



## Request for Proposals

### Zoning & Subdivision Ordinance Rewrite

City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

RFP Release Date: August 2, 2024

Proposal Due Date: August 30, 2024, at 4:00pm CST

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

The City of La Crosse seeks proposals from qualified consultant firms who demonstrate the capability and proven experience of providing professional planning and zoning services, to undertake the rewriting of the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances. The existing zoning ordinance has not been substantially updated since the 1980s. Due to the age of the ordinance, the recently adopted updated Comprehensive Plan, and changes to state statutes, the City recognizes the need for more than just an incremental reform of the current zoning code. The new ordinance must be readable, understandable by the public, and enforceable.

**Electronic proposals are due by Friday, August 30, 2024, at 4:00 pm CST. Inquires and proposals should be directed to:**

Tim Acklin, AICP  
Planning Manager  
City of La Crosse, WI  
400 La Crosse Street  
La Crosse, WI, 54601

608-789-7391  
[acklint@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:acklint@cityoflacrosse.org)

## **COMMUNITY BACKGROUND**

The City of La Crosse is prominently located along the Mississippi River in western La Crosse County, Wisconsin. It borders the state of Minnesota and the Town of Campbell (west), the City of Onalaska (north), the Town of Medary (east) and the Town of Shelby (southeast). The City has a well-established connection to the region's surface water resources with its location at the confluence of the Mississippi, La Crosse, and Black Rivers. La Crosse encompasses 23.8 square miles and is a very low growth, urban center. Just under one-half of the City's land base is undeveloped or in permanent open space. La Crosse's population has fluctuated slightly from 51,320 people in 2010 (U.S. Census), to 52,580 in 2020 (U.S. Census)—a 2.7% increase. La Crosse's projected 2040 population is 51,850.

The prominent bluffs, rivers, adjacent municipalities, and the La Crosse River Marsh contribute to a landlocked community that continues to experience successful growth via commercial and residential redevelopment projects with a few occasional developments on vacant parcels. Multi-family residential development has predominately been the most desired land use, particularly around the Downtown, adjacent to the three institutions of higher learning, and along the State highways 16, 53, 35, and 14/61.

La Crosse has a Council-Mayor form of government. The mayor is elected to implement the policies of the thirteen-member Common Council as well as overseeing the day-to-day operations of the City government. The City Plan Commission has been appointed to take action on site plans, plats, and conditional use petitions, and makes recommendations to the Common Council regarding amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Zoning Map.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

After a multi-year effort, the Common Council adopted an updated comprehensive plan in October 2023 that is guided by one of the following goals:

*Complete a comprehensive review and update of the City's zoning code to evaluate barriers to development that include off-street parking requirements, minimum lot size and setbacks, design standards, and permitting of ADU's*

Additionally, the Future Land Use section in the comprehensive plan is based on the "Neighborhood, District, and Corridor Framework" (NDC), a system devised by the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU). The intent of the NDC model is to encourage walkable, compact communities that are rich with amenities and celebrate the history of the built environment and the preservation of natural features, all while respecting the fabric of communities. The NDC model can pair well with form-based codes, a land development regulation that focuses on the physical form of the built environment in relation to the

public realm as the code's overarching principle. If the City decides to integrate a form-based code in the future, the NDC model can be used to guide a cohesive urban form.

The City is also currently reviewing the final draft of the La Crosse 2024 Housing Study that is guided by the following overarching action: (Adoption in August/September 2024)

*Complete a comprehensive review and update of the City's zoning code to evaluate barriers to development*

The state of the current zoning ordinances is not unusual:

- It has not been completely updated since the early 1980s.
- Sections of the code may not be consistent with recent changes in state statutes.
- Numerous amendments have been made that sometimes are not consistent with the rest of the code.
- It is Euclidian in nature and contains design standards that are outdated, difficult to administer, and often hidden in many different sections.
- It lacks options for mixed-use districts.
- As written, key components of the code are difficult to understand by staff and the public.
- The entire code perpetuates suburban-styled development that impedes opportunities to promote dense urban development and lacks the ability to achieve either traditional or modern development patterns in City's varied neighborhoods and corridors.
- Many ordinances lack specificity or common sense, making zoning enforcement often difficult.
- It is not user-friendly and lacks consistent graphics to improve readability.
- Many of the requirements do not reflect existing conditions, creating a large number of nonconforming properties. This has led to frequent variance requests, zoning code amendments, requests to rezone to Planned Unit Developments, or requests for exceptions to design standards
- The code needs to be updated to become consistent with and implement the City's recently updated Comprehensive Plan.

## **RESOURCES**

Municipal Code Chapter 113- SUBDIVISIONS

[https://library.municode.com/wi/la\\_crosse/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=PTIILADEOR\\_CH113SU](https://library.municode.com/wi/la_crosse/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIILADEOR_CH113SU)

Municipal Code Chapter 115-ZONING

[https://library.municode.com/wi/la\\_crosse/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=PTIILADEOR\\_CH115ZO](https://library.municode.com/wi/la_crosse/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIILADEOR_CH115ZO)

Forward La Crosse- 2040 Comprehensive Plan

<https://forwardlacrosse.org/complan/>

La Crosse 2024 Housing Study

**Inset Link once adopted**

Multi-Family Design Standards Handbook (115-510)

<https://www.cityoflacrosse.org/home/showpublisheddocument/6086/637847481002630000>

Commercial Design Standards Handbook (115-511)

<https://www.cityoflacrosse.org/home/showpublisheddocument/6084/637847479856030000>

## **PLANNING STAFF & STEERING COMMITTEE**

The Planning Division is led by the Director of Planning, Development, and Assessment. There are three other planners in the division with the Planning Manager as project lead, one environmental planner, and one associate planner. This Department works closely with the Engineering Department and Fire Department-Division of Community Risk Management on subdivision and zoning related activities within the City and anticipates their involvement in this project.

In order to reduce the amount of administrative work performed by the consultant, Planning staff will assist with gathering local data, coordinating with local property owners and stakeholders, arranging meetings, as well as other similar type responsibilities as determined.

During the course of the project, the Consultant shall work with elected and appointed officials, City boards and committees, City staff, identified stakeholder groups, and the general public. The Consultant will also work with a local media company, selected by the City, for marketing, website, and community engagement purposes. Using the stated selection criteria, proposals will be evaluated by Planning, Development, and Assessment Department staff and the City Plan Commission, who has been designated as the Steering Committee for this project. Only firms/teams submitting proposals by the deadline will be considered.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

The consultant shall submit a proposed work plan with a timeline based on the below scope of work. With work beginning no later than December 2024, staff estimates the process could take as long as 18-24 months. The City's source of funding requires that a contract is signed with a consultant before end of year 2024 and completed by end of year 2026.

Provide both a summary and the detail of the proposed services, or alternatively recommend another process or modifications, including any technical/innovative approaches, for the project if they have found them to be effective in zoning code rewrites.

The scope of work should include the following:

- **Review of Current Municipal Code**-- Review, familiarize, analyze, and critique Municipal Code Chapter 113- Subdivisions and Chapter 115- Zoning and any other related codes. Review should include, but is not limited to, the following:
  - Definitions
  - Processes and requirements for division of land and plats. (Chapter 113)
  - Process for enforcement of zoning. (115-2 to 115-34)
  - Non-Conforming Uses. (115-33)
  - Variances/Board of Zoning Appeals. (115-57 to 115-61)
  - Process for rezoning property. (115-34, 115-81 to 115-90)
  - Basic zoning districts. (115-140 to 115-158)
    - Includes Permitted uses, Setbacks, Lot Size, Height Requirements, Density, Off-Street Parking, etc.
  - Traditional Neighborhood Development Zoning. (115-403)
  - Off-Street Parking Requirements (115-393)
  - Planned Development District. (115-403)
  - Multi-Family Design Standards- (115-510)
    - Process and Standards.
  - Commercial Design Standards. (115-548)
    - Process and Standards.
  
- **Review of Comprehensive Plan and other related plans:** The consultant will review and identify Plan Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations of the comprehensive plan and other related plans identified by Planning staff and the steering committee to ensure the new code will be consistent with current planning documents. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  - Forward La Crosse-2040 Comprehensive Plan
  - La Crosse 2040 Housing Study

- **Public Outreach:** The consultant will provide a public participation plan designed to receive input from community stakeholders, staff, and the public as well as educate and inform them on the process. It is anticipated that the following items will be considered public outreach and should be addressed in the public participation plan:
  - Creating education materials to be used by staff and the consultant at public meetings on the importance of rewriting zoning codes, types of zoning codes (Euclidean, Form-Based, & Hybrid) and their benefits.
  - Work with a local media company, selected by Planning staff, for marketing, social media presence, and managing the project website. This will permit the consultant to develop surveys, polls, project information, maps or any other materials for the public to view and provide input to as well as advertise meetings and input opportunities.
  - Meetings with the City Plan Commission to obtain input and/or provide updates on the process. The City Plan Commission meets monthly. Attendance can be virtual.
  - Stakeholder Identification. Review and discussion of certain sections of the code will require separate stakeholder meetings. These sections include, but are not limited to, the following:
    - Multi-Family and Commercial design standards.
    - Off-Street Parking
    - Basic Zoning District Uses and Regulations
    - Board of Zoning Appeals
    - Subdivision Ordinance
  - Stakeholder Meetings. Work with staff to prepare materials and conduct identified stakeholder meetings. Staff is prepared to conduct these meetings on behalf of the consultant using materials prepared by the consultant. The consultant may choose to conduct these meetings. In some cases, attending virtual may not be an option. It is anticipated that anywhere from 3-5 meetings with these groups will be conducted throughout the process. These stakeholder meetings would include, but not limited, to the following:
    - Neighborhood Associations.
    - Board of Zoning Appeals staff and board members.
    - Engineering/Public Works Staff
    - Architects/Developers/Contractors
    - Fire Department Division of Community Risk Management Staff
    - Elected Officials.
    - City Staff (City Attorney, City Clerk)
  - Public Meetings. Over the course of the project the consultant will conduct four to five (4-5) public engagement opportunities, such as open houses, during the project. (kick-off, middle, and near the end). Planning staff will work with the consultant on meeting logistics.
  - Additional strategies or opportunities for public engagement that have worked well for you in other projects. Best practice engagement techniques,

including building more equity into the process, are important to capture input from people often not engaged.

- **Analysis and Recommendations.** Provide an analysis of the City’s existing code, highlighting its strengths and shortcomings based on the consultant’s review of existing code, review of current plans, and community and stakeholder input. Include recommended approach for potential revisions that include best practices/example codes as related to low-carbon sustainable development, form-base designs, affordable/attainable housing, missing middle housing, mixed housing integration, parking reductions, multi-modal transportation, performance standards for various uses, etc.
  
- **Documents:** The consultant will prepare drafts of the zoning ordinance for review by staff, the steering committee, and the public culminating in a final version to be acted upon by the Plan Commission and adopted by the Common Council. These documents include, but not limited to, the following:
  - Draft and format code revisions, including all progressive iterations and final versions with cross-references.
  - Code Accompaniments – Add relevant tables, illustrations, and images (such as improved use tables, design guidance, etc.).
  - Recommended amendments to the Comprehensive Plan that are anticipated. May include future land use map/GIS shapefile and text changes.
  - Refine, finalize and deliver to the City an electronic copy of the final zoning code rewrite. Final proposed zoning code rewrite must be compliant with the City’s Municipal Code format and numbering system.
  
- **Project Schedule:** The consultant provides the City an anticipated schedule for the above work, with a goal of completion by the end of 2026.

## **PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS**

The City of La Crosse is not liable for any costs incurred in replying to the RFP. Consultants are asked to submit a concise proposal describing their capacity to manage the project and their experience with similar projects. Samples of zoning code revisions / rewrites and public participation plans are expected. The proposals should include a clear outline of how the consultant would help the City meet the project objectives.

All proposals shall include the following elements:

- **General Information.**
  - Name and address of submitting organization; give the state in which incorporated or chiefly located; indicate whether licensed to operate in Wisconsin; identify prime contact in organization and telephone numbers.

- Provide a general narrative of your understanding of the project, your understanding of municipal code rewrites, and your involvement in projects of similar size and scope and describing any modifications or expansion of the information provided. A list of client references for which the consultant has provided similar services should be provided, including the name, address and phone number, and email of a contact person for each reference. Indicate the type, scope and duration of the work done for each client.
- **Project Plan**
  - Address the objectives stated in the above Scope of Work.
  - A detailed project time schedule with start date and major project milestones. Indicate the date on which your team would be able to initiate the study and whether the project can begin by end of year 2024 and completed by end of year 2026.
- **Budget.**
  - The budget for this project is not to exceed \$260,000. Please indicate the anticipated expenditures appropriate to a lump sum contract. For each task within your detailed work plan, please submit a lump sum budget. Include a percentage of support costs as a separate line item in your overall budget. Support costs should include costs such as travel time, transportation, lodging, meals, printing, communication, etc.
- **Project Management & Development Team.**
  - Provide a narrative describing the project operations and management strategy
  - Include an outline of essential functions of the project management role, the expected City role, and examples of prior site plans that the team has successfully implemented
  - Provide a list of principals and staff assigned and committed to this project and their expertise/qualifications.
  - Include any conflicting assignments/projects during the projected project timeline
  - Provide testimonials or reference letters from public clients for the team's past projects
- **Additional Required Attachments.**
  - One example of your firm's typical services agreement or contract.
  - Signed City of La Crosse Standard Terms and Conditions. (Attachment A)
    - Submittal of an RFP constitutes acceptance of the City of La Crosse's Standard Terms and Conditions with no requested amendments.

The La Crosse Planning, Development, and Assessment Department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals.



## EVALUATION/SELECTION CRITERIA

The RFPs will be reviewed and evaluated by the Planning staff and the City Plan Commission using the evaluation criteria provided below.

Category	Points
Overall Quality of Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completeness and thoroughness in addressing the scope of work and requested information.</li></ul>	25
Approach to the Project Scope. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work Plan, Deliverables, Any Innovations</li><li>• Timeline</li><li>• Budget</li></ul>	50
Organization, Personnel, and Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualifications of Personnel</li><li>• Specific experience of firm in Municipal Code rewrite or strongly related activities. (Examples of related work with other communities)</li><li>• Experience of individual team members in Municipal Code analysis and rewriting.</li><li>• An interdisciplinary team of bona fide personnel</li></ul>	25
Public Participation Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approach to all inclusive, community wide participation</li></ul>	50
<b>Proposal Total</b>	150

After evaluating the submitted RFPs, the City Plan Commission may determine to award a consultant with the project or select firms for interviews. If interviews are needed, we anticipate they will be held between September 16, 2024-September 27, 2024, and will be separately scored.

Upon selection of a finalist, the City by its proper officials shall attempt to negotiate and reach a final agreement with the finalist. If the City, for any reason, is unable to reach a final agreement with this finalist, the City then reserves the right to attempt to reject such finalist and negotiate a final agreement with another finalist who has the next most viable proposal or bid. The City may also elect to reject all proposals and re-issue a new RFP.

### Proposals Due

Only electronic submittals will be accepted. Electronic proposals will be accepted until Friday, August 30, 2024 @ 4:00 PM CST. Proposals must be submitted to Tim Acklin, AICP at [acklint@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:acklint@cityoflacrosse.org).