

# **REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, MA BUSINESS PARK FEASIBILITY STUDY**

---



## **Introduction**

The Town of Northfield, Massachusetts issues this invitation to multi-disciplinary consulting firms to submit proposals for full completion of the Business Park Feasibility Study. The successful proponent will work with the Town to manage the project through all stages from the kick-off meeting to completion of the study.

## **Community Background**

Northfield is a rural community of 3,000 located in Franklin County. 18.9% of residents are under age 18 and 19.8% of residents are over age 65. Northfield has an Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Administrator form of government. Five elected members comprise the Select Board, which appoints the Town Administrator. The Town Administrator is the chief operating officer and manages daily town operations. The grant development director pursues grants, implements grant-funded projects, and pursues economic development priorities. According to Northfield's 2014 Master Plan, most land uses are designated as open land, agriculture, wetlands, or forest, and generally unprotected. Thomas Aquinas College-New England is also situated in Northfield.

Northfield's guiding economic development plan is the 2021 Local Rapid Recovery Plan (LRRP). The LRRP lays out the primary economic development goals of the town, which center on capitalizing on Northfield as a regional tourist destination. The Town is currently facilitating a façade improvement program, the first goal of the LRRP, which will support property and business owners and aims to encourage new businesses to open in Northfield and to increase sales for existing businesses. Northfield is also a participant in the Rural Downtown District Management Project, coordinated by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, which aims to figure out how the Downtown business communities in three Franklin County communities can best be supported, examine different organizational models, and recommend a model that can be implemented and sustained over time. The Select Board established an Economic Development Advisory Committee in May 2023 with a charge of helping to foster a stable and diversified economy, provide an excellent quality of life for residents and visitors, and create a viable business environment for current and prospective business owners.

As identified in the Planned Industrial Park Inventory Update for Franklin County, MA (2018), "there is market interest for planned industrial park space in Franklin County." Northfield's Master Plan (2014) identifies the need to "develop a pro-industry/manufacturing or industry/manufacturing-friendly environment" and the Northfield Select Board established the Business Park Development Committee (BPDC) in 2018, underscoring the interest in such development. A Community Planning Grant awarded to Northfield by Massachusetts Office of Housing and Livable Communities will enable the town to pursue an in-depth feasibility study for business park development in town, which will build from the foundational work of Northfield's BPDC and engage a host of stakeholders in the process.

## **HELPFUL LINKS**

For more information about the Town of Northfield please visit these sites:

- [Town of Northfield, MA](#)
- [Northfield Fast Facts](#)

## **Background – Commonwealth Places Grant Program**

The Community Planning Grant Program, a program of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, provides funding for technical assistance for Community Planning projects. This competitive grant program awards funds based on the community planning or zoning project's nexus with housing, transportation, infrastructure, economic development, and community development.

## Project Overview

The Business Park Study will examine the viability of business park development in Northfield. In 2019 and 2020, the Business Park Development Committee conducted research on existing business parks in the region, evaluation of locations suitable for development, and identification of 2 parcels for potential development and preliminary conversations with property owners; this study will build on the foundational work of Northfield's Business Park Committee while inviting community input in the process. This work revealed the necessity of hiring an expert to move forward with pursuing development. The project outcome will be a report outlining the process, site feasibility, evaluation of financial, legal, regulatory, environmental, and residential impacts, a summary of industry market opportunities, an exploration of ownership models, and an action plan for development.

## Scope of Work

Grant funding will be used to hire a Consultant with expertise in business park/light industrial development and experience working in rural communities. The study will consist of 4 stages.

**1. Background Analysis:** The consultant will meet with key stakeholders to learn about project history, review town plans and affiliated goals, and create a project schedule. During the background analysis phase, an initial public meeting will take place during a Select Board meeting for the consultant to be introduced and share the project plans.

**2. Parcel Analysis:** This phase entail a high-level analysis of the sites identified by the Business Park Development Committee that considers development feasibility factors including parcel ownership, size, and utilities. While the sites represent suitably-located parcels for a business park, they were not evaluated for potential uses, environmental concerns, ownership constraints, or other regulatory factors. If these sites are deemed not viable, parcels under town or private ownership may also be considered. The consultant will further determine an appropriate facility size for the preferred parcel(s). This stage may also include an appraisal, to be arranged by the Town. The consultant will create a brief presentation analyzing viability of each site, with recommendations for which site(s) to pursue based on background and parcel analysis. This information will be presented to the Select Board in a meeting where questions and feedback will be invited.

**3. Full Feasibility Assessment:** This stage is a more thorough feasibility assessment of the selected parcel, including regulatory, legal, financial, and other due diligence considerations that must be assessed prior to development and will be carried out by the consultant or their subcontractors. It will detail the path from project concept to fruition and help the Town navigate the real estate development process, citing examples of similar projects when possible, including:

- Location, Site Analysis, and Development Feasibility
- Buildable Area Analysis Map
- Ownership Model Analysis
- Regulatory Analysis, Land Use and Environmental Permitting, and Traffic Analysis
- Utility and Infrastructure Availability, including Digital Connectivity and Preparedness for Alternative Energy
- Economic Value Creation: Occupancy Rates, Lease Rates, Local Tax Implications
- Employment Generation and Local Business Generation Opportunities
- Social Performance: Community Outreach, Neighborhood Impacts, Public Concerns, Community Benefit Agreements
- Identification and Remedies to Constraints
- Conceptual Site Plan
- Estimated Development Cost total based on Conceptual Site Plan

**4. Project Report:** The final stage is a project report that includes a summary of: Stages 1-3; impact evaluation; industries and business types suited to the site; examples of development and ownership models; financing and tax credit analysis; identification of possible funding sources, including federal and state grants and tax increment financing; and an action plan for development with recommendations. Study recommendations will include marketing strategies, target markets, and recommendations for working with developers. Report will be presented to the Select Board, with time for review by staff prior. The report will also be shared, as required under the conditions of the grant, with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

**PROPOSED TIMELINE** *subject to change*

November 27, 2023	Request for Qualifications (RFQ) issued
January 17, 2024	RFQs due at 6:00 p.m. EST (Eastern Standard Time)
January 18-31, 2024	Proposal Review and Interviews; Contract execution
February 2024	Introductory planning meetings; Introductory public meeting
March – Sept. 2024	Feasibility Study
September/October 2024	Presentation of Feasibility Study and Recommendations during public meeting

**PROJECT BUDGET**

The Town has a maximum of \$38,000 available for consultant fees.

The Town will provide meeting space, meeting supplies, and printing. The Town will also dedicate staff to support the project.

Payments will be made on a reimbursement basis. The Consultant should invoice the Town once per month, for work completed in the prior month.

**NUMBER OF SELECTED RESPONDENTS**

The Town of Northfield plans to select 1 consultant for the project. The consultant may hire subcontractors.

**GENERAL CONDITIONS**

The Town reserves the right to cancel this Request for Qualifications, or reject, in whole or in part, any and all proposals, if the Town determines that cancellation or rejection serves in its best interests. The Town reserves the right to waive informalities, and to issue addenda to this RFQ.

The Contract for resulting from this RFQ will be subject to the availability of funds from the Town. Funds for this Project have been provided by a Community Planning Grant provided by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. The successful Consultant represents that all services provided under a contract awarded through this RFQ will be performed in accordance with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws, ordinances, by-laws, codes, and regulations and in accordance with sound project management practice, and the requirements of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**CONTACT & QUESTIONS**

Please direct questions or requests for assistance to: Mallory Sullivan at 413-498-2901 ext. 111 or [grantdevelopmentdirector@northfieldma.gov](mailto:grantdevelopmentdirector@northfieldma.gov).

**ADA COMPLIANCE**

For persons with disabilities needing reasonable accommodations, please contact the Town’s ADA Coordinator, Andrea Llamas, at [allamas@northfieldma.gov](mailto:allamas@northfieldma.gov) or 413-498-2901 x115.

## QUALIFICATIONS

Grant funds will be used to hire a consultant with expertise in business park/light industrial development, a history of effectively engaging the public, and experience working in rural communities.

### *Preferred Qualifications*

- 10 years' experience in business park development or another related field;
- Experience working with 5 or more rural communities of comparable size on similar projects;
- Experience facilitating workshops, engaging diverse communities, and presenting to elected and/or senior organizational officials.

### *Basic Qualifications*

- 5 years' experience in business park development or another related field;
- Experience working with 3 or more rural communities of comparable size on similar projects;
- Experience supporting facilitation of workshops and presenting to elected and/or senior organizational officials.

## RESPONDING TO RFQ

The response must include the following details in a single file, not to exceed 12 pages, and responding in the following order:

1. Cover Sheet: include the Consultant Firm name, phone number, email address, mailing address, and the name and title of the primary contact.
2. Overview and description of the firm's history, including any special or unique services it may provide and experience in completing work of this type, including examples of similar projects.
3. Proposed project team and roles. Include the resume of each team member. Identify the lead member of the project team who will be the primary contact.
4. List whether or not your agency is the sole consultant for the entire project. Include any sub-contractors who will be working with your firm on this project, what their responsibilities will be, and a summary of applicable experience and qualifications.
5. Summary of your firm's understanding of the project including how the project team will meet the objectives of the RFQ and fully describe the type, quantity, quality, format, and means of accountability for all deliverables.
6. Succinct but thorough explanation of how the project team will achieve the scope of work within the timeline provided. If an alternate timeline is necessary, based on limited availability or other factors address these issues and suggest another timeline.
7. Budget for the entire proposed scope of work and, where appropriate, disaggregated by component. All potential costs must be included in the budget.
8. References from 2-3 prior projects (include reference name, affiliation, phone number, and email).

Each proposal shall be delivered digitally. Upon delivery, the proposal will become the property of the Town of Northfield.

## SUBMISSION PROCEDURES AND DEADLINE

Responses must be submitted via email to [grantdevelopmentdirector@northfieldma.gov](mailto:grantdevelopmentdirector@northfieldma.gov). All materials must be received by 6:00 p.m. EST on January 17, 2024. Late submissions may be reviewed if those received by the deadline are non-responsive.