



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

**Re-write of the
Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)**
January 13, 2026

Due Date: Monday, February 09, 2026
Time: 5 PM Eastern Time

Submittal: Via email sushil.nepal@gastonianc.gov
[Utilize File Transfer Portal for larger files]

Contact: City of Gastonia Planning Department
Planning Director – Sushil Nepal
Sushil.Nepal@gastonianc.gov

IF YOU NEED ANY REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR ANY TYPE OF DISABILITY IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCUREMENT, PLEASE REACH OUT TO THE CONTACT LISTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The City of Gastonia, North Carolina (the City) is soliciting professional services from qualified consultants (individual firms or teams of consultants) to assist with re-write of the City's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The City is interested in firms capable of providing professional services including research, analysis stakeholder engagement, drafting of UDO text, graphics, mapping and final document preparation.

1.1 Background Information:

The City of Gastonia, NC, located in the south-central Piedmont region of the state, spans approximately 52 square miles and has an estimated population of more than 85,000 residents. As the largest municipality in Gaston County, Gastonia also serves as the county seat and ranks as the 13th most populous city in North Carolina.

Located a short drive from Uptown Charlotte and the Charlotte Douglas International Airport, Gastonia is the second largest municipality in the rapidly growing Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The strong MSA-level trends have led to Gastonia's resurgence as a residential destination for families in neighboring counties, with approximately 35% of families moving to Gaston County from Mecklenburg County.

The [current UDO](#) was originally adopted in 2009 and has received many gradual updates since its inception. The most extensive update was adopted in June, 2021 and was related to compliance with North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 160D. Following 160D compliance, major ordinance chapter/section revisions included Off-Street Parking and Loading (Chapter 10), Signs (Chapter 12), and residential development standards (Chapter 8).

On October 21st, 2025, the Gastonia City Council adopted the [2050 Comprehensive Plan](#), which will transition away from the traditional Future Land Use Map and introduce Place based Planning principles. As the City transitions to a Place Based Planning Structure, the update of the UDO is top priority to ensure that long-range planning aligns with the development regulation. The UDO update was identified in the Investment Priority and Action Plan chapters of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan and is the initial step of implementation.

1.2 Project Purpose:

The primary objective of the UDO re-write is to align the ordinance with the recently adopted 2050 Comprehensive Plan. This alignment will ensure a seamless transition from traditional Euclidean zoning practices to a more modern, place-based planning framework. The update will likely involve a comprehensive review and creation of zoning districts (and new zoning map), development standards, and overall document organization. Particular emphasis should be placed on advancing the growth strategies outlined in the 2050 Comprehensive Plan, strengthening placemaking efforts, and enhancing urban design principles.

1.3 Guiding Principles:

The guiding principles of the UDO re-write are rooted in the vision and goals of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan, highlighting a forward-looking, inclusive approach to community development. Generally, the UDO should be concise and prioritize consistency, clarity, and flexibility within the development framework. The document shall be user-friendly and emphasize the use of graphics, diagrams, tables and charts rather than excessive text to explain the desired concepts. The use of innovative tools to produce the final product is encouraged. Overall, the final product will need to be produced in print (PDF) as well as interactive via a web-based format.

The City of Gastonia is in the process of transitioning to host its ordinances (including the UDO) on the EncodePlus platform, the newly created UDO will be hosted on this platform and that the proposals need to account for any needed coordination and cost associated with such hosting or transfer of final content to the EncodePlus platform.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

The Scope of Work is intended to guide and offer general framework the preparation for the re-write of the UDO. The City expects that the final Scope of Work will reflect modifications made based upon staff discussions with the consultant selected to re-write the UDO. Below are typical steps we envision with the re-write:

- **An analysis of the existing UDO** in its entirety to review the current content, accuracy, consistency with other city-wide adopted policies that impact development within the City.
- **Review of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan** to ensure the re-write of the UDO is in alignment with the recently adopted policy document.
- **Review of other City adopted plan and policies** that impact development pattern and mobility within the City, such as Transportation Plans, Greenway Plans, Downtown Plans etc.
- **Develop an early Framework** for the rewrite of the UDO and get buy-in for the staff and involved stakeholders.
- **Draft the UDO and Adoption** guided by an inclusive process for engagement of both internal (City) and external stakeholders. A guidebook shall be created upon adoption to assist with the implementation of the new UDO.

The following section offers a general summary of the desired areas of interest for inclusion in the new UDO. However, this should not be viewed as limiting possible approaches but rather as direction for the re-write of the Unified Development Ordinance.

- Provide Land Use Flexibility to promote Placemaking

The zoning districts will need to be aligned with the place types and activity centers outlined in the Our Growth Framework section of the Comprehensive Plan. This includes but is not limited to accommodating mixed-use growth in the activity centers and along key corridors. The update will need to explore a set of revised standards for newly established zoning districts to generally support an infill growth pattern and revitalization of downtown, transitional industrial areas and mixed-use activity centers.

- Expand Housing Options

A theme found throughout the Comprehensive Plan is the need for a multifaceted approach to diversifying housing throughout the city. This includes an expansion of missing-middle housing, ways to increase quality affordable housing, more rental housing near transit stops, and support for mixed-use centers with higher-density housing. There will also need to be an assessment of lot size and other dimensional requirements in residential zoning districts to encourage accessory dwelling units, small-scale housing, and other nonconventional housing approaches, where it is appropriate.

- Regulations to assist with housing of unsheltered population

The re-write of the UDO shall provide regulations for use such as non-congregate shelters, cooling stations, and/or warming stations to assist the City in managing and providing housing support for unsheltered population within City limits.

- Ensure Quality Urban Design in Both Residential and Commercial/Mixed-use Areas
To enhance the character of new development and redevelopment, the updated ordinance will need to incorporate site design and building standards that lead to a high-quality urban form. For example, it might be desirable to require build-to zones on some streets to create a consistent interface between public streets and private buildings with ground-floor retail. Building standards could also address entryways, first floor transparency, façade composition, building height, and building materials. Additional site considerations could include unified circulation systems for multi-building developments. The updated ordinance will offer standards to enhance open space requirements as part of new development/redevelopments.
- Incorporate Complete Streets Standards for All Modes of Travel
To help realize the goal of creating safe and walkable neighborhoods, the updated ordinance should utilize other tools to develop a comprehensive sidewalk network, such as requiring sidewalks along both sides of the streets for all new development/redevelopment and developing a sidewalk fund and an improved fee-in-lieu program.
- Evaluate Parking and associated setback Requirements
The current ordinance eliminated minimum parking requirements and utilized maximum parking in most zoning districts. The update will review the ordinance for possible reductions, or any needed adjustments to the parking requirements. In addition, the consultant shall investigate regulations to support parking in rear and side yards only, breaking up large parking areas, reviewing shared parking provisions, establishing larger setbacks for front-loaded garages, setbacks for all newly created zoning districts and establishing parking maximums to support higher density mixed-use developments.
- Incorporate Open Space Preservation Tools
Incorporating tools, such as heritage tree preservation, conservation subdivisions that dedicate usable open space (active/passive), transfer of development rights (TDR), and overlays to protect challenging terrain, stream corridors and watersheds to help advance this goal. The update should also explore improvements to the existing tree protection and landscaping standards.
- Bring Certainty to the Review Process and creation of a Development Guidebook
The re-write of the UDO shall expand on the existing administrative review process to include more ways to support place-based decisions that encourage good urban design, mixed-use development, and more walkable neighborhoods. The consultant shall investigate guidance for master and phasing plans for large developments and improvements to enforce provisions and procedures, as necessary. The final deliverable shall also include a Development Guidebook and associated checklists/tools to assist with the implementation of the new UDO.
- Explore the Use of Incentives
The re-write shall include ways to provide affordable housing, public gathering spaces, sustainable development practices (site and building) and public art by granting additional building height, increased density and/or other incentives.

2.1 Public Engagement and Role of Steering Committee:

It is expected that key stakeholders and the public will be engaged throughout the process, including a steering committee that broadly represents the community. The consultant team will need to utilize modern ways of

soliciting input and garnering public participation with oversight and guidance provided by City staff. In addition to an external Steering Committee, it is expected that a team of internal City staff will be identified to serve a Project management Team (PMT). The applicant's proposal should identify key stages for steering committee input, public engagement/input, and feedback from the Planning Commission and City Council. To ensure success, it is important for the community, the steering committee, staff and consultants, to collaborate throughout the process leading up to adoption by the City Council.

3. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

a) Schedule

The following is the anticipated schedule that is subject to change by the City.

EVENT	DATE
RFP Issued	January 13, 2026
Questions pertaining to RFP Due by	January 22, 2026, by 5:00 PM
Responses to questions issued via addendum	January 26, 2026, by 5:00 PM
RFP Proposal Due Date	February 09, 2026, by 5:00 PM
Evaluation Committee Review	February 16 – February 28, 2026
Conduct Interviews of Top Candidates	Week of March 2, 2026

b) Proposal Questions

Questions concerning this RFP must be sent to Sushil Nepal, no later than 5:00 PM, on January 22, 2026. Questions must be submitted via email to sushil.nepal@gastonianc.gov

c) Proposal Due Date

Proposals shall be received electronically no later than 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time, on Monday, February 09, 2026. There will not be a public bid opening.

d) Period and Terms of Contractual Agreement

The selected consultant will enter into a contract with the City of Gastonia to cover the scope of services outlined in this RFP. Please note when responding to this request, you will agree to the conditions outlined in the RFP and the standard terms of the Sample Contract Agreement.

e) Late Submittals

Any submittal received after the due date and time shall not be considered.

f) Competitive Selection

The successful consultant will be selected on a fair and rational basis, and the evaluation factors outlined below shall be applied to all eligible, responsive proposals. Award of a contract may be made without discussion with the submitters after responses are received. Proposals should, therefore, be submitted with favorable terms. The City reserves the right to void the contract if the work has not been completed on the date specified by the Consultant.

g) Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MWBE)

Pursuant to General Statute 143-48 and Executive Order #77, the City of Gastonia invites and encourages participation in this procurement process by businesses owned by minorities, women, handicapped or disadvantaged persons. Only businesses certified by the N.C. Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB) Office shall count toward MWBE participation.

Respondents shall make good faith efforts to contact minority, women, handicapped or disadvantaged- owned businesses to allow each an equal opportunity to participate on any portion of the scope of the work involved. Proposals shall include MWBE information and documentation.

h) Contracts

It is recognized that the formal basis of any agreement between consultant and user will be a contract to be negotiated between parties rather than a proposal. In submitting proposals, the consultant must indicate that they are prepared to complete a contract containing all the information submitted in their proposals. The consultant must also be prepared to meet the City's insurance requirements at the time the contract is awarded. Successful Consultant shall be required to Complete a Scope of Work and sign a City of Gastonia contract.

i) Rejection of Proposal

The City of Gastonia reserves the right to reject all proposals, to waive any informality in proposals received, to accept or reject any or all the items in the proposal, to award the contract in whole or in part and/or negotiate any or all items with individual consultants if it is deemed in the City's best interest. Moreover, the City reserves the right to make no selection if proposals are deemed to be outside the fiscal constraint or not in the best interest of the City.

j) Insurance

The consultant shall purchase and maintain during the life of this contract comprehensive general liability and other insurance as is appropriate for the work being performed as outlined in the sample contract which is attached for your reference. A Certificate of Insurance is required at the time of executing the final contract.

4. GENERAL SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

The City invites all interested and qualified firms to submit proposals. Responses should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward and concise description of the applicant's experience and qualifications related to the proposed scope of services. This outline is not all-inclusive, and firms can provide additional information as deemed appropriate.

Letter of Introduction

Include a cover letter summarizing the firms' basic qualifications, experience, and reasons for interest in this opportunity. The letter should be on a company letterhead and signed by a principal or authorized officer for the entity.

Table of Contents

Provide a Table of Contents with page numbers.

Executive Summary

Provide a summary that includes the highlights of the RFP, along with the strengths and special expertise of

the firm and the associated team to successfully accomplish the objectives of the City. Please limit the executive summary to one page.

Statement of Qualifications

Identify and describe the qualifications of the firm and professional services that may be provided by the consultant or consultant team in response to this request. Also include information on any proposed subconsultants. Qualifications will be verified via a minimum of three references, included with submittal.

Provide experience with similar projects including summary of the project, which team members were involved in referenced projects, and the time period. Also highlight any projects performed for the City of Gastonia during the past 5 years. If applicable, please note any relevant or related projects performed in the State of North Carolina.

Project Team & Project Management

Identify the proposed project team (including any subconsultants) and key personnel for the successful completion of projects in partnership with the City. Include brief resumes of the project manager and up to four (4) project team members including office location, years of experience, certifications, and education. Identify the project manager or primary contact and any other team leaders proposed. It is expected that the team members proposed in the RFP will be those assigned to work on the project for the City. Also describe the firm's quality assurance/quality control methods along with firm's project management approach.

Project Approach

This section should include a detailed description of the firm's project approach in alignment with Scope of Work noted in the RFP, understanding of the intent of the project and its objectives and the character of the required deliverables. Include a schedule (in Gantt chart form) showing all milestones, critical stakeholder/public meetings and deliverables to maintain project progress. The proposal should identify the level of assistance required from the city to complete each task.

Project Cost Estimates

Provide an estimated cost of the project with a not-to-exceed price for all services.

Format

Submittals will be received electronically in PDF format and be 12 pt font size and limited to no more than 20 pages (standard letter size) excluding the cover page, cover letter, table of contents, and any section dividers. The submittal shall be emailed with the words, **“RFP: Re-write of the Gastonia’s Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)”** in the subject line. The City will not consider proposals that arrive past the deadline.

Conflict of Interest

State any conflicts of interest a consultant company and/or any key individual may have with this service.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be submitted electronically to sushil.nepal@gastonianc.gov.

Each original proposal shall be signed and dated by an official authorized representative to bind the consultant. Unsigned proposals will not be considered. All proposals must be received by the City of Gastonia not later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of this RFP.

Proposals will be evaluated according to completeness, content, and experience with similar projects,

and the ability of the consultant team. The City will randomly select the consultants' references, but the City reserves the right to contact all the references listed if information from the three references contacted warrant further inquiry. Awarding a contract to one consultant does not mean that the other proposals lacked merit, but that, all factors considered, the selected proposal was deemed most advantageous to the City of Gastonia.

In addition to any other evaluation criteria identified in the solicitation document, the City will consider the following factors to ensure that any award will be in the best interest of the City of Gastonia:

Evaluation Criteria	Percentage
Overall content and quality of the Proposal to meet requirements stated in the RFP	15%
Professional qualifications of staff/team assigned to the project	20%
Experience providing requested services	25%
Approach to the project and understanding of intent and objectives	25%
Effective relationships and partnerships demonstrated through past projects, included but not limited to engagement efforts with diverse group of stakeholders	10%
Project cost estimates	5%
Total	100%

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Public Records

Upon receipt by the City, your proposal is considered a public record except for material that qualifies as "Trade Secret" information under North Carolina General Statute 66-152 et seq. Proposal packages will be reviewed by the City's Selection Committee, as well as other City staff and members of the public who submit public record requests. To properly designate material as a trade secret under these circumstances, each proposals must take the following precautions: (a) any trade secrets submitted by a consultant should be submitted in a separate, sealed envelope marked "Trade Secret - Confidential and Proprietary Information - Do Not Disclose Except for the Purpose of Evaluating this Proposal," and (b) the same trade secret/confidentiality designation should be stamped on each page of the trade secret materials contained in the envelope. Do not designate your proposed pricing as a trade secret.

In submitting a proposal, each consultant agrees that the City may reveal any trade secret materials contained in such response to all City staff and City officials involved in the selection process and to any outside consultant or other third parties who serve on the Selection Committee or who are hired by the City to assist in the selection process. Furthermore, each consultant agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the City and each of its officers, employees and agents from all costs, damages, and expenses incurred in connection with refusing to disclose any material that the consultant has designated as a trade secret.

Any consultant that designates its entire proposal as a trade secret may be disqualified from the selection process. Information in the RFP responses will not be shared until after award of contract.

Conditions and Reservation

Upon receipt of this proposal, the City reserves the right to meet with any or all consultants submitting

proposals at any time prior to an award to assure that the successful proposal nearly meets all goals and objectives. The right is further reserved to use any or all ideas presented in any response to this RFP, whether amended or not. Selection or rejection of the proposal does not affect this right. During review and evaluation of proposals, the City further reserves the right to negotiate with the consultant whose proposal most closely meets the City's goals and objectives for this project, to amend that consultant original proposal by additions or deletions.

Termination

The City may terminate this agreement at any time by 60 days' notice in writing from the City to the Consultant. If the contract is terminated by the City as provided herein, the consultant shall be paid for services satisfactorily completed, less payment or compensation previously made.