Request for Proposals

Saguache County Master Plan Consulting Services

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1. Introduction

Saguache County, Colorado, through the Department of Land Use, is soliciting proposals from qualified planning and consulting firms to prepare a Countywide Master Plan. This Request for Proposals (RFP) is intended to identify a consultant with strong experience in rural land use planning, agriculture, water resources, and growth management in Colorado.

The Master Plan will serve as the County's primary long-range planning document and will guide land use decisions, policy development, and future updates to County regulations.

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2. County Background

Saguache County is a rural county located in south-central Colorado, encompassing approximately 3,170 square miles with a low population density and a strong agricultural and ranching heritage. The County includes incorporated municipalities, vast agricultural lands, public lands, and environmentally sensitive areas, and relies heavily on surface water and groundwater resources for agricultural and domestic use.

Key planning considerations include: - Protection of agricultural lands and water rights - Rural character and open space preservation - Compatibility between agricultural, residential, and emerging land uses - Limited infrastructure and services - Growth management consistent with community values

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3. Purpose and Planning Priorities

The purpose of this project is to develop a clear, implementable, and legally sound Master Plan that reflects Saguache County's rural character and statutory authority under Colorado law.

Planning priorities include:

- Rural land use and large-lot development patterns
- Protection and prioritization of agricultural lands and operations
- Water resource protection, including surface water, groundwater, and agricultural water rights
- Growth management and land use compatibility
- Economic development management
- Infrastructure and service limitations in rural areas

- Intergovernmental coordination with municipalities and state and federal agencies
- Adaptive management for addressing issues of extreme weather events
- Guidance for utility-scale and distributed solar energy development that balances renewable energy goals with agricultural viability, water resources, wildlife, and rural character

The Master Plan should establish clear policy direction that prioritizes the long-term preservation of productive agricultural lands while identifying appropriate siting, scale, and performance standards for solar energy development in locations that minimize conflicts with agriculture and natural resources.

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4. Scope of Services (Summary)

Proposers may recommend refinements; however, the anticipated scope includes:

A. Project Management

- Develop a concise work plan and schedule
- Coordinate with County staff and Planning Commission
- Attend key meetings (virtual or in-person, as appropriate)

B. Existing Conditions and Policy Review

- Review existing County plans, land use regulations, and relevant studies
- Analyze land use patterns, agriculture, water resources, demographics, and infrastructure constraints

C. Public and Stakeholder Engagement

- Prepare a practical engagement strategy appropriate for a rural county
- Facilitate community meetings, surveys, and stakeholder interviews
- Engage agricultural producers, water users, and landowners

D. Vision, Goals, and Policies

- Develop a Countywide vision and guiding principles
- Establish land use, agriculture, water, housing, and growth management policies

E. Future Land Use Framework

- Prepare a future land use map, zoning, and policy descriptions
- Address rural development patterns and land use compatibility
- Identify agricultural priority areas and policies that discourage fragmentation and conversion of productive farmland
- Provide policy guidance for solar energy development, including preferred siting criteria, compatibility standards, and avoidance of high-value agricultural lands and irrigated acreage
- Ensure consistency with County regulatory authority

F. Implementation Strategies

- Identify priority actions and timelines
- Recommend updates to land use regulations, where appropriate
- Provide clear, actionable implementation steps

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5. Colorado Statutory Authority

The Master Plan shall be prepared in accordance with Colorado Revised Statutes §30-28-106, which authorizes counties to adopt a master plan for the physical development of unincorporated territory. The Plan should also consider consistency with related provisions of C.R.S. Title 29 (Local Government) and Title 37 (Water Resources), as applicable.

The Master Plan is intended to serve as a policy guide and shall not, by itself, change zoning or land use regulations.

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6. Deliverables

Key deliverables include: - Concise work plan and schedule - Existing conditions summary - Public engagement summary - Draft and final Master Plan (digital and print-ready) - Future land use map (GIS-compatible)

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7. Proposal Requirements

Proposals should be concise and include:

1. Cover Letter
2. Firm Qualifications and Relevant Experience (rural Colorado preferred)
3. Project Team and Key Personnel
4. Project Approach and Understanding of County Priorities
5. Public Engagement Approach for a Rural Community
6. Proposed Schedule
7. Fee Proposal (lump sum or not-to-exceed)

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8. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Experience with rural land use and Colorado counties
- Understanding of agriculture, water, and growth management issues
- Qualifications of project team
- Quality and practicality of proposed approach

- Cost and overall value

The County may conduct interviews at its discretion.

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9. Submission Instructions

Proposals shall be submitted by hand delivered, mail, or electronically in PDF format to:

Saguache County Department of Land Use
Amber Wilson
505 3rd Street
PO Box 326,
Saguache, CO 81149
atorrez@saguachecounty-co.gov

Proposals must be received by 3:00 p.m. on November 30, 2026.

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10. Reservations

Saguache County reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive informalities, negotiate scope and fees, or cancel this RFP at any time. Proposal preparation costs are the responsibility of the proposer.
