

ADVERTISEMENT

**TOWN OF BERLIN
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP # 2025-06
Comprehensive Plan Update**

Due Date: Friday, September 5, 2025

Time: 3:00 P.M. EST

The Town of Berlin is seeking Proposals for Consulting Services to update and revitalize the Comprehensive Plan of the Town. Qualified firms are encouraged to visit the Town of Berlin website at www.berlinmd.gov/government/request-for-proposals/ for the official RFP.

Sealed proposals will be accepted until 3:00 PM on Friday, September 5, 2025. EEO.

**TOWN OF BERLIN
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Notice is hereby given that proposals will be received by the Town of Berlin, Maryland, for:

RFP # 2025-06

Comprehensive Plan Update

by filing with the Town of Berlin, 10 William Street, Berlin, MD, 21811 until:

Date: Friday, September 5, 2025

Time: 3:00 P.M. EST

Deliver submittals to:

Mary Bohlen, Town Administrator
Town of Berlin
10 William St.
Berlin, MD. 21811
Attn: RFP # 2025-06

The Town of Berlin is seeking Proposals for consulting services for an update of the Comprehensive Plan of the Town.

GENERAL INFORMATION

NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that proposals will be received by the Town of Berlin, Maryland, for consulting services to revitalize the Comprehensive Plan of the Town by filing with the Town at the above date/time and at the above location.

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND: The Town of Berlin, Maryland (the “Town”) seeks consulting services to revitalize the Comprehensive Plan to define the goals and objectives for development options and implementation strategies on a variety of land use issues and include the development and incorporation of small area plans to address major corridors, anticipated developments, and other areas of specific concern, including, but not necessarily limited to the Historic District and Downtown Business Area.

The Comprehensive Plan will address the vision, goals, objectives, and policies to guide the Town’s development and redevelopment. It will integrate aspects of development, such as demographics, land use, public facilities and infrastructure, transportation, environmental, and economic growth recommendations, as well as relevant considerations pertaining to land use of areas immediately adjacent to, but outside of the corporate limits of, the Town. The plan will guide the Mayor and Council, the Planning Commission, various advisory boards, departments, developers, property owners, and residents on the appropriate growth and redevelopment for the Town of Berlin for the next 10 to 20 years.

The successful proposer will provide these services to the Town as described further throughout this document.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Town of Berlin recognizes the need for a purposeful discussion about the future land use of the Town. The existing [Comprehensive Plan](#) was adopted in 2010 and reviewed without amendment in 2020. The Town is interested in a revised plan that weighs the [Town of Berlin Strategic Plan for FY2025-FY2028](#) (adopted in May 2024) and includes community engagement, encompasses social and environmental issues, and focuses on implementation. The Comprehensive Plan needs to define the land use aspirations of our community and seek to address the needs and values of the residential and commercial communities of the Town as related to land use. The Town understands that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to land use and that different approaches and small area plans may be necessary. The Town strives to have a Comprehensive Plan that acts as the leading policy document guiding development in the community.

For the purposes of this RFP, the Town will form a review committee consisting of members of the Mayor and Council, Planning Commission, and select staff including the Planning Director and Town Administrator, and others. The committee shall be responsible for the review of this document, review of submitted proposals and engagement with firms having submitted proposals, recommendation to the Mayor and Council for award of contract, review of deliverables throughout the process, and review of drafts of the Comprehensive Plan and engagement with the consultant on incorporation of information based on those reviews.

ABOUT BERLIN: Berlin is a small town on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, governed by a Strong Mayor system and operating on a July–June fiscal year. The Town provides services including police, public works, parks, utilities (water, wastewater, electric, stormwater), economic development, planning, code enforcement, contracted engineering, and general administration. It is supported by various boards and commissions, such as the Planning Commission, Historic District Commission, and Board of Appeals.

General demographic information (2023): Population: 5,161; Median Age: 39.9; Median Household Income: \$78,883; Median Property Value: \$345,100 (source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/berlin-md>).

Originally part of the 1677 Burley Plantation, Berlin developed along what is now Main Street—once a Native American path and later the Philadelphia Post Road. Incorporated in 1868, Berlin has preserved its historic charm through community-led restoration and development efforts.

Today, Berlin features tree-lined streets, a Victorian town center, historic homes, and a museum, attracting both residents and tourists. Located under 10 miles from Ocean City and Assateague Island and within a short drive from several major cities, Berlin serves as both a destination and a popular day trip location.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Town seeks to contract with a consulting firm or team that possesses extensive experience in community planning and redevelopment strategies. The successful firm is expected to provide a range of services, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Adherence to State of Maryland Comprehensive Plan Requirements; a general guide can be found at <https://planning.maryland.gov/Pages/OurWork/PBP/compplans/requirements.aspx>.
- Alignment with the [Town of Berlin Strategic Plan \(2024\)](#), the [Charter and Code of the Town](#), and relevant local, state, and national statutes, regulations, and policies. The Comprehensive Plan should take specific initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan into consideration.
- Evaluate existing and emerging issues to address the impacts of land use, including consideration of strategies involving housing affordability, community connectivity, resiliency, and sustainability. Examples of existing and emerging issues may include:
 - Infill and redevelopment strategies for established neighborhoods, commercial centers, and major development sites/areas.
 - Environmental sustainability and the impact of land use decisions, particularly as related to stormwater management.
 - Consideration of current needs and future trends in mobility and connectivity.
 - Consideration of the development of small area plans.
- Include public engagement efforts to determine the needs, issues, and opportunities within the community. The Town expects the successful firm to design and implement an engaging and robust public engagement program that strives to be broad and far-reaching, involving members of the public, community stakeholders, Town staff, Planning Commissioners, and the Mayor and Council. An emphasis on engagement that is representative of the community, both geographically and demographically, is a priority for this process. The successful firm shall have experience conducting public engagement and incorporating findings within similar projects.

Public engagement should be genuine, flexible, and meet the community where they are. A public engagement plan that incorporates both small feedback opportunities, such as web-based or written feedback, as well as larger approaches, such as town halls, open houses, or workshops, is preferred. Public engagement activities shall include, but are not limited to, marketing materials, mailings, interactive workshops, and print/web materials. Outreach strategies for both online and in-person engagement will be expected. Public engagement will be coordinated with the Town's social media, web-based, and other existing forms of communication.

- The plan shall include recommendations for how to address pending infrastructure challenges and needs through a cost-of-service or other monetary consideration. The plan should identify strategies for how the Town should grow in a more sustainable way (economically and environmentally) to avoid severe infrastructure maintenance issues and impacts on service delivery.
- Focus on accountable implementation. The plan should include a planning horizon (e.g., 2050) to develop projections on how the community wants to grow, goals on how to get there, and performance measures that assess progress. Specifically, this will include approaches that tie actions to defined timetables, activities, budgets, and responsible parties. A strategy for regular reporting of implementation effectiveness to the public and a methodology for revising the plan based on the reported findings should be included.

PROJECT SCHEDULE: The Town anticipates this project to occur in 2025 and 2026. The timeline below is the anticipated project schedule. “Project Concludes” is defined as submission of the final version of the Comprehensive Plan, including review and amendment by the relevant bodies. Significant weight will be given to the successful firms’ input on this timeline once selected for contract award.

Request for Proposals Release Date: July 1, 2025

Deadline for Written Questions: August 1, 2025, 4:00 PM

Posted Responses to Written Questions: August 8, 2025, 4:00 PM

Proposal Submission Deadline: September 5, 2025, 3:00 PM

Committee Review and Interviews: October/November 2025

Recommendation to Mayor and Council for Award of Contract: December 2025

Project Commences: January 2026

***Initial Draft Presented to Planning Commission and Mayor and Council:** September 2026

***Project Concludes:** December 31 2026

*These items to be firmly fixed in consultation/negotiation with successful vendor.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES: The consultant will be required to deliver a variety of products at various stages of the project. Examples of deliverables can include, but are not limited to:

- Marketing materials for review and approval, and in formats suitable for publication/posting to various media, including newspapers, websites, and social media formats.
- Descriptions of community engagement plans.
- Web-based version of the final plan and recommendations for review and testing.
- Database of final plan recommendations.

- One (1) digital file of the Comprehensive Plan draft with all inserts for review.
- One (1) digital file of the complete and final Comprehensive Plan.
- One (1) set of Comprehensive Plan maps in digital format compatible with the Town's GIS.

The Comprehensive Plan shall be presented in a format and language that is user-friendly and easily comprehended and accessible to the general public. The consultant should make an effort to minimize the use of over-technical, or niche planning language. The extensive use of maps, graphics, and other devices that enhance the readability, ease of use, and understanding of the Comprehensive Plan is required.

At the completion of the process, the consultant shall provide a complete Comprehensive Plan with all maps, graphs and other graphics, and tables.

PROPOSAL CONTENT AND FORMAT

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS: Responses to this RFP must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- **Title page:** Provide the subject and reference number (RFP #) of the project; the firm's name, address, telephone, and website.
- **Cover letter:** A cover letter/statement of interest regarding the firm's interest in and understanding of the project. The letter should include a statement that the firm has read and understands the RFP and agrees to the conditions, requirements, and terms stated in the RFP.
- **Statement of qualifications:** Provide information on the firm's size, location, available resources, and a brief description of experience relevant to the project. Information should demonstrate the firm's and any sub-consultants' qualifications, and those of the staff to be assigned to the project. Firms should demonstrate experience as the lead firm on at least three (3) similar projects, preferably within the past five (5) years.
- **Project team:** Identify the project team (including sub-consultants and associates) and provide a statement of qualifications for each individual, including information such as education, professional registrations, areas of expertise, and years of service in their respective fields. The following information should be included:
 - Identify key individuals, companies, and the organizational structure of the team.
 - Identify roles and responsibilities of all proposal team members and their backups, as well as their experience in the specifically assigned functions.
 - List the proposer's experience with other successful plans; include roles and responsibilities for these projects' team members, in addition to providing contact information for references for these other plans.
- **Understanding of the Town of Berlin:** Include a summary of the firm's understanding of the project as described in this RFP, as it specifically relates to the Town of Berlin and the unique

issues facing the Town. Identify the Town's background and issues that will affect the firm's methodology and approach to the project.

- **Methodology and approach:** Provide a description of the method and approach your firm intends to utilize to complete the Project. Discuss and clearly explain the methodology proposed to satisfactorily achieve the required services for the Project. The respondent must document a clear understanding of the RFP's entire scope of work and Project intent, including data requirements, public participation process, all aspects of technical analysis, projects, advanced technology, and software. Firms should provide innovative approaches the Town should consider when implementing this project.
- **Project timeline:** Using the timeline on the previous page as a guide, provide a proposed schedule from the start to the completion of the Project. The schedule should include phasing, key tasks, milestones, and approximate completion dates.
- **Work samples:** List and provide in electronic format only (web link or PDF) at least three (3) examples of Comprehensive Plans completed within the last five (5) years in which the consulting firm was the project's lead agency.
- **References:** Provide a list of municipal clients for which the firm was the lead agency in providing services consistent with those described in the RFP. Provide contact information (name, position, address, telephone number, and email) of people that the Town may contact to verify work completed and performance. Maryland clients are preferred but not required.
- **Verify firm capacity:** Provide a statement of the firm's ability to begin and complete the Project within the timeframe identified in this RFP and in the manner described in the RFP response.
- **Cost Proposal/Work Estimate:** A complete Cost Proposal/Work Estimate, including thorough illustration of significant classifications of items and their associated costs, including a schedule of hourly rates.
 - Cost Proposal should be reflective of the **Scope of Services** above, providing as much breakdown and detail as necessary to adequately demonstrate and justify the proposal.
 - Please note: The Town of Berlin is exempt from Maryland Sales Tax – information to be provided upon request as applicable.
- **Signature Page:** The completed Signature page as included in this RFP.
- Additionally, submitters are encouraged to submit a narrative describing the expectations for execution of the contract within the Town of Berlin to include:
 - Scheduling of work to include a general idea of progression through the project.
 - Any other information the submitter feels is relevant for consideration.

All proposals, including supporting documentation, are confidential until a recommendation is made to the review committee. All costs incurred in the preparation of this proposal are the responsibility of the proposer. All proposals shall be considered firm offers for a period of 180 days following the due date. Once submitted, proposals may not be changed without the written consent of the Town.

The submission should be in .pdf format. The submission can be delivered via email, including via link to a file transfer site. Please see “DEADLINES AND IMPORTANT DATES” section for relevant information regarding submission.

PROPRIETARY PROPOSAL MATERIAL: As a government entity, the Town of Berlin is subject to respond to requests for documents under the Freedom of Information Act. Any proprietary information revealed in the proposal should, therefore, be clearly identified as such and will be protected as allowed under the law.

SIGNATURES: The Proposal shall be signed by one of the legally authorized officers of said corporation. If awarded the contract, the Contract shall also be so executed.

INTERPRETATIONS, MODIFICATIONS AND ADDENDA: All questions regarding the RFP should be directed in writing. All questions and responses will be shared with all known interested parties, as well as via a Q&A document published as further described in the “DEADLINES AND IMPORTANT DATES” section.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS: Selection of firms to be interviewed by the review committee will be made following a review and ranking of proposals received. The Town reserves the right to interview and receive a formal presentation from only those submitters whose proposals best match the evaluation criteria as selected by the review committee. The Town intends to select proposers for interviews within four weeks after receipt of proposals. However, the scheduling of interviews may take up to six weeks.

The proposals will be evaluated based on several factors, including:

- Past performance on similar projects;
- Understanding of Project scope;
- Approach in completing the objectives of the Project;
- Relevant experience, and availability of key personnel, and relevant experience;
- Knowledge of and experience in creating Comprehensive Plans;
- Ability to bring unique ideas and perspectives to the Project;
- Firm’s stated ability to meet schedules; and
- The appropriateness and extensiveness of the firm’s experience with the public engagement process.

Upon selection of the final proposal, the Town will negotiate final business and performance terms with the selected firm. The commencement of negotiations does not commit the Town to accept any or all of the terms of the proposal, and negotiations may be terminated by the Town at any time, in which case the Town reserves the right to enter negotiations with other proposers. These negotiations may result in minor or material changes to the proposal, including both the business terms and the project. Successful negotiations will result in an award recommendation. Agreements addressing business terms and performance benchmarks will be entered into between the parties. The agreement shall include requirements for insurance, bond, indemnification, and non-discrimination.

The Town reserves the right to reject, in whole or in part, any or all proposals. If deemed appropriate to achieve the goals for the Project, the Town reserves the right to make no selection and re-issue an

RFP. The terms and conditions of any agreement resulting from the RFP process are subject to approval by the Town Council.

QUALIFICATIONS: These services will require the firm to have the following qualifications:

- Five (5) or more years of related experience.
- Experience working with municipal or private entities on similar projects.
- Appropriate licensure in the State of Maryland and within the relevant industry(ies) as applicable.

EVALUATION CRITERIA: The Comprehensive Plan Review Committee will consist of qualified staff of the Town as well as Elected and Appointed Offices, and others as determined by the Town of Berlin. The Committee will evaluate the submittals and rank them in order of the most responsive submittal. Proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the weighted criteria listed below:

Criteria	Maximum Points
1. Methodology and Approach	25
2. Qualifications and Experience	25
3. Cost	25
4. References and Past Performance	20
5. Project Timeline and Proposed Schedule	5
Total Points	100

DEADLINES AND IMPORTANT DATES: Please see further information, including instructions, regarding relevant dates immediately below the following table. All dates/times indicated herein are Eastern Standard Time (EST); submittals must be received by the dates/times indicated to be eligible for consideration. Submittals beyond the dates/times indicated will not be considered.

Task	Date
RFP Release	Tuesday, July 1, 2025
Questions Due	Friday, August 1, 2025, 4:00 PM
Q&A to be posted	Friday, August 8, 2025, 4:00 PM
Proposal Submittals Due	Friday, September 5, 2025, 3:00 PM
Committee Review and Interviews	October/November, 2025
Selection of Successful Submitter and Recommendation of Award to Mayor and Council	December, 2025

Friday, August 1, 2025, 4:00 PM - Deadline to submit questions: Questions from potential Bidders are due via email to each of the following email addresses:

mbohlen@berlinmd.gov

kdaub@berlinmd.gov

info@berlinmd.gov

Please note: The Town reserves the right to review and evaluate the question to determine if the question is relevant to the RFP process or of a nature considered beyond that process; an example would be a question more suited to the negotiation of contract by the successful submitter. Determination of such is at the sole discretion of the Town.

Questions that are phoned, faxed, sent through regular mail, or submitted via any other method or to any other email address or individual will not be accepted. Oral responses or responses to questions submitted in any other format or to any other person will be non-binding.

Friday, August 8, 2025, by 4:00 PM - Posting of responses: Responses to questions from potential Bidders will be posted at the following link by the deadline. It is the responsibility of potential Bidders to visit the website for this information berlinmd.gov/government/request-for-proposals/.

Friday, September 5, 2025 by 3:00 PM - Due Date for Proposals:

If digital/electronic (preferred): Must be submitted in PDF format by the deadline and sent to each of the following email addresses:

mbohlen@berlinmd.gov

kdaub@berlinmd.gov

info@berlinmd.gov

Digital/electronic submittals must contain the Subject: "Deadline Submission for RFP # 2025-06"

If hardcopy: An original and four (4) copies of the proposal must be received by the deadline. Proposals must be in a sealed envelope and addressed to: Town of Berlin, Attn: Mary Bohlen, 10 William Street, Berlin, MD 21811. The outside of the envelope must be clearly marked "RFP # 2025-06". Proposals received after that date and time will not be considered.

Regardless of submittal format, it is the responsibility of the submitter to ensure delivery by the date(s)/time(s) indicated.

Proposals received after the due date will not be considered. Submitters accept all risks of late delivery of submittals regardless of fault.

The Town of Berlin reserves the right to reject any and all submittals and to waive irregularities and informalities in the submittal and evaluation process. This RFP does not obligate the Town to pay any costs incurred by respondents in the preparation and submission of their statement of qualifications. Furthermore, the RFP does not obligate the Town to accept or contract for any expressed or implied services.

It is the Town of Berlin's policy to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin or sex, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its federally funded programs and activities.

The Town is committed to a program of equal employment opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, sex, age, nationality, disability, or sexual orientation. The successful consultant must comply with the Town of Berlin's equal opportunity requirements.

Review and award of Contract and Minimum Considerations

- **REJECTION OF SUBMITTALS:** The Town reserves the right to reject any and all submittals and to waive irregularities and informalities in the submittal and evaluation process. This RFP does not obligate the Town to pay any costs incurred by respondents in the preparation and submission of their qualifications. Furthermore, the RFP does not obligate the Town to accept or contract for any expressed or implied services.
- **CONTRACT AWARD:** The Town reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the submittals. The Town further reserves the right to accept or reject all or any part or combination of parts of the successful firm's proposal. The firm selected as the apparently successful firm will be expected to enter into a contract with the Town. Following consultant selection, the successful consultant shall prepare a proposal and scope of work for review by the Town. Once the Town and Consultant have reached an agreement on the scope of services, a final contract will be reviewed and approved by both parties. The foregoing should not be interpreted to prohibit either party from proposing additional contract terms and conditions during the negotiations of the final Contract. If the selected firm fails to sign the Contract within ten (10) business days of delivery of the final Contract, the Town may elect to negotiate a Contract with the next-highest ranked firm. The Town shall not be bound, or in any way obligated, until both parties have executed a Contract. No party may incur any chargeable costs prior to the execution of the final Contract.
- **CONTRACT NEGOTIATION:** The Town reserves the right to negotiate all elements of the submittals, proposals, terms and conditions, and/or scope of work as part of the contract negotiation process prior to any formal authorization of the Contract by the Town.
- **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT:** The successful consultant or consultants must comply with the Town of Berlin's equal opportunity requirements. The Town of Berlin is committed to a program of equal employment opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, sex, age, nationality, or disability.
- **TITLE VI:** It is the Town of Berlin's policy to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin or sex, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its federally funded programs and activities.
- **INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS:** The Consultant shall procure and maintain for the duration of this Agreement insurance against claims for injuries to persons or damages to property, errors and omissions or professional liability that may arise from or in connection with the performance of work hereunder by the Consultant, his agents, representatives, employees or subcontractors. The cost of such insurance shall be paid by the Consultant.

- **NON-ENDORSEMENT:** As a result of the selection of a firm to supply products and/or services to the Town, the firm agrees to make no reference to the Town in any literature, promotional material, brochures, sales presentation, or the like without the express written consent of the Town.
- **COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS:** In addition to nondiscrimination and affirmative action compliance requirements previously listed, the consultant or consultants ultimately awarded a contract shall comply with federal, state, and local laws, statutes, and ordinances relative to the execution of the work. This requirement includes, but is not limited to, protection of public and employee safety and health; environmental protection; waste reduction and recycling; the protection of natural resources; permits; fees; taxes; and similar subjects.

Bidder: _____

SIGNATURES

I, the undersigned, am an authorized agent of the firm listed below and am authorized to submit the attached response to the RFP as indicated above. I certify that all information included herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I further acknowledge the conditions and requirements expressed in the RFP and the agreement to adhere to same.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Firm Name: _____

Tax/EIN: _____

DBA: _____
(if different than Firm Name above)

Address: _____

City, State Zip: _____

Phone: _____