

DEVELOPMENT OF AN
OPEN SPACE & TRAILS MASTER PLAN
GORHAM, MAINE

FEBRUARY 21, 2024

INTENT TO SUBMIT: MARCH 14, 2024
QUESTIONS DEADLINE: MARCH 21, 2024
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: APRIL 11, 2024 5:00 PM

Overview

The Town of Gorham is soliciting proposals from qualified consultants interested in providing planning services in support of developing an open space and trails master plan. The scope of the project is to draft an open space and trails master plan that will act as a guide to elected and appointed town officials by identifying high priority areas and properties to protect, acquire or use for conservation and agricultural purposes, and provide an overall trail planning document outlining new connections, design guidelines, and provide recommendations to resolve conflict and create a variety of experiences. The project scope also includes providing land stewardship guidance for existing agricultural properties, open space lands, identifying opportunities to expand connectivity between open space assets and neighborhoods, as well as outlining programs, ordinances, and partners that could be instrumental in securing the future of the identified and preserving high priority areas.

Motivation

In recognition of the Town's historic past on agricultural and natural resource based economies, forecasted commercial and residential development needs, trends, and pressures in Southern Maine, and in anticipation of impacts of a changing climate and natural resource disturbances, the Town of Gorham seeks the development of an open space plan to help guide and prioritize future opportunities for open space preservation, protection of critical wildlife habitat and corridors, recreation access, and agricultural preservation. The open space plan will serve as both a stand-alone planning document and as the primary information tool for natural resource management and resilience strategies expected to be adopted in a future Comprehensive Plan (anticipated for 2026).

Background

Gorham Development Patterns

The 1970s brought a significant change in the Town's development pattern. Instead of the compact development in the Town's village areas (Gorham Village and Little Falls), the Town began to see its first low density residential subdivisions within the rural and suburban landscapes. In the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s the trend of dividing rural landscape continued and even accelerated under the growth pressures from the cities of Portland and South Portland pushing westerly.

During this time the Town witnessed a significant decrease in the amount of agricultural land being actively managed. A majority of the agricultural land being converted to residential development was dairy farms that used to dominate the rural landscape of Gorham.

Preservation

The Town of Gorham has initiated two programs, Recreation and Open Space Impact Fee and adoption of a Development Transfer Overlay District, to help with preservation efforts in the Town of Gorham. The programs have slightly different goals for the preservation of land in Gorham but both provide financial support to the preservation of land.

The Recreation and Open Space Impact Fee is a fee paid by all new residential dwelling units to be built in the Town of Gorham. The open space portion of the fee is to help retain a ratio of 0.0497 acres of community open space per capita. The fee can be spent to acquire land, conservation easements and/ or development rights, protect significant natural resources, conserve scenic values, preserve agricultural and viable farmland, and provide areas for low-intensity recreational activities such as walking, bird watching, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, biking, hunting, trapping, and similar activities that are consistent with the primary use of the property as forest or farmland.

The Development Transfer Overlay District was created to promote the development of livable, walkable neighborhoods of the community where public utilities (sewer & water) are available. The district allows for higher density residential development in designated areas with public sewerage in exchange for payment of a development transfer fee. The development transfer fee is used by the Town to conserve land in the Rural District through purchasing or easement. The Town has adopted a rating system policy for properties seeking utilization of funds for conservation. The policy identifies a matrix which ranks the conservation priorities outlined in the Development Transfer District ordinance language.

Reference Plans / Studies and Other Related Reports

Town of Gorham 2016 Comprehensive Plan (Amended in 2021)

Project Goals

If successful, the Open Space plan will:

- Identify open spaces, forests, riparian habitat, and agricultural lands important to the residents of Gorham for their capacity to provide a range of ecological and public services including but not limited to climate change resilience, public recreation access, economic sustainability, rural aesthetic and protection from development, water quality, habitat and wildlife corridor protection;
- Establish a town wide strategy for land conservation and preservation;
- Plan for establishing new or formalizing existing access to passive recreational areas and balancing public access and types of uses with sustainable management practices;
- Plan for formalizing links to and between new and existing assets to ensure access;
- Identify regional partnerships and opportunities to help in the preservation of land;

- Guide and prioritize capital investments and identify funding opportunities including public/private partnerships; and
- Be a tool for coordinating townwide projects, policies, trail recreation, and programs related to open space preservation and management.
- Identify existing trails and identify potential network development.

Through this RFP, the Town is requesting qualified consultants submit recommended approaches to develop an Open Space Plan. A final scope of work will be negotiated with the selected consultant based on responses to this RFP.

Project Budget

The expectation is that this work can be done for less than \$75,000.00 to include investment in communication and engagement with citizens.

The final budget and scope of services will be negotiated with the selected firm.

Submission Information

All consultants interested in submitting a proposal must provide a written notice of their intent to submit an RFP to the Community Development Department by **5:00 p.m. on March 14, 2024**. The notification of intent must include the name, address, telephone number and email of the project manager responsible for the RFP submission. The purpose of this notice is so that the Town can ensure that all potential respondents are included on any updates or modifications to this RFP and answers to questions submitted by the questions deadline. Notifications of Intent will be accepted by Thomas Poirier at tpoirier@gorham.me.us.

To be considered, proposal submissions must include four (4) hardcopies and one (1) digital copy of the complete submission packet in a searchable PDF format. All submissions must be received by the Community Development Department by **5:00 p.m. on April 11, 2024**. No late submissions will be considered.

This RFP is also available on the Community Development Department page on the Town's website <https://Gorhammaine.org/community-development/> or by contacting Thomas Poirier in the Community Development Department at tpoirier@gorham.me.us.

Scope of Services

The selected consultant(s) will be expected to have the technical ability to successfully complete the list of tasks described in this section. This list may be altered based on consultant recommendations as part of the contract negotiation process with the firm(s) selected by the Town of Gorham.

Task 1: Project Meetings

- Develop a suggested meeting schedule with key municipal staff for progress updates. The proposal should specify the total number of project meetings and type (in-person or conference call) for the duration of the project.
- Present and facilitate a discussion with the Open Space Advisory Committee to review draft and final Plan recommendations.
- Prepare a presentation for the Town Councilors to present the plan for final adoption/approval.
- Selected consultant will be responsible for taking and maintaining meeting notes at each step in the process.

Task 2: Existing Plans & Conditions

- Recommendations in the existing plans should be reviewed and addressed where appropriate in the Open Space Plan.
- Inventory Town's existing public and private open space lands and develop a GIS dataset based on inventory.

Task 3: Public Participation

- Develop a public outreach and plan, including a suggested meeting schedule. The selected consultant should anticipate organizing at least one community meeting early in the process. Community Development staff are available to assist with public meetings.
- Develop summaries of public input.

Final Deliverables

- One (1) electronic copy of all meeting summary highlights and notes.
- One (1) electronic copy of final Open Space Plan for Town Council action in both PDF and MS Word format.
- Maps and supporting map data provided in GIS format compatible with ArcMap 10 and should be referenced to the coordinate system in Maine State Plane, NAD83 with units in feet.
- All information, data, documents, photos, computer records, and other materials of any kind acquired or developed by the consultant pursuant to this project shall be the property of the Town of Gorham.

Anticipated Schedule

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| - Release of RFP | February 21, 2024 |
| - Intent to submit notices from firms to Town | March 14, 2024 |
| - Questions/Clarifications deadline | March 21, 2024 |
| - Deadline for Submission of Proposals | April 11, 2024 |
| - Bid Opening | April 16, 2024 |
| - Selection of Consultant | TBD |

*Note: The selection process may include interviews of one or more respondents. Expected date of Final Deliverables To be negotiated based on selected firm's proposal, with expectation of no more than six months from contract date.

Submission Requirements

All RFP submissions must include the following information to be considered by the Town of Gorham:

- General
 - Cover letter stating the firm's interest in the RFP.
 - Title page listing name of firm and contact information.
 - Table of contents.
 - Firm description or descriptions if different consultants will be teaming together.
 - Identify the project manager and members of the project team (if applicable) that will be assigned to this effort, including their qualifications and expertise.
 - Estimate the level of involvement for each staff member assigned to the Town.
- Project Understanding
 - Provide a statement (not to exceed 3 pages) summarizing how the consultant or project team is particularly qualified for this project.
 - Provide a narrative outlining the recommended approach to developing an Open Space Plan, including references to points of public contact related to the outreach, education and engagement detailed in Task 3 in the Scope of Work.
 - Suggest a reasonable schedule of work, including completion of the Final Deliverables.
- Comparable Projects
 - Provide a summary of projects similar in size and scope to this Open Space Plan project, including:
 - Reference name and contact information
 - Current status of the plan – in progress/draft complete/ordinance adoption date
 - Size and scale of the geographic area
- Cost Estimate
 - Estimated level of involvement of each staff member and their respective hourly rate.
 - Administrative costs including mileage, photocopying, etc.
- Any other information the firm(s) may wish to submit that demonstrates their ability to provide the highest level of service to the Town of Gorham.

Note: The attached Agreement is for reviewing purposes and will only be completed with the selected bidder.

To be considered, proposal submissions must include four (4) hardcopies and one (1) digital copy of the complete submission packet in a searchable PDF format. All submissions must be received by the Community Development Department by **5:00 p.m. on April 11, 2024**. No late submissions will be considered. Submit PDF packet via email to [Tom Poirier \(tpoirier@gorham.me.us\)](mailto:tpoirier@gorham.me.us)).

Decision Process

The Town of Gorham Community Development Department will review all applications received by the submission deadline. Based on its review of the RFP submissions, the Community Development Office Department may schedule interviews with one or more consultants or firms prior to finalizing a Scope of Work and contracting with a firm based on the review criteria listed below.

Selection Criteria

- Approach to conducting the tasks outlined in the scope of service 40%
- Qualifications, experience and performance (e.g., adherence to schedule and budget, quality of work) on similar types of project for consultant & project team members 40%
- Appropriateness of compensation rates and overall cost estimate 20%

Contract Term

The general term of the contract will be based on the Scope of Work to be negotiated with the selected firm. See Contract Agreement attached to this RFP below.

Please note that all materials developed as part of this project will become property of the Town of Gorham.

EVALUATION CRITERIA (+ Scoring Matrix)

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| 1. Completeness of the submitted proposal and overall technical approach to the project. Specificity given on the approach, deliverables and description of the process to complete the project. | 20 points |
| 2. Professional qualifications of key personnel and proven past performance with similar projects; technical knowledge and experience with creating open space plans. | 35 points |
| 3. Project cost and fees, including the feasibility of the proposal based upon the timeline and cost schedules; flexibility to adjust the proposed plan to work within budgetary guidelines. | 25 points |
| 4. Provide examples of similar plan(s) created for a city/town. Explanation(s) given on how the approach to the Gorham project may or may not differ substantially from the examples given. | 20 points |
| Total | 100 points |

Questions

Please note the deadline for submitting questions is **5:00 p.m. on March 21, 2024**. Any questions pertaining to this RFP should be submitted in writing via e-mail to: [Thomas Poirier, tpoirier@gorham.me.us](mailto:tpoirier@gorham.me.us). Responses to all questions will be emailed to all applicants who have submitted their intention to submit a response to this RFP.

Reservation of Rights

The Town of Gorham reserves the right to reject any and all firms, decline to proceed with selection of any candidates, to request additional qualifications, and to make inquiries as may be necessary to verify qualifications.

Nothing in this document shall require the Town of Gorham to proceed with any of the identified services stated in this request for information.