

The City of Evanston is beginning the next phase of Envision Evanston 2045, a community-led effort to guide how our city develops over the next 20 years. The Community Development Department is requesting your input on a draft Scope of Services for the Zoning Update. This document outlines the work we are seeking from consultant firms and teams to update Evanston's zoning rules to align with and implement the new Comprehensive General Plan.

Community input will help ensure that this scope is clear, effective, and community-focused when it goes to the City Council for review and approval. Please share your feedback by Wednesday, February 18, 2026. We will use it to refine the draft before submitting it to the City Council. Community members may also provide input at the City Council's regular meeting on February 23, 2026.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to review this draft and share your thoughts. We look forward to working with the community on this important project for Evanston's future.

### **What is the Envision Evanston Zoning Update?**

On January 26, 2026, the City Council adopted a new Comprehensive General Plan, which sets a shared vision and policy direction for land use and development through 2045. The Zoning Update is the process of revising Evanston's zoning regulations and zoning map to reflect and support the new plan. In simple terms, this work helps ensure that the rules governing what can be built and where match the community's long-term goals.

### **How can I share feedback on the Draft Scope of Services?**

You can submit comments:

- Online: [Click to access the feedback form](#)
- By email: [envisionevanston2045@cityofevanston.org](mailto:envisionevanston2045@cityofevanston.org)
- In Person: City Council Meeting on February 23, 2026

### **When will the City Council review the Draft Scope of Services?**

The City Council will review the draft at its regular meeting on February 23, 2026.

## City of Evanston Zoning Update - Draft Scope of Services

Evanston invites professional consulting firms and teams to submit a written proposal for the City of Evanston’s Zoning Update. This is a critical, community-centered effort that will shape the evolution of Evanston’s built environment. In January 2026, the City Council adopted a new Comprehensive General Plan as part of the Envision Evanston 2045 initiative. The last significant update to the City’s zoning code was completed in 1993. There have been several substantial amendments, including the addition of various overlay districts, and numerous smaller amendments, since then. Evanston seeks a holistic update to align the Zoning Ordinance and Map with the 2026 Comprehensive General Plan. Central to this effort is robust, inclusive community engagement that meaningfully involves residents, businesses, and other stakeholders throughout the project. The City encourages consultant teams to recommend whether this takes the form of a complete rewrite or a markup of the existing regulations. Regardless of approach, the resulting code must be easy to understand, intuitive to navigate for users of all experience levels, produce predictable outcomes, use clear graphics and visuals wherever possible to communicate intent, and consider the unique attributes of the city, which include but are not limited to, lakefront access, university and business district transitions with residential areas, diverse housing types and needs, and quality design.

### Anticipated Project Phasing and Schedule

The City anticipates the project will include four phases and be completed by mid to late 2028. However, the City emphasizes that quality is prioritized over expediency. Proposals should articulate the anticipated project schedule and any adjustments recommended to the proposed phasing.

1. Work Plan and Project Launch
2. People, Places, and Policy Assessment
3. Drafting the Code with the Community
4. Adoption/Legislative Process

|         | 2026          |    | 2027              |    |                  |    | 2028  |    |    |    |
|---------|---------------|----|-------------------|----|------------------|----|-------|----|----|----|
|         | Q3            | Q4 | Q1                | Q2 | Q3               | Q4 | Q1    | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| Phase 1 | Plan & Launch |    |                   |    |                  |    |       |    |    |    |
| Phase 2 |               |    | Engage and Assess |    |                  |    |       |    |    |    |
| Phase 3 |               |    |                   |    | Engage and Draft |    |       |    |    |    |
| Phase 4 |               |    |                   |    |                  |    | Adopt |    |    |    |

## **Phase 1 - Work Plan and Project Launch**

The City of Evanston will establish a Work Group to provide active oversight of each phase of the Zoning Update. The primary role of the Work Group is to track project milestones, engagement activities, and decision points to ensure they are carried out as intended. It is not responsible for conducting a technical review of individual project deliverables. Getting the process right, particularly the approach to community engagement, is critical to the success of this project and to building public trust in the outcomes. The Work Group will be composed of two representatives from both the City Council and the Land Use Commission, and staff from the Community Development Department.

The City anticipates that the Work Group will convene virtually on a monthly basis to receive status updates from the consultant team and discuss progress, challenges, and upcoming engagement activities. In addition to reviewing the consultant's proposed work plan before project launch, the Work Group will monitor implementation throughout the project and make recommendations to the City Council regarding any process adjustments needed to ensure meaningful community involvement and a successful outcome.

### Phase 1 Deliverables

- I. **Draft and Final Work Plan:** The work plan must highlight key dates for each project phase and deadlines for draft and final deliverables. It must also identify specific consultant team members who are responsible for developing deliverables and deadlines. A public engagement plan that outlines key dates and deadlines for draft and final materials and events must be included.
- II. **Monthly Work Group Meetings:** The consultant will be responsible for hosting and scheduling the virtual meetings. Agendas must be provided one week in advance of each meeting.
- III. **Work Group Minutes and Recordings:** The consultant will be responsible for minutes and providing a recording within one week of each meeting.
- IV. **Project Webpage Content:** The consultant will develop content for a project webpage hosted on the City's website. The site content will be updated throughout the project by the consultant and will serve as the main hub for information.
- V. **City Council, Land Use Commission, and Community Meetings:** The consultant will present an overview of the process to the City Council, Land Use Commission, and community. Meetings can be attended virtually as a cost-saving measure.

- VI. **Presentation Materials & Video:** The consultant will prepare a slide deck that provides an overview of the process. The consultant team will use these presentation materials to record a video for City staff and elected officials to communicate with local community members and interested parties regarding what to expect throughout the process. The video will also be posted on the project webpage.
- VII. **Monthly Consultant Progress Report:** Consultant invoices with task budget, percent complete, and earned value.

## **Phase 2 - People, Places, and Policy Assessment**

This phase will result in a comprehensive, community-informed assessment of Evanston's built environment and its alignment with the current zoning code and map. The assessment will combine technical analysis with local knowledge to develop a shared understanding of the physical characteristics, patterns, and neighborhood attributes. The assessment should be conducted by ward and neighborhood, as appropriate, and evaluate housing and building types, height, setbacks, lot size, and uses. In coordination with community input, the consultant will evaluate how existing development patterns align with the current zoning regulations within each ward or neighborhood. This analysis should identify areas where current zoning aligns with neighborhood characteristics and areas where it may fail to reflect established conditions.

Using this information, the consultant shall develop clear, accessible visual representations of the existing built environment that accurately reflect current conditions and support informed discussion and scenario planning in later phases. The consultant team shall also prepare visualizations of what can be built under the current zoning code to help residents, decision-makers, and stakeholders understand existing development potential within each ward or neighborhood. This will also inform the development of regulations to address nonconforming properties that exist today and that could result from a future zoning framework.

This phase shall also include a review of relevant local, regional, state, and federal policies, regulations, and case law to inform potential zoning changes. This review shall include, but not be limited to:

- Envision Evanston 2045 (Comprehensive General Plan), Housing4All (Strategic Housing Plan), and other adopted City planning and policy documents
- Adopted building codes, recent amendments, and upcoming code releases that may relate to or conflict with the Zoning Code
- Zoning application relief and entitlement history from the past 10 years
- Zoning text amendment history from the past 10 years

- State law changes, including the People over Parking Act
- Relevant state and federal case law

Public engagement and community outreach will be a core component of this phase and will begin early in the process. The purpose of engagement is to gather qualitative information from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders about Evanston's neighborhoods, including the physical characteristics, development patterns, and neighborhood qualities that community members value most and want to protect, or enhance through the zoning update. Engagement activities should be designed to help participants understand existing conditions and zoning regulations while also capturing local knowledge about what works well today and what changes they would like to see in the future. These opportunities should encourage broad participation, be tailored to each neighborhood, and reach as many people as possible.

The consultant shall demonstrate the ability to design and conduct engagement processes that are transparent, accessible, and meaningful, with clear methods for documenting, synthesizing, retaining, and reporting community input. Community feedback collected during this phase must be clearly traceable and used to inform subsequent analysis, scenario development, and regulatory recommendations.

### Phase 2 Deliverables

- I. **Engagement and Outreach Materials:** The consultant will be responsible for preparing and supplying draft and final versions of all engagement and outreach materials related to this phase.
- II. **People, Places, and Policy Assessment:** This report should summarize existing conditions as defined by the data, literature review, and public engagement, and identify both strengths and areas for improvement in the existing code. The following should also be included in the report:
  - A. Complete inventory of land use patterns, building typologies, transportation networks, use data, etc.
  - B. Locations where infill development, TOD, missing-middle housing, and adaptive reuse opportunities are feasible.
  - C. Impact and resulting externalities of City policies, plans, and regulations on the built environment (e.g., land use type, building type, transit access, public improvements, etc.).
  - D. Impact and resulting externalities of City policies, plans, and regulations on surrounding natural resources, parks, and infrastructure systems
  - E. Impact and resulting externalities of institutional land uses, including but not limited to Northwestern University, St. Francis and Evanston Hospitals, public school districts, etc.

- F. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of all responses received from public engagement activities during this phase, alignment with Evanston’s demographics (including calculating weighted data based on tenure, income, and other key demographic variables), and how information was used to inform recommendations in the report.
  - G. List of federal, state, and appellate court cases used to inform recommended updates.
  - H. Relevant citations, data sources, and policy and planning documents that were used to inform the report.
- II. **Built Environment Model:** A model of the existing built environment shall be developed to visualize and support scenario planning and impact assessment during Phase 3. The mapping tool should enable scenario planning with three-dimensional modeling capabilities to support the development of the Zoning Code.
  - III. **Video and Audio Recordings:** (as applicable) that capture community engagement events, individual interviews, focus groups, etc.
  - IV. **Monthly Work Group Meetings:** the consultant will be responsible for hosting and scheduling the virtual meetings. Agendas must be provided one week in advance of each meeting.
  - V. **Work Group Minutes and Recordings:** The consultant will be responsible for providing minutes and a recording within one week of each meeting.
  - VI. **Monthly Consultant Progress Report:** Consultant invoices with task budget, percent complete, and earned value.

### **Phase 3 - Drafting of the Code and Map Together**

The City is open to using the existing zoning framework or innovative approaches to the organization and structure of the Zoning Ordinance, including chapters and overall layout. The primary goal is to create a zoning code that is clear, accessible, and predictable for users of all experience levels. The use of graphics, diagrams, and other visual tools throughout the code is essential to aid understanding.

Phase 3 is intended to be an iterative and highly interactive drafting process. At a minimum, the consultant team shall prepare an initial draft, present that draft for public review, collect and document feedback, revise the draft in response, and present the updated draft so the community can see how their feedback was incorporated. As the draft evolves, the consultant shall host several community engagement opportunities, anticipated to occur on a ward-by-ward or neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis, to review draft concepts, explain key regulatory changes, and gather feedback on code provisions. These meetings shall be structured to support two-way dialogue, encourage broad participation, and clearly communicate how community input is shaping

subsequent revisions. The consultant shall be responsible for documenting feedback received and incorporating it into revised draft materials.

Throughout Phase 3, the consultant shall also conduct in-person working sessions with the Land Use Commission and the City Council (in separate meetings) at key milestones to review draft code concepts and discuss how community feedback has been incorporated. The consultant shall revise the draft zoning code in response to feedback from these bodies and may be required to attend follow-up meetings as the draft continues to evolve. Draft materials shall be updated on an ongoing basis as feedback is received, ensuring that each subsequent version reflects prior input and discussion.

This phase will also include preparing a draft zoning map, which shall be developed and refined through the same iterative engagement process. The draft map shall be presented during working sessions with the Land Use Commission and City Council and shared with the community through various engagement opportunities, anticipated on a ward-by-ward or neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. The consultant shall collect, document, and respond to feedback on the draft map and revise it accordingly. They should also prepare an interactive mapping tool that summarizes the existing and proposed zoning regulations on a lot-by-lot basis.

Advancement to the next phase will be contingent upon completion of iterative engagement and refinement cycles and clear documentation of how community and advisory body feedback informed the evolving draft. The consultant team shall also complete an independent analysis, grounded in national and regional research and adapted to Evanston's local conditions, that evaluates the likely impacts of proposed zoning changes on housing supply, density, population growth, affordability, displacement risk, and fiscal sustainability. All assumptions must be clearly documented, and findings shall be made publicly available in advance of final engagement and decision-making milestones to support informed deliberation by the City Council, Land Use Commission, and the community.

### Phase 3 - Deliverables

- I. **Engagement and Outreach Materials:** The consultant will be responsible for preparing and supplying draft and final versions of all engagement and outreach materials related to this phase.
- II. **Draft Zoning Code:** This will include the text and any infographics or illustrations that facilitate the interpretation and application of the Code. The draft Code should be in both English and Spanish.

- III. **Draft Zoning Map:** This should be the draft Map to rezone the entire City, including overlay districts (if applicable) and local historic districts.
- IV. **Interactive Zoning Map:** As part of the public outreach, a mapping tool should be developed to display the proposed zoning map and compare current and proposed regulations for individual parcels. Community members should be able to provide feedback via this interactive map to help inform refinements throughout this phase.
- V. **Impact Analysis:** This report should evaluate the likely impacts of proposed zoning changes on housing supply, density, population growth, affordability, displacement risk, and fiscal sustainability.
- VI. **Graphic Comparison of Current and Proposed Regulations** - The consultant should prepare graphic comparisons of current and proposed regulations to aid in conversations with the Land Use Commission, City Council, and community.
- VII. **Engagement Summary:** A quantitative and qualitative analysis of all responses received from the various public engagement opportunities during this phase, how it aligns with the demographics in Evanston (including calculating weighted data based on tenure, income, and other key demographic variables), and how this information was used to inform the draft zoning code.
- VIII. **Monthly Work Group Meetings:** The consultant will be responsible for hosting and scheduling the virtual meetings. Agendas must be provided one week in advance of each meeting.
- IX. **Work Group Minutes and Recordings:** The consultant will be responsible for providing minutes and a recording within one week of each meeting.
- X. **Monthly Consultant Progress Report:** Consultant invoices with task budget, percent complete, and earned value.

#### **Phase 4 - Adoption/Legislative Process**

The consultant team will be responsible for facilitating, with City staff support, several public hearings with the Land Use Commission to review the final draft zoning ordinance and map amendment. The consultant will be responsible for tracking and incorporating any amendments made by the Land Use Commission throughout the public hearing process. Upon receiving a final recommendation from the Land Use Commission, the consultant will be responsible for facilitating, with City staff support, the introduction and adoption of a final Ordinance and map amendment with the City Council. It should be expected that several City Council meetings (regular or special) will be required before a final vote. The consultant will be responsible for tracking and incorporating any amendments made by the City Council throughout their review.

#### Phase 4 - Deliverables

- I. **Land Use Commission Draft Code, Map, and Amendment Tracking:** The consultant will provide a final draft zoning code and map for the Land Use Commission Public Hearing. They will also be responsible for tracking any amendments made throughout the public hearing process.
- II. **City Council Draft Code, Map, and Amendment Tracking:** The consultant will provide a final draft zoning code and map incorporating the Land Use Commission amendments. They will also be responsible for tracking any amendments made throughout the City Council review and adoption process.
- III. **Final Zoning Code:** The adopted Code should include all applicable charts, graphics, and other inserts to accurately depict the Code for its daily application and use by City staff. The draft Code should be in both English and Spanish.
- IV. **Final Zoning Map:** The adopted Map should be in full color and show the level of detail in current Maps, at a minimum. A digital PDF for City use (web-viewable for scrolling and printing). This will also include a shapefile and any other necessary files for future management.
- V. **All other data, GIS shapefiles, etc., in all formats:** Collected and developed throughout the process for City records.
- VI. **Monthly Consultant Progress Report:** Consultant invoices with task budget, percent complete, and earned value.

## **Consultant Selection Criteria**

### Community and Project Understanding

- Understanding of local conditions and what makes Evanston special
- Understanding of CMP recommendations

### Proposed Scope of Services

- Degree of innovation proposed
- Thoroughness of engagement approach
- Commitment to engaging a representative sample
- Thoroughness of phases and tasks
- Innovation of engagement approach
- Focus on data-driven recommendations
- Demonstrated experience in analyzing and incorporating public engagement
- Identification of deliverables
- Appropriateness of the project schedule
- Commitment to proper editing

### Project Team

- Structure of organizational chart
- Experience of the project manager
- Experience of other key personnel
- Experience of the project team
- Inclusion and identification of team members with expertise in the following:
  - Planning and zoning
  - Public engagement
  - Built environment assessment and visualization
  - Media, public relations, and professional writing
  - Meeting facilitation
  - Spanish interpretation and translation

### Project Experience

- Experience with writing zoning ordinances in communities with similar attributes (urban/suburban mix, lakefront access, universities, and diverse demographics)
- Experience creating an online, map-based tool, scenario planning, and visualization
- Experience engaging diverse communities
- Experience with innovative public engagement techniques