



# Boston/ New England

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **Simulation Exploring Tradeoffs in Housing Development**

#### **Project Theme**

ULI Boston/New England invites proposals for the design and development of a realistic experiential learning simulation that allows participants to explore the tradeoffs and economic implications of new housing development in a community.

#### **Background**

Massachusetts, and much of New England, has a strong tradition of local control over land use and zoning, with the legislative body of many towns consisting of open town meeting. This means that local leaders directly set policies and make decisions that promote or prevent the development of housing.

One of the many challenges in permitting and/or approving the development of new housing in communities across New England is limited shared knowledge of the tradeoffs related to housing development. Furthermore, there are often misconceptions about the impacts of housing developments and/or unrealistic expectations around affordability, costs related to housing development, benefits to municipal governments, and developer profitability, to name a few.

Massachusetts has a housing deficit of at least 200,000 units and homeownership and rental pricing that is amongst the highest in the nation. We believe that by engaging in our communities, we are best positioned to make a positive, incremental impact that will unlock housing production by leveraging and targeting the skills, expertise, and civic engagement capacity of our members who volunteer their time to deliver ULI programming.

The product to be developed has the potential to change the discourse in communities amongst key stakeholders to help jumpstart housing production. While Massachusetts requires municipalities of a certain size to submit affordable Housing Production Plans to the state every 5 years for compliance with state law Chapter 40B, there is no

general requirement on the local level to plan wholistically for housing to meet community needs across housing types- and many municipalities lack the staff capacity or budget for significant planning efforts.

The product to be developed may be paired in communities with elements of ULI's successful [Technical Assistance Panel \(TAP\) program](#) to provide tailored technical assistance to municipalities interested in increasing housing production.

Our primary comparable product to engage with local leaders, UrbanPlan (described in-depth below), is broadly successful. However, it features an urban scenario and we have received feedback that it is difficult for those in suburban or town settings to relate. While it includes a housing component, it is not focused on housing.

### **The Inspiration for a Housing Simulation: About UrbanPlan**

This RFP is rooted in a desire to build on elements of the successful experiential learning exercise UrbanPlan, a signature ULI educational program. UrbanPlan is a realistic, engaging exercise in which participants—high school students, university students, or public officials—learn the fundamental forces that affect development in our communities. Participants experience challenging issues, private and public sector roles, complex trade-offs, and fundamental economics in play when proposing realistic land use solutions to vexing growth challenges.

Developed by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) in partnership with the Fisher Center for Real Estate and Urban Economics at UC Berkeley, the UrbanPlan program engages participants in a powerful case study that puts them in the middle of a fictional city's development project. UrbanPlan is practical, realistic, dynamic, and challenging-and that's on purpose. By providing the chance to put theory into practice, UrbanPlan helps participants think critically about the fundamentals of real estate.

UrbanPlan is generally delivered in-person, using a physical site plans, Legos, and laptop to access a digital site plan linked to a pro forma, but an online version was developed during the pandemic.

To read a description of UrbanPlan for Public Officials and to access a video clip, click [here](#).

For a brochure on UrbanPlan for Public Officials, click [here](#).

To view the core case component of UrbanPlan, please click [here](#).

### **Scope of Services**

We are seeking to amplify the experiential learning component of the established UrbanPlan model through the creation of a comparable experiential learning model centered on realistic tradeoffs around housing in a suburban or town setting.

We are also open to other creative approaches that include an engaging experiential learning simulation.

Anticipated users of the product to be developed include local elected and appointed officials, municipal staff, and community leaders. They may or may not be supportive of more development or housing in their communities, but we seek to create more knowledgeable participants in this process. The product will be deployed in municipalities through facilitation provided by ULI member volunteers.

Our goal is the creation of a housing-oriented experiential simulation/game that:

1. enables participants to explore some of the primary tradeoffs involved in housing development, and
2. promotes better understanding of the development benefits and impacts specifically related to housing development.

Ideally, the simulation could be scalable, to be experienced by large groups of people at once (think Town Meeting members, multiple boards (Planning, ZBA, Select Board, etc.) within multiple towns at the same time.

Proposal proponents will be expected to meet with leadership and staff of ULI Boston/New England to further discuss and refine project proposals post-award.

Proposals may be for a first-phase, or for a complete deliverable.

Projects should include a financial basis that is realistic within any simulation or model developed.

### ***Potential Simulation Elements***

Some potential elements of the simulation are proposed below. This isn't intended to be an exhaustive list nor is the inclusion of all these proposed elements a requirement.

Proposals should include a description of proposed elements to be included in the simulation.

Typologies: Suburban or town.

Garden Style development or traditional New England 3–6-unit infill.

Existing Site Conditions: Previously developed- Brownfield or environmental issues, demolition requirements. Greenfield- Soil conditions, geotechnical- ledge, other expense considerations.

Infrastructure Issues: Utility availability, costs associated with on-site/privatized sewer/wastewater, power, water.

Climate Resiliency Goals/Concerns: Solar, Passive house.

Access Road/s: MBTA goals, mobility oriented. Adjacency to town center/shopping.

Housing goals: Family housing/match community housing profile and trends, Affordable – at what percentages, supported housing, senior housing.

Plug for tax revenue.

Plug for service impacts: public safety, schools, other services.

Building Type: townhomes, traditional New England 3 or 6 family (3 story), garden style, Podium (1+5 story), mid/high rise (maybe).

Parking Type: surface, stand-alone garages, attached garages-townhome attached, structured parking- podium, wrap, below grade.

Parking requirements: Walkability to transit/jobs, parking lift systems.

### **Budget Amount and Commitments**

The project cost is not to exceed \$21,000.

### **Proposal Evaluation**

ULI Boston/New England will evaluate proposals based on several criteria:

- Degree to which product teaches users about the community-level tradeoffs of housing development.
- Degree to which product is grounded in realistic housing development finance and municipal finance.
- Degree to which product is relatable to local leaders in a suburban or town setting.
- Degree to which product can be delivered by ULI member volunteers in communities.
- Feasibility of proposal in the-near term.
- Degree to which proposal leverages external resources or opportunities.

Interviews may be requested as part of the evaluation process.

### **RFP Schedule**

Submissions Due: May 9, 2024

Contract Awarded by: June 3, 2024

Deliverable Due: Fall 2024

### **Submission Guidelines and Instructions**

Proposals should include:

- Basic information and overview of the firm or consultant.
- A description of the project proposed.
- The proposed cost for services.
- Proposed timeline to complete work in sufficient detail to establish project milestones and deliverables.

- Samples of relevant previous work.
- Staffing plan with resume/CV for project leadership.
- References.
- If a phased deliverable is proposed, please describe all subsequent phases necessary to develop a complete product.
- If a phased deliverable is proposed, please describe an anticipated budget for future phases. Please describe any external funding resources that could support your work or any in-kind support available.

Please submit responses to this RFP via email to Catherine Rollins, Director, at [catherine.rollins@uli.org](mailto:catherine.rollins@uli.org) by 5:00PM EST on Thursday, May 9.

### **Questions about RFP**

Please email any questions about this RFP to Catherine Rollins, Director, at [catherine.rollins@uli.org](mailto:catherine.rollins@uli.org).

Any updates about the RFP will be posted at [www.boston.uli.org](http://www.boston.uli.org).

### **Ownership of Work Product**

ULI Boston/New England and ULI will own any work products resulting from contracted services. Permission to use any work products in another venue must be requested and may be granted by ULI Boston/New England.

### **About ULI**

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization focused on research, education, and the development of best practices for the real estate industry. The mission of the Urban Land Institute: Shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

Founded in 1936, it now has 49,000 members based in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific that represent the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines working in private enterprise and public service. A multi-disciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates an open exchange of ideas, information and experiences among industry leaders and policymakers with a goal of creating healthy, equitable and sustainable communities. More than 1,300 members represent the Boston/New England District Council.