



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: David Loya, Director of Community Development

PREPARER: Delo Freitas, Senior Planner/Special Projects Program Coordinator

DATE: October 1, 2025

TITLE: **Award a Contract for Zoning Updates Planning Services to Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. in the Amount of \$549,711; Authorize an Increase up to 10% for Contingencies; and Approve Necessary and Associated Related Actions.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council:

- 1) Award a contract for Zoning Updates Planning Services to Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. in the amount of \$549,711;
- 2) Authorize the City Manager or designee to increase the contract amount by up to 10% (\$54,971 for a total not to exceed \$604,682) to allow for contingencies; and
- 3) Authorize the City Manager to execute all applicable documents.

INTRODUCTION:

The City recently adopted its first comprehensive General Plan revisions since 1999, which triggers required updates to the City's Land Use Code to create internal consistency between the General Plan and its implementing ordinance. City staff released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Zoning Updates-Planning Services in July of this year. The City received three highly competitive responses to the RFP. Lisa Wise Consulting (LWC) provided the best overall response, and the cost proposal was competitive. Staff recommend authorizing the award with an approximate 10% cost contingency. This action will award the contract to Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. to conduct the work, which contains multiple tasks and is slated to be completed by early 2028.

BACKGROUND:

The City posted its RFP for Arcata Zoning Updates – Planning Services, on July 23, 2025, (<https://www.cityofarcata.org/bids.aspx?bidID=164>), with responses due on August 29, 2025. The City received three proposals and chose to interview the two highest-ranked responding teams. The review panel ranked both the written and interview responses of both teams (Attachment A). The proposals were highly competitive, but the review panel ranked Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. slightly higher, due largely to their demonstrated in-depth project understanding and experience with similar projects across the state.

DISCUSSION:

The City recently completed a comprehensive update to its General Plan, including updates to twelve of the City's thirteen Elements. The General Plan Update emphasizes permit

streamlining and strategic infill of the City's core urban area for housing development. While the General Plan sets a vision and policy guidance for future development, the Land Use Code as its implementing ordinance sets specific standards and regulations used in project review. The General Plan Update included areas of policy change that require review and updating of the Land Use Code to ensure internal consistency.

In 2024, the City was awarded a "Prohousing" grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD) to complete components of the implementation associated with the passage of Arcata's updated General Plan that will encourage rapid production of additional housing supply. The RFP's planning services, proposed to be awarded to Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc., include several components of that work, including updates to the Land Use Code as well as additional regulatory updates necessary to meet the City's housing commitments as outlined below.

- 1) Land Use Code updates to create internal consistency between the General Plan (specifically the Land Use Element) and its implementing ordinance;
- 2) A separate standalone ordinance supporting the development of Accessory Dwelling Units, compliant with state law;
- 3) A new form-based code to streamline high quality, high-density development in the Valley West Infill Opportunity Zone (as adopted through the 2019 Housing Element); and
- 4) Environmental review necessary to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), based on the Environmental Impact Report prepared for the Arcata General Plan 2045.

The adaptation strategies produced from this planning effort will help guide the City's future development and support the City in reaching its aggressive housing goals over the next twenty years.

The recommendation of contract award to Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. is based on staff's interest in choosing a firm that can develop high-quality, straightforward regulations that are digestible by the average Arcata resident. Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. has a proven track record of working with communities on comprehensive code updates and development of form-based codes, and staff is confident that their team will be a good fit for the project.

Staff anticipates bringing work product to the community and decision makers periodically over the next two-year period before bringing final documents for approval in late 2027 or early 2028.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The contract will not result in new policy but will implement the vision of the General Plan 2045.

COMMITTEE/COMMISSION REVIEW:

The work product will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and committees as appropriate, including the Historic Landmarks Committee, before being adopted by the Council. Staff will continue its engagement strategy to ensure the Council has access to the work as it develops.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

The contract award is not subject to environmental review. It is not a project as defined by CEQA.

Unless unforeseen circumstances arise, the documents produced will be covered by the EIR adopted for the General Plan and zoning updates.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

The City has secured grant funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to execute this work. In 2024, the City was awarded a “Prohousing” grant from HUD to complete components of the implementation associated with the passage of Arcata’s updated General Plan that will encourage rapid production of additional housing supply. The City has received \$550,000 to fund the tasks outlined in the RFP which constitutes the entirety of the award. Additional Prohousing grant dollars have been allocated for both staff time and admin/overhead costs.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

Motion to:

- 1) Award a contract for Zoning Updates-Planning Services to Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. in the amount of \$549,711;
- 2) Authorize the City Manager or designee to increase the contract amount by up to 10% (\$54,971 for a total not to exceed \$604,682) to allow for contingencies; and
- 3) Authorize the City Manager to execute all applicable documents.

Consent Calendar vote.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Scoring Results Summary
- B. LWC Cost Proposal Table for Arcata Zoning Updates