

Merrillville Comprehensive Master Plan - Request for Proposals & Qualifications



Town Of Merrillville

This request contains information pertaining to the Town of Merrillville's need for an updated Comprehensive Master Plan including but not limited to project goals, referenced documents and terms for qualified firms to review and submit their proposal and qualifications by the designated response date.

Merrillville Town Council
Mr. Rick Bella - President
7820 Broadway
Merrillville, IN 46410

Date Issued: August 15, 2022

Response Deadline: September 6, 2022 4:00 PM CST

PURPOSE

The Town of Merrillville is seeking qualified planning consulting firms to facilitate a community planning process and develop a new Comprehensive Master Plan to guide development, redevelopment, and capital improvements for the Town in both the short-term and long-term. The plan must be prepared in accordance with and meet the requirements of IN Code § 36-7-4-500 series and will serve as a guiding document for the growth and development of the Town for a minimum of 10 years.

PROJECT GOALS

The Town seeks to accomplish the following goals and develop implementation strategies through the comprehensive planning process to achieve these objectives:

- Develop and build consensus around a unifying vision for the community that considers existing assets, present opportunities, and wishes of the many residents and businesses of Merrillville.
- Further articulate this vision through a series of goals, objectives, and actionable projects that will result in achievement of the broader vision.
- Examine and assess recent demographic and economic trends across the community and larger region.
- Identify and capitalize on economic development opportunities to grow quality job opportunities and attract new residents to the Town.
- Provide varied methods for community engagement so that all who want to participate are afforded opportunities to do so.
- Identify areas of interest to incorporate greenspace and sustainable low impact development BMPs as well as conservation of natural resource features and smart growth principles.
- Identify and prioritize stormwater infrastructure enhancement in underserved areas to enhance flood protections and improve stormwater quality.
- Incorporate transportation to optimize traffic flow and provide safe roadways as well as aesthetic corridors.
- Educate elected, appointed, and community leaders; residents; business owners; and developers about the value of planning and the desired direction for the future of Merrillville.
- An accessible and user-friendly document that guides decision-making for local leaders and property owners.

BACKGROUND

Merrillville, Indiana is located in Lake County, Indiana, approximately 30 miles southeast of the Chicago Loop and shares borders with Hobart, Crown Point, Winfield, Gary and Schererville. Since its incorporation in 1971, the town has evolved into an established and prosperous community of over 36,000 residents making it the largest town in Indiana. Merrillville has a total area of 33.26 square miles. It is estimated that the daytime population of Merrillville grows to over 100,000 due to shoppers

and workers across the community. Merrillville serves as a commercial and industrial hub for the greater Northwest Indiana region. The town is centered on the intersection of U.S. Route 30 and Interstate 65. The Lincoln Highway runs through Merrillville. The original alignment of Lincoln Highway is known as 73rd Avenue (also called Old Lincoln Highway) in Merrillville, while the current Lincoln Highway (US 30) is known as 81st Avenue. State Road 53 (Broadway) and State Road 55 (Taft Street) traverse the town from north to south.

The Town's current comprehensive plan was created in 1999. There have been a number of changes in community since that time. New development and redevelopment have occurred along Lincoln Hwy, Broadway St, and Taft St, and most notably, the Star Plaza Theatre closed in 2017 and was demolished in 2018. It represents a key redevelopment opportunity for the Town. While we have been able to attract new jobs and residents through industrial and residential construction, developable land is still available, and it is critical we have a plan that takes into account present conditions and is reflective of the vision of current community members.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW

Below are documents developed by the town and other supporting entities to serve as references for the planning process:

- Town of Merrillville 1999 Comprehensive Plan
- Merrillville Parks Master Plan
- Merrillville Zoning Ordinance
https://library.municode.com/in/merrillville/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=MUCO_CH21Z_O
- Merrillville Stormwater Master Plan, August 2014
https://cms4files.revize.com/merrillville/document_center/SW_Master_Plan_Final_Report_August_2014.pdf
- Merrillville Disaster Response Plan
- Lake County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan
https://lakecounty.in.gov/departments/emergency-mgmt/hazard-mitigation-plan-c/Lake_MHMP_Dec.pdf
- Merrillville Transportation/Traffic Studies:
 - Whitcomb St
 - Broadway (S. of 30)
- GNIAR Housing Market Document
- Merrillville Schools

SCOPE OF WORK

- Vision, Principles
 - Drawing on public and stakeholder input, articulate a vision for the Town of Merrillville as an organizing principle for future growth and change. Develop principles for the required plan elements.
- Existing Conditions and Current Plan Review:
 - Provide a comprehensive description and analysis of existing conditions, including the physical, economic, demographic, and social factors that will drive or constrain the development of the community. The community assessment should provide comparisons to similar communities to serve as benchmarks for the Town.
 - Review existing planning documents, noting the status of implementation, and identify projects and policies for consideration in the new plan.
- Community Education
 - Provide information to residents, businesses, and policy makers on the meaning and role of the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Develop and maintain a plan website.
- Public Engagement:
 - Lead an extensive and creative engagement process with residents, businesses, and policy makers.
 - Plan and execute regular meetings with the Merrillville Team.
- Land Use
 - Produce a future land use map.
 - Provide recommendations for the location, scale, and design of mixed-use development and multi-family development, e.g., residential density, height based on realistic growth forecasts.
 - Recommend redevelopment or enhancement strategies for older commercial areas.
 - Evaluate the role of light industrial land uses.
 - Establish character-based categories for commercial and mixed-use districts and corridors.
 - Develop urban design and placemaking strategies appropriate to character-based land use categories.
- Transportation
 - Evaluate the Town's Street network using a complete streets framework.
 - Produce a thoroughfare plan based on character-based typologies.
 - Provide recommendations for an on- and off-street pedestrian pathways system.
 - Identify gaps in the multimodal transportation network and propose strategies and projects to improve connectivity.

- Propose strategies to improve safety and calm traffic along major thoroughfares.
- Housing
 - Provide recommendations for the integration of diverse housing types into the community.
 - Include strategies for maintaining the quality of mature residential neighborhoods.
- Community Facilities and Infrastructure
 - Review condition and capacity of transportation, stormwater, water and sanitary infrastructure.
 - Inventory and assess adequacy of existing municipal facilities including Town Hall, Fire Stations, Police Station, and Public Works.
- Parks and Open Space
 - Inventory existing parks by type.
 - Provide recommendations for a town-wide green infrastructure network linking parks, natural areas, and multi-use trails.
- Economic Development
 - Conduct a market study.
 - Review and analyze market conditions and economic forecasts.
 - Determine demand and supply of industry types and discuss gaps and opportunities.
 - Review tax revenue implications of different development types.
 - Evaluate regulatory structure and suggest changes to attract and retain desired business types.
 - Recommend programs for the retention and attraction of desired business types.
- Concept Plans
 - Develop conceptual plans to test development concepts for areas to be identified during the planning process.
- Implementation Plan
 - Develop an implementation plan that coordinates decision making across Town departments and between the public and private sector.
 - Include capital projects, regulatory changes, and new or revised programs or procedures to be implemented over a ten-year period.
 - Identify funding sources and responsible parties for implementation measures.
- Documentation
 - Provide graphically appealing user-friendly documents that can be printed and viewed online.
 - Final documents shall be provided electronically to the Town in an editable format.

ANTICIPATED DELIVERABLES

- Outreach/Marketing Plan
- Project Management Plan
- Presentation materials for all public, committee, Plan Commission, and Town Council meetings
- Project website
- Reports of each public engagement activity
- Existing Conditions report
- Draft Plan

- Final Plan (including 10 bound copies, a pdf, and an editable file).

BUDGET

The proposed budget range for the project shall be from \$150,000- \$250,000.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Town of Merrillville will develop a team comprising of professional staff and select local representatives. The Town Manager will serve as the project manager and primary contact. The project will be guided by Merrillville Team and Town Council. The consultant will work under the direction of the Town Manager. The consultant shall designate a project manager to serve as the primary point of contact for the duration of the project. The consultant shall develop and maintain a project management plan that includes regular communication with Town staff. The Consultant shall be responsible for planning and executing all public meetings and other forms of public engagement. All documents will be reviewed by the Merrillville Team prior to release. In accordance with Indiana State Code Section 36-7-4-500, the consultant shall present the Comprehensive Plan to the Town of Merrillville Plan Commission for approval and to the Town of Merrillville Town Council for adoption.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

- Cover Letter
 - A cover letter introducing the firm(s), including the name of the firm(s) and the name and contact information of the person(s) authorized to represent the company regarding all matters related to the proposal.
- Description of Approach
 - A summary of your firm(s)' project understanding, intended approach and methods, and community engagement efforts. The approach must be consistent with the Scope of Work listed in the RFP.
- Project Experience
 - The firm must have experience developing comprehensive plans for mature suburban communities.
 - A description of firm(s)' experience in comprehensive plans or other similar projects.
 - Provide links to or electronic copies of at least three plans.
 - Provide references for at least three projects.
- Team Expertise
 - The team should include members that represent the following disciplines: transportation planning, land use planning, urban design, economic development.
- Brief description of general qualifications.
 - Specific evidence of relevant experience developing comprehensive plans for similar communities.
 - Resumes of key personnel that may work with the Town. Resumes should list all relevant licenses and certifications.
- Schedule

- Overview of timeline and important project milestones to ensure project delivery on time.
- Project Costs
 - An outline of your professional fees for completing the work as described. Provide an estimate of projected hours and costs for each task. Include hourly rates for each member of the team.

SUBMITTAL PROCEDURES

Submittals must be received by the Town of Merrillville by no later than 4:00 p.m. (CST) on September 6, 2022.

Consultants must submit three (3) identical hard copies and one (1) electronic copy of their submittal package. Electronic copies may be submitted either as a saved document on a USB flash drive with the paper copies or via an email received prior to the deadline. Hard copy submissions must be in a sealed package or envelope marked “Town of Merrillville Comprehensive Master Plan.” The consultant organization’s name and address shall appear in the upper left corner of the package. Documents submitted via email must include in the subject line the consultant organization’s name and “Town of Merrillville Comprehensive Master Plan.”

Submissions must be delivered to Town Hall at the following address:

**Town of Merrillville
Patrick Reardon – Town Manager
7820 Broadway
Merrillville, IN 46410**

Emailed submissions and general questions must be sent to: preardon@merrillville.in.gov

There will be no public opening for this RFP. Late submissions will be rejected and returned unopened. Respondents are responsible for ensuring that their submittals are received by the Town before the deadline. The Town reserves the right to reject any and all proposals.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change.

- Release RFP..... August 15, 2022
- Responses Due.....September 6, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. (CST)
- Interviews (if necessary)Beginning Week of September 19, 2022

EVALUATION OF SUBMITTALS

- Demonstrated understanding of the project.
- How well the consultant addresses the scope of work and refines it based on the needs outlined.
- Community engagement strategy that utilizes innovative tools and will result in robust participation.
- Quality of relevant project experience.
- Qualifications of firm(s), project manager, and other team members.
- References.
- Proposed timeline and ability to complete the process in a timely manner.
- Overall clarity, completeness, and responsiveness to this RFQ.

Proposals will be reviewed by a selection committee that includes staff, Plan Commission members, and Town Council members. Proposals will be evaluated based upon the following:

The Town of Merrillville will evaluate all submittals to determine which consultants have the experience and qualifications that are most suited for these services.

The Town of Merrillville may request personal interviews with the highest-ranked consultants.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- The Town of Merrillville reserves the right to reject any and all responses and to waive minor irregularities in any response to the RFP.
- The Town of Merrillville reserves the right to request clarification of information submitted and to request additional information from any firm submitting a response to the RFP.
- The Town of Merrillville shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by any firm in preparing, submitted or presenting its response to the RFP.
- By submitting a response, the responding firm acknowledges the proposal and all materials submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of the Town.