



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

City of Essex Junction, Vermont

The City of Essex Junction is seeking proposals from qualified and experienced professional planning consultants to lead a collaborative, community-driven process and complete the technical work necessary to update its 2019 Comprehensive Plan. The updated plan must meet the requirements of the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117) and be aligned with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's (CCRPC) ECOS Plan.

Date Issued:	October 10, 2025
Deadline for Questions:	November 4, 2025 by 4:30 PM
Staff Response to Questions:	November 7, 2025 by 4:30 PM
Submission Deadline:	November 14, 2025 by 4:30 PM
Contact Information:	Christopher Yuen, AICP Community Development Director City of Essex Junction 2 Lincoln St Essex Junction, Vermont, 05452 802-878-6944 x 1607 cyuen@essexjunction.org

1. Introduction

The City of Essex Junction is a vibrant, growing community in northwestern Vermont, known for its walkable neighborhoods, strong local economy, and small-town character. Home to approximately 11,000 residents, the City serves as a regional node for employment, education, and transportation while maintaining a welcoming, community-oriented atmosphere. Formerly part of the Town of Essex, Essex Junction became an independent city in 2022 following a community-led effort to create a local government more closely aligned with residents' priorities.

The City is seeking proposals from qualified consulting firms to prepare an updated Comprehensive Plan that will guide Essex Junction's growth and development for the next 10–20 years. The selected consultant will work closely with City staff, the Planning Commission, City Council, and other boards and committees. The current Comprehensive Plan, adopted in August 2019, will expire in August 2027.

The total project budget is \$40,000, funded by a \$30,000 Municipal Planning Grant from the State of Vermont and a \$10,000 City match.

2. Purpose and Intent

The City of Essex Junction is undertaking a Comprehensive Plan Update to address significant changes in state law, regional planning frameworks, and community priorities. Since the last update in 2019, Vermont's housing crisis has escalated, major statewide land use policies have shifted, and Essex

Junction has become an independent city following its separation from the Town of Essex. This update is not meant to only be a routine renewal—it is a necessary modernization to align with new policies, address pressing local needs, and guide sustainable growth over the next 20 years.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide City-wide growth and development patterns, investments, and initiatives, and is the foundation for determining effective public policy, master planning, and land use decisions for the future. It should reflect and respond to the priorities, values, and requirements of Essex Junction residents and to provide a clear path forward for navigating the complex tradeoffs inherent in long-range planning. It will provide an ongoing framework for informed and directed development.

The plan shall include goals, objectives, and strategies, and will utilize maps, graphs, and other imagery tools to analyze, assess, and recommend best practices for values-based planning, economic development, housing, infrastructure, transportation, and other improvements. This plan update must meet the requirements of the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (V.S.A. Title 24, Chapter 117) and be in alignment with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's ECOS Plan. It is expected that parts of the 2019 plan may still be applicable today and may be re-adopted with some updates. Other parts of the plan may require more substantial changes or complete re-write.

As the guiding policy document for the City, the plan update should integrate the following recent and upcoming interrelated municipal and state initiatives:

1. **2024 Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan (CVSAP)** – Following a two-day workshop and robust public engagement period, Essex Junction developed its first Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan in June 2024 after separation from the Town of Essex. The vision and strategic pillars adopted through this initiative should serve as guiding principles behind this plan. The strategic actions should be integrated into the Comprehensive Plan as appropriate.
2. **Act 47 of 2023 (HOME Act), Act 181 of 2024 and Municipalized Housing Targets** – This plan update must align with recent statutory changes enacted in recent years to address the ongoing housing shortage. It should map out a plausible and realistic pathway to meeting or exceeding the municipalized housing targets either as drafted or as adopted into the ECOS Plan depending on timing. These targets more than double the existing rate of housing construction in the City.
3. **Regional Future Land Use Map and State Designation Programs**- The plan update must include a new future land use map that aligns with the regional future land use map and the City's transition of most areas to Tier 1B status. It should also consider the potential that some areas may be transitioned to Tier 1A in the future if feasible. While the Future Land Use Map in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan replicated the 2019 zoning map, the map in the updated Comprehensive Plan should be redrawn at a level of specificity partway between the Regional future land use map and the City's zoning map..
4. **Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development Master Plan**- The City is currently in the final stages of completing a Transit Oriented Development Master Plan for the Pearl Street Corridor and the City Center. This plan includes various transportation, land use, and public

realm proposals such as modifications to the traffic pattern at the Five Corners intersection, additional pedestrian crossings near bus stops, height limit increases, zoning district consolidations, and a transition to form-based code. These efforts aim to achieve the density necessary to sustain frequent, all-day transit. The Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan, expected to be adopted by early 2026, should be fully integrated into the Comprehensive Plan.

5. **Recent and Upcoming Transportation Projects-** The Comprehensive Plan Update should incorporate recent and upcoming transportation projects such as the newly completed Crescent Connector Road, the citywide traffic calming policy update currently under consideration. The plan should also reference relevant regional plans such as the Chittenden County Regional Safety Action Plan, as well as national best practice guidance as appropriate.
6. **Financing Tools such as CHIP, TIF, Vermont Infrastructure Sustainability Fund-** The Comprehensive Plan Update should include high-level recommendations on potential options for funding infrastructure necessary to accommodate the targeted growth. It should explore whether new and existing financing tools such as the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP), Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and the Vermont Infrastructure Sustainability Fund may be helpful for the City in upcoming years.

The 2019 Comprehensive plan references a combined Town of Essex / Village of Essex Junction Enhanced Energy Plan. As a part of the Comprehensive Plan update project, the selected consultant shall update the Enhanced Energy Plan and create a standalone version for the City to re-adopt.

3. Submission Requirements

Proposals must be received by 4:30 PM (local time) on November 14, 2025 at the Essex Junction City Offices, 2 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452. Proposals shall be marked to the attention of Christopher Yuen, Community Development Director. Digital proposals may be submitted via e-mail to cyuen@essexjunction.org, but the City assumes no responsibility for formatting or transmission errors. Incomplete or late proposals will not be considered.

Proposals are limited to 10 pages (project understanding, scope, team experience, hours by task, cost proposal, and schedule) plus up to 5 additional pages for team qualifications and relevant project summaries.

The City of Essex Junction reserves the right to request additional materials to decide which proposal best meets its needs and it may reject any or all proposals if deemed to be in the City's best interest to do so.

All proposals submitted become the property of the City of Essex Junction and are considered public documents. Preparing, submitting, and presenting a proposal is the sole expense of the designer.

3.1 Questions and Contact

Please direct questions about the Request for Proposals (RFP) to Christopher Yuen, Community Development Director, at 802-878-6944 extension 1607 or cyuen@essexjunction.org. The deadline for

questions is 4:30 PM on November 4th, 2025. Responses will be provided on the City's website by 4:30 PM on November 7th, 2025.

3.2 Technical Proposal

The Technical Proposal should demonstrate that the consultant understands the intent and scope of the project, the character of the deliverables required for completion, and the specific tasks that must be performed to supply these services. In addition, consultant qualifications necessary to successfully complete this project should be demonstrated. Please include the following information in the technical proposal.

- **Cover Letter & Project Abstract** – Introduce the firm and summarize your understanding of the project, including your proposed approach.
- **Methodology** – Describe your proposed methods and tasks, referencing the Scope of Work. Consultants are encouraged to suggest enhancements or additional tasks.
- **Role of Key Staff, Qualifications & Timeline** – Identify the project manager and key team members, their roles, and time commitments. Provide resumes for participating individuals only. Include a table of estimated labor hours per task and a Gantt chart showing the project schedule and milestones.

3.3 Cost Proposal

A cost proposal should be included with the technical proposal and list the prime consultant and any sub-consultants separately and include the following:

- Assigned personnel hours, fully loaded hourly rates, and costs per task.
- Direct expenses as a separate line item.
- Subconsultant cost proposals in the same format.

4.0 Scope of Work

The Scope of Work (SOW) is consistent with the Municipal Planning Grant application and is not necessarily in chronological order. A breakdown of tasks and responsibilities by the consultant or team is anticipated to include the phasing and tasks listed below. Respondents are invited to provide recommendations for refinements, or additional tasks envisioned to make this work successful.

Task 1: Project Management

- The selected consultant shall designate a project manager to communicate regularly with the Community Development Director to coordinate meeting agendas, deliver progress reports, and resolve any issues that may arise throughout the course of the project.
- The first project management meeting will include a review of the scope of work, outreach and technical methodologies, roles, responsibilities, and proposed schedule.
- The project manager of the selected consultant will be responsible for the development of a detailed project schedule and work plan that identifies key dates and milestones.
- The selected consultant shall schedule regular meetings with City staff to discuss project progress, direction, and new tasks.
- The selected consultant will be expected to coordinate meeting presentations and attendance with City staff to solicit input and feedback from the Planning Commission, City Council, and

other boards and committees as appropriate, and shall provide interim reports, presentations, and updates to each as required and appropriate.

Task 2: Planning Commission Work Sessions

- The selected consultant will attend at least eight Planning Commission meetings
- These meetings are intended to be a platform for the Planning Commission and members of the public to provide high-level policy direction and to review data and draft plan material as they become available.
- Each meeting may be focused on one or more policy topics or Comprehensive Plan section.
- The selected consultant will be responsible for preparing any presentation materials necessary for each Planning Commission meeting except for material produced by city staff in-house as agreed upon during project management meetings.

Task 3: Review Existing Plans

- The selected consultant will review the Essex Junction 2019 Comprehensive Plan to identify sections, charts, datasets, and/or topics in need of revision, addition, or removal.
- The selected consultant will review and integrate other relevant plans, actions and strategies such as the six pillars of the 2024 Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan (CVSAP) and documents, including but not limited to those mentioned in Section 2 of this RFP.

Task 4: Mapping and Analysis

- The selected consultant shall update all necessary maps, charts and data visualizations in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan. These include but are not limited to natural resources, historic sites, recreation, transportation, community facilities, non-motorized transportation, wastewater, water distribution, existing land use, future land use, flood hazard area, and parking.
- The City may be able to offer limited assistance in this task with the help of a Fall 2025 student intern from the University of Vermont Sustainable Urban Planning course. These work products will be made available to the consultant when available.
- The 2019 Comprehensive Plan currently references an Enhanced Energy Plan. Mapping and analysis to update the enhanced energy plan will need to be conducted as well.

Task 5: Policy Updates

- The selected consultant shall prepare amendments as necessary to bring the Comprehensive Plan into compliance with state statute and the Regional Plan such that the Regional Planning Commission may approve the plan and confirm the city's planning process.
- Policy options presented should be based on best practices. The consultant should discuss key policy tradeoffs with city staff, the Planning Commission and the general public prior to making major recommendations.
- The Comprehensive Plan should integrate all relevant goals and actions listed in the 2024 CVSAP and the Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development Plan
- The consultant may include additional goals/objectives/programs as identified during public engagements, but the "six pillars" adopted through the 2024 CVSAP should be a core part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Task 6: Public Engagement

- The selected consultant shall lead the implementation of a multi-channel, inclusive public engagement strategy to ensure broad participation in the Comprehensive Plan update, particularly among underserved and underrepresented populations. The City has adopted the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation as a guiding framework, aiming to involve and collaborate with the community at key stages of the process.
- To expand accessibility and reach those who face barriers to in-person participation, the project should include one or more online public surveys and leverage the City's website and social media channels to share updates and gather input.
- The project aims to engage at least 500 residents and stakeholders—about 5% of the City's population.
- The project should integrate existing engagement results from previous engagement efforts including the Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan, the Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development Master Plan, and any other relevant projects listed in the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's Interactive Community Engagement Database to avoid duplicative outreach, and public fatigue.

Task 7: Prepare for Plan Adoption

- The selected consultant shall prepare for and attend Planning Commission and City Council hearings for Plan Adoption
- The selected consultant will be responsible for proposing and maintaining a project schedule that allows for timely plan adoption in a manner consistent with all statutory requirements.

Task 8: Document Preparation

- The selected consultant will produce a print and web-ready final draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan, including an Executive Summary, organized in a user-friendly format.
- All maps and data shall be provided to the City in digital format upon the completion of the plan update project.

Project Timeline

The project shall be at least 30% complete by June 30, 2026. This project is funded with a Municipal Planning Grant and shall be substantially completed by the grant agreement end date of April 30, 2027.

Project Budget

The maximum budget for this project is \$40,000 in total: \$30,000 from the State of Vermont Municipal Planning Grant and \$10,000 from the City.

Selection

The Selection Committee includes the City Manager, Community Development Director, and member(s) of City's Planning Commission or other appointed boards. They will review and evaluate each proposal based on the criteria below. Firms will then be ranked accordingly. The Selection Committee may interview the top three firms if it is deemed necessary to choose the highest qualified firm. Upon selection of a firm, a final scope of work, and schedule will be negotiated with the top-ranked firm.

Criteria for Selection

Responses will be scored using a predetermined point methodology for each of the factors below for a total of 100 points.

Review Criteria	Maximum Points
A demonstrated understanding of the project, approach, methodology and responsiveness to the scope. • A thoughtful and innovative approach to address the project's scope ;; • Quality and thoroughness of the proposal and clearly laid out schedule, tasks, and deliverables.	40
Qualifications, demonstrated experience with similar projects, and references	30
Cost effectiveness - The degree to which the proposal maximizes value and impact within the specified budget including clear, detailed, and realistic budget justification that aligns with the scope of work	30
TOTAL	100

Contract Requirements

The Responder, prior to being awarded a contract, shall apply for registration with the Vermont Secretary of State's Office to do business in the State of Vermont, if not already so registered. The registration form may be obtained from the Vermont Secretary of State, 109 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05609-1104 or online. The contract will not be executed until the Responder is registered with the Secretary of State's Office. The successful Responder will be expected to execute sub-agreements for each sub-Responder named in the proposal upon award of this contract.

The City of Essex Junction Rights

The City of Essex Junction reserves the right to modify or issue changes to the original RFP. Any change will be distributed to all those who the RFP was originally distributed to. The City of Essex Junction also reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received as a result of this solicitation, to negotiate with any qualified source, to waive any formality and any technicalities, or to cancel the RFP in part or in its entirety if it is in the best interest of the City of Essex Junction. This solicitation of proposals in no way obligates the City of Essex Junction to award a contract.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The firm shall comply with the applicable provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, Executive Order 11246 as amended by Executive Order 11375, and as supplemented by the Department of Labor regulations (41DFR Part 60). The firm shall comply with all the requirements of Title 21, V.S.A., Chapter 5, Subchapters 6 and 7, relating to fair employment practices to the extent applicable. A similar provision shall be included in any and all subcontracts.

Insurance & Purchasing Policy Requirements

The firm shall meet the insurance requirements of the City's Purchasing Policy. Also, all contracts for services shall contain indemnification and hold harmless language as required by the City's Purchasing Policy.