

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT SERVICES

City of Essex Junction, Vermont

The City of Essex Junction is seeking proposals from qualified and experienced professional consultants to guide the City on the next steps for establishing an Economic Development program.

Date Issued: June 26, 2026
Deadline for Questions: July 10, 2026 by 4:30 PM
Staff Response to Questions: July 17, 2026 by 4:30 PM
Submission Deadline: July 24, 2026 by 4:30 PM
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About the City of Essex Junction

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.

Essex Junction continues to be a strong employment center for large and small, service oriented, retail, and manufacturing enterprises. As the host community for Global Foundries the City plays a critical role in the state's economy. The following strengths (as modified from the 2019 Comprehensive Plan) combine to make Essex Junction a great place to locate and/or invest in a business:

- Essex Junction is strategically located within the region and has the infrastructure to support new businesses and business expansion. The City is a transportation hub, with close access to Interstate 89 and Vermont Routes 15, 2A, and 117, and Burlington International Airport. In addition, the Crescent Connector- a Circ alternatives project intended to mitigate traffic at Five Corners and open areas of underutilized land in the designated Village Center to development has been completed. The downtown transportation terminal is a major stop for Amtrak and for Green Mountain Transit which provides county-wide public transportation.
- The Village Center and the Pearl Street commercial corridor have been designated as a Downtown Center in the 2026 Chittenden County ECOS Plan (awaiting final approval), which are mixed use centers bringing together community economic activity and civic assets.
- The City has a variety of old and new, large, and small business properties. The historic Village Center and Pearl Street commercial corridor have had multimillion dollar, federally funded restorations, and

redevelopment. In addition to Global Foundries, the City is home to the Center for Technology, Essex, which is Vermont's largest secondary technical education facility and the Champlain Valley Exposition, Vermont's largest indoor and outdoor exposition center.

- As of the last count in 2019, there are approximately 225 small businesses in Essex Junction.
- The City has adequate sewer capacity for new development, though there are some infrastructure upgrades needed in certain locations in the City. Also, in the long term the housing targets will not be met in full at current capacity.
- The City has a Commercial Tax Stabilization Policy intended to encourage economic development, diversify the tax base, enhance the street scape and provide long-term growth in the Grand List and help maintain the vitality of the Village of Essex Junction's commercial business district. Any for-profit or non-profit corporation, partnership, cooperative, or proprietorship that is existing, locating or expanding in a commercial zone in the Village of Essex Junction may be eligible for tax stabilization.
- Essex Junction has a State designated Village Center District which provides tax credits for a variety of building repairs and improvements. Note that the state designation program is currently undergoing a reform and may open up new or different opportunities for the City to consider.
- Numerous housing units have been added to the downtown making Essex Junction a great place to live near employment, with more units planned. In addition, the City is undergoing a zoning rewrite that will increase the number of permissible homes along the transit served areas.
- City residents live in comfortable, friendly neighborhoods all within walking distance of the downtown. The City continues to prioritize walking and biking by dedicating 25% of LOT revenue to sidewalk replacements, and an active Bike Walk Committee working to improve bike infrastructure. This support of bike and pedestrian travel makes it easier for residents to visit downtown businesses.
- The schools are consistently ranked among the best in the state.

Project Overview and Goals

The City seeks proposals from qualified economic development consulting firms to assist the City in evaluating, designing, and recommending the next steps necessary to establish a municipal economic development program. The City currently does not have a formal economic development program, dedicated staff function, committee, or organizational framework to support economic development activities. However, the City intends to leverage existing regional planning work (both the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and the Economic Mobility Program) and align efforts with its Comprehensive Plan to avoid duplication.

The purpose of this engagement is not to develop a traditional Economic Development Strategy, strategic plan, or comprehensive economic development plan. Instead, the City seeks practical recommendations regarding how economic development functions should be organized, governed, funded, staffed, and implemented to support the City's long-term economic vitality.

Project Goals

The City is highly reliant on property tax revenue and seeks to expand and diversify its revenue base through strengthened economic development efforts.

The selected consultant will help the City:

- Understand the current economic development landscape, assets, challenges, and opportunities.
- Identify the most appropriate role for the City in economic development activities.
- Evaluate organizational and governance models used by comparable communities.
- Recommend options for establishing a sustainable economic development program.
- Identify staffing, funding, partnership, and operational requirements.

- Provide a phased implementation roadmap for launching the program.

Desired Outcomes

At the conclusion of the project, the City will have:

- A clear understanding of its role in economic development.
- Recommended organizational and governance structures.
- Staffing and funding recommendations.
- A practical framework for establishing an economic development program.
- A phased roadmap for implementation.

Background and Reference Documents

Development of the implementation roadmap should take into consideration the following existing and interrelated municipal and regional initiatives:

1. **Essex Junction's [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 reflect a chosen ethos for Essex Junction: a Community Representation Model that 'focuses on community led conscious redevelopment and economic development to ensure broad community outcomes are prioritized'. One of the six pillars is Economic and Business Development, and three associated actions (see pages 16-18 of the Plan for more detail). In addition, we've have developed annual reports as we implement this plan. The current status of the Economic and Business Development Pillar can be seen on page 11 of this [2026 report](#).



2. **Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** – The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Chittenden County region is the West Central Vermont CEDS developed in 2023. This plan provides a solid basis for economic development strategy in the region.
3. **Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan Update** - The 2027 Comprehensive Plan update is currently underway. The team has incorporated outreach to the business community as a part of this work. Ultimately the plan will include and economic development element. Input in the development of the Comprehensive Plan will be beneficial in building the City's economic development program.
4. **Economic Mobility and Opportunity Initiative** - The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), in partnership with the municipalities of Essex Junction, Shelburne, South Burlington, and Winooski, are engaged in a 30-month, grant-funded Economic Mobility and Opportunity Program through the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). This national initiative

supports local governments in advancing equity and economic mobility through cross-sector collaboration and data-informed strategies and decision-making. The Economic Mobility Manager is working across the four participating municipalities to address systemic barriers that affect residents' abilities to access stable housing, good jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities, and long-term financial security. The position supports collaborative projects that expand opportunity, strengthen partnerships, and advance inclusive community development throughout the region. Collectively, "We aim to be a region where everyone has access to governance participation, entrepreneurship, and attainable housing." Building the City's economic development program upon this approach has the potential to make inclusion economically beneficial and vital to the city in the long-term.

5. Other Recent Local Efforts in the Region of Interest:

- a. [South Burlington's Economic Development Strategy](#) - Adopted by the South Burlington City Council in August 2025, this is a recent, in-depth strategic plan for economic development in our region. Much of the data and basis of the plan is likely relevant to Essex Junction.
- b. [Experience Shelburne](#) – a branded economic development effort guided by a strong partnership between community volunteers and advisors and the Town of Shelburne.

Scope of Services

The consultant shall propose a scope of work and methodology that addresses the project objectives. The City anticipates that the work may include stakeholder engagement (likely through a working committee), assessment of existing conditions, review of comparable communities, evaluation of organizational models, and development of recommendations; however, respondents are encouraged to propose the approach they believe will best achieve the desired outcomes.

Key questions to be addressed may include:

- What role should the City play in economic development?
- What economic development functions are most appropriate for the City at this time?
- What organizational structures and governance models should be considered?
- What staffing, funding, and partnership arrangements may be necessary to support an economic development program?
- What foundational policies, procedures, or resources should be established?
- What implementation steps should be considered in the short, medium, and long term?

Deliverables

Respondents should propose deliverables they believe are necessary to meet the project objectives. At a minimum, the City expects a written report and presentation materials with recommendations that:

- Identify options for establishing an economic development function. This should include recommendations for or against: establishment of an economic development committee, Main Street program, Small Business

Association or the like; business recruitment strategy; required or incentivized development agreements to encourage community input in development applications; or any other function the City should consider.

- Evaluate the advantages, challenges, and resource implications of those options.
- Provide recommendations regarding organizational structure, governance, staffing, and partnerships.
- Provide a practical framework for establishing an economic development program, including a phased roadmap for implementation.

The City welcomes innovative approaches and encourages respondents to recommend the methodologies, deliverables, and engagement strategies that will provide the greatest value. Due to this flexibility, the City intends to negotiate the final scope of work with the selected consultant.

Consultant Qualifications

The selected consultant should demonstrate experience in economic development and setting up economic development programs, plus one or more of the following areas:

- Organizational and governance assessments.
- Municipal operations and administration.
- Economic development implementation and capacity building.
- Stakeholder engagement and facilitation.
- Public-private partnership development.
- Vermont Downtown Designation Program, Main Street America programs and familiarity with Vermont's designation reform plans.

Submission Requirements

Proposals must be received by 4:30 PM (local time) on July 24, 2026 at the Essex Junction City Offices, 2 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452; or via email to rmahony@essexjunction.org. Hard copy proposals shall be marked to the attention of Regina Mahony, City Manager. The City assumes no responsibility for formatting or transmission errors for digital submissions. Incomplete or late proposals will not be considered.

To be considered, interested parties must submit by the deadline a proposal package that includes the following:

- Letter of interest – must be no more than two pages long and include contact information and signature.
- Summary of qualifications, experience, and availability.
- Project team – identify who will participate in this project and include a brief resume of project team members identifying their qualifications and experience.
- Proposed approach to the process, including a proposed schedule and description of proposed community engagement.
- Proposed budget - The contract amount for the proposed work shall not exceed a maximum of \$28,000 for project completion, including all expenses. 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.

- List of three clients – The client name, contact person, telephone number, and email for at least three clients for whom you have completed a similar project in the past.
- A minimum of three examples of similar work products, at least one of which was prepared on behalf of a City or comparable entity.

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.

Questions and Contact

Please direct questions about the Request for Proposals (RFP) to Regina Mahony, City Manager, at rmahony@essexjunction.org. The deadline for questions is 4:30 PM on July 10, 2026. Responses will be provided on the City’s website by 4:30 PM on July 17, 2026.

Project Timeline

While there is no firm timeline on this project, it would be beneficial to understand future budgetary implications no later than October 2026.

Project Budget

The maximum budget for this project is \$28,000 in total (including all community engagement costs).

Selection

The City of Essex Junction’s selection committee will review and evaluate all properly submitted proposals received on or before the deadline. The selection committee will first review each proposal for compliance with the mandatory requirements of the RFP. Failure to comply with any mandatory requirements may disqualify a proposal. The selection committee shall participate in the analysis of RFPs, the interview process (if applicable), and the final recommendation of the selected consultant for the project. Proposals will be evaluated by the City of Essex Junction selection committee as set forth below:

Review Criteria	Maximum Points
A demonstrated understanding of the project, approach, methodology and responsiveness to the scope. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.