

**Request for Proposal for  
REGIONAL LAND CONSERVATION, STEWARDSHIP, AND RECREATION STUDY  
FOR LARIMER COUNTY, CO  
AND  
LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS MASTER PLAN**

**A. PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Larimer County (and Partner Agencies) is requesting that qualified professional consultants submit a description of qualifications, detailed scope of services, a general approach to the project(s), estimate of costs, timeline (by task) key persons, and references, for preparing a Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study for the Partner Agencies and a Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan specifically for Larimer County.

**1. Background**

In 1995, Larimer County voters passed an initiative for a ¼ cent county-wide sales tax specifically for the purchase/protection of open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, regional park preserves, regional trails, and agricultural lands thereby initiating the County Open Lands Program. The tax revenue is shared between Larimer County (~45%) and the Cities of Ft. Collins, Loveland, Estes Park, Berthoud, Wellington, Windsor, Johnstown and Timnath (~55%). In 1999, Larimer County citizens voted to extend the existing sales tax until 2018, and establish bonding authority for Larimer County. In addition, the City of Fort Collins “Open Space Yes!” 1/4% sales tax was passed in 2005 for a 25-year period (to end in 2030). Loveland maintains a Capital Expansion Fee and the Millennium Environmental Fee dedicated to the purchase of open space, and Larimer County has a parkland in lieu fee dedicated to the purchase of parks and open space. No other municipality has a dedicated open space sales tax (or fee??) outside the share they receive from the county sales tax.

Multiple land conservation entities (City and County Open Space and Natural Areas Programs) exist in Larimer County funded through existing sales tax dollars. These land conservation entities, henceforth called the project “Partner Agencies”, in combination with non-profit land trusts, state and federal agencies, have protected and manage hundreds of thousands of acres county-wide in fee-title and via conservation easement for natural, agricultural, scenic, and cultural resource values and to provide outdoor passive recreation opportunities. Each Partner Agency has individual land protection and recreation priorities across a broad spectrum. Assessment of areas of overlap or gaps in meeting public needs/preferences for land conservation and recreational opportunities as well as engaging the public to evaluate the cost, types, balance and level of service to providing those opportunities is of interest.

The most recent Open Lands Master Plan for Larimer County’s Natural Resources Department, *Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan*, was completed in December 2001. This plan included a county-wide inventory of existing county open lands, wetland resources, wildlife, rare/sensitive species, historic/cultural resources, and an analysis of the need for additional recreational opportunities, regional trails, and land acquisition to protect wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, riparian corridors and scenic areas. Currently, the Larimer County Natural Resources Department holds over 44,000 acres through fee-simple and conservation easement with the use of county open space sales tax dollars. In addition, the Department manages over 9000 acres of recreation lands at four Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs, campgrounds in the Estes Valley and smaller parks in the Big Thompson Canyon. The cities and towns that receive a portion of the county open space sales tax hold an estimated \_\_\_\_\_ acres in fee-title and conservation easement. The active land trusts in the county hold \_\_\_\_\_ acres in conservation easement within the county.

Larimer County has been highly inventoried with respect to wildlife, scenic, agricultural and recreational facilities. Existing documentation and studies that will be helpful are listed in Section F of this RFP.

Regional trails, including the Colorado Front Range Trail, should be addressed in the Regional Study as well as the Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan, with suggestions for adding or dropping certain regional trails based on the outcome of the survey and inventory.

## **2. Purposes**

### **Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study:**

To conduct a regional study that identifies opportunities for local and regional partnerships in land conservation and provision of recreational amenities to meet citizen needs, protect significant landscapes and values, provides diverse outdoor recreational opportunities and advises efficient and effective use of dollars.

### **Specific *Objectives for the Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study***

Include:

1. Gap and needs analysis resulting in preferences for land conservation opportunities including values such as agricultural, natural resource, scenic, community buffers, etc. for city and county open space programs.
2. Gap and needs analysis resulting in preferences of recreational opportunities, their infrastructure and the types of lands needed to support them; specifically looking at of a wide spectrum of recreational and/or other compatible land use opportunities that communities value (such as community gardens, wild zones, etc.) identified by citizens for city versus county type open space programs. Recreational opportunities not compatible include such things as developed sport fields, skate parks, etc.
3. Integration of information and data from *GOCO Pilot Project for Youth, Families and the Outdoors* (already completed by others and available to this study).
4. Identify public needs and preferences about services provided by conservation entities within Larimer County through a public involvement program, as well as through developing and conducting a scientifically sound survey.
5. Develop and implement a study that determines the economic benefits to Larimer County and each incorporated city (by census tract data or down to the neighborhood level or by zip code???) of natural areas, open space and recreation and how they contribute to the value of tourism, property values and overall quality of life.
6. Create benchmarks for levels of service and public expectation for land management including trails, trailhead amenities, signs and for traditional uses versus new or more diverse uses that may be identified through the process.
7. Perform financial analysis including scenarios outlining impacts to levels of service, management and public access to currently protected and future proposed protected lands based on continuation of sales tax revenues versus other partnerships and funding sources.
8. Create a mapable (with associated database) financial model for estimating acquisition cost and associated long-term management costs for fee simple and conservation easement lands with varying degrees of public access and opportunities (such as agricultural lands, community gardens, public access open space and trails, CE's, regional trails, etc).
9. Make recommendations on implementation strategies to address the efficient and effective utilization of sales tax revenues and local and regional partnership opportunities as it pertains to various agencies roles and niche in land conservation and recreational opportunities, and identify areas of overlap in conjunction with identified public priorities. Consultant shall take into account the roles and relationships between the various conservation, outdoor recreation, and education programs and agency mission statements as well as existing planning efforts to identify duplication.
10. Conduct a conservation finance analysis on the future needs of the County and partnership agencies and the structure of any future funding associated with those needs
11. A web-based mapping tool that allows for current and future manipulation of above variables to "weight" data and establish land protection and recreation priorities and can be used long-term by the public, local governments and other partners to update and share data and maps for long-term planning efforts.

### **Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan:**

The purpose of the Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan is to provide a focused vision, priority project areas, and specific implementation strategies to accomplish this vision, that will guide the Open Lands Program and Department of Natural Resources in the protection of Larimer County's important natural, recreational, and agricultural resources.

Specific **Objectives of the Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan** Include:

1. Identify important natural, scenic, agricultural and recreational resource values in Larimer County, building upon existing information from the regional study, the GOCO Education Pilot Project and the 2001 Open Lands Master Plan and other sources listed in section F of this RFP.
2. Identify and refine Larimer County Open Lands Program's role in the larger framework of land protection and recreational and/or other compatible land use opportunities that communities value (such as community gardens, wild zones, etc.) that may be provided by other local, state, federal, and non-profit conservation entities in Larimer County (i.e. geographically, types of open space land, recreational niche, etc.).
3. Identify public needs and preferences through a comprehensive public involvement program.
4. Make recommendations for acquisition of open space using public input generated through the public involvement process and the interactive online mapping tool and present opportunities based on cost (level of acquisition, development, and maintenance), public preference, resource, recreation and other values, geographic and type of open space, etc.
5. Balance resource (i.e., wildlife habitat, scenic, agricultural, etc.), recreational and/or other compatible land use opportunities that communities value (such as community gardens, wild zones, etc.), long-term management costs, and public opinions to produce a focused and workable Master Plan for Larimer County Open Lands Program.

## **B. SCOPE OF SERVICES**

### **1. Mapping**

The Partner Agencies will work with the consultant to determine the relevant information to be included on project maps. Mapping files not available through the County or Partner Agencies will be researched and collected by the consultant and provided to the Partner Agencies in ESRI Personal Geodatabase format, stored in Colorado North State Plane HARN coordinate system (U.S. feet). However, the consultant will be solely responsible for developing any maps for the project. No field data collection or map digitizing is included in the scope of work. GIS coverage data will not be provided until AFTER a contract is awarded. Data being provided by Larimer County and Partner Agencies are for the sole purpose of this project, and will not be utilized in other projects or shared with any other entities other than the partners of this project, for any purpose. Map product deliverables to include:

- Complete a visual rendition of the needs assessment and gap analysis
  - Consultant to provide visual analysis of public feedback and create maps resulting in preferences for land conservation opportunities for city and county open space programs.
  - Consultant to provide visual analysis of existing conditions and maps portraying areas of overlap, omission, inadequacy or inefficiency in the current land conservation and recreation opportunities in the region.
- Create a mapable (with associated database) financial model for estimating acquisition cost and associated long-term management costs for fee simple and conservation easement lands with varying degrees of public access and opportunities (such as agricultural lands, community gardens, public access open space and trails, CE's, regional trails, etc).

- Development of an online, interactive mapping tool to visually capture public priorities and allow for current and future manipulation of variables to “weight” data and establish land protection and recreation priorities and can be used long-term by the public, local governments and other partners to update and share data and maps and guide future land conservation implementation.
- Consultant will establish data files and provide to the Partner Agencies in a digital GIS format, mapping products and associated databases to allow for future manipulation of variables to “weight” data. The Partner Agencies may provide these files to study users (core team, stakeholder group, public) for current and future manipulation and editing. PDF file format or GIS view only files may be required to accomplish the desire to provide publicly-available files for non-GIS users.
- Final report for both the regional study and Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan to include all of the above including any hard copy maps.

## **2. Public Involvement**

### **Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study:**

The consultant is asked to outline a specific outreach involvement plan for the regional study that uses traditional and non-traditional as well as technological outreach sources to engage a cross section of the community including various agency, business, community groups and others including a demographically diverse public representation. Specifically, the outreach involvement plan by the consultant should include:

- Engaging community members from a statistically valid sampling size within each zip code of the county.
- Assist in content development and visual elements of website for dissemination of project information. County will host website within [www.larimer.org](http://www.larimer.org) website with links to all the Partner Agency websites.
- Creation of a project brand that serves to create an identity for the study effort, generate community interest and link the various outreach methods under one common umbrella.
- Facilitation of regular core team (comprised of Partner Agencies) and advisory committee (comprised of other conservation and land management agencies as well as a larger cross section of the community) meetings throughout the process, including taking meeting notes for review by Partner Agencies.
- Coordination and facilitation of public meetings and focus groups, core team, advisory committee, agency boards, and elected officials at key stages to solicit input from a broad demographic of citizens.
- Consultant to provide facilitators, meeting materials and presentation, meeting summaries and collected input. Public meetings to be held at various locations around the county to engage representative publics.
- Consultant to provide food/refreshments for public or stakeholder facilitated sessions.
- Development of a statistically valid public survey (draft and final survey instrument) to be stratified by zip code and include method of delivery analysis (web-based vs. traditional mail, in person or phone survey or combination of these).
- Consultant will conduct analysis of survey data with input from core team. Results of the data will be provided in a written and graphic summary and analyzed in conjunction with other qualitative feedback.

### **Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan:**

Community input will be very important to the success of the Master Plan. The consultant is asked to outline a specific public involvement program emphasizing community and visitor outreach techniques and private landowner involvement. Public involvement techniques should incorporate current technologies approaches as well as include an interactive web-based mapping application. The consultant will incorporate information from the regional study including the survey results, economic study, and information from the completed education pilot study to help determine public

opinion, needs and preferences in regards to the Larimer County Open Lands Program. Specifically, public involvement should include:

- Engaging community members representing the demographic make-up of the county.
- Creation of public outreach plan including uses for traditional, non-traditional and technological outreach resources.
- Consultant will develop website content with county web designer and county staff (including information on the plan, updates on the status of the plan, and meeting times and dates) and visual elements of website for dissemination of project information. County will host website within [www.larimer.org](http://www.larimer.org) website).
- Facilitation of regular core team (comprised of representatives from County staff, various boards, and stakeholder groups) and advisory committee (comprised of larger conservation/recreation community stakeholders) meetings throughout the process, including taking meeting notes for review by County staff.
- Consultant to provide coordination and facilitation of public meetings to solicit input from a broad representative demographic of county citizens. Consultant to provide facilitators, meeting presentation and other materials, meeting summaries and any other needed items. Presentation and other materials developed by the consultant will be made available to County staff.
- Consultant will suggest appropriate timing of meetings to be held at various locations around the county to engage representative publics.
- Consultant to provide food/refreshments costs for public or stakeholder facilitated sessions.

### **3. Draft Reports**

#### **Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study:**

The draft plan would be reviewed by the core team, advisory committee, agency boards and the public. All copy costs of drafts will be paid by the consultant. The consultant will work with staff and Partner Agencies to present the draft reports for board and public comment. Refinement of the study and communication with the community will be critical to its success. Based upon the public review process, the study will be revised and/or refined. A draft study will be prepared that includes, but may not be limited to the following elements:

- Project organization, vision, goals, and objectives
- Existing conditions and evaluation
- Gap and Needs Analysis (including public survey, focus group, other meetings)
- Economic study results
- A summary of preferences and implementation strategies to fill identified gaps.
- Financial strategies (conservation finance analysis, benchmarks and level of service/management and costs)
- Maps and map products as described in mapping section and relevant databases/tables
- References and additional sources of information

#### **Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan:**

In addition to public review of the draft plan, the Board of County Commissioners, the Open Lands Advisory Board, County staff, advisory committee and core team will review and make comments on the draft plan. All copy costs of drafts will be paid by the consultant. The consultant will work with staff to present the draft reports for public comment. Refinement of the plan and communication with the community will be critical to the success of the plan. Based upon the public review process, the plan will be revised and/or refined. The proposed plan will then be recommended for adoption by the Open Lands Advisory Board

- Project organization, vision, goals, and objectives
- Existing conditions and evaluation

- Analysis of needs and preferences
- Recommendations and implementation strategies
- Alternative planning concepts and financial strategies (including one for if the open space sales tax is not extended beyond 2018)
- Maps and relevant tables
- References and additional sources of information

#### **4. Final Reports**

##### **Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study:**

The final study summary will be prepared based upon the above elements. The report will be delivered to the Partner Agencies as a master copy on Microsoft Word or as directed by the Partner Agencies. The master copy will be suitable for printing any number of copies as desired by the Partner Agencies. The Partner Agencies will pay for copy costs of the final Study. All mapping prepared by the consultant shall be delivered in a format and of such quality that is deemed acceptable by Partner Agency staff in order to ensure reproduction quality.

##### **Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan**

The final Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan will be prepared based upon the above elements. The report will be delivered to the County as a digital master copy on Microsoft Word or as directed by the County. The master copy will be suitable for printing any number of copies as desired by the County. The County will pay for copy costs of the final Master Plan. All mapping prepared by the consultant shall be delivered in a format and of such quality that is deemed acceptable by County staff in order to ensure reproduction quality.

### **C. BUDGET AND TIMELINE**

#### **1. Budget**

##### **Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study:**

Please subtotal fees by task.

##### **Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan:**

Please subtotal fees by task.

#### **2. Timeline**

As the Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan will be directly informed by the Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study portion of this RFP, it is expected that the consultant will outline an integrated timeline for completion, including draft and final reports for both elements. It is anticipated that the total timeline for both the regional study and master plan combined will not exceed 18 months.

### **D. QUALIFICATIONS**

- Consultant and team with verifiable experience that can accomplish the project in a timely manner.
- Verifiable experience with specific work examples of using a creative approach to gather information from diverse audiences that are representative of the demographic make-up of Larimer County.
- Experience conducting public listening sessions and retaining an experienced, well qualified facilitator(s) on the team that can help diverse and often opposing participants find common ground
- Experience creating large scale public surveys and any subsequent analysis following data collection.
- Describe ability to create interactive web-based maps containing similar information above using existing GIS data as well as sourcing data that is not currently available.
- Recent experience developing and merging digital databases for newly collected and existing information.

- Project team knowledge of Larimer County and the Northern Colorado area and its attributes and challenges.
- Experience in conducting or managing a qualified entity to perform a statistically valid public survey and economic study.

## **E. SUBMITTAL FORMAT**

### **1. Format**

All submittals should be no more than 8 one-sided (or 4 two-sided) pages long (double space width 1 inch margins) with no more than 5 pages attributed to the Regional Study and no more than 3 pages attributed to the Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan. Submittals shall have no more than ½ page biographies of each team member working on the project, and should include, in the following order:

- Letter of transmittal
- The company (or team) and individuals who would complete the tasks outline in this RFP and a complete description of their qualifications
- Overall approach and timeline
- Detailed scope of services for the regional study including outline, budget (both hourly and total cost estimates) and deliverable for each project element including: (1) gap, resource and needs analyses including public outreach plan;; (2) Development and implementation of economic study; (3) creation of benchmarks for levels of service; (4) creation of web-based map products and associated databases for current and future manipulation of variables; and, (5) draft and final study reports.
- Detailed scope of services for the Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan.
- County and Partner Agency staff responsibilities for each task and any associated overhead
- References

### **2. Proposal Evaluation**

The County will evaluate all proposals and determine whether any or all consultants should be invited for an interview. A short list of candidates may be invited to meet with a selection committee for an interview.

## **F. RELATED AVAILABLE INFORMATION**

### **1. Existing Plans, Studies, and Documentation**

- *Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan (2001)*
- *Larimer County Parks Master Plan (2007)*
- *City of Loveland Natural Area Sites Plan (2008)*
- *City of Fort Collins Land Conservation Plan (2004)*
- *City of Loveland Open Lands Master Plan (2003)*
- *Survey of Critical Biological Resources Larimer County, CO (2004)*
- *GOCO Pilot Project for Youth, Families and the Outdoors (anticipated 2012)*
- *Larimer County Master Plan (1997)*
- *Larimer County Land Use Plan (1999)*
- *A Plan for the Region Between Fort Collins and Loveland (1995)*
- *Northern Colorado Regional Planning Study (1995)*
- *Front Range Mountain Backdrop – Technical Report (1996)*
- *The Rural Land Use Process - (1996)*
- *Big Thompson River Corridor Study (1997)*
- *Little Thompson River Corridor Study (1998)*
- *Larimer County Open Lands 2008 Preferences Exercise*

## **G. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Proposals will be evaluated based on

1. Qualifications – 50%

Experience and expertise with coordinating studies of this type and scope.

Project team knowledge of Larimer County, the Partner Agencies and relevant situation and challenges.

Demonstrated accomplishment of project objectives with budget realities and Partner Agency needs.

Experience with implementing interactive mapping projects or ability to contract and manage a qualified entity to perform this aspect of the project.

Experience with facilitating and coordinating creative public involvement processes, focus groups and Partner Agencies through a master planning process.

Experience in conducting or managing a qualified entity to perform a statistically valid public survey.

Experience in conducting or managing a qualified entity to perform an economic study.

2. Price – 25%

3. Consultant team attributes - 25%

Ability to perform all mandatory requirements in an appropriate timeframe

Consultant team with demonstrated ability to work together

Consultant team with demonstrated ability to facilitate potentially high conflict meetings using collaborative processes

Consultant and Partner Agency communication plan

**H. Partner Agency Provisions and Staff Involvement:**

**Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study**

- GIS Data map layers - roads, parcels, resource information (soils, wildlife, CNHP data, rivers and wetlands),
- Will participate in public meetings by assisting with facilitation, coordination, presentations, set up, scheduling, and making room reservations
- Supply all data and map layers from GOCO Education Pilot Project including: demographics, existing recreation facility inventory, etc.

**Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan**

- GIS Data map layers - roads, parcels, resource information (soils, wildlife, CNHP data, rivers and wetlands),
- Will participate in public meetings by assisting with facilitation, coordination, presentations, set up, scheduling, and making room reservations
- Consolidate notes from public meetings