



**THE CITY OF GASTONIA**  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**York Chester Small Area Tree Plan**

**Issued by:**

City of Gastonia  
 181 S South St Gastonia, NC 28052  
[www.gastonianc.gov](http://www.gastonianc.gov)

**Date of Issue: Friday, November 14, 2025**

The City of Gastonia, North Carolina is soliciting proposals from an experienced consultant – certified by the International Society of Arboriculture or the American Society of Consulting Arborists - interested in assisting the City with developing an Urban Forestry Neighborhood Master Plan as approved by the Gastonia City Council on January 17, 2023. The scope of the project is to develop an Urban Forestry Neighborhood Master Plan to provide a framework for the City to effectively manage and maintain the urban and community forest of the York Chester Historic District as a sustainable asset, consistent with the values and needs of the community, while maximizing its ecological, social, health, and economic benefits. The plan will help create a better understanding of the City's tree maintenance needs; provide a template for a city-wide Urban Forestry Master Plan; prioritize tree removal and planting; develop risk management and hazard mitigation strategies; and allow the City to advocate and advance the myriad of benefits that trees provide to the community.

### **BACKGROUND**

The City of Gastonia – a Tree City USA Community for over 20 years – adopted its current Tree Ordinance (and within it the creation of the Tree Advisory Commission) in May 2020 with the intention of modernizing and reinvigorating its urban forestry policies. Along with a digital public tree inventory, having dedicated City staff to oversee the implementation of the ordinance has led to an increased focus on tree preservation on developed sites, as well as the retention and protection of many historic trees owned by the public. As the city grows, the need to update and expand upon its Urban Forestry goals grows along with it.

While the city has seen much new development in recent years, there are long established neighborhoods such as the York-Chester neighborhood and historic district, whose large canopy trees are a major character-defining feature with some of the trees as old, if not older than the historic buildings, which were built in the late 1800s to the 1940s. As such, over recent years the residents here have seen great losses to the valued tree canopy due to storms, disease, and age.

As a result, York-Chester residents voiced support for the creation of an urban forestry master plan at the August 2, 2022 City Council meeting so to document existing City tree policies and programs, assess the existing tree canopy, and advise on tree maintenance, preservation, and expansion opportunities in the short and long term.

City Council requested for the Tree Advisory Commission – a panel of citizens and City staff who meet to make recommendations on the Tree Ordinance – to produce a scope of work for a plan that would meet the requests of the citizens while benefitting the city’s urban forestry program in a way that can be shared by the community at large.

### **SCOPE OF WORK**

- Implement the public engagement process with community stakeholders, citizens, businesses, developers, and other interested parties. This may involve surveys, email, focus groups, interviews, etc.
- Meet with City Council and Citizen Boards/Committees to assess the importance of urban forestry and the desired functions of the urban forest.
- Review and detail existing ordinances, policies, plans, and procedures affecting/enhancing the urban forest, including existing tree inventory, tree planting practices, tree ordinance, Comprehensive Plan, etc.
- Provide recommendations to increase operations efficiencies, reduce costs and risk mitigation, and promote better coordination between departments, decision makers and the community at large.
- Develop a UTC (urban tree canopy assessment and change analysis) and provide a visual representation and informatics to highlight key results of the assessment of existing tree canopy.
- Review the current and future threats and opportunities to the urban forest
- Provide analysis of urban tree canopy environmental benefits such as water & air quality, reduce urban heat island effect, energy efficiencies, storm water management and health.
- Provide an equitable prioritization plan for street tree ROW planting
- Identify current opportunities for partnerships with other governmental entities or nonprofits and / or make recommendations and give tools for private sector to establish a nonprofit to contribute to the success of the growth and sustainability of the City’s urban forest.
- Compilation of best practices for community outreach and engagement to support expansion and maintenance of the urban forest
- Prepare a plan document with appropriate and effective graphics that presents the content in a concise readable, and engaging style. The plan should include a framework of short-term and long-term actionable goals, objectives, recommendations, and strategies that mesh with the City’s overall goals and priorities. Funding possibilities and resource needs should be identified where possible.
- Define metrics to measure success and keep the plan updated and useful in the long-term.

## **DELIVERABLES**

The Urban Forestry Neighborhood Master Plan should be a user-friendly document available in both written and digital form, containing high quality graphics, charts, and maps. The plan should include an executive summary or other such document/section that can be easily and widely distributed and a summary of data gathered from engagement activities. A digital copy of the final draft document and the final approved plan in both PDF and other editable word processing program, preferably Word or InDesign shall be provided along with a summary PowerPoint for presentation to City Council and other groups.

## **RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

The response to this RFP shall contain the following elements:

- Statement of Understanding of Scope
- Qualifications of personnel and their role in the project
- Schedule
- Cost estimate

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

1. Professional Qualifications and Relevant Experience – up to 20 points maximum
2. Proposed Methodology and Scope of Work– up to 30 points maximum
3. Management Plan and Timetable – up to 30 points maximum
4. Cost of Project- up to 20 points maximum

## **PREPARATION OF PROPOSAL**

All proposals should be complete and carefully worded and must convey all the information requested by the City. Applicants will be scored by the Tree Advisory Commission, as well as key City staff, pursuant to the selection criteria listed on page 3 and explained on pages 2 and 3.

## **ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSALS**

- The City reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals, or any items of part thereof, or to waive any informalities or irregularities in a proposal.
- The City reserves the right to withdraw the RFP at any time without prior notice.
- The City makes no representation that any contract will be awarded to any Responder to this RFP.

## **ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION**

Proposals shall be submitted electronically to Juliann Lehman, [Juliann.lehman@gastonianc.gov](mailto:Juliann.lehman@gastonianc.gov). It is the Responder's responsibility to allow sufficient time to complete and submit their proposal, including all documentation required by this RFP, prior to the stated deadline. Only electronic proposals will be accepted; hard copy proposals will be rejected as nonresponsive and returned unopened without exception.

## QUESTIONS

Every effort has been made to ensure that all the information needed by interested firms is included herein. If a firm finds that it cannot complete a proposal without additional information, it may submit questions, in writing, to the City of Gastonia Representative. No negotiations, decisions or actions shall be initiated by any firm or potential firm as a result of any verbal discussion with any City of Gastonia representative or employee.

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| <b>Proposals are to be digitally submitted to:</b><br>Juliann Lehman<br>Keep Gastonia Beautiful Administrator<br><a href="mailto:Juliann.lehman@gastonianc.gov">Juliann.lehman@gastonianc.gov</a> | <b>All questions must be submitted in writing to:</b><br>Juliann Lehman<br>Keep Gastonia Beautiful Administrator<br><a href="mailto:Juliann.lehman@gastonianc.gov">Juliann.lehman@gastonianc.gov</a> |
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## IMPORTANT DATES

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>RFP issue date</b>                | <b>11/17/25</b>                       |
| <b>Written questions deadline</b>    | 12/1/25                               |
| <b>Answers to questions posted</b>   | 12/5/25                               |
| <b>Proposal Submission Deadline</b>  | 12/19/25                              |
| <b>Interviews (if needed)</b>        | On or around mid-late January 2026    |
| <b>Award of contract (tentative)</b> | 2/6/25                                |
| <b>Contract completion</b>           | One year from date contract is signed |