



SENECA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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Request for Proposal

Comprehensive Plan

Seneca County, City of Tiffin, and City of Fostoria, Ohio

September 26, 2017

1. Basic Information

Issue Date: September 26, 2017

Proposal Due: 3:00 pm, Thursday, October 26, 2017

Format: Three (3) copies of a Letter of Interest, one (1) electronic PDF copy of the proposal, and one (1) sealed copy of the cost estimate

Issuer: Seneca Regional Planning Commission
109 S. Washington St., Suite 2002
Tiffin, OH 44883

Main Contact: Charlene Watkins, Executive Director
Seneca Regional Planning Commission
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2. Background & Summary

Located in northwest Ohio, Seneca County is a micropolitan community of approximately 553 acres and 55,000 residents that boasts a robust agricultural industry with 1,100 farms and has ranked first for wheat, second for soybeans, and fourth for corn production out of Ohio's 88 counties. Community Supported Agriculture, Farmers Markets, farm-to-table dining, as well as local farm products in the grocery stores, are commonplace. Seneca County also offers residents and visitors more than 900 acres of parkland and preserves, one of the state's few scenic rivers, and a large variety of recreational options.

The Seneca County micropolitan area also has seen a surge of economic growth in the past few years, with more than 1,300 new jobs and \$300 million in new investment announced in the

cities of Tiffin and Fostoria, the county's six villages, and 15 townships. It has been recognized nationally, placing in the top ten percent in the country for economic development for six years in a row and in the top ten (out of 536 similar counties) twice in the last four years.

Retail, restaurants, and service businesses in the cities and villages are strong and multiplying, with a large number of new businesses locating and starting up. The two hospitals serving the area and other healthcare facilities continue to make strategic investments. The two universities, regional educational service center, industrial training centers, and local public and private school districts also continue to build facilities, develop programs, win awards, and improve quality.

It is a community that lives connected, supporting the growth and prosperity of all with a spirit of public and private-sector collaboration found in few other places. Recently, Seneca County (County) and the City of Tiffin partnered on a new \$15 million justice facility to house all the county courts as well as the Tiffin-Fostoria Municipal Court, a first in the state of Ohio. Together with the City of Fostoria, the County and City of Tiffin are looking to potentially partner again to create a joint comprehensive plan, understanding the importance of collaboration as well as for providing joint framework with rich context for establishing public policy and community development strategies, as well as addressing pressing and future community issues.

Accordingly, the County, City of Tiffin, and City of Fostoria seek proposals for combined and individual plans from qualified planning consulting firms to prepare Comprehensive Plan(s) for participating entities with a twenty-year planning horizon. Guidelines for responses are included in this document.

Firms interested in being considered for selection should respond by submitting three (3) copies of the Letter of Interest, one (1) electronic PDF copy, and one (1) sealed copy of the cost estimate with your proposal **by 3:00 pm, Thursday, October 26, 2017** to the following address:

Seneca Regional Planning Commission
Attn: Charlene Watkins
109 S Washington St., Suite 200
Tiffin, OH 44883

Responses received after 3:00 pm on the response due date will not be considered. Seneca Regional Planning Commission assumes no responsibility or liability for costs incurred by Proposer in responding to the request for proposal (RFP) or in responding to any further requests for interviews and/or additional data. Proposals become part of the official County files of Seneca County and the official files of the City of Tiffin and the City of Fostoria and will not be returned to the bidders.

3. Overview

Seneca County, the City of Tiffin, and the City of Fostoria, Ohio are jointly seeking proposals from qualified planning consulting firms (Consultant) to provide professional planning services for the preparation of a combined and/or individual Comprehensive Plan (Plan) for one or more of the following entities: Seneca County, the City of Tiffin, and the City of Fostoria. This project will result in the adoption of an updated Comprehensive Plan for the participating entities. As such, extensive public engagement will be an essential component of the comprehensive planning process.

The Comprehensive Plan will address long-range policy for land use planning, transportation, economic development, housing, public facilities, historic, natural and cultural resources, agricultural preservation, intergovernmental cooperation, budget preparation, and capital improvement planning and other facets of community life deemed important by the Consultant and agreed to by the participating entities.

The Plan will provide a guide for orderly growth that balances environmental values and reasonable development demand over the next 20 years. The Plan will include policy statements, goals, objectives, strategies, maps, and graphics that will serve as a working framework for the development of public policy for future land use. This framework will provide clear and predictable guidance to developers, stakeholders, and citizens; help maintain collaborative and respectful relationships with the community; establish policies and priorities for coordinated development in conjunction with minimum level of service standards; and provide strategies to encourage economic development, quality residential growth, and general improvements for the protection and improvement of the quality of life for the residents and businesses of Seneca County.

The Comprehensive Plan should guide future land use, public investment and development decisions in order to protect natural resources, prime agricultural lands, and enhance quality of life. The Plan will be a “blueprint” for the future of the county and city based on the desires and vision of its residents. The Plan may be developed with the guidance of a professional planning team, but it is created, owned, and championed by the community and its members. The participating entities believe that a successful Plan is one that will be widely understood and embraced by the public, described in a document that will interest and engage ordinary citizens, and be used regularly as a decision-making tool.

Work is anticipated to begin in 2018 with an 18 to 24 month timeframe. The finished product should be ready for adoption by the participating legislative bodies at public hearings by late 2019.

4. Assumptions

4.1 Physical Scope

The physical scope of the combined Comprehensive Plan as well as a separate Seneca County plan will be the entirety of Seneca County. The appropriate physical scope of a separate City of Tiffin and/or City of Fostoria plan would be determined by the consultant.

4.2 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is made up of Seneca Regional Planning Commission; the Seneca Industrial and Economic Development Corp. (SIEDC), Seneca County Commissioners, Mayor of Tiffin, City of Tiffin Council Members, City of Tiffin Engineer, City of Fostoria Mayor, Fostoria Economic Development Corporation, Seneca County Engineer, Seneca County Villages representative, and Seneca County Townships representation. Seneca Regional Planning Commission will actively participate in the project and provide the Consultant all existing data, plans and reports, and GIS data, and will assist in the distribution of materials, meeting set-up, and other logistical functions. Staff will coordinate meeting logistics with the public, and review draft documents for initial comment. It is essential that the Consultant be able to dedicate the time needed to conduct these tasks independently, if necessary or required, and to lead the Comprehensive Plan project. The Consultant shall be primarily responsible for developing the Plan's policy frameworks with guidance and recommendations from the Steering Committee, and considering the information gathered through surveys or other methods of community assessment from other key stakeholders.

4.3 Data

To the greatest extent possible, the data gathered for this project will be based on existing information, reports, studies, etc.

5. Scope of Services

The scope has four major sections:

5.1 Public Engagement

5.2 Baseline Analysis

- a. Data collection and Analysis
- b. Existing conditions assessment

5.3 Plan Preparation

- a. Visioning
- b. Establishment of goals and objectives
- c. Plan elements
- d. Map series
- e. Graphic support

5.4 Plan Implementation

- a. Short-term work plan
- b. Plan review and update schedule
- c. Adoption

5.1 Public Engagement

To fully engage the community in the planning process, it will be necessary to frame community issues in a way that encourages dialogue and an exchange of ideas.

Task 1 Execute Public Engagement Strategy

Exact components of the public engagement strategy will be developed with input from the Steering Committee. At a minimum, it is to include:

- a. Steering Committee Meeting: up to two (2) meetings held with Consultant team and Steering Committee with additional meetings to be negotiated.
- b. Stakeholder and Public Involvement Meetings: up to ten (10) meetings with stakeholders and/or public meetings which the Consultant will lead to engage the community. Local staff will assist with the public involvement.

The Consultant team will make every effort to minimize travel costs by combining trips and utilizing technology where possible. Additional trips, meetings, and outreach will be discussed and developed as necessary.

5.2 Baseline Analysis

The baseline analysis phase of the planning process establishes a benchmark of information on existing conditions, including identification of issues and opportunities. The Consultant team will identify available data and maps regarding existing land use, development patterns, transportation and infrastructure, natural resources, current plans and regulations, and other pertinent information. A strategy for addressing any critical gaps will be developed and all data will be analyzed and the findings documented.

Task 1 Data Collection and Analysis

Seneca Regional Planning Commission will provide all existing maps, plans, reports, studies, regulations, GIS data and any other information as needed by the Consultant. SIEDC, as the City of Tiffin's Community Development agent as well as any appropriate agent for the City of Fostoria and/or the City of Fostoria itself, may also be asked to provide information to the Seneca Regional Planning Commission.

Task 2 Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Challenges Assessment

A comprehensive assessment of all the existing conditions, trends, and opportunities and challenges – physical, economic, and social – will be undertaken. The following topic areas will be addressed as part of the assessment:

- a. Land Use

- b. Population, Household, and Labor Forces Characteristics and Trends
- c. Employment and Economic Characteristics and Trends
- d. Housing
- e. Quality of Life Factors
- f. Transportation System and Circulation
- g. Agricultural Resources
- h. Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources
- i. Community Facilities
- j. Public Services, Permitting, and Regulations
- k. Intergovernmental Cooperation

5.3 Comprehensive Plan Preparation

For the Comprehensive Plan to be effective it must identify the challenges that the community faces and present solutions in the form of recommended policies, development standards, and community projects and programs. The Plan will do the following:

- a. Be focused on implementation – outlining prioritized steps for the City, the County, and the community and stakeholders
- b. Identify how future public investments, community development, and public policy can support appropriate and robust economic development and growth
- c. Evaluate and recommend natural and mineral resource conservation measures and agricultural land protection practices
- d. Promote land use strategies that direct growth and development into appropriate locations based on natural resources constraints, protection of prime agricultural lands, and economic development and business assets and resources
- e. Evaluate public facilities and level of service standards
- f. Recommend future growth policy in cooperation/coordination with other municipalities in the county
- g. Identify viable funding sources for plan implementation
- h. Evaluate the walkability, livability, quality of life and sense of place of Seneca County and make recommendations for future enhancement

Task 1 Visioning and Development of Community Goals

The Visioning phase is a vital stage of the planning process. The vision and goals for the future of the participating entities will be shaped by its residents. The Vision will be crafted to reflect the wants, needs, and desires of the community which will be aligned with physical and economic strategies. The Vision Statement will provide the foundation for Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives and will ultimately shape future decision making in the participating entities.

Task 2 Plan Elements

The Comprehensive Plan is anticipated to be divided into topical elements that are analyzed individually and then connected to one another to achieve the community's vision and established goals and objectives. The identification of specific plan elements

will be a reflection of the outcomes of the existing conditions, opportunities, and challenges assessment and public engagement process. Topic elements may include:

- a. History and County Profile
- b. Land Use
- c. Community Character and Quality of Life
- d. Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources
- e. Agricultural Preservation
- f. Local Economy
- g. Housing
- h. Economic and Workforce Development
- i. Public Facilities and Services
- j. Transportation and Thoroughfare Plan
- k. Parks and Open Space
- l. Intergovernmental Cooperation
- m. Implementation

5.4 Implementation Program

For the Comprehensive Plan to be effective, it must be an integral component of decision making for staff, elected, and appointed officials. Implementation of the Plan is critical in guiding the future of the participating entities towards realization of the vision articulated in the Plan. The Implementation Program defines and provides a schedule of actions necessary to implement the strategies and recommendations of each element of the Plan and also makes recommendations for regular review and updating of the Plan. The Implementation Program may include:

- a. Short Term Work Plan
- b. Review of Capital Improvement Program
- c. Plan Review and Annual Update Program
- d. Plan Adoption

6. Deliverables

Final deliverables should include, but not be limited to:

- a. A print ready PDF file and an original editable version of the Plan documents
- b. All files related to the development of the Plan (GIS, Excel, etc.)
- c. Implementation Strategy with measurable benchmarks
- d. PowerPoint presentation encompassing all elements of the Plan

7. Letters of Interest, Programmatic Selection Process

7.1 Instructions for Preparing and Submitting a Letter of Interest

- a. Provide the information requested in the Letter of Interest Content (Item 7.2 below), **in the same order listed**, in a letter signed by an officer of the firm. **Do not** send additional forms, resumes, brochures, or other material.
- b. Letters of Interest shall be limited to sixteen (16) 8¹/₂" x 11" single sided pages plus two (2) pages for the Project Approach (Item 7.2h below).
- c. Please adhere to the following **requirements** in preparing and binding letters of interest:
 - Please use a minimum font size of 12-point and maintain margins of 1" on all four sides.
 - Page numbers must be centered at the bottom of each page.
 - Use 8¹/₂" x 11" paper only.
 - **Bind letters of interest by stapling at the upper left-hand corner only.** Do not utilize any other binding system.
 - **Do not** provide tabbed inserts or other features that may interfere with machine copying.

7.2 Letter of Interest Content

Please note that all information shall be presented in this order and shall not exceed the maximum number of pages for each item.

- a. Cover letter (not to exceed **one** page).
- b. Description of the firm, including: the location of the primary office, pre-qualifications, any sub consultants and the percentage and type of work to be performed by each sub-consultant, and the current staffing of the primary office broken down by specialty (not to exceed **one** page).
- c. Identification of the project manager and description of the project manager's experience, length of time with the firm, and qualifications (not to exceed **two** pages).
- d. Identification of key staff members, including key sub-consultant staff, and description of the staff's experience, length of time with the firm, and qualifications (Not to exceed **two** pages).
- e. Description of the firm's milestone plan and ability to meet the timetable to complete the study on time (Not to exceed **one** page).
- f. Identification of current projects that are under contract in the primary office and quantifiable description of the amount of time that assigned staff has to complete the study (Not to exceed **one** page).

- g. Description of similar type projects completed in the last three years by the firm and sub-consultants and any references complete with contact information. Identify the project manager for each reference project listed (Not to exceed **two** pages).
- h. Description of the firm's project approach. Include the firm's understanding of the project, innovative ideas, ability to meet the scheduled completion date, and any other relevant information concerning your firm's qualifications for the project (Not to exceed **two** pages).

Cost estimates and typical billing rates. Cost estimate shall be a line itemization of costs to include but not limited to the following (Not to exceed **five** pages):

- Separate line item for a joint Seneca County, City of Tiffin, City of Fostoria comprehensive plan
- Separate line item for a joint Seneca County & City of Tiffin comprehensive plan
- Separate line itemization for a separate plan for Seneca County, Ohio
- Separate line itemization for a separate plan for the City of Tiffin, Ohio
- Separate line itemization for a separate plan for the City of Fostoria, Ohio

7.3 Selection Sub-factors

Must have an AICP Certified Planner (or similar planning qualification) identified as project manager on the planning team.

The Plan is to be completed and delivered to the Seneca Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) within 18-24 months from the date of authorization.

It is anticipated that if a Consultant is selected, they will be authorized to proceed on or about March 1, 2018.

7.4 Suspended or Debarred Firms

Firms included on the current Federal list of firms suspended or debarred are not eligible for selection.

8. RFP Questions, Clarification, Omissions

No interpretation of the meaning of the RFP will be made to any bidder orally. Every request for such interpretation should be in writing and emailed to:

Charlene Watkins at cjwatkins@senecarpc.org

A response will be issued to the Seneca Regional Planning Commission's website, www.senecarpc.org. Proposing parties are responsible for clarifying any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, omissions, or other errors in the RFP prior to submitting a proposal, or it will be deemed invalid.

8.1 Communications Restrictions

Please note the following policy concerning communication with the SRPC, SIEDC, the City of Tiffin, the City of Fostoria, Seneca County, and any other agent of the participating entities during the announcement and selection process during the time period between advertisement and the announcement of the consultant selection, the SRPC, SIEDC, the City of Tiffin, the City of Fostoria, and Seneca County staff will not communicate with consultants (or their agents) regarding the status of the selection process, or entertain any communications related to marketing, etc. When completed, a selection notification will be announced by U.S. mail and email.

8.2 Selection Procedures

The SRPC will directly select a consultant based on the Letter of Interest (LOI). The scoring committee will consist of the aforementioned Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The Programmatic Consultant Selection Rating Form that will be used to select the consultant is shown below:

Consultant Selection Rating

Project: Seneca County, City of Tiffin, and/or City of Fostoria Comprehensive Plan

Project Type: Planning Document Selection Committee Members:

Firm Name:

Category	Total Value	Scoring Criteria	Score
Management & Team			
Project Manager	20	See Note 1, Exhibit 1	
Strength/Experience of Assigned Staff including Sub-consultants	15	See Note 2, Exhibit 1	
Ability to Complete Work/Timetable	10		
Firm's Current Workload/ Availability of Personnel	5	See Note 4, Exhibit 1	
Consultant's Past Performance	15	See Note 3, Exhibit 1	
Project Approach	35		
Total	100		

8.3. Exhibit 1 - Consultant Selection Rating Form Notes

- a. The proposed project manager for each consultant shall be ranked, with the highest ranked project manager receiving the greatest number of points, and lower ranked project managers receiving commensurately lower scores. The rankings and scores should be based on each project manager's experience on similar projects and past performance for the LPA and other agencies. The selection committee may contact ODOT and outside agencies if necessary. Any sub-factors identified should be weighed heavily in the differential scoring.

Differential scoring should consider the relative importance of the project manager(s) role in the success of a given project. The project manager(s) role in a simple project may be less important than for a complex project, and differential scoring should reflect this experience, with higher differentials assigned to projects that require a larger role for the project manager.

- b. The and strength of the assigned staff, including sub-consultant staff, should be ranked and scored as noted for Number 1 above, with higher differential scores assigned on more difficult projects. Any sub-factors identified in the project notification should be weighed heavily in the differential scoring.

As above, other agencies may be contacted.

- c. The consultants' past performance on similar projects shall be ranked and scored on a relative, differential scoring type basis, with the highest ranked consultant receiving a commensurately greater number of points. The selection team should consider ODOT CES performance ratings if available, and consult other agencies as appropriate.

The differential scoring should consider the complexity of the project and any sub-factors identified in the project notification.

- d. The consultant's workload and availability of qualified personnel, equipment and facilities shall be ranked and scored on a relative, differential scoring type basis. The selection team shall consider an equitable distribution of work to similarly qualified firms.