



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

OPEN SPACE ZONING OVERLAY ORDINANCE

**PROPOSALS DUE
Friday May 17, 2024
By 4:00 PM EST**

INQUIRIES
Christopher Strohler, AICP
Long-Range Planner
Phone: 610-398-0401 x231
Email: strohlerc@southwhitehall.com

INTRODUCTION

South Whitehall Township, a First-Class Township in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, is requesting proposals from qualified firms for a one-time contract to prepare an open space zoning overlay ordinance for the Township. This overlay ordinance will cover an approximately 5,500-acre, primarily rural area in the northern portion of the Township.

Proposals shall be submitted electronically to Christopher Strohler, Long-Range Planner no later than Friday May 17th, 2024, by 4:00 PM EST.

Proposals shall be emailed as attachments in Portable Document Format (PDF) to strohlerc@southwhitehall.com or via a downloadable link. Please contact the Township ahead of the final submittal to test any links or file share options. The Township reserves the right to reject any or all proposals not submitted appropriately by the specified deadline.

PURPOSE

South Whitehall Township is seeking the services of a consultant (or team of consultants) to undertake the preparation of an open space zoning overlay ordinance for an approximately 5,500-acre area in the northern part of the Township, referred to as the Jordan Valley.

The goals of the Jordan Valley Open Space Zoning Overlay Ordinance are to:

- Maximize open space preservation
- Minimize impacts to local roadways
- Prioritize complimentary development patterns
- Maintain private property owner's development rights

This zoning overlay ordinance should provide options to landowners and developers to better balance the preservation of open space in compliment with residential, commercial, and industrial developments in the Jordan Valley.

BACKGROUND

South Whitehall adopted its latest Comprehensive Plan in March 2023. The overarching goals of the 2023 Comp Plan are to *“identify areas based on existing neighborhood, natural characteristics, and existing physical boundaries to strategically plan for potential growth that is harmonious within the identified area”* and to *“plan for future land use, development and redevelopment to remain within the capacity to install and maintain infrastructure in a fiscally responsible manner.”*

Resource protection is an important theme and focus of the 2023 Comprehensive Plan. The primary area recognized for resource protection in the Plan is the northern third of the Township, where development is sparse, but resources are densely concentrated. This area, now referred to as the Jordan Valley was identified as a unique area that residents consider a special landscape, contributing to Township's rural identity and quality of life. With limited access to public water and public sewer, a large portion of the Jordan Valley has remained undeveloped.

The Comprehensive Plan also introduced the concept of Place Types as a way to bridge the gap between land use and zoning and focus on preserving and promoting the region's sense of place. General Place Type descriptions were created for the Comprehensive Plan to help visualize their use, but more details are needed to integrate design parameters and better guide desired development patterns.

The Jordan Valley is identified as a specific land use type in the Comprehensive Plan with the following goals:

Preserve the rural and historic character of the Jordan Valley through the following:

- *Preserve natural resources and important landscapes through incentives and cooperation with landowners.*
- *Enhance crossroad villages with attention to the surrounding landscape.*
- *Encourage the continuation of active agriculture by allowing uses consistent with operations of working farms.*
- *Incentivize the utilization of Conservation Subdivisions for future land developments.*

The proposed zoning overlay district will cover the entire Jordan Valley land use area and some areas designated as Industrial and Rural Residential. In addition to the resource protection goals of the Comprehensive Plan, the Township is currently working on an open space, historic, agricultural, and natural resource preservation plan, entitled *South Whitehall Landscapes*. The goals of this plan emphasize the need for permanent preservation of resources through direct land protection, ordinance revisions, and policy. This plan will also identify guidelines on the specific types and uses of open space in the Township.

SCOPE OF WORK

The selected consultant or consulting team will provide the planning services necessary to create the Jordan Valley Open Space Zoning Ordinance through the following tasks:

1. Coordinate directly with South Whitehall Township staff to develop the concepts and components of the ordinance.
2. Draft the zoning overlay ordinance structure and text.
3. Further Develop Place Type descriptions, including approved use types and design considerations.
4. Develop design guidelines and standards for the zoning overlay district.

The selected consultant will not be responsible for any mapping, GIS analysis, or related tasks. All mapping, data collection, analysis, and information needed to inform the provisions of the ordinance will be provided by Township staff.

The selected consultant will also be required to work collaboratively with Township staff (and possibly other consultants) to evaluate how the draft provisions of the ordinance fulfill the four goals of the Jordan Valley Open Space Zoning Ordinance throughout the project. This evaluation will primarily be conducted through GIS analysis conducted by Township staff but will be an important step in the ordinance development process.

CONSIDERATIONS

- The consultant will adhere to all requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) during the development of the overlay ordinance.
- All public notices, posting, administrative proceedings, etc. related to the zoning overlay ordinance adoption will be handled by the Township and not be the responsibility of the consultant.
- No public meetings, workshops, hearings, etc. will be required of the consultant as part of this scope of work.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals shall include the following items:

- 1. Letter of Transmittal**
 - a. Primary Consulting Firm's name, mailing address, and nearest office location
 - b. Primary contact person and contact information
 - c. Statement that this proposal is a response to the Jordan Valley Open Space Zoning Overlay Ordinance RFP
- 2. Consultant Firm or Team Experience**
 - a. Brief overview of the firm(s)
 - b. Narrative explaining the approach to the project
 - c. Examples of relevant work and/or experience
- 3. Key Personnel**
 - a. Project Team organizational chart with assigned project manager
 - b. Anticipated roles of all personnel assigned to the project
 - c. Resumes/Experience Summaries for all relevant personnel
- 4. Timeline**
 - a. Proposed project schedule. South Whitehall Township would prefer to have the ordinance in draft form before the end of 2024. To keep on pace, bi-weekly meetings with Township staff are encouraged.
- 5. Price Proposal**

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by an evaluation committee comprised of Township Staff. In order of importance, staff will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

1. Documented experience in open space/conservation-based zoning
2. Experience in Pennsylvania with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC)
3. Creativity and innovation in new techniques and ideas, with an understanding of real-world practicality
4. Project Schedule
5. Cost

SUMMARY

South Whitehall Township is encouraged to work with experienced, innovative firms to develop this overlay ordinance to fulfill the open space preservation goals of the South Whitehall Township Comprehensive Plan and *South Whitehall Landscapes Plan*.

South Whitehall Township reserves the right to interview any or all the applicants submitting a proposal, although decisions may be made on the proposal alone. Additionally, the Township reserves the right to request clarifying information from the Proposer after submission of the proposal. South Whitehall Township reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, regardless of cost.

Questions on the proposal or submission requirements may be directed to:

Christopher Strohler, AICP

Long-Range Planner

Phone: 610-398-0401 x231

Email: strohlerc@southwhitehall.com

LINKS

[2023 South Whitehall Township Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code \(MPC\)](#)
