

STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning & Economic Development Committee **DATE:** 10/20/15

FROM: Todd Okolichany, Planning Director

PREPARED BY: Alan Glines, Assistant Director

SUBJECT: Update for the Scope of Services for the Comprehensive Plan RFP

Summary

Staff is preparing to release the request for proposals (RFP) to update the city's comprehensive plan. The RFP provides a general description of the current conditions of the community and the scope of services expected with the plan update. The proposed RFP scope of services are attached herein.

Background

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide a blueprint for sustainable growth and development over the next 10-20 years and beyond. The plan will typically establish a vision for the city and will include goals and strategies that reflect community desires concerning how and where the city should grow, future land use patterns and other policy guidance, while ensuring sufficient infrastructure, parks and community services.

The city's current comprehensive plan, titled "Asheville City Development Plan 2025" was adopted in 2003. The plan focused on:

- Continued investment and redevelopment in areas with sufficient infrastructure
- Strategies to encourage mixed-use development
- Introduction of multi-modal transportation planning and implementation
- Strategies to confront a lack of affordable housing
- Fostering economic growth in key sectors of the community: high-tech, manufacturing, medical and entrepreneurship
- Continued revitalization efforts to support downtown Asheville and other special districts

In many ways the comprehensive plan has been a success in that it has focused our conversations as a community, has helped the city maintain a high quality of life and a robust local economy. Since 2003:

- The population has increased by 16,000 to an estimated 89,000 people
- The city has attracted investment by a number of dynamic modern employers
- Revitalization efforts have expanded to include the downtown area, Biltmore Village, the River Arts District and Haywood Road, resulting in new investment and sustainable growth
- The city is advancing plans for multi-modal transportation improvements, including greenways, sidewalks and transit

Challenges remain and need additional focus and solutions provided through the comprehensive planning process. Some of these challenges include the following:

- Service sector expansion is raising concerns about growth in lower wage paying job sectors
- Affordable housing continues to be a major challenge for residents of Asheville

- Ongoing dialogue to enhance a resilient economy
- Identify strategies for climate change adaptation
- Land use and multimodal transportation alignment to meet common goals

Staff has completed a draft RFP to solicit planning consultant services to assist the city in updating its comprehensive plan. A major goal of the comprehensive plan update is to provide a strong platform for sustainability while maintaining a high quality of life where all residents and businesses can be successful. The following list of 6 facets of sustainability will provide the focus of the plan:

1. Ensure a livable built environment by integrating multimodal transportation with housing goals to ensure connectivity and mobility while enhancing community character and placemaking.
2. Live in harmony with nature and mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing the city's reliance on traditional energy sources while living in balance with the natural systems around us.
3. Maintain a resilient and diversified economy so that our economy will be better protected from fluctuations in the market, and residents will have access to employment and other entrepreneurial opportunities.
4. Promote community equity and housing that meets the needs of current and future residents of the community by ensuring access to safe and affordable housing, community wellness and economic mobility.
5. Encourage healthy communities by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and access to recreational and outdoor activities community-wide.
6. Enhance partnerships and further responsible regionalism by participating in dialogues with other communities on regional issues and participating in partnerships with local and regional agencies and communities for the good of the region.

When the proposals are received, several staff and members of the Planning and Zoning Commission will form a selection committee to review the proposals and select a short list group to interview. Staff will bring a contract for services with the highest ranking firm to City Council for consideration and approval. Staff anticipates bringing forth the selection committee's recommendation to City Council in January 2016.

Financial Impact/Resources:

There is a budget of \$200,000 to hire consultant services.

Goal Alignment:

The RFP release is directly linked to the City Council Strategic Operating Plan Focus Area 1: Economic Growth and Sustainability; Goal 3: Create economic development and community investment opportunities through partnerships, planning and incentives; Action Item: Update the Comprehensive Plan 2025.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends moving forward with the release of the RFP.