



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

Town Manager's Office
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November 4, 2016

Request for Proposal (RFP) for Housing Study and Needs Assessment

Town of St. Johnsbury Vermont
Fall of 2016

Proposal Due Date: Friday, December 2, 2016 by 4:30 pm

Proposals shall be delivered to:

Town Manager's Office
attn: Joe Kasprzak
51 Depot Square, Suite #3
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

Five copies of submittal should be provided. Submittals received after the due date listed above will not be considered.

The Town of St. Johnsbury reserves the right to reject any and all submittals in the best interests of the Town and is not responsible for any costs incurred in the development of the submittals.

Questions: Contact Joe Kasprzak at (802)748-3926, ext.5

Background

The Town of St. Johnsbury is the shire town of Caledonia County and the most populated in the region, with a 2010 population of 7,603. Key attractions include the Fairbanks Museum of Science, the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, Catamount Arts, and the eastern terminus of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. The St. Johnsbury Academy, an approved independent day and boarding school, is also an attraction which draws families with high school-aged children from around the region and country. St. Johnsbury is home to a number of industries that collectively employed 5,438 workers in 2015.

St. Johnsbury's State-designated downtown and adjacent neighborhoods are dense and include buildings reflecting a range of 19th and early 20th Century architectural styles, many of which maintain a high degree of integrity. Outside the downtown area, St. Johnsbury remains rural in character.

In 2015, the Vermont Council on Rural Development facilitated a "Community Visit" in St. Johnsbury. This well-attended event brought residents together to define both key assets and key concerns of the Town. It resulted in the creation of a number of committees, one of which was the housing committee with a mission to "identify strategies and projects that improve the quality and diversity of housing as a key component in building a thriving community."

One of the key tasks identified by the housing committee is a comprehensive assessment of the Town's existing housing stock, and a strategic plan for improving the quality and choice of housing products. St. Johnsbury had 3,158 occupied housing units at the time of the 2010 Census, over 40% of which were renter-occupied. From 2000 to 2010, St. Johnsbury lost 39 housing units, while the surrounding rural towns of Barnet, Waterford and Kirby collectively gained 135 housing units, consisting mostly of owner-occupied single-family detached homes.

Concerns identified by the St. Johnsbury housing committee include a lack of re-investment in older single-family homes, and a lack of housing products in town that are both affordable and appealing to a range of incomes, particularly to young professionals moving to the region. It is recognized that housing that is both appealing and affordable to an educated workforce is a key component to economic development and job growth. Other pressing issues include concentrations of poverty and the deteriorated state of multi-family housing in town, and erosion of property values caused by blighted properties.

The proposed St. Johnsbury housing assessment study is expected to utilize and build upon existing data, such as labor market information published by the VT Department of Labor and U.S. Census Bureau, the Caledonia County section of the 2015 Statewide Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), and data collected by the Vermont Mobile Home Park Research Collaborative. The study will also make use of Town Grand List data, as well as information collected by local and State officials on the condition of multi-family housing units.

This project is funded in part by a Vermont Community Development Program grant from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Project Overview

The Town of St. Johnsbury intends to contract with a qualified consultant with expertise in housing markets and economic development to prepare a housing report including 1) a detailed inventory and assessment of the Town's housing, and 2) a strategic plan to improve the quality and range of housing options in order to serve a broad range of incomes and household sizes, and to foster re-investment in St. Johnsbury's historic neighborhoods.

The strategic plan will incorporate the perspective of a broad range of local stakeholders, will document local housing-related initiatives underway, and will outline a strategy that will provide direction to the Town, housing developers and other local partners to take actions that will build an economically sustainable, thriving community.

Scope of Work and Work Product

The Consultant will provide a comprehensive housing report that includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. State and Regional Overview:

- Using existing data sources and studies, provide a brief overview of demographics, labor market, and housing market trends including development patterns, vacancy rates, sales prices and rents; and information on housing cost burdens for both renters and owners.
- Provide data on where residents of St. Johnsbury work, and where employees working in St. Johnsbury live, in various income categories (using OnTheMap or similar data tool).

2. St. Johnsbury Housing Inventory and Assessment:

- Using best available data (including most current St. Johnsbury Grand List data) create an inventory identifying the number, type (e.g., single-family, multi-family, mobile home), disposition (rental or owned), and value of each unit (applying equalization rate¹).
- Under each housing type and disposition, identify the number of :
 - subsidized, income-restricted units (project based, tax credit, etc.),
 - age-restricted units (both subsidized and market rate),
 - handicap-accessible units (both subsidized and market rate),
 - special needs units (e.g., D.O.C. transitional housing),
 - units in mobile home parks, and
 - unrestricted market-rate units.

¹ The VT Department of Taxes conducts an annual equalization study of all municipalities in Vermont to assess the correlation of the listed values to sales prices to establish an "equalization rate" for each municipality.

- Using data available from the State Housing Authority, indicate the number of housing choice vouchers used in Town.
- Provide an inventory of multi-unit developments of five units or more (including mobile home parks) and key to a map.
- Within selected study areas (the State-designated Downtown and 1-mile perimeter; and the hamlets of St. Johnsbury Center, and East St. Johnsbury):
 - Provide detailed information on housing units of each type, including age, condition, and whether located in a flood hazard area;
 - Review and cross-reference housing unit inspection information collected on rental units by the local Code Enforcement Officer and Health Inspector, and in the State’s “Essential Maintenance Practices” database;
 - Evaluate the availability of overnight parking for multi-unit housing;
 - Rate the walkability of existing multi-unit residences and senior residences to transit hubs, places of worship, civic attractions, healthcare, grocery & drug stores, etc., utilizing existing data where available.

3. Recommended Strategies

- Identify within the selected study areas existing buildings that may be rehabilitated and re-purposed to fulfill existing housing needs and demand; and vacant or underutilized parcels appropriate for new housing developments, both rental and owned, both market rate and income-restricted, and serving various household types (student interns, seniors, young professionals, families).
- Identify incentives to foster re-investment in existing owner-occupied housing units (e.g., grants to renovate, tax stabilization).
- Develop strategies that deal with absentee property owners and vacant and blighted properties.
- Develop strategies for the accommodation of off-street parking needs for existing multi-unit developments (in consideration of the winter overnight parking ban.)
- Identify suggested improvements to improve walkability in selected study areas to better serve residential developments.
- Work with an Historic Preservation consultant that the Town has retained in order to ensure that housing improvement strategies within selected study areas will be developed that are consistent with Historic Preservation goals.
- Identify potential funding sources to support recommendations.

Proposal Content

The Town of St. Johnsbury respectfully requests a proposal from you, and/or your firm, for the provision of the services identified above. The brief proposal shall include the following.

- A statement of consultant's background, qualifications and similar project experience that demonstrates knowledge of the project requirements.
- A description of the consultant's technical approach to the project, including an outline of the sequence of tasks, major benchmarks and milestone dates.
- A brief summary, with resumes attached, of key staff on the project team who will be directly involved in the project, including designation of a single point of contact for coordination of the project. Staff resumes should focus on individuals who will have primary responsibility for performance of the work.
- A description of similar project experience involving key staff to be involved in the project. The consultant agrees to provide references upon request.
- Proposed use of Town staff, office staff, as well as any equipment, materials or additional data that will be expected from the Town at the onset of the project.
- Agreement to accomplish the project within the time frame contained in this RFP.
- Estimated cost of the services to be provided under this proposal.
- Proposed services to be sub-contracted if any, anticipated subcontractors, and anticipated costs for these services.

Any additional terms or conditions, which are deemed necessary for entering into a contract with the Town of St. Johnsbury, should be attached or incorporated as part of the proposal.

The Consultant will be required to comply with all applicable sections of the Grant Agreement between the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and St. Johnsbury. Specific compliance is required in the areas of:

- 1) Conflict of Interest, Section VII of the Grant Agreement
- 2) Equal Opportunity, Section X of the Grant Agreement
- 3) Retention of and Access to Records, Section XIV of the Grant Agreement
- 4) Audits, Section XII of the Grant Agreement

All proposals become the property of the Town of St. Johnsbury and will not be returned. The Town reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive technicalities, or to negotiate further with a responder who appears to most nearly meet the Town's desires.

Evaluation

Selection will be based upon the proposals submitted and will be ranked primarily based upon the following criteria:

- Consultant's understanding and technical approach to the project.
- Consultant's ability to meet the project schedule.
- Pertinent experience and qualifications of the project team.
- Relative value of the services to be provided (cost will not be the primary determining factor but cost-effectiveness and efficiency will be given very serious consideration.)
- The project budget is capped at \$25,000.

Time Frame

December 2, 2016 – Proposals due

Dec 12th, 2016 – Consultant selected

January 1, 2017 – Work begins

Dec 31, 2017 – Project complete

Deliverables

- Consultant will schedule monthly check-ins to review project progress with project administrators.
- Consultant will meet with the Housing Committee members two times during the project time-frame to provide project updates.
- Consultant will provide grant administrators with first drafts of the final report
- Consultant will present the final report to the Selectboard and public at a public meeting.
- Consultant will provide final report to Selectboard (1 unbound hard copy and 5 bound hard copies, digital, and PowerPoint)