City of Asheville Staff Report

City Council Meeting Date: September 8, 2026

Staff Resources:

- Chris Collins, Planning and Urban Design Interim Director
- Will Palmquist, Principal Planner

Action Requested:

- Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a contract with Opticos Design, Inc. in the amount of $1,403,000 to develop an update to the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan and new development regulations, including the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), and Standard Specifications and Details Manual (SSDM); and approval of an associated budget amendment to transfer funds to the Special Revenue Fund for the contract.

Background:

- After a competitive selection process, City staff has negotiated a contract with Opticos Design, Inc. to serve as the primary vendor for the Comprehensive Plan Update and Development Code Rewrite project.
- The project scope encompasses project management, inclusive community engagement through the process of:
    - A data- and trend-driven update to the City's Comprehensive Plan
    - A comprehensive review and redrafting of the Unified Development Ordinance
    - A comprehensive review of the Standard Specifications & Details Manual
- The total contracted cost of this project is not to exceed $1,403,000 funded as follows:
    - $1,200,000 from CDBG-DR Award Funds
    - $203,000 from the City's Stormwater Enterprise Funds
- The schedule for the contractor's work, including implementation/training after the code adoption, is 2.5 years, with work concluding on the comprehensive plan and UDO completing in October of 2027.
- Work related to the initial update of the City's Standard Specifications & Details Manual will be completed in March 2028.
- Work beyond calendar year 2027 includes optional additional tasks that are funded, which would require an amendment to the contract.
- In order to align with the project's available funding, three tasks have been moved to additional tasks that can be undertaken if funding should become available. Those tasks are:
    - Adoption and Implementation Support
    - Updates to Downtown and River District Design Guidelines
    - Creation and publishing of draft and final versions of the City's SSDM Document

Vendor Outreach:

- Staff outreach included posting the Request for Proposals (RFP) on the State's Interactive Purchasing System and the City's Purchasing website for General Services RFP/Bid Opportunities.
- The RFP was posted on March 20, 2026 with a deadline for responses on April 16, 2026.
- The internal evaluation panel reviewed and scored eight qualified submitted responses and scheduled two rounds of interviews with the top firms.

Council Vision 2036 Focus Area(s):

- A Well Planned and Livable Community

Council Priority Recovery Area(s):

- People; Infrastructure & Environment; Housing; Economic Recovery

Committee(s): N/A

Fiscal Impact:

- The total contracted cost of this project is not to exceed $1,403,000.
    - $203,000 will be funded with fund balance from the City's Stormwater Enterprise Funds
- The City has applied for a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) planning grant to fund the majority of the work; however, because Notification of HMGP funds are uncertain and not expected until 2027, the majority of this budget ($1.2M) will be financed by CDBG-DR funds on a reimbursement basis until HMGP Notification is received. CDBG-DR funds may also be utilized for components of this work not eligible under the HMGP program.
- Scope of work items ineligible for HMGP will be prioritized first.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a contract with Opticos Design Inc. in the amount of $1,403,000 to develop an update to the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan and new development regulations, including the Unified Development Ordinance; and approve an associated budget amendment to transfer funds to the Special Revenue Fund for the contract.

Attachment(s):

- Resolution
- Budget Amendment

City of Asheville Resolution Number 26-___

Resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute a contract with Opticos Design LLC to provide planning and design services for the update to the city's Comprehensive Plan and a rewrite of the city's development regulations

Whereas, the City of Asheville has authority pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 160A of the North Carolina General Statutes to enter into contracts for services with other entities; and

Whereas, pursuant to the City's Procurement, Purchasing and Contracting policy, general services contracts valued at $90,000 or more require City Council approval; and

Whereas, the City has a need to enter into a contract to update the City's Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan and rewrite the City's Development Regulations; and

Whereas, the City issued an RFP and Opticos Design, LLC was selected as the vendor most capable of leading a team to provide the complex list of services required to support the completion of this project; and

Whereas, City staff recommends the execution of a contract beginning September 8, 2026 and ending February 28, 2029 in the amount of $1,403,000, with (1) one-year optional renewal period for a total contract amount not to exceed $1,403,000;

Now, Therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Asheville that:

The City Manager is hereby authorized to execute a contract with Opticos Design LLC beginning September 8, 2026 and ending February 28, 2029, with a (1) one-year optional renewal period to provide a variety of planning and design services, for a total contract amount not to exceed $1,403,000 and to execute any documents necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Read, approved and adopted this the 8th day of September, 2026.

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Esther E. Manheimer, Mayor

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Brad Branham, City Attorney

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Magdalen Burleson, City Clerk

City of Asheville Budget Amendment Ordinance Number ____

Be it Ordained by the City Council of the City of Asheville:

That Sections 1 and 2 of the City of Asheville Annual Operating Budget Ordinance be amended to provide an appropriation of $1,403,000 to Special Revenue Fund, funded with Stormwater fund balance and existing CDBG-DR funding as follows:

Stormwater Fund

Revenues:

Fund balance - $203,000

Expenditures:

Transfer to the Special Revenue Fund - $203,000

Special Revenue Fund

Revenues:

Transfer from the Stormwater Fund - $203,000

Transfer from the CDBG-DR Fund - $1,200,000

Total Revenues - $1,403,000

Expenditures:

Contracted Services - $1,403,000

That this ordinance shall be in full force and effect upon the date of final passage.

Read, approved and adopted this 8th day of September, 2026.

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Esther E. Manheimer, Mayor

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Brad Branham, City Attorney

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Magdalen Burleson, City Clerk