

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

City of Morris, Minnesota

Comprehensive Plan Update

More for Morris 2050



1. Project Overview & Intent

The City of Morris, Minnesota, is seeking proposals from qualified planning, municipal design, and community consulting firms (or multidisciplinary teams) to lead a holistic update and overhaul of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Morris's current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1999. While it successfully captured local values at the turn of the century, the 25-plus year gap makes a routine review insufficient. The City now requires a holistic overhaul that transitions Morris from reactive municipal decision-making to a proactive, strategic framework grounded in predictable 10–15 year planning cycles.

As a rural regional hub, Morris balances a distinct agricultural and advanced manufacturing identity, major institutional anchors (such as the University of Minnesota Morris and Stevens Community Medical Center), and nationally recognized sustainability achievements (the Morris Model). Although the community has been stable over the years, there is a strong appetite to push for more development and increased economic activity to grow the population and tax base of the City. The objective of this RFP is to select a firm that can deliver a visionary, strategic, and data-driven document that is legally defensible under Minnesota Statutes (§ 462.351–462.364) and accessible to all.

2. Core Design Principles

Proposals must demonstrate how the planning process and final deliverables will embody the following foundational principles:

- **Community-Oriented & Consensus-Focused:** Grounded in local small-town values while cultivating shared community consensus for long-term growth priorities.
- **Inclusive & Tailored:** Engagement tailored to specific groups—including UMM (faculty, students and staff), regional agricultural and industrial workforces as well as business and healthcare workforces, and historically underrepresented populations—ensuring all residents have a voice.
- **Strategic & Action-Oriented:** Shifting from passive land-use policies to direct implementation tools that guide zoning, capital improvements, and economic expansion.
- **Data-Driven & Legally Defensible:** Rooted in up-to-date demographic data (e.g., 2020 Census updates) and statutory requirements.
- **Transparent & Accountable:** Offering clear tracking mechanisms, direct accountability for municipal departments, and a structured 5-year plan review framework.

3. Community Context & Key Strategic Issues

Located in Stevens County in West Central Minnesota, Morris serves as the primary regional hub for commerce, healthcare, agriculture, and higher education across three primary pillars:

- **Agriculture & Industry:** Agro-industrial processing and large-scale regional agricultural operations.
- **Higher Education:** The University of Minnesota Morris (UMM) campus and West Central Research and Outreach Center, driving student talent, research, and campus-community integration.
- **Regional Healthcare:** Stevens Community Medical Center and associated health facilities.

Key Trends & Strategic Challenges to Address:

1. **US Highway 59 Bypass & Growth Corridors:** Managing land-use dynamics, commercial access, and industrial expansion near the US TH-59 Bypass and primary city gateways: TH 28, TH 59, TH 9.
2. **Housing Across All Life Stages:** Addressing critical workforce housing shortages, rental housing oversight, starter homes, and senior housing options. Strive to have ample housing for current and potential residents, guided by strategic land use.
3. **Growth Management & Annexation:** Establishing clear criteria for orderly expansion in coordination with Stevens County and Morris Township. This includes connecting annexed parts of the City that currently have private systems.
4. **The "Morris Model" Sustainability Integration:** Harmonizing Morris's national leadership in clean energy, waste reduction, and climate resilience directly into land-use, utility, and building policies.
5. **Town-Gown Synergy:** Deepening connections between UMM (students, faculty, land use, multi-modal transit) and the Atlantic Avenue Downtown/Central Business District, especially as it relates to understanding reduced enrollment and partnership to try to drive more engagement for prospective students and their families to the community and campus.
6. **Government & Institutional Land Use:** The 1999 Plan discusses this, but a large portion of property within the City is tax exempt which adds to tax revenue issues. This plan update should assess the effect of these property holdings on the City's tax base and consider opportunities for land exchange, joint development and/or long-term leases. This echoes the previous importance of continuing to develop industrial and commercial business sectors.

4. Scope of Services & Core Modules

Module 1: Comprehensive Land Use & Spatial Growth

- **Existing Land Use Assessment:** Evaluate current development patterns vs. future expansion needs.
- **Orderly Annexation & Fringe Planning:** Establish annexation triggers, service territory limits, and joint planning frameworks with Stevens County.
- **Zoning & Regulatory Alignment:** Review city zoning classifications (R, RM, RF, CBD, NC, HB, I1, I2, MC) and subdivision regulations to ensure full harmonization with future land-use maps.
- **Environmental & Resource Protection:** Integrate protections for the Pomme de Terre River watershed, Crystal Lake, local wetlands, and wellhead/groundwater protection areas.

Module 2: Transportation & Infrastructure Systems

- **Multimodal Transit & Connectivity:** Plan local arterial/collector networks, bike trails, pedestrian infrastructure, campus-to-downtown corridors, and regional airport long-range goals.
- **Utility Capacity & Capital Improvement:** Assess public water production, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer management systems tied to capital improvement plans.
- **Public Services & Facilities:** Coordinate facility planning for municipal public works, emergency services, civic spaces, and public parks.

Module 3: Housing, Economic Development & Community Demographics

- **Demographic & Market Analysis:** Analyze community demographics, population shifts, and wage dynamics using Census data.
- **Housing Strategy:** Provide actionable policies for entry-level starter housing, multi-family development, rental code policies, and workforce options.
- **Economic Diversification & Business Retention:** Formulate strategies for industrial park expansion (Morris Industrial Park), value-added agro-industry, retail capture, and key employer partnerships (Superior, Westmor, Riverview, etc.).

Module 4: Sustainability, Resilience & Natural Resources

- **Morris Model Policy Integration:** Incorporate clean energy goals, green infrastructure, energy efficiency, and waste reduction strategies as guiding practices into land-use and utility chapters.
- **Parks, Recreation & Open Space:** Assess park distribution, trail linkages, natural areas protection and management, and recreational facilities for all age groups.

Module 5: Legally Defensible Document & Implementation Framework

- **Implementation Audit of the 1999 Plan:** Prior to drafting recommendations, evaluation for action items listed in the previous plan is needed to understand the progress made. This will help us determine the effectiveness of the previous plan and help us determine what needs to be completed yet as well as provide room for discussion on how to make the new plan more effective for implementation of the 2050 plan.
- **Statutory Compliance:** Ensure all chapters meet or exceed requirements under Minn. Stat. § 462.351–462.364.
- **Action & Monitoring Matrix:** Build a user-friendly implementation matrix detailing task priorities across different short- and long-term timelines, departmental responsibilities, estimated capital costs, potential funding/grant sources, and a mandatory 5-year progress review.

5. Anticipated Plan Structure

The final document should balance technical rigor with accessible, well-designed layout elements.

Chapter / Section	Primary Focus & Content	Lead / Contributing Roles
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1. Executive Summary	Core vision, strategic takeaways, and primary implementation goals.	Consultant (Primary)
2. Introduction & Vision	Statutory framework, community values, and overarching planning goals.	Consultant (Primary), Community & Council (Secondary)
3. Community Profile & Data	Historical context, census demographics, economic profile, and regional trends.	Consultant (Primary), Staff & Community (Secondary)
4. Land Use & Spatial Design	Future land-use map, growth areas, annexation priorities, zoning alignment.	Consultant (Primary), Staff & Planning Commission (Secondary)
5. Downtown & Corridors	Atlantic Avenue CBD revitalization, TH-59/TH-28/TH-9 entrance corridors.	Consultant (Primary), Staff & Planning Commission (Secondary), SCEIC & Business Community (Secondary), MnDOT (Secondary)
6. Transportation & Utility	Streets, trails, transit, utility capacities (water/sewer/stormwater).	Consultant (Primary), Staff & Engineering Firms (Secondary), MnDOT (Secondary), Planning Commission and Airport Board (Secondary)
7. Economic Development	Industrial and commercial land inventory, establish clear goals for job creation, tax base growth, and community prosperity while aligning with land use and infrastructure.	Consultant (Primary), Staff (Secondary), SCEIC & Business Community (Secondary)
8. Housing & Neighborhoods	Workforce housing, density strategies, rental code and housing quality.	Consultant (Primary), Staff & Community (Secondary), County HRA, SCEIC & Business Community (Secondary)
9. Sustainability & Resilience	Incorporating the Morris Model, renewable energy, waste, conservation.	Consultant (Primary), Staff and Morris Model team (Secondary)
10. Library, Parks, Trails & Recreation	Park system evaluation, trail connections, natural resource corridors.	Consultant (Primary), Park & Library Boards (Secondary), Community Ed, Staff & Community (Secondary)
11. Implementation Matrix	Prioritized action items, cost estimates, responsible entities, 5-year review. Make this a document that doesn't just sit on the shelf!	Consultant (Primary), Staff & Council (Secondary)

6. Community Engagement Plan

The City expects a proactive engagement strategy tailored to reaching residents across all walks of life, comprising four primary pillars:

1. **Targeted Stakeholder Focus Groups:** Dedicated sessions with key groups including business owners (industrial and commercial), local government leaders (school district, Stevens County, and neighboring townships), UMM leadership (staff, faculty and staff), agricultural producers, and healthcare system leaders.
2. **Community Education & Visioning Series:** Informative public workshops and open houses covering demographic trends, housing challenges, and opportunity to discuss and identify the community's values, priorities and long-term goals.
3. **Inclusive Outreach for High-Priority Populations:** Customizing formats to engage non-English speaking households, low-income residents, and renters who typically do not attend standard evening public hearings.
4. **Digital & Online Engagement Tools:** Online public comment tracking, visual preference surveys, social media updates, and a dedicated project webpage.

7. Submission Requirements

Questions regarding this process should be submitted to zoe@ci.morris.mn.us by end of day on October 1, 2026. Proposals should be sent to zoe@ci.morris.mn.us by end of day on October 10, 2026. During the evaluation process, however, the City of Morris reserves the right to allow for corrections of errors and/or omissions. Proposals must be under 50 pages total (excluding cover letter) and structured into the following sections:

- **Section 1: Executive Summary & Project Understanding** – Brief firm profile, values, and a demonstration of the firm's understanding of Morris's specific opportunities and dynamic.
- **Section 2: Approach & Methodology** – Detailed task plan, engagement strategies, and approaches to addressing complex rural/regional issues.
- **Section 3: Firm Qualifications & Team Resumes** – Identification of Project Manager, key personnel roles, bios, and hourly billing rates.
- **Section 4: Relevant Experience & References** – Profiles of past comprehensive planning projects for rural regional hubs and/or college towns, including contact information for at least three municipal client references.
- **Section 5: Work Plan & Schedule** – A phased breakdown showing milestones, deliverables, staff resource allocations, and target completion dates.
- **Section 6: Sealed Cost Proposal** – Itemized fee structure submitted as a separate document following the mandatory budget format.

8. Mandatory Budget Format (Sealed Cost Proposal)

All proposals must be clearly identified and marked with the project name with a separately sealed cost proposal. All proposals shall be based on an hourly "not to exceed" amount and follow the general format as provided below. The City may, in its sole discretion, negotiate a price for the project after the selection committee has completed the final rankings. Negotiations will begin with the most qualified, as determined in the evaluation process. If the City is unable to negotiate a contract for services,

negotiations will be terminated and negotiations may begin with the next most qualified consultant. The only cost proposal opened will be for the most qualified proposer the City has selected for negotiation.

Line Item	Description	Calculation	Total Cost
1. Direct Labor	Project Manager / Senior Planner / Associates	Hours × Rate	\$0.00
2. Overhead / Indirect Costs	Indirect Rate × Direct Labor	—	\$0.00
3. Subcontractor Costs	Specialty consultants (if applicable)	—	\$0.00
4. Materials & Supplies	Workshop materials, printing, graphics	—	\$0.00
5. Travel & Reimbursables	Mileage, lodging, site visits	—	\$0.00
6. Fixed Fee / Miscellaneous	Additional project management expenses	—	\$0.00
TOTAL COST	Not-to-Exceed Total	—	\$0.00

9. Selection Criteria & Evaluation Weights

Evaluation Criteria	Weight	Key Evaluation Focus
Firm Experience & Technical Expertise	25%	Proven track record in comprehensive planning for rural regional hubs, college towns, and agricultural communities. Show us specific past projects where your analysis led to actionable land-use and infrastructure recommendations.
Methodology & Land Use Approach	25%	Quality and rigor of the work plan, regulatory alignment strategies, and resilience integration.
Community Engagement Strategy	20%	Innovative, inclusive plans for public input and building community consensus.
Project Team & References	15%	Qualifications of assigned personnel and positive feedback from municipal client references.
Cost Effectiveness & Value	15%	Overall clarity, completeness, and value of the itemized cost proposal.

10. Anticipated Project Timeline

Milestone Event	Target Schedule
RFP Issuance Date	Day 1
Deadline for Written Questions	Day 21
Proposal Submission Deadline	Day 30
Consultant Interviews (if needed)	Days 45–50
Contract Award & Negotiation	Day 60
Project Kickoff Meeting	Month 3
Project Completion Target	12–14 months from contract execution

