) Business sector (developers, small businesses, etc.)
- 4) Civic and non-profit organizations
- 5) Political representatives (elected and appointed officials)
- 6) Town Departments

b. Suggest any improvements to collecting public input that help create:

- 1) Meaningful and relevant dialogue – The community should feel that the dialogue has been meaningful and relevant to their interests and quality of life.
- 2) Inclusivity – The perspectives and participation of a broad range of community members and neighborhood types should be equitably represented in the process and resulting plan.
- 3) Accessibility - The public should have the information they need to participate in ways that are appropriate to their experiences and lifestyles.
- 4) Creativity - Consider creative outreach and engagement opportunities as focused design sessions, pop up events, interactive online tools, community workshops, project website, social media.

c. Analyze community engagement responses and findings – suggest any additional outreach if needed. Prepare a report summarizing community outreach process and responses in conjunction with Town staff.

B. Economic Development - The Town's Comprehensive Plan attempts to maintain and strengthen Niskayuna's existing diverse commercial and retail economic areas such that they complement one another and maintain Niskayuna's fiscal base, while protecting residential neighborhoods from commercial and industrial encroachment. In the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update, the Consultant should work with the Committee to:

a. Review and update the Town's community assets, including neighborhoods, the Town Center and other commercial districts, and bring forth recommendations to maintain and enhance these areas. Community assets should include:

- 1) Individual residential neighborhoods;
- 2) Town Center;
- 3) Centers of commerce and industry;
- 4) Centers of education; and
- 5) Key roadways and travel corridors.

b. Discuss the role and relationship between the Town and its Research and Development Zoning District (General Electric, Momentive, KAPL), including:

- 1) Impact of growth and expansion;
- 2) Impact on vehicle and pedestrian transportation;
- 3) Town's role with respect to this industry.

- c. Discuss the roles and relationships between the Town, adjacent communities, and Schenectady County:
 - 1) Examine and discuss economic growth based on past trends, current dynamics and emerging industries as they impact the Town, Schenectady County and the region.
 - 2) Align land use plans to the Schenectady County Economic Development strategic plan and Mohawk Revitalization Plan.
- d. Discuss the Town's Commercial District in terms of branding and identity, and discusses how current zoning and design standards contribute and could be revised.

C. NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING, HOUSING & DEMOGRAPHICS - The right balance of concentrated high density residential and commercial land use to low density residential land use is a priority for the Town of Niskayuna. There are limited areas of land within the Town limits that can be developed. Niskayuna is also a diverse community with diverse housing needs and pressures. The Town expects the consultants to work with the Committee to:

- a. Use community engagement / involvement to identify new or supplement existing individual neighborhood concerns and recommendations. Assess unique pressures and problems within each neighborhood.
- b. Evaluate properties that are available for development including vacant and underutilized sites. This task will include identification of parcels with inappropriate land use designations in the existing comprehensive plan, as well as an evaluation of land use category descriptions in general to determine if new categories are needed.
- c. Review the Town's numerous Paul Schaefer homes and recommendations within Comprehensive Plan to recognize and preserve these unique and valuable community assets.
- d. Analyze recent Census data to understand changes in demographics since 2013 update.
- e. Suggest additions or updates to Comprehensive Plan regarding housing needs, affordable housing opportunities, long term care housing needs, opportunities for residents to age in place, and mixed-use housing opportunities compatible within or close to commercial districts.

D. TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE - Vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle circulation systems impact development patterns and quality of life in the Town of Niskayuna. Issues of sidewalk policy, street classification, and non-vehicular access to destination points were important issues in the 2013 plan. Additionally, public utility

systems, including water, sanitary sewer, and storm-water, influence land use and development decisions. The location, capacity and condition of the assets as well as the systems' management and budgeting policies ultimately affect the growth potential and fiscal health of the community. The Consultant should work with the Committee to:

- a. Examine public services, including emergency services, utilities, and other infrastructure available within the Town, and whether the existing infrastructure and services are adequate to support the current needs and projected future growth of the Town.
- b. Engage in comprehensive approach to review the preservation of the Town's main road assets and level of service of traffic.
- c. Review the existing network of sidewalks and multiuse paths to ensure accessibility and interconnectivity to neighborhoods, businesses, schools, key roadways and travel corridors.

E. RESILIENCY & NATURAL RESOURCES - The Town of Niskayuna is bordered on two sides by the Mohawk River and has retained large areas of parkland – both maintained recreational fields and natural spaces. The Town of Niskayuna strives to maintain a balance between natural and developed spaces. In this regard, the Consultant will need to work with the Committee to:

- a. Examine the Town's 2013 recommendations for preservation of natural resources and propose updates.
- b. Review and incorporate the protection of sensitive environmental areas, the current health of the Mohawk River, preservation of recreation and open space, encouragement of green building design, and storm water management practices into key areas of plan where appropriate.
- c. Review Town's existing Mini-NRI, Parks Master Plan, and Draft Street Tree Master Plan. Build upon these existing plans and reports to prioritize resiliency and establish strategies to incorporate and align their goals (as relevant) into the 2025 Comp Plan.
- d. Review New York States guidance for Climate Smart Communities Certification: PE6 Action – Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements. Propose changes and incorporations to 2025 Comp plan that will maximize number of points under this submittal item (initial review of action items already completed by Comprehensive Plan Committee, which will be provided to consultant).

F. IMPLEMENTATION – The Town recognizes that an organized timely implementation of the Comprehensive Plan Update is an extremely important step in the process. The consultant shall work with the Committee to:

- a. Review existing and suggest additional goals for the Town based upon the need to maintain and/or improve various elements identified during the 2013 Comprehensive Plan and current plan update to achieve the desired results expressed by the community.
- b. Provide recommendations and suggestions for ensuring Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is included throughout plan and examine existing goals and implementation actions through a DEI lens.
- c. Identify recent and pending legislation that the Town should consider regarding land use and zoning, and discusses legislation as it enhances or detracts from the draft goals for the proposed Comprehensive Plan.
- d. Provide a framework and benchmarks to track progress during the execution of the implementation plan.
- e. Discuss assignment of responsibility for the execution and management of plan recommendations.
- f. Discuss the assignment of a panel to ensure goals are being met and to redirect the implementation process in the event that a failure is identified in its execution.

5. Meetings: The consultant budget shall include sufficient time to work with Town Planning Department staff and attendance to required public meetings. Such meetings may occur by conference call or in person. At a minimum, the consultant should plan for -

- A. Regularly meeting with Town staff (monthly or as-needed, virtually) and Comprehensive Plan Committee (monthly, in person, 6pm) to provide comments, suggestions and updates.
- B. Attending a variety of public outreach meetings.
- C. The selected consultant will work closely with the Town Planning Department and Comprehensive Plan Committee to develop and review content with suggestions for changes; however, the final content of the document shall remain in the control of the Comprehensive Plan Committee and Town staff to write.

6. Deliverables: While the Town and Comprehensive Plan Committee are responsible for approving the content, changes and recommendations within the 2025 Comprehensive Plan, **the formatting and type-setting of the plan is the responsibility of the Consultant.** Draft and Final Project Delivery shall include:

1. An electronic copy of all DRAFT documents shall be submitted at least two (2) weeks prior to any scheduled public meeting. Following the incorporation of all appropriate revisions by the selected consultant, electronic copies shall be provided one (1) week prior to any public meeting for posting on an electronic file-sharing website and/or distribution by email by the Town. The selected consultant shall bring the appropriate number of hard and electronic copies of all materials for review and comment at public meetings.
 - a. Number of Copies
 - 1) Draft Document – 10 bound copies and 1 electronic version.
 - 2) Final Document – 10 bound copies, 1 electronic version, and 1 executive summary / flyer for the Town’s website and social media that clearly communicates the plan for citizens and stakeholders.
 - 3) Draft and final copies must be provided in an electronic format as determined by the Town for reproduction and web-based purposes.
 - 4) All mapping will be prepared in ArcGIS compatible files and will be provided to the Town for reproduction and inclusion in mapping systems and software.
2. **Maps and Materials:** It shall be the responsibility of the selected consultant to provide all maps and other materials required for the project. Specifically, the selected consultant shall provide large maps, handouts, and materials for public meetings, hearings and presentations, maps for published reports and any other printed or published materials. The Town will provide access to GIS data in a digital format.
7. **Project Timeline:** The Town has a history of consistent growth with development pressures, and with the Town approaching buildout – an updated Comprehensive Plan and Zoning is paramount to balancing development pressure with protection of open space, neighborhoods and historic assets. Therefore, the Town wishes to complete the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update in a timely manner and consideration will be given to consultant(s) who can recommend, implement and deliver all objectives, including comprehensive community input, utilizing time-saving strategies. The consultant shall propose a timeline for completing the project **no later than October 31, 2024**; such work commencing after receipt of notice from the Town Board to proceed with the project. The proposed date of notification to proceed would be February 27, 2024. The selected consultant should complete the project by October 31, 2024.

PRESUBMITTAL INFORMATION MEETING

An optional virtual consultant informational meeting will be held on February 5, 2024 at 11am via Google Meet software to answer questions about the plan expectations and project scope. Attendees must email robertson@niskayuna.org to request a link attend the meeting prior to February 2, 2024 at 3:00pm.

PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL DEADLINE

Proposals shall be submitted to the Town no later than **February 13 at 3:00 PM.**

Proposals must be delivered prior to 3:00 PM EST on Friday, February 13, 2024. Proposals must be submitted in a sealed envelope plainly marked "REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL – COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE for the Town of Niskayuna," addressed to Michele Martinelli, Town Clerk. Proposals can be mailed, or hand delivered to the Town of Niskayuna, One Niskayuna Circle, Niskayuna, NY 12309. Proposals shall consist of one (1) printed version and one (1) electronic version on a CD or thumb drive.

Late proposals will not be accepted.

Only one proposal will be accepted from any firm.

All price quotes must be firm for a period of ninety (90) days following the proposal due date.

The Town of Niskayuna reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or any part(s) thereof; to waive any formalities or informalities contained in any proposal; and to award the proposal to the most responsive and responsible proposing consultants as deemed in the best interest of the Town of Niskayuna.

The Town of Niskayuna will not return proposals or other information supplied to them by any proposing firm.

CONTENTS OF PROPOSAL

1. **Cover Letter.** A cover letter shall be provided stating the name, physical and email address and telephone number of the consultant's contact person and must bear the signature of the person having the authority to issue the proposal for the consultants and bind the firm in a formal contract with the Town of Niskayuna.
2. **Project Personnel and Qualifications.** A narrative shall be provided by the applicant and prospective subcontractors for the proposed project, including types of services for which the applicant and prospective subcontractor are qualified. The narrative shall include the names of principals and key personnel from the applicant firm and prospective subcontractors that will be assigned to the project, along with their experience, their titles with their respective firm, and their qualifications.
3. **Project List / References.** Provide at least three (3) similar projects completed by the applicant that demonstrate similar competencies that are required by this project. Include name, address and phone number of individuals who can be contacted for references.
4. **Project Approach and Work Program.** Provide a detailed description of the applicant's approach to the project separated by individual tasks. Include a

discussion on innovative ideas used in other similar projects which the applicant feels may be applicable to this project.

5. **Project Schedule.** Include a timeline for the performance of the work program, including the completion of all tasks and the delivery of all materials for each phase.
6. **Budget.** The proposed not-to-exceed budget. The consultants should submit a budget describing categorical costs necessary to complete the proposal and indicate the approximate percentage of available funding estimated to be required for each task. Respondents should be prepared to provide a detailed budget in a timely fashion should they be selected.
7. Any other information deemed necessary by the proposing Consultant.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals shall be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- Responsiveness to the needs of the Town of Niskayuna, both in cost of services and in scope of the services offered;
- Responsibility of the proposing consultant, and its experience in dealing with municipal governments, specifically on projects of similar scope and nature;
- The degree to which the proposal meets or exceeds the terms of the RFP; and
- The proposed fee structure, based on the services to be provided.

A prospective consultant will be evaluated on its ability to meet the expected project completion schedule and detailed budget requirements.

A prospective consultant will be evaluated on its demonstrated ability to solve problems, meet needs and assist the Town in pursuing opportunities to achieve a complete 2025 Comprehensive Plan update.

The Town of Niskayuna's Comprehensive Plan Committee and Town staff will evaluate all proposals and make their recommendation to the Town Board.

The consultant selected for the award will be chosen on the basis of the apparent greatest benefit to the Town of Niskayuna, and not necessarily on the basis of the lowest price. Following notification of the successful consultant, it is expected that a contract will be executed between the parties dependent upon and subject to the availability of specific funding for these professional services (anticipated contract date early March 2024).

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Right to Modify, Rescind or Revoke RFP - The Town reserves the right to modify, rescind or revoke this RFP, in whole or part, at any time prior to the date on which the authorized representative of the Town executes a contract with the selected consultant. The Town may also award a contract for a single phase of this project, depending on available funding resources or other factors.

Right to Reject - This RFP does not commit the Town to select a consultant or to award a contract to any consultant.

Schedule of Events - The Town will make a good faith effort to follow the timeline set forth in this RFP for evaluating, negotiating and issuing an award.

Risk of Loss, Damage, Delay - Consultant acknowledges and agrees to release and hold harmless the Town, its officers, employees, agents and staff, from and against any and all claims, liability, damages, and costs, including court costs and attorney's fees, arising out of or pursuant to the delivery of the proposal or failure to deliver the proposal as directed by this RFP.

Ownership of Property - All proposals become the physical property of the Town upon receipt. All work product prepared by the selected consultant for this project shall be the property of the Town.

Cost of Participation - The Town specifically disclaims responsibility and/or liability for any and all costs, expenses, or claims relating to or arising out of the consultant's participation in this RFP process, including, but not limited to, cost incurred as a result of preparing, copying, shipping, presenting, and/or clarifying the proposal and the information relevant to the proposal.

Compliance with Applicable Laws, Regulations and Ordinances - By submitting a proposal, the consultant agrees to and shall comply with all applicable local, county, state and federal laws, regulations and ordinances.

Insurance - The selected consultant shall, before work commences, procure and maintain at its own expense during the duration of the performance of this project professional insurance acceptable to the Town of Niskayuna.

END OF RFP