



Gratiot Countywide Master Plan: 2023-2043

Request for Proposals (RFP)

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING SERVICES TO PREPARE A NEW MASTER PLAN ON
BEHALF OF GRATIOT COUNTY AND ITS MUNICIPAL UNITS.

March 27, 2023

PURPOSE:

The Gratiot Countywide Master Plan Steering Committee is soliciting proposals for a new master plan to be complete in 2023/2024. Respondents must offer a proposal that will meet the scope of services, requests and general description of work activities identified in this Request for Proposals (RFP), while adding what the Respondent would have to offer to the master plan.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Gratiot County is located at the center of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The County is comprised of twenty-three local units of government, including sixteen townships, three villages, three cities, and the County. Gratiot County is primarily rural with a very active agricultural community. The cities and villages serve as commercial, industrial, and residential hubs. Gratiot is also known for being a leader in wind energy; there are currently 345 wind turbines installed, with 72 more under construction. Gratiot County is also becoming increasingly known for recreational opportunities.

The local jurisdictions collaborate at a level that is unprecedented in the State of Michigan. In 2011, all twenty-three jurisdictions came together to develop a shared Master Plan that encompassed the goals, objectives, and strategies of all units: the GREAT (Gratiot Regional Excellence and Transformation) Plan. The Plan was individually adopted by each local unit of government in 2012, and was a truly collaborative initiative. This Plan was reviewed and updated in 2017 and can be found [here](#).

Members from all jurisdictions are involved in the Gratiot Countywide Master Plan Steering Committee (Committee). Upon review of the current Master Plan, the Committee has determined a new Master Plan is needed to help pave the way for the next twenty years. Reasons a new plan is needed instead of an update include:

- New or more accurate information has become available since the creation of the current plan: 2020 US Census data is now available



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- Major developments in the community or in nearby communities have affected the underlying principles, strategies, or land use needs in particular areas: Development of ZFS Ithaca, the state's largest soybean processing facility, and continued development of renewable energy (wind and solar)
- There has been a recurring or new issue in the community that is not addressed in the current plan: New issues include
 - Aligning with the Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) expectations set forth by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)
 - Upgrades to US Highway 127 for safety and economic development purposes
 - Increased need for broadband access in rural areas stemming from the COVID pandemic
 - Further collaboration efforts in the County, including the Gratiot Area Water Authority, St. Louis, Ithaca, and Pine River Transportation Authority collaborating with the Alma Transit Center, and the need for increased housing

Therefore, the Committee is seeking proposals from qualified firms (“Consultant”) to develop a new Master Plan on behalf of all Gratiot County jurisdictions. This will include providing technical and public engagement assistance for creating a new community vision and identifying long term goals and objectives. The Consultant must demonstrate a capacity to work closely with project partners, key stakeholders, various municipal staff, community boards and commissions, and the public in the course of updating the Plan.

Gratiot County has three cities and one village engaged in the Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) program through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). As part of the RRC designation process, the Committee seeks to incorporate an RRC-aligned Master Plan with an Economic Development Plan as a major component to the Master Plan. These components must align with the [RRC Best Practices as determined by MEDC](#), specifically *Best Practice 1.1 – Master Plans* and *Best Practice 5.1 – Economic Development Strategy*.

PROPOSAL TIMELINE:

Request for Proposals Released _____ Monday, March 27, 2023 at 2 pm
Deadline to Submit Questions _____ Monday, April 10, 2023 at 2 pm
Deadline to Receive Proposals _____ Monday, April 24, 2023 at 2 pm

The Committee reserves the right to modify any element of the timeline should it



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become necessary.

PRE-SUBMITTAL MEETING:

No Pre-Submittal Meeting has been scheduled for this project. Please see Section “Questions and Requests for Clarifications” below in regards to submitting questions.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS:

Consultants must submit by email a PDF copy of proposal by 2:00 pm on Monday, April 24, 2023 labeled “Gratiot Countywide Master Plan 2023 Proposal” to kasey.zehner@gratiot.org

The firm's name and address shall be clearly indicated in the email message. Proposals, and amendments to Proposals, received after the date and time specified above will not be accepted. Proposals via mail or fax will not be accepted. Sales calls or presentations will not be allowed during the RFP process. The RFP can be downloaded from this website: gogrowgratiot.org

DISSEMINATION OF RFP INFORMATION:

The Committee may issue responses to requests for clarifications, questions, comments, and addenda to this RFP, or other materials related to this solicitation, on their website: www.gogrowgratiot.org. It is the responsibility of the Consultant to check the Committee website regularly during the solicitation period for updated information. By submitting a Proposal, Consultants are deemed to have constructive knowledge and notice of all information pertaining to this RFP.

ADDENDA TO THE RFP:

Any change(s) to the requirements of this RFP initiated by the Committee will be made by written addenda to this RFP. Any written addenda issued pertaining to this RFP shall be incorporated into and made a part of the terms and conditions of any resulting agreement. The Committee will not be bound to any modifications to or deviations from the requirements set forth in this RFP unless they have been documented by addenda to this RFP. Consultants will be required to document that they are aware of all addenda issued, if any, by the Committee in their Proposal.

QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATIONS:

1. Contact Person for the Project: All questions or contact regarding this RFP must be directed to Kasey Zehner, who can be reached by email at kasey.zehner@gratiot.org .



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2. Clarifications of the RFP: Consultants are encouraged to promptly notify Ms. Zehner of any apparent errors or inconsistencies in the RFP. Should a Consultant require clarifications to this RFP, the Consultant shall notify the Committee via email in accordance with Subsection 1 above. Should it be found that the point in question is not clearly and fully set forth in the RFP, a written addendum clarifying the matter will be issued and posted on the [Committee website](#).

3. Deadline for Submitting Questions:

a. All questions must be submitted to the Committee by 2:00 pm on Monday, April 10, 2023.

b. The Committee is not responsible for failure to respond to a request or question that has not been labeled correctly. Questions can be submitted via email to kasey.zehner@gratiot.org as long as they are received no later than the date and time specified above.

4. Committee Responses: The Committee, in its sole discretion, will respond to requests for clarifications, questions, and comments. Responses will be posted to the website on or before 2:00 pm on Friday, April 14, 2023.

COST OF PROPOSAL PREPARATION:

Any party responding to this RFP shall do so at their own risk and cost. The Committee shall not, under any circumstances, be liable for any pre-Contractual expenses incurred by any Consultant who elects to submit a Proposal in response to this RFP or by any Consultant that is selected. Pre-contractual expenses are defined as expenses incurred by Consultants and the selected Consultant, if any, in:

- Preparing a proposal and related information in response to this RFP;
- Submitting a Proposal to the Committee;
- Negotiations with the Committee on any matter related to this RFP;
- Costs associated with interviews, meetings, travel, or presentations; or
- Any and all other expenses incurred by a Consultant prior to the date of award, if any, of an agreement, and formal notice to proceed.

The Committee will provide only the staff assistance and documentation specifically referred to herein and will not be responsible for any other cost or obligation of any kind, which may be incurred by the Consultant.

GENERAL SCOPE OF WORK:

Included in the scope of services will be the following tasks.



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Development of Countywide Master Plan

1. Conduct public engagement sessions to gather input from residents, businesses, property owners, administrative staff, and the Boards and Committees of the jurisdictions within Gratiot County.
2. Review and Audit the current Master Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and any other relevant documents, and note any relevant inconsistencies between the documents.
3. Conduct a community-wide survey to obtain input regarding trends, outlooks, and preferences.
4. Identify strategies for priority redevelopment areas that will define a clear direction of how and where development/re-development should occur.
5. Determine a specific implementation plan, with associated timelines and responsible parties, for each immediate, short, and long-term goal.
6. Develop a framework that will facilitate annual evaluation of the Master Plan's implementation in each community.
7. Follow the Michigan Planning Enabling Act requirements (Act 33 of 2008; MPEA).
8. Be able to complete project in no more than twelve (12) months of contract execution date.

Economic Development Strategy

Gratiot County and its jurisdictions do not currently have an economic development strategy. One needs to be developed that identifies the community's economic development goals, actions, timelines, and responsible parties that meet the RRC objectives. For an economic development strategy to follow best practices put forth by the RRC program, the individual objectives must tie back to one or more of the goals identified in the regional context. The Consultant shall tie the Committee's strategy to the EMCOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The process will include conducting visioning sessions to identify and understand the community's resources, and to develop those resources to accommodate business growth with particular focus along any areas identified during the Master Plan initiative. It should also identify at least three priority sites in jurisdictions seeking RRC designation.

Individual Jurisdiction Components

In past iterations of the Countywide Master Plan, each jurisdiction had the option of contracting with the Consultant to provide more in-depth discussion for their area, which is included in the Countywide Master Plan as an addendum. The Committee expects each entity seeking RRC designation to engage in this process, as well as some Townships or Villages. This would include identifying



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priority redevelopment sites, updating or developing a Capital Improvements Plan, and updating or developing a Downtown Plan. Please include the costs that would be associated with these components as separate from the cost of the Countywide Master Plan and Economic Development Strategy in the Proposal; costs can be included as an hourly rate (with anticipated hours spent on each component) or as completed project. Individual jurisdictions will then decide if they will opt to pay for this additional work.

DELIVERABLES:

1. One un-bound copy of the new Master Plan
2. A digital copy of the new Master Plan in .pdf format
3. A digital copy of the Master Plan in .docx format
4. All tables associated with the new Master Plan in .xlsx format
5. Any additional raw data
6. All pictures, graphics, renderings, and charts associated with the new Master Plan in .jpg format
7. GIS data will be provided in a format that can be used to display layers on the Gratiot County GIS Authority's existing GIS site

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS:

The successful proposal shall:

1. Each response to the RFP should be accompanied by a letter of interest not exceeding one (1) page that summarizes key points of the proposal and which is signed by an officer of the firm authorized to commit the Respondent to the obligations contained in the proposal. The letter should also include a phone number and email address for the Respondent's contact person.
2. Provide information on the respondent's background and experience in the following:
 - a. Preparing municipal master plans and updates
 - b. Creating economic development strategies
 - c. Engaging the public for planning purposes, including methods utilized for public engagement
 - d. Following RRC Best Practices in previous master plans
3. Highlight any characteristics or capabilities that make the respondent uniquely qualified to perform the services requested.
4. Include a proposed timeline of the process indicating the Consultant can complete the services within twelve (12) months.
5. Provide a separate proposed fee range for completing each part of the Scope of Work. The final scope and fee will be negotiated with the



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successful respondent but is expected to be consistent with the fee range submitted with this proposal.

6. Include Consultant's recommended terms of payment (such as percent of contract due at what time).
7. Disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest with any jurisdictions of Gratiot County, including its officers, elected officials, agents, and employees.
8. Describe any partnerships with any organizations/subcontractors/suppliers that will play a role in this project.
9. Identify at least three (3) references including the organization/business, address, contact person, phone number, date of services, and scope of services.
10. Provide examples of at least two (2) similar projects completed in the last five (5) years. Examples may be provided in electronic formation or by providing an internet link.
11. Provide a copy of your certificate of insurance verifying professional, commercial general, automobile liability, and workers' compensation insurance coverage with minimum policy limits as detailed in this RFP. The coverage must be maintained and carried in force for the duration of the contract.

Any additional information believed necessary to assist the Committee in evaluating your proposal may also be submitted.

PROPOSAL CONDITIONS:

1. By submission of a proposal, the respondent certifies that they have not paid or agreed to pay any fee or commission, or any other thing of value, contingent on the award of this contract to any employee, official, or current contracting consultant of the Committee. The respondent certifies that the financial information in this statement has been arrived at independently and without consultation, communication, or agreement, for the purpose of restricting competition as to any matter relating to such costs with any other proposal or Bidder.

2. The contents of the proposals shall be considered public records of the Committee and its member jurisdictions. Any respondent submitting a proposal hereunder further acknowledges and agrees that the Committee is a public entity which is required to abide by laws governing public records and shall not be liable for disclosures required by law. All materials submitted in response to this RFP shall become the property of the Committee and its member jurisdictions upon delivery



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to the address set forth above.

3. The Committee or its representatives shall not be held responsible for expenses incurred in the preparation or subsequent presentation of the RFP response.

4. This RFP is not an offer to enter into a contract, but rather a solicitation for Proposals.

5. The Committee reserves the right to reject all Proposals in its sole discretion. The Committee reserves the right to reject any and all Proposals in whole, or in part, and accept any Proposal or portion of the Proposal that, in their opinion, best serves the interest of the Committee and its member jurisdictions.

6. The selected consultant and their subcontractors are required not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment to be employed in the performance of the Proposal with respect to hire, tenure, terms, conditions or privileges of employment, because of race, color, religion, national origin, or ancestry or also because of age or sex, except based on a legitimate occupational qualification. Violation of this requirement may be regarded as a material breach of the Michigan Fair Employment Practices Act and may be subject to prosecution.

7. The awarded contract will be governed by the laws of the State of Michigan. Venue for any claims or litigation regarding this contract may only be brought in the 65th District Court, 29th Circuit Court or the Federal District Court, Eastern District of Michigan. The selected vendor/contractor shall not assign the contract or sublet it or portions thereof without the written consent of the authorized Committee representative. The Committee insurance and indemnification requirements as well as standard contract provisions will be a requirement of the awarded contract.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

The selection process will be based on responses to this RFP, verification of references, and any interviews to verify the ability of proposer to provide services in response to this document. The Committee will evaluate each proposal based on the following criteria:

1. Demonstrating clearly and completely, your firm's understanding of the RFP scope of work (20 pts.);
2. Qualification, skill, and experience level of staff and creativity conducting a public engagement strategy (20 pts.);



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3. Reasonableness of project cost (10 pts.);
4. Reasonableness of project timeline (10 pts.);
5. Demonstrated experience on projects of similar scope and favorable reference checks (20 pts.);
6. Previous experience preparing a master plan and economic development strategy that comports with the MEDC RRC program is preferred (20 pts.)

The Committee will evaluate proposals using the above scoring criteria. Scores are private and tabulated for aggregate only. Representatives from the Committee will include City, Village, Township and County representatives from individual jurisdictions in Gratiot County. The Committee reserves the right to select any proposal that, in the sole judgment of the Committee, is in the best interests of the Committee, Gratiot County and its municipal units even if the selected proposal does not achieve the highest score.