

LEGAL NOTICE  
City of Ashtabula  
Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code Update  
RFP

The City of Ashtabula, Ohio (the “City”) is seeking a Request for Proposal (RFP) from multi-disciplined, professional land use planning consulting firms to lead in the rewrite of our Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code in a phased approach. The Comprehensive Plan is both a visioning and implementation tool, and is the key guiding document for City Council, City Staff, boards and commissions, the business community, and our residents. The City of Ashtabula reserves the right to accept Phase I of this RFP and not Phase II.

Sealed proposals will be received by the City Manager of the City of Ashtabula, Ohio, at his office in the Ashtabula Municipal Building, until 4:00 p.m. on April 4, 2025.

Please contact the City Manager’s office at 440-992-7183 to receive a copy of the information for the RFP, or by email to [kjones@cityofashtabula.com](mailto:kjones@cityofashtabula.com). The RFP is also available at [www.cityofashtabula.com/rfps](http://www.cityofashtabula.com/rfps)

The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive any informalities or irregularities in the proposals received and to accept any proposal which is deemed most favorable to the City of Ashtabula

The City is an Equal Opportunity Employer.  
The City of Ashtabula, Ohio  
James Timonere  
Ashtabula City Manager

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Publish: 2/14/2025 and 3/7/2025

# 2025 Comprehensive Plan & Zoning Code Request for Proposals



The City of Ashtabula, Ohio (the “City”) is seeking a Request for Proposal (RFP) from multi-disciplined, professional land use planning consulting firms to lead in the rewrite of our Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code in a phased approach. The Comprehensive Plan is both a visioning and implementation tool, and is the key guiding document for City Council, City Staff, boards and commissions, the business community, and our residents. The City of Ashtabula reserves the right to accept Phase I of this RFP and not Phase II.

## **COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

The City of Ashtabula is located on Lake Erie’s coastline about an hour between Cleveland, Ohio and Erie, Pennsylvania. With approximately 17,975 residents, Ashtabula is the largest city in Ashtabula County. The City’s area is 7.6 square miles. The transportation network availability is excellent, including port, highway and rail connections. There are an abundance of natural resources including multiple parks, the river valley known as the Gulf, the Northshore Trail, the Ashtabula River and Lake Erie. Historic properties and museums provide cultural amenities throughout the City.

For more information and to learn more about our community, please visit the City’s website at [www.cityofashtabula.com](http://www.cityofashtabula.com).

## **CURRENT PLANS**

Ashtabula Downtown and Harbor Districts Revitalization Plan (2002). This document was created to develop new design ideas for the Main Avenue downtown and the Harbor Historic District with the Ashtabula River Gulf as a connector between the two.

Walnut Beach Park Master Plan (2010). This plan includes strategies and projects to make Walnut Beach Park one of the finest public beaches on Lake Erie.

Lift Bridge Community Association Revitalization Implementation Strategy (2012 & 2018 Update). This plan was created to bring the recommendations of three critical past plans into the forefront, and to implementation. The target area for this strategy is the entire Harbor Historic District and East 6<sup>th</sup> Street on the east of the river to SR 11.

## **PHASE 1: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The City seeks to create a new implementable comprehensive plan which will serve as a guide when considering policy changes, land use planning, budget preparation, economic development initiatives, and capital improvement programs.

There are two primary goals for the new Plan. First, the Plan should identify and articulate a community vision for the next 20 years, with 5-year updates, based on input from citizens and various other stakeholders within the City. Second, the Plan should provide a series of realistic projects, programs, etc. that can be implemented to achieve the City’s vision. Overall, the plan must contain practical strategies to implement the recommended projects and plans that will promote the sustainable development of the community in a coordinated, consistent manner and which will be

embraced by community decision-makers and officially adopted by the Planning Commission. The Plan should incorporate the City's various planning documents referenced above.

### **SCOPE OF WORK PHASE 1: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The following scope of work illustrates the City's approach toward the completion of an implementable Comprehensive Plan. Suggestions from the consultant may be included to expand, refine, or improve the conceptual approach while achieving the goals of the final product.

1. Community Engagement and Promotion – Identify a robust and thorough public engagement plan that includes participation at strategic stages of the process. This includes providing multiple opportunities for public input, a range of strategies, one-on-one meetings with local officials and/or boards and commissions, as well as other stakeholders. The City will ask the consultant to provide a menu of innovative strategies that will provide ample opportunities for meaningful engagement of all segments of our community. This may include providing opportunities at City events, meeting in key locations that provide easy access to our various sections of the City, digital surveys, or other strategies that encourage meaningful participation and feedback.
2. Existing Conditions Analysis – Gather and analyze necessary baseline data including, but not limited to demographics, existing land use and zoning, current housing stock, infrastructure and market data, and existing planning documents (referenced above).
3. Future Land Use and Growth Management – Define a feasible and well-planned Future Land Use Plan that addresses all types of land uses within the City. This shall serve as the basis for future rezoning actions and Zoning Code updates. Analyze current uses and development patterns to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. Identify areas for redevelopment, infill, and adaptive reuse opportunities and determine strategies to initiate the process. Develop a sub-area plan for strategic locations to include more detailed analysis and visioning.
4. Transportation Connectivity – Propose feasible and specific transportation connectivity plan to identify arterial and collector streets, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, intersection improvements, roadway extensions, alignments and road diets, and establish the goals and priorities for a successful implementation of each. This includes reviewing existing plans and recreational trails built in conjunction with the Ashtabula County Metroparks Northshore Trail as well as surveying existing vehicular and pedestrian transportation networks and street classifications.
5. Implementation Plan – Craft an implementation plan for short- and long-term actions. Prepare priorities, goals and objectives and make recommendations for policies and strategies for plan implementation. The tasks should establish indicators, benchmark baseline conditions, and set targets for each indicator to help to quantifiably measure and track progress. The City will work with the consultant team to support this work.
6. Meetings – The consultant team will be expected to facilitate key meetings at the major milestones of the project, including a kick-off meeting, steering committee meetings, stakeholder meetings, public engagement, and the adoption process that will occur throughout the plan process. All public engagement meetings and meetings throughout the adoption process will be assisted by City Staff. These meetings should include a kickoff meeting, a minimum of three check-in meetings, and meetings to review the Draft Plan, prior to the public approval process.

7. Final Deliverables – The final deliverables will be a graphic-rich final Comprehensive plan document and summary document in both printed and digital format. The consultant must also provide a format to be included on the City’s website.

## **PHASE 2: ZONING ORDINANCE REWRITE**

The current Zoning Code has an emphasis on land use separation. It has undergone numerous updates to address new issues that arise in the City as well as deficiencies in the existing code but has not undergone a comprehensive rewrite. As a result, many regulations and permitted uses are outdated and do not encourage the highest and best use for development. A comprehensive rewrite is necessary to eliminate inconsistencies and incorporate planning and zoning best practices with the priorities established in the Comprehensive Plan.

## **SCOPE OF WORK PHASE 2: ZONING ORDINANCE REWRITE**

The following scope of work illustrates the City’s approach to an implementable Zoning Code. City staff will finalize the scope of work with the selected consultant prior to contract authorization. The City is open to suggestions other than those items listed which the consultant believes will be of value in producing a viable zoning code that will have practical applications for day-to-day implementation. The scope of work should include the following at a minimum:

1. Current Zoning Code Assessment - The consultant will work closely with staff in producing an assessment of the existing code and other related sections of the Codified Ordinances.
2. Comprehensive Plan – Review and identify the goals, policies and implementation strategies of the Comprehensive Plan from phase one of this RFP to ensure the updated code will be consistent with the plan.
3. Existing Planning Documents – Review plans produced by the City that may impact the new Zoning Code.
4. Public Participation Approach - Devise a robust public participation process to include a potential steering committee, stakeholder meetings, and property owner/developer meetings. The consultant will propose an outreach process that specifies how and when the public will participate throughout the code rewrite, including applicable public hearings.
5. Meetings – The consultant team will be expected to facilitate key meetings at the major milestones of the project, including a kick-off meeting, steering committee, stakeholder meetings, public engagement, and the adoption process that will occur throughout the plan process. All public engagement meetings and meetings throughout the adoption process will be assisted by City Staff. These meetings should include a kickoff meeting, a minimum of three check-in meetings, and a meeting to review the Draft Plan, prior to the public approval process.
6. Draft Zoning Code - Submit draft sections and map for review and editing with staff throughout the process. The Draft Zoning Code should provide an emphasis on Development based regulations incorporating design elements, improved landscaping/screening options, light and noise, pedestrian amenities, parking, outdoor storage, simplification of use types and classifications clearly defined.
7. Legal Review - Coordinate with the City legal counsel to provide a legal opinion on the enforceability of the updated planning and zoning code and zoning map, If applicable.

## **PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS**

Responding firms shall include in their proposals all content following the formatting and submittal instructions as requested below. Firms are encouraged to provide any additional information that

will further demonstrate the firm's qualifications and abilities to acceptably complete this project but are hereby instructed to limit such additional information which is directly relevant to the services being requested.

Format - Each consultant shall submit a formal proposal to include three (3) bound copies. The proposal shall also be submitted electronically, via email or USB flash drive. The submission must be compatible with Adobe Acrobat, in a single file, and be formatted to print on standard office paper sizes.

Content – The proposal must address the following items in the following order. Failure of the proposal to respond to a specific requirement may be a basis for elimination from consideration during the comparative evaluation.

- a. Cover Letter – Cover letter indicating interest in the project, an understanding of the Scope of Work, and familiarity with the planning area. The letter shall be signed by a representative authorized to legally bind the firm, and include: name, telephone number, and e-mail address of a contact person with authority to answer questions regarding the proposal (ideally the day-to-day project manager for this work).
- b. Consultant Team and Qualifications – A description and identification of the companies and individuals involved, their office/work locations, along with the background and experience of these companies and individuals shall be provided. Each key personnel identified in the proposal should provide a resume outlining their experience. The description should include the project team's availability and capacity to perform the work, and an organization chart showing key personnel and their affiliations should be included.
- c. Project Examples and References – The lead consultant should provide a minimum of three (3) projects for which similar services have been provided, summarize work provided, list key personnel and include the cost of each project. The examples should include contact information for each project including, name of primary client contact, organization, email, and phone number. For each, if any sub-consultant(s) were used, please provide two (2) example projects and references.
- d. Public Outreach and Communication – Provide a description of the proposed public input process that identifies the number of meetings and target audience.
- e. Project Approach and Work Plan – Describe the project approach by phase, task, and subtasks, including milestone deliverables, meetings, and how the project approach will fulfill the needs of the Scope of Work included in the RFP. Please indicate your approach to integrate the City and Staff into the project.
- f. Schedule – Identify a schedule that summarizes all phases, tasks, sub-tasks, deliverables, milestone meetings as well as expected hours to complete described in the proposed work plan. The project is expected to be completed within eighteen (18) months from the award of the bid. If an alternative timeline is proposed, the consultant should explain.

The City is open to suggestions other than those items listed above which the consultant believes will be of value in producing a viable project.

Please note: All material submitted is public property and is subject to Ohio Public Record laws. All proposals submitted will become the Property of the City of Ashtabula.

## **DEADLINE AND SUBMITTAL**

Proposals should be submitted to the following address no later than 4:00 PM Eastern Time Zone on April 4, 2025. All material submitted in accordance with this RFP becomes property of the City and will not be returned.

Proposal copies should be submitted to:

City of Ashtabula  
Attention: Mary Church  
mchurch@cityofashtabula.com  
4250 Lake Avenue  
Ashtabula, Ohio 44004

## **EVALUATION AND CRITERIA**

All proposals received by the City will be reviewed to determine whether they are responsive to the requisites of the RFP. Proposals which are determined to be non-responsive may be rejected. Although the City may request an oral interview of any respondents prior to the final scoring and selection, the City reserves the right to award based on the initial proposal received, without discussions, therefore, the proposer's initial proposal should contain its best technical and price terms.

Consultant order will be based on the following criteria:

Example of Proposal Evaluation Criteria	Points
Project understanding, original approach and familiarity with innovative comprehensive planning concepts.	35
Capabilities and previous experience in comparable projects and specialized experience and technical competence of the consultant.	25
Demonstrated ability to meaningfully and successfully engage the community in development of plans.	15
Personnel assigned to the project demonstrating the consultant's capacity to complete the requested service on time and within budget.	15
Logistics and familiarity with the planning area	10

## **RFP DISCLOSURES**

The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive any non-material irregularities or information in any RFP, and to accept or reject any item or combination of items.

The City assumes no responsibility or liability for costs incurred by Proposers in responding to this RFP or in responding to any further request for interviews, additional data, etc.

Selection will be based upon a determination as to which proposal is in the best interest of the City. Any decision made by the City shall be final and is not subject to appeal.

This RFP shall not, in any manner, be construed to be an obligation on the City to enter into a contract or result in any claim for reimbursement of cost for any efforts expended in responding to the RFP or in anticipation of any contract.

The City reserves the right to accept Phase I of this RFP and not Phase II.

## **INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS**

A consultant shall maintain, at Consultant's expense, the following insurance at all times during the performance of services for the City of Ashtabula, Ohio and shall provide certification evidencing such insurance:

- **Workers' Compensation** in conformity with applicable law, at statutory limits, for its employees, and **Employer's Liability Insurance** with limits no less than \$1 million per occurrence; **Professional Liability (Errors and Omissions) Insurance** with limit no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence or claim, \$2,000,000 aggregate.
- **Automobile Liability Insurance** covering any auto with limits no less than \$1 million per accident for bodily injury and property damage; and
- **Commercial General Liability (CGL) Insurance** at least as broad as ISO Form CG 0001 covering bodily injury and property damage with limits no less than \$1 million per occurrence, \$2 million aggregate.

Additional Insured/Primary Insurance: The City of Ashtabula, its officers, employees, volunteers and agents shall be additional insureds on the CGL coverage with respect to liability arising out of work or operations performed by or on behalf of Consultant. Such coverage shall be primary as respects the Additional Insureds and any insurance or self-insurance maintained by the Additional Insureds shall be excess of the Consultant's insurance and shall not contribute with it.

Any additional insurance for the Project obtained by the Consultant at the request of the City of Ashtabula, Ohio, shall be at the expense of the City of Ashtabula, Ohio.

**Claims Made Policies** - If any coverage required is written on a claims-made coverage form:

1. The retroactive date must be shown, and this date must be before the execution date of the contract or the beginning of contract work.
2. Insurance must be maintained, and evidence of insurance must be provided for at least three (3) years after completion of contract work.
3. If coverage is canceled or non-renewed and not replaced with another claims-made policy form with a retroactive date prior to the contract effective, or start of work date, consultant must purchase extended reporting period coverage for a minimum of three (3) years after completion of contract work.

**Acceptability of Insurers** – Insurance is to be placed with insurers with a current A.M. Best rating of no less than A:VII, unless otherwise acceptable to the City of Ashtabula and so stated prior to any agreement for services being executed.

**Non-renewal, Cancellation, or Material Change of Coverage** - Each insurance policy required above shall state that coverage shall not be cancelled, except with notice to the City of Ashtabula, Ohio. If the consultant receives a non-renewal or cancellation notice from an insurance carrier providing coverage required herein, or receives notice that coverage no longer complies with the requirements herein, consultant agrees to notify the City of Ashtabula representative (indicated below) by fax or email within five (5) business days with a copy of the non-renewal or cancellation notice, or written explanation of how coverage is no longer in compliance. Consultant shall cease operations on the occurrence of any such non-renewal, cancellation, or material change and shall not resume operations until providing proof that insurance is in force that complies with these requirements.

Notice Under These Requirements – Any notice needed under these requirements shall be made as stated to the “City of Ashtabula, Planning & Community Development, 4250 Lake Avenue, Ashtabula, Ohio, 44004.

Submittal of Certificates - The Consultant is required to submit all certificates of insurance at the same time the Consultant returns the signed Agreement to the City of Ashtabula. The City will not execute an Agreement to authorize work without the certificates being submitted. The City reserves the right to request complete, certified copies of required policies, including amendatory endorsements, at any time.

Certificates to be Kept Current - The Consultant is required to provide the City with current certificates during the term of provided services under the Agreement. (Note above stipulation related to Claims Made Policies.)

**HOLD HARMLESS:** To the fullest extent permitted by law, Consultant shall hold harmless, defend at its own expense, and indemnify the City of Ashtabula, Ohio, its officers, employees, agents, and volunteers, against any and all liability, claims, losses, damages, or expenses, including reasonable attorney’s fees, arising from all acts or omissions to act of the Consultant or its officers, agents, or employees in rendering services under this contract; excluding, however, such liability, claims, losses, damages, or expenses arising from City of Ashtabula’s sole negligence or willful acts. Consultant will execute a Hold Harmless Agreement as part of the Agreement.

**Note:** By submitting a response to an RFP, Consultant understands that, if selected, the Consultant must meet the City of Ashtabula, Ohio Insurance and Indemnification requirements.

Publish Date: 2/14/2025, 3/7/2025