



OAK RIDGE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE Planning Consultant Request for Proposals

DATE ISSUED: April 22, 2024

SUBMITTAL DUE DATE: May 22, 2024

COMMUNICATIONS

All communication of any nature with respect to this Request for Proposals (RFP) shall be addressed to City of Oak Ridge planning staff liaisons as identified in this RFP. With the exception of communications with the planning staff, prospective firms and their staffs are prohibited from communicating with elected or appointed City officials, City staff, and any selection committee member regarding this RFP or submittals from the time the RFP is released until the selection results are publicly announced. Violation of this provision may lead to disqualification of the firm's proposal for consideration.



The City of Oak Ridge, via the Oak Ridge Municipal Planning Commission, is soliciting interest in contracting with a planning consulting team to augment staff and commissioners in an update of the Comprehensive Plan.

***Oak Ridge was born as one of
three Manhattan Project ‘secret cities’
– a world-changing scientific leap to end WWII.***

Since its incorporation in 1959 as a city – rather than a government installation – Oak Ridge has been slowly transforming from its secretive past into an outward-looking, modern, evolving community.

The update of the Oak Ridge Comprehensive Plan must recognize the past while helping communicate the vision for the future of an independent city – unlike its surrounding satellite neighbors – within the metropolitan region. This may require an atypical planning approach.

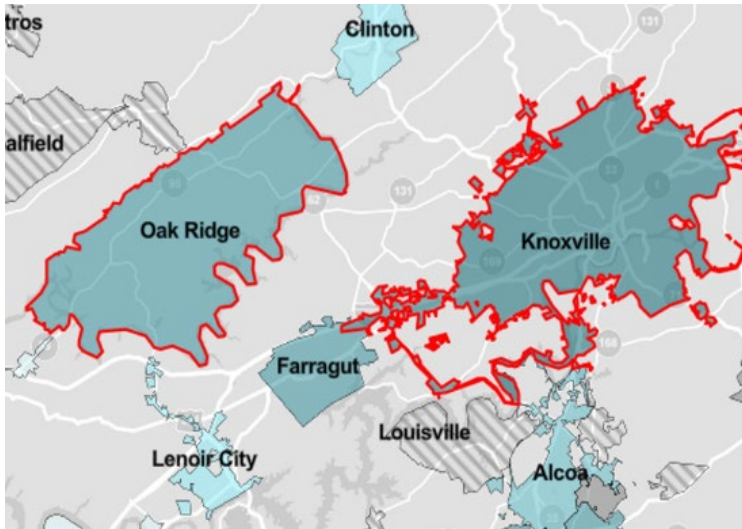
The history, formation and transformation of the ‘secret city’ into a modern city is not a typical story. While most cities are born as small places, and grow generationally into their future, Oak Ridge became what it ‘was’ virtually overnight.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS OR CONSIDERATIONS

Most communities feel they are unique, and rightly have important distinctions to be considered in a comprehensive planning process. Oak Ridge, arguably, has more unique characteristics than the average community in light of its history and Manhattan Project origin. Creating a plan that is ‘Uniquely Oak Ridge’ is the goal.

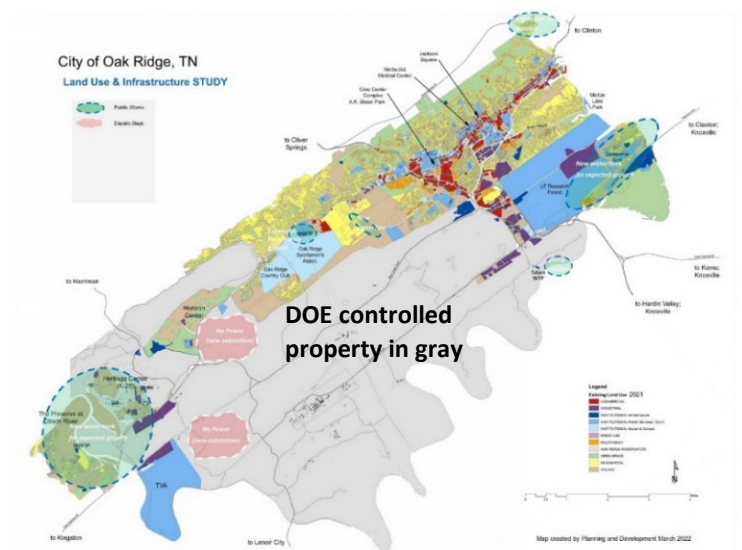
Examples include:

- The City’s infrastructure, and its very existence, sprang from nowhere in a matter of months during WWII. As such, its infrastructure is wearing out all at once across the City, rather than in generational phases as is the norm for communities that grow and add infrastructure periodically. Although only 1/6th the population of nearby Knoxville, Oak Ridge is virtually the same physical size;



- The City’s ability to fund maintenance and infrastructure improvements have been complicated by a lack of significant population and tax-base growth in generations;
- A significant portion of housing stock was built in the early 1940s, to accommodate workers who travelled to their jobs via a 24/7 transit system, from neighborhoods that had walking-distance shopping and institutional resources, and lack adequate parking for contemporary families;

- Oak Ridge was initially developed with multiple neighborhood commercial centers and devoid of a central, mixed-use downtown (but creation of a downtown center is currently a priority effort);



- Over HALF of the City’s footprint, including nearly all undeveloped acreage, is owned by the Department of Energy, and is unavailable for urban development; DOE is, however, open to discussions about the transfer of unused properties that are not considered to be ‘mission critical’ for their future use. The comprehensive plan offers an important opportunity to evaluate options as the basis for subsequent requests of property transfer; [areas in light blue are TVA or UT controlled and off-limits as well.]
- Development of a business-oriented, regional airport (5000’ runway) is actively underway.

- The City BluePrint, a community visioning process with significant citizen participation, was completed in 2019 and the plan is still a valid vision/direction for Oak Ridge, and the agreed upon foundation for the Comprehensive Planning effort. (detail following)

Critical Background/Guidance to Oak Ridge Comprehensive Plan Development

The **City Blueprint** was adopted in January of 2020, after an extensive 2-year community participation process. The intention of the plan was to develop an agreed-upon direction or vision, in anticipation of updating the Comprehensive Plan. **The Planning Commission is satisfied that the vision and major direction of the Blueprint are still valid and appropriate as a jumping off point of the comprehensive planning process.** As such, the process will not require an extensive ‘visioning’ stage, but the intervening time, as well as population growth and in/out migration, dictate that a robust step of community education/reengagement on the Blueprint’s principles is an essential element of the planning process.

A link to the full document is available at the Comprehensive Plan webpage (oakridgetn.gov/comprehensiveplan), but the Blueprint’s essence can be briefly summarized as follows.

- **GROW OAK RIDGE** The clear message coming out of the Blueprint was a shared vision to grow, primarily within or immediately adjacent to existing City services areas. (i.e. limit expansion of our service networks; optimize use of existing infrastructure.)
- **Build on being “Uniquely Oak Ridge.”** While people will have different views on what that means, a helpful guide is to point to the identified ‘values’ of the Blueprint, including:
 - **Science/Technology:** the foundation and heritage of Oak Ridge.
 - **Public Education:** the community’s long-standing commitment.
 - **Natural Asset:** the importance of preserving natural assets as a part of our identity.

So, while being pro-growth is a clear objective, that growth needs to be well-planned, help to maximize use of existing infrastructure, and be guided by community values.

Growth & Change Opportunities

While many areas of the City are well-established and less likely to see dramatic change, there are several categories or locations that warrant special attention to guarantee positive change. Some of these include:

- **DOE property:** as discussed in the previous section;
- **Wilson Street/Downtown Corridor:** proposed new, mixed-use ‘heart’ of the community;
- **Jackson Square & Grove Center:** these are two of the original neighborhood commercial areas, that are particularly active and have great potential for growth and improvement;
- **Manhattan Overlay District (MDO):** central city area of primarily war-era housing, often in need of significant rehabilitation for code compliance and modern market appeal, lacking parking, and in some instances are concentrations of codes enforcement and police calls for service;
- **Airport:** while much of the land near the future airport is in developed industrial parks or off-limits DOE property, creative and thoughtful planning for available nearby property can be key to maximizing the airport’s economic benefits to the community – especially as a catalyst to attraction or expansion of businesses that benefit from immediate proximity to business air travel (e.g. transport of short-lived medical isotopes);
- **Waterfront:** Oak Ridge has very limited, publicly-accessible waterfront property since the majority is under DOE or TVA ownership or control. Melton Hill Park is the home to a world-class rowing venue which attracts 7-8 high school, college and master rower regattas each year. Along with spring training for many northern schools, rowing events bring approximately 17,000 competitors and spectators to Oak Ridge, supporting hotels, restaurants and attractions, for an estimated impact of nearly \$1.8 million per year. All the more reason for careful and creative planning on the use of available/accessible property;
- **Trails/Open Spaces:** planning for and integration of the extensive, existing trail and open space assets, can be a major enticement to new, nearby development – or community growth in general.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Oak Ridge is highly accessible to regional attractions and resources while maintaining a unique identity including being the home of the Oak Ridge National Lab, a renowned public school system, plus nationally acclaimed rowing, mountain biking, and hiking venues. The City anchors the north end of the Oak Ridge Corridor, approximately 22 miles west of Downtown Knoxville. Oak Ridge occupies portions of Anderson and Roane counties, and two major interstates (I-40 and I-75) intersect just minutes away. Oak Ridge is part of the more than one million person greater Knoxville Metropolitan Area. The City has a resident population of approximately 33,000 and a daytime population in excess of 50,000 in light of major regional employers. Over 115,000 residents are within a 20-minute drive of Oak Ridge.



Oak Ridge was established in 1942 as a production site for the Manhattan Project – the history-changing project that developed the atomic bomb and helped end WWII. The Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and Y-12 National Security Complex, which grew out of the Manhattan Project, are still crucial to national security as well as the city's economy and culture. As the largest multipurpose lab in the Department of Energy's National Laboratory system, ORNL is home to the Spallation Neutron Source facility and the world's fastest scientific supercomputers.

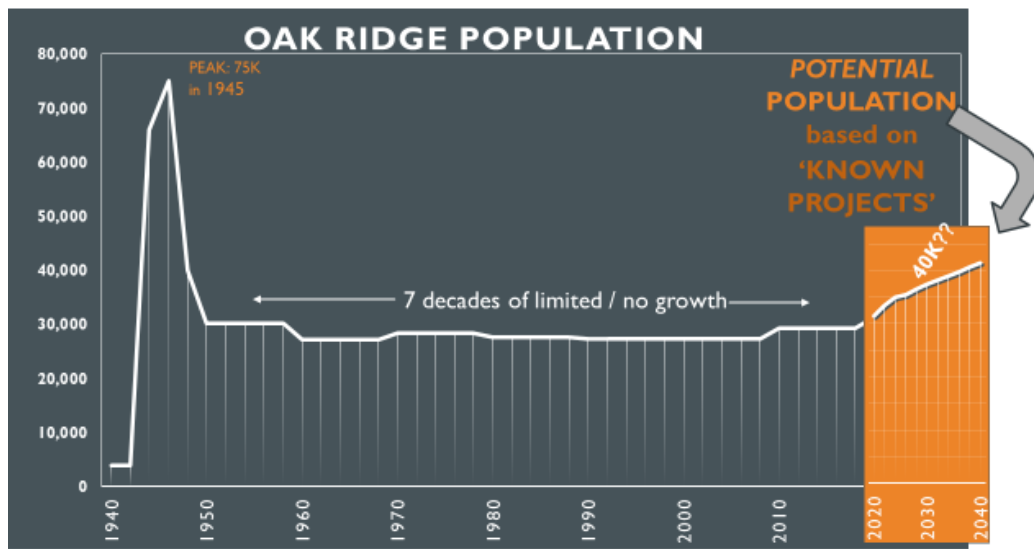
The Manhattan Project National Historical Park, the American Museum of Science and Energy, and museums such as Children's Museum, Oak Ridge History Museum, the K-25 History Museum, and the Y-12 History Center, tell the story of how Oak Ridge was built and about the science and technology changing the world still today.

Oak Ridge boasts the first of only two fully-certified K-12 STEM systems in the world. The City operates a preschool, four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The largest campus of Roane State Community College, plus non-instructional higher education organizations including the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education, Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU), and the University of Tennessee Forestry Stations and Arboretum, are located in the City. Culture is also of great importance, represented by our excellent symphony, art center, playhouse theater and abundant annual festivals.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION:

Oak Ridge has maintained a very flat population trajectory for decades, but this has begun to change in recent years. In addition to the opening of several new national retailers in the City’s core, along with local restaurants and shops across the City, population has begun to noticeably increase (approximately 10% in less than five years). Although not a projection, the build-out of existing and known developments could reasonably result in a population of nearly 40,000 by 2030. This would represent a one-third population increase in just over a decade.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>
2010 (census)	29,330 (languished around this level since 1950)
2020 (census)	31,402 (began picking up in late 20-teens)
2010-20 change	2,072 (7.1%)
2022 (July) Estimate	32,614 (UTK Boyd Center for Business & Economic Research)
2020-22 change	777 (2.4%; or annual 1.2% increase)
2023 Estimate	32,614 x 1.012 = 33,005



While it is very difficult to predict 5 or more years in the future, build-out of existing developments, such as the Preserve or the Main Street Lofts, along with many other new approved or announced projects, could conceivably take Oak Ridge to ~40,000 by 2030. That would be a one-third increase in 10 years after 70 years of virtually no growth!

MAJOR EXISTING AND NEW EMPLOYMENT

Oak Ridge is home to a variety of government and private sector employers. Many employees of these organizations live within the City limits, but a majority reside in adjacent Knoxville/Knox County or other surrounding communities. In fact, the daily employment in-migration for Oak Ridge, exceeds daily out-migration by a significant margin. According to recent-years’ data, approximately 31K people in-migrate daily for work, while only ~ 9K leave the City to work in surrounding Counties. As such, there is a substantial, unmet market of daily ‘residents’ who might be served if new, more desirable housing, eating/drinking places and other attractive destinations are provided.

Federal entities including the Department of Energy, and various related prime and subcontracting businesses employ approximately 19,000 workers in Oak Ridge. This includes approximately 9600 at the Y-12 National Security Complex, 6500 at ORNL, 2000 at UCOR, nearly 800 at ORAU, and 175 in other related DOE offices. Additionally, nearly 1700 people are employed by various engineering, technology or other DOE-serving businesses in Oak Ridge. Other major employers including Methodist Medical Center, Roane State Community College, City of Oak Ridge and school system, among others, employ an additional 2000-plus workers. (employment data from Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce & E TN Economic Council reports)

EXAMPLES OF MAJOR EMPLOYERS' STAFF LEVELS (rounded):

Y-12 National Security Complex	9600
ORNL	6500
UCOR	2000
ORAU	600
City of Oak Ridge	420
Oak Ridge Public School System	875
Methodist Medical Center	820

Finally, corporate expansion and job growth projections are also on the upswing, with a variety of new industrial employers and/or facilities on the horizon. Many of these are cutting edge technologies or “new nuclear” industry applications, with highly-qualified, well-paid employees anticipated. Examples include the TVA Small Modular Reactor project, Kairos Power, Triso-X and Carbon Rivers. Each company projects hundreds of new employees plus the prospect of many well-paid construction jobs over a ten-year construction horizon.

PROPOSAL CHARACTERISTICS & CONSIDERATION

The Planning Commission is seeking a consulting team bringing effective methods to help us develop a plan leveraging our unique past and current opportunities, based on meaningful, broad-based community involvement, and serving as a usable guide to an agreed-upon future.

The resulting plan must:

- Clearly convey the City’s vision;
- Have involved a broad cross-section of the community in ways that create a unique plan that has real community buy-in;
- Contain actionable recommendations for clear guidance when considering future rezoning requests, new developments or unexpected circumstances;
- Be adaptable such that future updates can be evolutionary and not require wholesale change during the planning horizon.

The following characteristics of prospective team and approach provide guidance to applicants on the values and priorities that proposals will be judged against. Additional detail is provided within the application format instructions found on pages 9-10 of this RFP.

PROPOSED PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (40%): Anticipated process to produce a plan that is ‘uniquely Oak Ridge,’ has broad and thorough community buy-in, and results in a product that is readily usable and applicable for decision making by Planning Commission, City Council and community interests intending to help achieve the vision.

TEAM STRENGTH/EXPERIENCE (30%): Qualifications, completion of comparable projects, key leadership and members of the team, capability and breadth of team members.

SCHEDULE (10%): While there is no hard deadline to be met, and no intention of rushing the process, the existing comprehensive plan is woefully out of date, so its timely replacement is highly desirable. That said, speed over enduring value is not the intent.

COST (10%): As with schedule, Oak Ridge does not intend to defer to a low bidder mentality, but proposed price is not irrelevant and may be among legitimate considerations, e.g. as a tie-breaker.

OTHER (10%): Considerations unique to proposal, not addressed by those above.

IMPORTANT SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

[View the Comprehensive Plan Web Page \(oakridgetn.gov/comprehensiveplan\)](http://oakridgetn.gov/comprehensiveplan), including:

- *City Blueprint*
- *Downtown/Wilson Street Vision*
- *'Vision 2030' plan for central Oak Ridge*
- *Natural Assets Guidebook, Legacy Parks*
- *Waterfront Master Plan*
- *Oak Ridge Airport project webpage*
- *Quality of Life survey results*

Additionally, the proposed **City contract template** is attached along with this supporting information.

PROCESS/SCHEDULE

ADVERTISEMENT/RELEASE OF RFP	April 22, 2024
SOLICITATION QUESTIONS & ANSWERS	Any questions regarding this solicitation, the community or the Planning Commission’s intentions, may be submitted to staff liaison via email at plandev@oakridgetn.gov , or wblasius@oakridgetn.gov . Questions and answers submitted before May 15, 2024 will be posted at: oakridgetn.gov/comprehensiveplan
DUE DATE & TIME FOR SUBMITTALS	Submittals must be received by the Planning Commission <u>NO LATER THAN: 3:00pm, May 22, 2024.</u> Proposer names will be public information, but submittal content will not be shared until after developer selection. Confidential financial information will not be made public.
INTERVIEWS WITH SHORT-LISTED TEAM(S)	TBA, if needed, will be held on June 6-7 . Interviews may be in person or virtual depending on schedules and location of proposing teams.
NOTIFICATION OF TEAM SELECTED TO NEGOTIATE FINAL TERMS OF CONTRACT	No later than 30 days after submittal date, or interviews if held, the Planning Commission will notify highest ranked team in order to complete contract details. (see contract template, attached) Once approved by Planning Commission, proposed contract must be approved by City Council before execution. The <u>July 8th City Council meeting</u> is the <u>target date for approval</u> . Assuming successful execution of contract, selected consulting team will be expected to begin work no later than 30 days after signing.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposal package should be submitted in an **ELECTRONIC PDF file** via email, thumb-drive, or preapproved alternative method.

SUBMITTALS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:

**Laura Carrington, Plan Steering Committee Chair
c/o Wayne Blasius, Planning & Development Director**

SUBMITTAL SHOULD BE VIA STAFF EMAIL to: plandev@oakridgetn.gov.

or in person at:

**City of Oak Ridge
Department of Planning & Development
200 S. Tulane Avenue
Oak Ridge, TN 37830**

Questions should be sent via staff email at plandev@oakridgetn.gov; wblasius@oakridgetn.gov; or jwilliams@oakridgetn.gov

Please use format shown below to provide your submittal information.

OAK RIDGE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TEAM SUBMITTAL FORMAT

PROPOSING ENTITY/TEAM: _____

CONTACT PERSON/INFO: Include name, phone, email, mailing address of contact, and website.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: State any conflicts of interest your firm or any key team member may have with this project or City of Oak Ridge.

Signature of applicant: _____

Type signatory name/title: _____

- 1. BRIEF OVERVIEW/INTRODUCTION OF TEAM/VISION APPROACH TO PLAN DEVELOPMENT**
(one [1] page maximum)
- 2. TEAM STRENGTH/EXPERIENCE (30% weighting):** (fifteen [15] page maximum; resume pages are not counted toward maximum number of pages.)
 - A. **Applicant Firm(s):** Firm name; or names, if partnership
 - B. **Lead staff/Project Executive** (include resume or bio)
 - C. **Project Manager** (if different than lead staff/project executive. Include resume or bio)
 - D. **Team Members:** major team members and roles (include resumes or bios)
 - E. **Relevant Team Experience:** of firm(s) and key staff, illustrating an understanding of comprehensive planning, community engagement, etc.
 - F. **References (3-5) from recent clients:** include contact information of primary client representative.

- 3. PROPOSED PLAN and DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (40% weighting):** (fifteen [15] page maximum)
Provide information such as but not limited to:
- A. Understanding of Oak Ridge: response to unique characteristics discussed herein and other insights;
 - B. Effective ways to engage a broad cross-section of citizenry – especially means of reaching groups who are not typically engaged, e.g. youth, low income citizens, etc.;
 - C. Discuss how resulting plan can leverage unique characteristics in Oak Ridge;
 - D. Describe, or cite past plan examples, to illustrate how plan recommendations can be incorporated into future decision-making;
 - E. Describe elements of the plan that you see best suited to Oak Ridge (e.g. land use, transportation network, natural assets, growth strategies, etc.).
- 4. SCHEDULE (10% weighting):** (two [2] page maximum)
A commitment to move forward sooner vs. later is desirable. Please include approximate timeframes anticipated for benchmarks such as but not limited to:
- A. Completion and submittal (to Planning Commission for approval) description of planning process and plan development schedule;
 - B. Major stages of plan development;
 - C. Draft plan completion;
 - D. Final community vetting;
 - E. Planning Commission review/consideration;
 - F. Preparation of plan document, website or other form of plan communication.
- 5. Cost Proposal (10% weighting):** (five [5] page maximum)
Description of contracted costs including staff time/rates, travel, production, variable costs, optional services, etc. Because of a desire to emphasize communication of the plan online vs. a printed document, duplicating costs, beyond a small number of initial copies, shall not be the responsibility of the consultant. Details should allow staff and officials to have a clear understanding of total cost to complete the plan and its communication products.
- 6. OTHER (10% weighting): Considerations unique to proposal, not addressed by information above.** (five [5] page maximum) Additional supporting materials, beyond five pages, may be included in your submittal but will not necessarily be considered in review and decision-making.

INTERVIEWS

Highest rated proposal team(s) may be invited for interviews in **Oak Ridge, June 6-7, 2024**. Interviews may be virtual or in-person, by all or some participants, depending on their location.