

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED
Mayor Kevin M. Kennedy



Sign Code Update
Request for Proposals

Response Due Date: Tuesday, March 12, 2019 at 4:00 PM

The City of North Olmsted, Ohio seeks proposals from qualified firms for professional planning and zoning services for the Sign Code Update project. To be eligible for consideration, the proposing firm must be capable of providing the services described herein and must meet all other criteria outlined in this Request for Proposals (RFP).

BACKGROUND

The City of North Olmsted is a mature suburb on the west side of Cleveland, with a land area of about 11.6 square miles and a population just over 32,000 residents. Following World War II, returning veterans looking for a good place to live began to move out from Cleveland and North Olmsted grew rapidly. The town was largely agricultural until the 1960's, but by 1965, it was the fastest growing suburb in Cuyahoga County. Commercial building continued to increase and North Olmsted's claim as the west side's top shopping destination was solidified with completion of Interstate 480 through the city in the 1980's. North Olmsted is home to Great Northern Mall and the North Olmsted Auto Mile and has one of the largest and most diverse commercial corridors in the County. Suburban legend has it that a stretch of Lorain Road in North Olmsted was once listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for having the most restaurants within a mile radius. The varying ages, sizes and scales of development create challenges for planning and zoning, not the least of which relates to signage.

Signs are regulated in Chapter 1163 of the North Olmsted Zoning Code. The last substantial update to the sign code occurred in 2000. In addition to the need for an overall audit and update of the code, specific areas for discussion and improvement include:

- Size and scale. Whether a large retail anchor at the mall or a small plaza tenant, the current sign regulations recognize little to no difference in the zoning district, size or scale of development or the setback from the street.
- Temporary signs. The US Supreme Court decision in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* threw a curve ball for most communities' temporary sign regulations, including North Olmsted's.
- Sign face calculation and architectural features. In measuring sign face, it is not always clear if the background of a sign should be included or excluded as part of the sign face area. Also, the

city has struggled with understanding when graphics are signage versus art; murals fall into this category.

- Design guidelines. There is little to no guidance in the code that establishes design criteria or review for any elements aside from type, number, height, size and location of signs. Being mindful of content neutrality, what other guidelines could or should be included in the code to address design or architectural elements in order to improve the quality of the built environment?
- Digital signs. To date, the city has taken the position of prohibiting digital signs, concerned with the impact on the appearance of the community and the difficulty of enforcing regulations related to illumination levels, flickering, flashing and other potentially disruptive impacts.
- Drive through facilities. With so many auto centric facilities in the community, questions arise as to how to classify menu boards, clearance bars and other drive through equipment.
- Sign variances. Sign variances are granted regularly, especially in conjunction with drive through facilities. It raises the issue whether sign variances remain valid after a change in the use for which they were granted.
- Administration. Since a permit process is a prior restraint on speech, are our time frames for review of permit applications legally adequate?
- Enforcement. Currently, our options to enforce the sign code are poor or non-existent, requiring long notification periods. A growing concern is the illegal placement of signs in the right-of-way (on utility poles, yard signs), often by off-premise businesses, where there is little penalty or discouragement other than removal by our service department.

The GO North Olmsted 2015 Master Plan contained the action item to **Review, Audit and Update the Current Zoning Code**. Since 2015, significant code changes have been made. The city's commercial districts have been completely rewritten, along with supporting chapters on conditional uses, development review and administration. Staff has also updated the single family residential district, the limited industrial district and has other updates in the planning stage. The sign code is one of the last and most sensitive remaining pieces.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The selected consultant will lead the process to update the city's sign code. The minimum scope of services shall be as described below. The consultant may propose additional scope of work that would result in a better process or end product.

A Code Analysis

The consultant shall review the city's existing sign code and conduct the research necessary to prepare a detailed report with the following components:

- Audit. Identify areas of the code that require revision to meet city objectives and to ensure consistency with recent and relevant court cases. Identify sign provisions that are not addressed in the current code that the city may wish to consider. Provide examples of how other communities have successfully implemented similar changes or regulations.
- Format Guide. Propose examples or ways to simplify and clarify sign code provisions, such as improved formatting, descriptive text and the addition of graphics or tables.

B Code Preparation

The consultant shall prepare draft sign regulations based on audit findings, advisory committee input, public participation and best planning practices. The consultant shall provide materials for review a minimum of one week ahead of each advisory meeting, community meeting or public hearing. Draft and final deliverables can be made by the consultant in any commonly available digital

format (PDF, Word, etc.) and the city will make necessary copies for committee and public distribution.

Final sign regulations should be consistent with the city's master plan vision for new development and redevelopment, ensure adequate visibility and wayfinding for businesses, maintain and enhance community character, conform to recent and relevant court cases and create clear and easy to administer regulations. The consultant shall prepare final deliverables to include the following at a minimum:

- Sign Code. Create a new Chapter 1163 complete with purpose and intent, definitions, detailed sign regulations and graphics depicting intent or examples.
- Checklist and Training. Develop a sign review checklist for use by staff and applicants and provide a training or instruction to key staff on its use.

Draft and final deliverables shall become the exclusive property of the City of North Olmsted. The consultant and its employees and agents shall assign to the city any copyright or ownership interests. The city shall retain the exclusive right to produce, reproduce, publish or authorize the material.

C Public Participation and Code Adoption

Public participation is an important part of any community planning process. The city is especially committed to ensuring robust participation by residents and members of the business community in this sign code update recognizing the difficult past history between the city and its businesses regarding signage regulations. See *North Olmsted Chamber of Commerce v. City of North Olmsted*, 86 F. Supp. 2d 770 (N.D. Ohio 2000).

- Advisory Committee. An advisory committee comprised of staff and key stakeholders will be formed to assist and provide feedback throughout the project. Committee meetings should occur at each phase of the project.
- Community Outreach. At least two opportunities for broad public input should be included in the consultant's scope of services. The consultant should propose specific types of engagement that will result in wide ranging participation.
- Project Webpage. The consultant shall provide text, photographs, renderings and other information as necessary for staff to develop and maintain a project page on the city's website.
- Public Hearing and Adoption. The final sign code will require adoption by the city's Planning and Design Commission and legislative approval by the North Olmsted City Council. In addition to other advisory committee or community meetings proposed, one formal hearing to be attended by the consultant will be required for each of these approvals.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPOSALS

Provide the information requested below with a cover letter signed by an officer of the firm.

Qualifications

List the project manager and any other key team members who will be responsible for the work and the project responsibility of each. Identify any subconsultants. Address the specific experience of the key team members on similar projects, including descriptions of relevant projects within the past 10 years, project references, and the team members' primary office location. Describe the capacity of the team and its ability to perform the work in a timely manner, relative to workload over the project timeframe.

Scope of Work

Prepare a detailed scope of work that is responsive to the city's requested Scope of Service as described above. Clearly identify the role and responsibilities of the city and/or advisory committee throughout the process. Provide a draft project schedule with detailed deliverables and milestone dates assuming a project start date of May 1, 2019.

Cost Proposal

Provide a not to exceed cost proposal for Basic Services for the Scope of Work. Include, as necessary, breakdowns of professional services and reimbursable expenses. The consultant may propose Additional Services with pricing that they deem would be beneficial to improve the outcome of the project.

SELECTION PROCEDURES, CRITERIA AND PROCESS

The city will select a consultant based on proposals submitted. Consultants interested in being considered for selection should respond by submitting three copies of their proposal to the address below **by 4:00 PM on Tuesday, March 12, 2019**. Responses received after 4:00 PM on the due date will not be considered.

Kimberly Lieber, AICP
Director of Planning and Development
City of North Olmsted, Ohio
5200 Dover Center Road
North Olmsted, OH 44070

The following criteria will be used in the consultant selection process:

- Strength of project manager and strength/experience of key team members
- Past performance and experience with zoning code projects of similar scope and size
- Demonstrated understanding of the most recent court decisions regarding sign regulation
- Innovative project approach tailored to the City of North Olmsted
- Value of services proposed for the project budget

Based on the proposals submitted, the City of North Olmsted will conduct interviews with top ranked firms. Once a final ranking has been established by the selection committee, the city shall enter into contract negotiations with the highest ranked firm to determine the final scope of service and project budget. If negotiations fail, negotiations with the highest ranked firm shall be terminated, and the city shall enter into negotiations with second highest ranked firm. This process shall continue until a contract is successfully negotiated. The contract must ultimately be approved by the city's Board of Control.

Contact Kimberly Lieber at (440) 716-4118 or lieberk@north-olmsted.com with any questions regarding this Request for Proposals.

Revision Date: 1/31/19