



# Zoning Code Rewrite

## Request for Proposals

Posting Date: January 30, 2026  
Submission Deadline: March 6, 2026

Planning and Zoning Department  
5520 Lacy Road  
Fitchburg, WI 53711

## Project Overview

The purpose of the Request for Proposals (RFP) is to receive competitive proposals from qualified consultants who are interested in completing a comprehensive update of the City of Fitchburg’s zoning regulations. This RFP is released jointly with the City’s Comprehensive Plan update RFP. **Consultants are welcome and encouraged to submit proposals for both of these RFPs and the City will consider any cost efficiencies of selecting the same consultant for both projects. The City expects to start the comprehensive plan update in the second quarter of 2026 with the potential to begin the zoning code rewrite in the third quarter of 2027, as the comprehensive planning process is finalizing.**

## Background

The City of Fitchburg is a rapidly growing community that includes a diverse mix of urban, suburban, and rural development patterns. Regional population projections show the City growing from roughly 36,000 in 2025 to 52,000 in 2050<sup>1</sup>. In order to accommodate this tremendous growth, the City is looking to prioritize infill development, redevelopment, and urban-scale development. While the City is tackling growth, it continues to retain a strong rural character in portions of the community, including areas designated for agricultural use and low-intensity development. This rural component is an important part of Fitchburg’s identity and land use framework and must be thoughtfully addressed in any update to the zoning regulations.

The City’s primary zoning regulations, [Chapter 22](#), are rooted in a conventional zoning ordinance that was last and only fully updated in the 1980s. Since that time, development practices, planning principles, state and federal regulations, and community expectations have evolved substantially. As a result, portions of the existing ordinance no longer reflect current best practices or the City’s long-term vision for growth, preservation, and redevelopment.

In 2010, the City adopted SmartCode, [Chapter 23](#), as an additional zoning ordinance for certain areas. Fitchburg’s SmartCode is a form-based code that emphasizes the physical form of development, the relationship between buildings and the public realm, and walkable, mixed-use patterns, rather than relying solely on conventional use-based zoning standards. While SmartCode has provided an alternative approach to development in select areas, it currently operates alongside the conventional zoning ordinance as a separate regulatory system.

The City now maintains two zoning ordinances—the conventional zoning code and SmartCode—along with numerous Planned Development Districts (PDDs) that have been used to accommodate development that does not fit cleanly within the existing regulations. Over time, the proliferation of PDDs has increased the complexity of zoning administration and reduced predictability for both applicants and the public.

As the City of Fitchburg seeks to comprehensively rewrite its zoning regulations, experience with Smartcode (form based code) and agricultural zoning is crucial for this zoning code rewrite. One outcome of this effort may be to combine the City’s two zoning ordinances into a unified, modern, hybrid zoning code that incorporates form-based principles while maintaining appropriate flexibility

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<sup>1</sup> Regional Data Group, Dane County, [Regional Data Group Releases New Dane County Population Projections – Capital Area Regional Planning Commission](#)

for rural and agricultural areas. An additional objective of this project is to significantly reduce reliance on Planned Development Districts by creating clearer, more adaptable base zoning districts.

As part of this effort, the City is also seeking to update its Sign Code, [Chapter 26](#), to ensure consistency with the revised zoning regulations and current legal standards. Staff expects that architectural standards will be addressed within the revised zoning regulations and that this will allow for repeal of [Chapter 25](#) Architectural Control. Staff does not expect updates to [Chapter 29](#) Historic Preservation. Updates to wetlands, wellhead and floodplain overlay zoning districts are not expected to be considered as part of the revised zoning regulations.

## Objectives

The primary objective of the zoning code rewrite is to create a modern, clear, and implementable regulatory framework that supports the City of Fitchburg's long-term vision for growth, preservation, and community character. The updated zoning regulations should be forward-looking, equitable, and flexible, while providing predictability for residents, property owners, developers, and decision-makers. Specific objectives of this effort include the following:

1. Expand Housing Choice and Diversity
  - Create zoning standards that allow and encourage a broad range of housing types, sizes, and tenures to meet the needs of a growing and diverse population. This includes, but is not limited to, single-family homes, duplexes and small multiplexes, townhomes, cottage housing, mixed-use residential, and housing options appropriate for seniors, workforce households, and multigenerational living. The code should support housing affordability through flexibility in design, density, and dimensional standards where appropriate.
2. Prioritize Infill, Redevelopment, and Efficient Land Use
  - Align zoning regulations with the City's goal of directing growth toward infill and redevelopment areas, particularly within existing urbanized and suburban areas. The updated code should incentivize redevelopment of underutilized properties, promote compact and walkable development patterns, and make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public services.
3. Advance Community Sustainability
  - Reduce environmental impact and carbon emissions to land use and development standards. Consider the implementation of site and landscape standards that integrate low-impact development, green infrastructure, and native biodynamic landscapes.
  - Facilitate mixed-use, higher-density, transit-orientated urbanism, and allow for the development of a Fitchburg downtown.
  - Prioritize pedestrians, bicyclists, and other alternative modes of transportation.
4. Balance Growth with Rural and Agricultural Preservation
  - Ensure that the revised zoning code thoughtfully addresses Fitchburg's rural and agricultural areas by maintaining appropriate development standards that protect agricultural operations, open space, and rural character. The code should provide clear guidance for low-intensity development while allowing flexibility for evolving agricultural practices and compatible rural land uses. Staff notes that Exclusive Agriculture District zoning is certified by the Wisconsin

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. Any recommended changes to this district shall remain consistent with the requirements of the [Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program](#).

5. Integrate and Simplify the Zoning Framework
  - Reduce complexity by minimizing reliance on Planned Development Districts and creating adaptable base zoning districts that accommodate a wider range of development scenarios. Where appropriate, integrate form-based principles into a unified zoning framework that replaces or consolidates the existing conventional zoning ordinance and SmartCode, resulting in a more predictable and user-friendly system.
6. Facilitate Predictable and High-Quality Development Outcomes
  - Establish standards that promote high-quality site and building design, compatible transitions between land uses, and positive relationships between private development and the public realm. The code should provide predictability for applicants while ensuring development contributes positively to community character and livability.
7. Improve Clarity, Usability, and Ease of Implementation
  - Draft the zoning code to be clear, concise, and easy to administer for staff and decision-makers, and understandable to applicants and the general public. Standards should be objective where possible, approval processes streamlined, and discretionary reviews clearly defined. The code should reduce ambiguity and improve consistency in interpretation and enforcement.
8. Incorporate Clear Graphics, Maps, and Illustrations
  - Include high-quality maps, diagrams, tables, and illustrative graphics that clearly communicate zoning standards, district intent, development form, and dimensional requirements. Visual tools should be used to improve comprehension, reduce misinterpretation, and support efficient project review and public engagement.
9. Support Equitable and Inclusive Development
  - Update the zoning regulations to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion by reducing regulatory barriers that disproportionately impact certain populations, promoting fair access to housing and opportunity, and supporting inclusive neighborhood design. The revised code should encourage development patterns that foster social interaction, accessibility, and safe, welcoming public spaces for people of all ages, abilities, incomes, and backgrounds.
10. Ensure Legal Soundness and Consistency
  - Update the zoning and sign regulations in a manner consistent with current state and federal legal requirements and best practices, including sign code standards that are content-neutral and legally defensible. The revised code should be internally consistent and aligned with the City's comprehensive plan and other adopted policies. The City expects that the selected consultant will make zoning recommendations that are consistent with all applicable state and federal regulations. The City Attorney will be involved in codifying the final product. However, the consultant shall not have the expectation that the City Attorney will be actively involved as the revised zoning regulations are drafted.
11. Coordinate with the Comprehensive Plan Update
  - Ensure close coordination between the zoning code rewrite and the concurrent

comprehensive plan update, so that land use policies, future growth areas, and implementation strategies are clearly reflected in the zoning framework. Opportunities for efficiency and consistency between the two efforts should be maximized.

## Plan Consistency

The following plans and studies shall be consulted:

- [Growing Fitchburg 2030 Comprehensive Plan](#) (RFP for update released with this RFP)
  - [Fitchburg Housing Plan](#) (Currently being updated)
  - [Dane County Regional Housing Strategy](#) (2024) See also [Best Practices](#) and [Residential Zoning Code Checklist](#)
  - Capital Area Regional Planning Commission [Regional Development Framework](#) (2022)
  - [Dane County Farmland Preservation Plan](#) (2024)
  - [A Comparison of the Approval Process Durations in the Greater Madison Area](#) (2024)
  - [Connect Greater Madison 2050 Regional Transportation Plan](#) (2022)
  - [City of Fitchburg Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#) (Currently being updated)
  - [City of Fitchburg' Comprehensive Park, Open Space, & Recreation Plan](#) (2024)
  - [City of Fitchburg Sustainability Plan](#) (2025)
  - [Fitchburg Opportunities in Agriculture Plan](#) (2017)
- [Fitchburg City in Motion Economic Development Vision and Strategy](#) (Currently being updated)

## Scope of Work

### Project Initiation and Existing Zoning Code Analysis

- Prepare a Project Workplan jointly with staff including a list of tasks, deliverables and timelines.
- Review the relevant policies, strategies, and actions in the City's planning documents. The selected consultant, at a minimum, should be familiar with the relevant plans listed above.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of Fitchburg's existing Zoning Ordinance, SmartCode, Sign Code, and related zoning policies.
  - [Chapter 22](#) – note that the following articles are not expected to be updated:
    1. Article VIII – Wetland Overlay
    2. Article XI – Wellhead Protection Overlay
    3. Article X – Floodplain Overlay
  - [Chapter 22 – Article V, Division 2](#) – Exclusive Agriculture is certified by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. Any proposed changes shall be consistent with Wisconsin Farmland Preservation.
  - Updated [Chapter 22 zoning changes from late 2025](#) are not in the Municode at this time, but shall be included in the project scope.
  - [Chapter 23](#) – SmartCode
  - [Chapter 25](#) – Architectural Control
  - [Chapter 26](#) - Signs
- Identify key challenges and inconsistencies within the existing codes, including areas where the regulations are outdated, overly complex, or do not align with the City's current development needs.
- Assess the effectiveness of the current zoning regulations in supporting Fitchburg's long-term vision for growth, preservation of rural areas, and urban development.

- In conjunction with staff, complete an analysis of non-conforming lots, uses, and sites using available GIS data.
- Evaluate conditional uses and advise as to what standard conditions, if any, should be encoded, in compliance with [Wisconsin Act 67](#).
- Provide a Summary Report and Map(s) for Plan Commission and public comment.

### **Stakeholder Engagement Plan**

- In collaboration with City staff, develop a stakeholder engagement plan that outlines strategies for involving key community members, City staff, elected officials, and other stakeholders in the process. Proposals shall specify the engagement tools and meetings that the consultant proposes as part of the cost estimate.

Design the engagement approach to build upon and complement the extensive public outreach conducted as part of the recent comprehensive plan update, with a level of effort that is proportional and cost-effective.

- Budget for and attend an appropriate number of Plan Commission meetings to review key elements of the revised zoning code; City staff will lead meetings with additional boards, commissions, or committees, with consultant participation as appropriate.
- Prepare clear, accessible public education and outreach materials explaining proposed zoning changes in plain language, including maps, graphics, and other visual aids.
- Clearly describe proposed engagement activities, tools, and meetings in the consultant's cost estimate.

### **Zoning Ordinance and SmartCode Rewrite**

- Develop a unified zoning ordinance that combines the City's existing conventional zoning ordinance and SmartCode into a hybrid model. The revised zoning regulations should integrate form-based zoning principles while accommodating Fitchburg's diverse land uses.
- Review and revise the City's zoning districts, with a focus on reducing the use of Planned Development Districts (PDDs) and creating clear, flexible zoning categories that can accommodate a variety of development types.
- Develop appropriate land use tables, dimensional requirements, and development standards for each zoning district, ensuring that they are clear, consistent, and easy to administer.
- Include form-based design standards in areas where appropriate, focusing on building form, placement, and the relationship between buildings and public spaces.
- Provide specific zoning standards for rural and agricultural areas to ensure these zones are preserved and adequately addressed within the overall zoning framework.

### **Sign Code Update**

- Review and assess the City's current Sign Code to determine how it aligns with the proposed zoning updates and current legal standards.
- Develop an updated Sign Code that is clear, modern, and consistent with the City's revised zoning regulations. This should include updated standards for sign types, sizes, locations, and other relevant factors.
- Ensure that the revised Sign Code is compliant with constitutional and legal requirements, particularly regarding signage and free speech.
- Integrate the updated Sign Code with the revised zoning ordinance to ensure consistency between the two.

### **Drafting and Review of Code Revisions**

- Prepare a draft of the revised zoning ordinance, including all necessary sections, tables, graphics, and regulatory language.
- Present the draft zoning ordinance to City staff, elected officials, and other stakeholders

for review and comment.

- Revise the draft ordinance based on feedback from the review process and incorporate any necessary adjustments.
- Prepare a revised zoning map that aligns with the revised zoning regulations and accurately reflects the updated zoning districts.

### **Adoption Support**

- Provide support to the City through the formal adoption process, including preparing necessary reports and presenting the revised zoning ordinance to the Planning Commission and City Council.
- Assist with public hearings and other adoption-related activities, addressing any questions or concerns raised by the public or decision-makers.
- Provide the City with final, adoption-ready versions of the zoning ordinance, Sign Code, and related materials in both digital and publication-ready formats.

These are expected requirements for the creation of revised zoning regulations and are not intended to be an all-inclusive list of every task necessary to complete the project. It is expected that the consultant will submit a proposal that provides the City with recommendations for approaches, tasks, and deliverables based on their expertise. Innovative approaches that meet the intent of the Objectives and Scope of Work are welcomed.

## **Technical and Data Standards**

- GIS: ESRI file geodatabase/shapefiles + metadata; Dane County coordinate system.
- Documents/Graphics: InDesign (packaged), editable PowerPoint templates; PNG/SVG assets, MS Word documents.
- Web Page: hosted by consultant or City; exportable static package at closeout; mobile friendly; WCAG 2.1 AA accessible.
- Open Records: All work products are City property and subject to WI open records; provide native files at project closeout.

## **Deliverables**

The selected consultant shall complete a final zoning code and zoning map with supporting documentation. Format the documents to be incorporated within the Fitchburg Municipal Code of Ordinances maintained by Municode. The final zoning code shall include easy to use charts, tables, checklists, graphics, images and figures. The consultant shall provide the City with electronic copies of all files in their editable formats compatible with Microsoft Office, AdobeInDesign and ESRI.

Expected documents include:

- Project Workplan
- Zoning Code Analysis Summary Report and Map(s)
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- Draft Zoning Ordinance and Map
- Final Zoning Ordinance and Map

## **Proposal Submission Requirements**

All proposals should adhere to the specified content and sequence of information described by this RFP. Submit a complete electronic version of the proposal via email to [brad.sippel@fitchburgwi.gov](mailto:brad.sippel@fitchburgwi.gov). PDF format is required. If the proposal is too large to submit via

email, please submit via a filesharing service. Proposals shall not exceed 25 pages. The City may reject any proposals not received by the deadline.

### Cover Letter

Provide a one-page cover letter on your letterhead that includes the address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the contact person(s). List the name and title of each person authorized to represent the consultant in negotiations. Include the signature(s) of the person(s) legally authorized to bind the firm to a contract.

Unless the consultant is an individual, all proposals must be signed with a firm/company/partnership/entity name and by a responsible officer or employee indicating that officer or employee's authorization to commit the consultant to the terms of the proposal. Obligations assumed by such signature must be fulfilled.

### Proposal Content and Sequence of Information

The response to the proposal shall include the following information in the order shown in the following section. The consultant should be sure to include all information that will enable the evaluation committee and the City to make a decision. Failure of the consultant to provide specific, detailed information may result in its proposal being rejected in favor of a sufficiently detailed proposal. Any necessary exhibits or other information, including information not specifically requested by this RFP but that would be helpful, should be attached at the end of the proposal.

### Qualifications and Experience

- Provide a statement of qualifications for your organization, the size of your firm, a description of the services provided by your organization, and a statement of the extent of experience/history of providing the services requested by this RFP.
- List the personnel to be involved in the study, their roles and responsibilities, and list the professional qualifications for everyone that would be assigned to provide services requested by this RFP. Professional qualifications include date and educational institutions of any applicable degrees, additional applicable training, and any professional certifications and/or licensing. In lieu of listing this information, you may submit a resume or curriculum vitae for each such individual if the resume/CV includes all the requested information.
- List the roles of each employee that will be assigned to this project over the anticipated project duration and a breakdown of each employee's expected time commitment to the project, as a proportion of total work time. Availability may be listed as a percentage of a full-time employee (FTE).
- Identify the three most recent examples of comparable zoning code rewrites accomplished with name and contact information for references.

Identify sub-consultants to be utilized and the role to be played by the sub-consultant(s). Provide information on the two most recent similar projects for the respective work of the sub-consultant(s).

### Proposed Approach

This section describes your proposed approach for meeting the services required by the City as explained above. Relevant considerations include the quality and feasibility of your approach to meeting these needs, the way in which you plan to provide adequate staffing, the equipment or other resources provided by you (if applicable). List any needs for physical space and/or

equipment at the City, if any.

Identify how you will meet all other aspects of the scope of work and related requirements stated above. List any items you cannot provide. If there are any components or details of the proposed project that are identified in this RFP that the consultant believes should be modified based on best practices or prior experience, the alternatives should be explained in the proposal.

Include in the proposal:

- Methodology addressing the scope of work, including how you will analyze existing information, perform the required analysis, and methods to evaluate land use options.
- Methodology to prepare the development strategies and address timing issues of the plan. Address how aspects of this plan are to be evaluated in relation to other overall comprehensive plan issues, and potential other neighborhood plans to be requested.
- Provide a public participation strategy following guidelines outlined in this RFP. In addition, address roles of city staff, commissions, and council. The City will undertake distribution of required notices, but the consultant will bear the responsibility for providing notice information.

### Project schedule and Cost

Include the expected timeline of the project and a cost not to exceed to fulfill the requirements of the RFP. The City has budgeted \$125,000-\$150,000 for the zoning code rewrite. The City will require a minimum 10% withholding of the estimated contract value until all work has been satisfactorily completed.

- Proposed project schedule
- Not-to-exceed cost for the requested services.
- Itemized budget and a detailed explanation for all costs associated with providing the requested services.
- Estimated labor hours by task that clearly identifies the project team members, their hourly rate and the number of hours expected to complete each task.
- The expected payment schedule and project milestones with which payments will be due. Payments shall be tied to identified performances criteria and not specific dates.
- Is travel time for meetings expected to be billable? If so, how will travel time invoices be calculated? Travel costs should be included within the City's allocated budget for the project.
- Include similar information for any subcontractors.

### Claims, Licensure and Non-Discrimination Violations Against Your Organization

List any current licensure or non-discrimination claims against you/your organization and those having occurred in the past five years, especially any resulting in claims or legal judgements against you/your organization.

### Submission Deadline and Tentative Schedule of Events

The City will accept written questions until February 11, 2026. Please submit your questions via email to Brad Sippel, Community Development Planner at [brad.sippel@fitchburgwi.gov](mailto:brad.sippel@fitchburgwi.gov). Written responses will be posted as an addendum no later than February 18, 2026. Use a subject line "Zoning Code Rewrite RFP Questions."

Submission deadline is by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, March 6, 2026, with all proposals submitted in PDF format. Email the PDF to [brad.sippel@fitchburgwi.gov](mailto:brad.sippel@fitchburgwi.gov). If the proposal is too large to submit via email, please submit via a filesharing service. Proposals shall not exceed 25 pages. Proposals not submitted by the deadline may be withdrawn from consideration by the City.

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Release RFP	January 30, 2026
Proposal Deadline	March 6, 2026
Evaluation Period by City	March 2026
Selection and Contract Negotiation	April 2026
Kickoff Meeting	TBD

## Questions

Questions about the project should be directed to Brad Sippel via email at [brad.sippel@fitchburgwi.gov](mailto:brad.sippel@fitchburgwi.gov).

## Proposal Evaluation and Consultant Selection Process

All proposals received will be evaluated by an RFP evaluation committee. During the evaluation process, the City may require a consultant’s representative to answer specific questions orally or in writing. The City will select the firm that submits the most responsive proposal. Selection will be based on the overall strength of each proposal, and the evaluation is not restricted to considerations of any single factor, such as cost. The committee will evaluate the proposals based on the following criteria:

1. Key Personnel Experience – 20 points
2. Project Experience – 20 points - Experience with SmartCode and agricultural zoning is preferred
3. Scope of Work – 25 points
4. Cost Effectiveness – 20 points
5. Project Schedule and capacity – 10 points
6. Quality of Submittal – 5 points

The evaluation committee may consider any other criteria it deems relevant, and the evaluation committee is free to make any recommendations it determines to be in the best interest of the City. Inaccuracy of the information supplied within a proposal or other errors constitute grounds for rejection of the proposal.

The City of Fitchburg may require a preselection interview. Consultant must agree to appear at a pre- selection interview at no cost, if required. No reimbursement will occur for preparation costs by the responder or their sub-consultant(s). Note that the City reserves the right to evaluate proposals solely based on each responder’s written submission.

## Additional Terms and Conditions

All documents, graphics, and exhibits produced by the successful proposer as part of this planning project shall be provided to the City, become the property of the City of Fitchburg, and be available for use by the City in any manner the City deems appropriate.

The City reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals or portions thereof without

stated cause. Upon selection of a finalist, the City by its proper officials shall attempt to negotiate and reach a final agreement with the finalist. If the City, for any reason, is unable to negotiate a final agreement with the finalist; the City then reserves the right to reject such finalist and negotiate a final agreement with another finalist who has the next most viable proposal. The City may also elect to reject all proposals and re-issue a new RFP.

The City is not bound to accept the proposal with the lowest cost, but may accept the proposal that demonstrates the best abilities and qualifications to meet the needs of the City. The selected consultant will need to provide proof of insurance. The City reserves the right to disqualify any proposal, before or after opening, upon evidence of collusion, intent to defraud, or any other illegal practice on the part of the consultant.