



## **CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

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**DATE:** JUNE 17, 2025

**DEPARTMENT:** COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**FROM:** LISA BRINTON, DIRECTOR

**THROUGH:** GRANT LEONARD, PLANNING MANAGER

**BY:** JONATHAN MOORE, SENIOR PLANNER

**TITLE:** PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH  
PLACEWORKS, INC FOR ZONING CODE UPDATE

### **RECOMMENDED MOTION:**

A motion to approve a resolution delegating authority to the City Manager to execute an Agreement for Professional Services with PlaceWorks, Inc. to prepare comprehensive Zoning Code updates for the City of Salinas in an amount not to exceed \$1,000,000.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The City of Salinas' Zoning Code last comprehensive update was adopted in 2006 following the 2002 General Plan. As the City is in the process of completing a comprehensive General Plan Update (GPU) and adopted a new Housing Element in December of 2023, it is critical to start a Zoning Code Update (ZCU) that is consistent with and implements these documents, makes the Zoning Code compliant with state law, and streamlines procedures in a user-friendly format. Through a competitive procurement process, the City selected PlaceWorks Inc. (PlaceWorks), as the preferred consultant for the ZCU. The Agreement for Professional Services (Agreement) will allow the City and PlaceWorks to undertake a multi-phase ZCU with robust community and stakeholder engagement. The Agreement's not to exceed amount is \$1,000,000 and is funded through the General Plan/Zoning Code Maintenance Fee.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### *General Plan Update*

The City launched a comprehensive General Plan update, Visión Salinas 2040, in the summer of 2021. The City is proposing a new approach to land use designations called Place Types to create and reinforce quality places where people want to live, work, play, and learn. Draft Place Types incorporate land use policies and recommendations of other recent planning documents including the Alisal Vibrancy Plan and Economic Development Element. These offer greater flexibility and density and place less emphasis on strict land use classifications. Their focus on place and form will make it easier to implement Objective Design Standards and other state law mandates intended

to reduce approval times for housing projects. Draft actions in the GPU also call for streamlining procedures and regulations in the Zoning Code to encourage economic development. The City is initiating the ZCU concurrently with General Plan adoption to ensure Zoning Code consistency within six months of adoption.

The 2023-2031 Housing Element was adopted in December 2023 in accordance with state deadlines and was found to be in substantial compliance with state law by HCD in February 2024. The Housing Element is a tool for the City to continue to address its housing challenges and plan for the community's housing needs. It includes a detailed work program of the City's goals, policies, quantified objectives, and programs for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing for a sustainable future. Development of the City's Future Growth Area is a key strategy to meet the City's housing needs and its Regional Housing Needs Allocation numbers.

Since 6th cycle Housing Element was based on the 2002 General Plan land use and current Zoning Code because of its statutory deadline, the Housing Element calls for the adoption of the General Plan update, and details necessary amendments the Zoning Code for implementation and for compliance with changes in State law. While it is generally good planning practice to update the zoning ordinances quickly after a general plan update, that has not always happened. Following Salinas' 2002 General Plan, the Zoning Code was not updated until 2007. Under recent State law, Assembly Bill 821 of 2023 (AB 821), a housing development application that is consistent with a jurisdiction's general plan but not zoning ordinance, requires an agency to amend their zoning ordinance within 180 days or process the development as specified. This effectively gives jurisdictions six months to make their zoning ordinance consistent with new general plan amendments to avoid the complications of such scenarios.

### *Procurement Process*

Staff prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a comprehensive Zoning Code Update for the City of Salinas (Attachment 4). The RFP was released on October 29, 2024, to the City's on-call list for Advanced Planning and Current Planning services. The RFP stated the Update should create a document that improves clarity, objectiveness, and predictability while increasing flexibility in designated areas of the city. It also stated that the Update should address:

- Consistency with the Visión Salinas 2040 General Plan and 2023-2031 Housing Element, including updates to the zoning map,
- Consistency with recent changes in State law, particularly those related to facilitating housing and objective design and development standards,
- Recommendations from staff and community stakeholders,
- Streamlining development administration processes, including applications, that interface with other municipal requirements, to create transparent and predictable paths to approval,
- Making the Zoning Code visually informative; and
- Appropriate CEQA review based on the Environmental Impact Report for the General Plan.

Three consultant firms submitted their proposals by the deadline of December 6, 2024:

- Precision Civil Engineering, Inc.
- Interwest Consultant Group.
- PlaceWorks, Inc.

The selection process included an evaluation of the written proposals, interviews, and reference checks. Each proposal was scored out of 100 points, with the average score determining the overall ranking. The criteria for evaluating the written proposals focused on project understanding, firm qualifications, team qualifications, track records, client references, and the completion and quality of the proposals. The evaluation panel for the written proposals and interviews consisted of city staff from the Community Development Department and the Public Works Department. City staff interviewed the two highest-rated firms from the written evaluation in January of 2025. The scoring criteria for the interviews emphasized presentation quality, experience with similar projects, understanding of city needs, sustainability, infrastructure concerns, potential challenges, and implementation strategies. Based on the rating and ranking process, PlaceWorks was selected with a total average score of 95 points. PlaceWorks was the highest scoring firm in both the written evaluation and the interviews. Following selection as the preferred consultant, PlaceWorks and city staff continued to refine and expand the draft proposed scope of work (Attachment 4) from their original proposal (Attachment 5).

#### *Draft Scope and Project Phases*

The Draft Scope of Work splits Zoning Code Update into three phases to address immediate needs, ensure consistency with the General Plan Update once adopted, while ultimately developing a new Code.

Phase One will address short-term amendments to the current Code to bring it into compliance with State law prior to completion of the General Plan Update (late 2025 at the earliest) and address priority items that do not need to wait for the comprehensive update.

Phase Two includes bridge amendments to make the current the Zoning Code consistent with the General Plan Update once the latter is adopted. Phase Two will include map and text amendments to the current Zoning Code to ensure consistency with the proposed Place Types and Land Use Element. By drafting these amendments concurrently with the completion of the General Plan Update, the City will avoid a long period of inconsistency. Completion of Phase Two is anticipated by mid-2026.

Phase Three is the completion of a new and revised Zoning Code. The new Zoning Code will be easier to use for the public and staff, visually rich with easily shareable graphics, and streamline development that is consistent with community needs and vision. This also includes fully implementing relevant portions of the General Plan Update. Completion of Phase 3 is anticipated by mid-2028.

## *Environmental Review*

PlaceWorks will determine and prepare appropriate levels of environmental review for each project phase. Environmental review for the overall Update will benefit from the efficiency of being able to tier-off the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) once adopted.

Based on the RFP and scope, PlaceWorks anticipates preparing a commonsense exemption for Phase One and addendums to the General Plan EIR for Phase Two and Phase Three.

## *Community Engagement*

Community involvement is a cornerstone of the Zoning Code Update and PlaceWorks will work with City staff to create an inclusive and thorough stakeholder engagement process. This will start with the creation of a Public Engagement Plan that builds off the successful engagement model the City has used in the General Plan Update, Alisal Vibrancy Plan, Economic Development Element, and other community planning efforts. An initial visioning session with the Council and Planning Commission will help set direction and priorities for the overall project. Engagement will include bilingual events and tools to generate interest and feedback from the broad community, including workshops and pop-ups. As a technical document, the Zoning Code Update will also require recurring engagement with specific stakeholders, including, but not limited to architects, designers, builders, business owners, and staff that use the Code on a daily or regular basis. PlaceWorks will also provide support to staff for additional engagement efforts beyond what they are able to attend.

## CEQA CONSIDERATION:

**Not a Project.** The City of Salinas has determined that the proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378). In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 includes the general rule that CEQA applies only to activities which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Because the proposed action and this matter have no potential to cause any effect on the environment, or because it falls within a category of activities excluded as projects pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378, this matter is not a project. Because the matter does not cause a direct or foreseeable indirect physical change on or in the environment, this matter is not a project. Any subsequent discretionary projects resulting from this action will be assessed for CEQA applicability.

## CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE §84308 APPLIES:

No, as this agreement was subject to a competitive process.

## STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

By streamlining development procedures and implementing General Plan recommendations, the Zoning Code Update furthers the following 2025 Salinas Strategic Plan strategies:

- 1.c. Explore and expand Economic Development opportunities

- 2.b. Encourage and incentivize senior housing development
- 2.c. Facilitate housing development while minimizing impacts to neighborhoods
- 4.a. Continue working on the Visión Salinas 2040 General Plan
- 4.b. Provide responsive and high-quality customer service

#### DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

The Community Development Department (CDD) is leading this effort with close coordination with other departments. CDD established an internal committee in May to support the ZCU comprised of staff from CDD, Public Works, Library and Community Services, Police, Fire, and Legal.

#### FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Fund	Appropriation	Appropriation Name	Total Appropriation	Amount for recommendation	FY 24-25 Operating Budget Page	Last Budget Action (Date, Resolution)
2513	30.3701-63.5900	Outside Services Other Professional Services	\$778,759	\$1,000,000	106	4/8/25, 23222

The funding source for this Agreement is from Fund 2513 (General Plan) which is funded by the General Plan/Zoning Maintenance Fees collected with building permits. Funding for this multi-year project is included in the Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget and the proposed Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget. The General Plan Fund budget appropriation for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 was \$726,718.00, with \$593,038.00 appropriated to professional services. On April 8, 2025, City Council approved increasing the professional services appropriation by \$400,000 for a new total of \$993,038. The requested FY 2025-26 budget appropriation for Fund 2513 is \$1,887,570.

#### ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
2. Draft Agreement for Professional Services
3. Exhibit B: draft Scope of Work
4. Request for Proposals
5. PlaceWorks, Inc. Proposal