



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

Notice is hereby given that the City of Wisconsin Rapids is seeking a qualified consulting firm to provide professional planning and urban design services in preparation of the Downtown Master Plan.

## RFP SCHEDULE

The RFP can be found on the City of Wisconsin Rapids website at the following link:

<https://www.wirapids.org/downtown-master-plan.html>

Proposal submittal deadline:	<b>February 23, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. CST</b>
Interviews for selected consultants:	<b>Week of March 4 – March 8</b>
Common Council approval of selected consultant:	<b>April 16, 2024</b>

Proposals shall be submitted no later than 4:00 p.m. CST on the above date and addressed to:

Kyle Kearns, Director  
Community Development Department  
Wisconsin Rapids City Hall  
444 West Grand Avenue  
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-2780

An electronic copy of submitted materials must also be emailed to [kkearns@wirapids.org](mailto:kkearns@wirapids.org)

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

The City of Wisconsin Rapids Community Development Director will respond to written or emailed requests concerning the project by February 16, 2024. All questions and answers will be shared on the City website project page: <https://www.wirapids.org/downtown-master-plan.html>. Responses may be through mail, email, phone, or virtual meeting. Do not attempt to contact other City staff members regarding your submittal or any other related submittal.

Kyle Kearns, Director  
Community Development Department  
Wisconsin Rapids City Hall  
444 West Grand Avenue  
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-2780  
[kkearns@wirapids.org](mailto:kkearns@wirapids.org)  
715-421-8225

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## I. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Wisconsin Rapids is seeking a qualified professional planning firm or consultant (“the Consultant”) that specializes in urban design to facilitate a community planning process that culminates in a downtown master plan (“the Plan”) for the City of Wisconsin Rapids downtown. Wisconsin Rapids City staff (“the City”) will serve as a lead on the public outreach/stakeholder engagement efforts and the Consultant will lead creation of the document including identification of overarching themes, catalytic projects, and opportunities, which will result in a planning document that includes a detailed implementation plan.

### BACKGROUND

The City of Wisconsin Rapids is located in Central Wisconsin in southeastern Wood County . It is the county seat and one of two of the largest urban centers in the county with a population of 18,877 (2020 Census), and a regional population of approximately 45,000. Historically, the City’s primary industries have included manufacturing and agricultural uses. The Verso Paper Mill closure in 2020 resulted in a loss of 900 jobs. Agriculture (primarily cranberries) and other manufacturing and industrial based uses continue to thrive. The City finds itself at a crossroads economically with the desire to both lean into its industrial and manufacturing heritage and also to move forward economically welcoming new industries and opportunities. The desire for downtown Wisconsin Rapids is to become an interconnected, activated core, experiencing a sharp uptick in redevelopment and space activation. The result would include a mix of successful business establishments, a variety of housing options, and third spaces.

Previous planning for the downtown includes the 2009 Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Waterfront Plan. Many of the goals and objectives outlined within the plan have been realized since its completion.

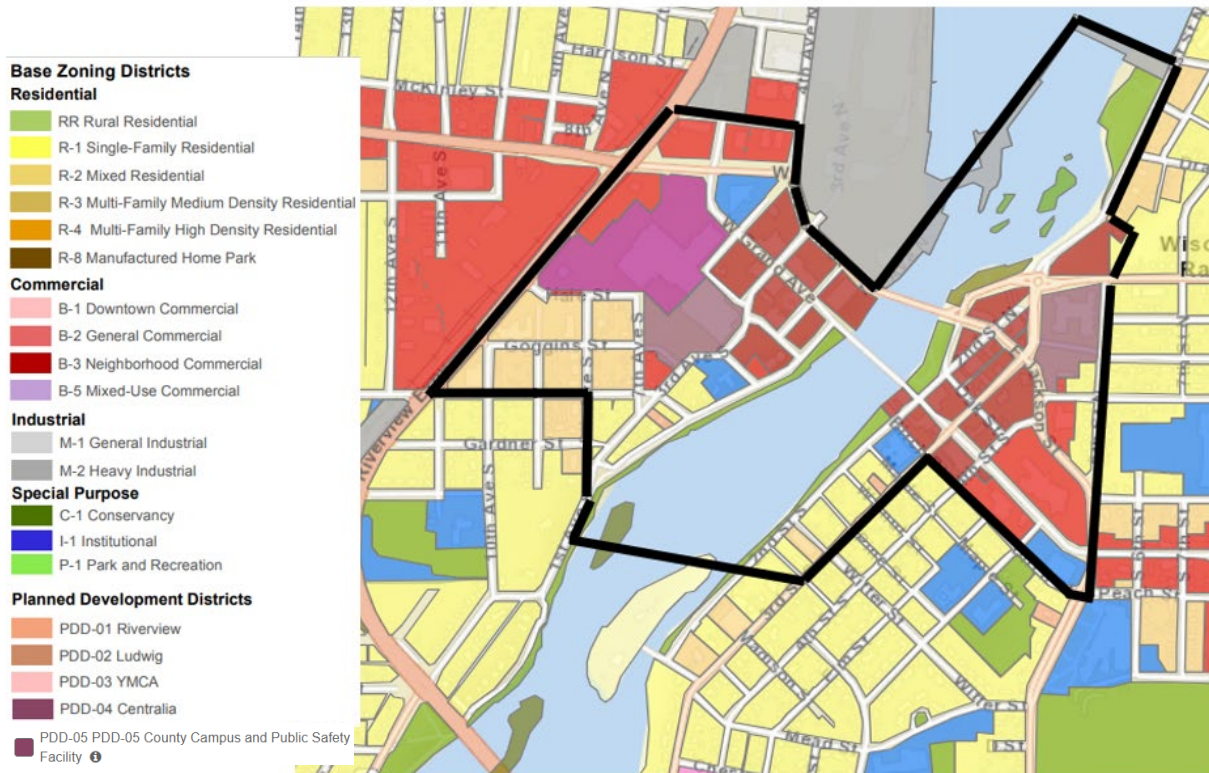
- Development – successful mall redevelopment project, expansion of the Wood County Campus, and façade improvements
- Placemaking – successful planning and installation of a comprehensive wayfinding signage project, installation of riverfront park improvements
- Bike/Ped Infrastructure – colored and textured pavement along sidewalks and in crosswalks; installation of two roundabouts (Baker Street and Jackson Street), and creation of a defined pedestrian route to connect downtown to the newly expanded Witter Park

This Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Plan will be a newly created planning document that will continue to build upon this momentum and clearly establish and identify a new vision,

overarching themes, catalytic projects, opportunities, and a clearly outlined implementation plan.

## PROJECT AREA

The 2009 Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Waterfront Plan project area is depicted below. The new Plan would include a reassessment to determine if these project area boundaries still provide the best context for downtown. The project area is approximately 230 acres, including approximately 160 land acres. A majority of the planning area falls within Wisconsin Rapids Tax Increment District (TID) 7.



Downtown Wisconsin Rapids includes three of the City's five Planned Development Districts (PDD's).

- PDD-03 YMCA – a successful redevelopment of a mall resulted in a YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and VA clinic. This community space is heavily utilized.
- PDD-04 Centralia – this multi-use center includes the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), Lowell Senior Center, Park Place Adult Day Services, Wisconsin Rapids Community Media, and Wisconsin Rapids Community Theatre. This community space is also heavily utilized.
- PDD-05 County Campus and Public Safety Facility – this is a newly created PDD that was done in conjunction with the recently approved jail expansion that is currently under construction. The Wood County Courthouse, jail and several county offices are located

in downtown Wisconsin Rapids. Creation of a more defined county campus to include wayfinding, land use continuity, and adequate transportation and circulation access, will be included in the Plan.

In addition to the PDD's described above, the downtown contains a defined commercial core, with historic shops and commercial buildings that occasionally contain residential and office spaces above. The City became a Certified Local Government (CLG) Community in March of 2023. It is the hope that through education and eventual access to historic tax credits that many of these buildings will continue to be retained and maintained appropriately. There are larger commercial parcels including the Hotel Mead and Conference Center, which is the City's largest hotel and is currently listed for sale. A mix of institutional uses exist downtown, including neighborhood churches that happen to be substantially public facing, Wisconsin Rapids City Hall, and the McMillan Memorial Library, which recently underwent extensive renovation that included a makerspace and public meeting and study rooms. A mix of housing exists to the south.

The Wisconsin Rapids Farmers Market is hosted twice per week seasonally from May to October in downtown Wisconsin Rapids. The market moves indoors during winter months into the Wisconsin Rapids Moravian Church. Wood County hosts the market and has collected survey data for feedback on securing a more permanent location. Several popular events are hosted in downtown Wisconsin Rapids including Lunch by the River, which includes food trucks and live music/performances; parades; and two 5k/10k run/walks.

## BUDGET

The total budget for the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Master Plan is **\$72,000** including reimbursable expenses (e.g. travel).

## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF SERVICES

The goal of the planning process is to provide a vision for the Wisconsin Rapids downtown and tactical strategies and recommendations to realize this vision. These strategies and recommendations will include, but not be limited to, planning for land development and redevelopment, transportation infrastructure, and placemaking. The vision as outlined in the plan will be arrived at through stakeholder engagement, community outreach, and professional advisement. The Consultant will NOT be responsible for all tasks associated with the development of the plan (see further clarification in the scope of services below).

## OBJECTIVES

The Plan will include several components to arrive at the strategies and recommendations described above.

- The Plan will include a summary of planning documents related to the planning area and include a synopsis of items that have been completed since the last plan. This will help to establish a framework to indicate both successes and area of need.
- The Plan will include an analysis of current conditions in Wisconsin Rapids formed through demographic data and economic market data. This will assist to identify area needs, highlight development opportunities, and establish priorities for public infrastructure.
- The Plan will outline the planning process and timeline, public engagement strategy, and seek to identify small mapped areas of concentration within the downtown.
- The Plan will seek to identify overarching themes/big ideas.
- The Plan will identify 6-8 key catalytic projects which will likely be broken down as follows:
  - 4-6 priority redevelopment areas
  - 1 priority street redesign
  - 1 priority public space area
    - All priority areas described above will include detailed renderings that will be fleshed out through the stakeholder meeting and community engagement process.
- The Plan will identify additional opportunities such as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, placemaking, historic preservation, a parking analysis, and sustainability.
- The Plan will include an implementation plan with a timeline for specific goals, objectives, and policies, with assignments and potential funding sources.

## SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Plan will be developed as a collaborative effort between the City and the Consultant. The Consultant will NOT be responsible for all tasks associated with development of the Plan. The City will lead the stakeholder outreach and public engagement activities and present and share the summary findings with the Consultant. The role of the Consultant will be to utilize the data to develop the overarching themes/big ideas and to identify catalytic projects and provide design and illustration services for various possibilities within these areas. This includes, but is

not limited to, the preparation of maps and diagrams to illustrate major concepts of the plan and conceptual design and renderings for 6-8 key project areas or corridors identified through the planning process. It is anticipated that the catalytic projects will include 4-6 priority redevelopment areas, 1 priority street redesign, and 1 priority public space area.

The specific scope and associated tasks required of the Consultant may be adjusted during contract negotiations based on the qualifications of the selected consultant, budget, schedule, and further refinement of goals and objectives. However, it is anticipated that the scope of work will align closely to tasks and deliverables at various stages of project development as identified below.

TASK	2024					2025												
	PHASE 1					PHASE 2					PHASE 3							
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Release RFP	█	█																
Review proposals/ interviews			█															
Select consultant				█														
Contract review/approval				█														
Project kick-off					█													
Begin public engagement					█													
Begin work with consultant						█	█											
Public visioning							█	█	█									
Review design concepts							█	█	█									
Development recommendations										█	█	█	█					
Finalize document														█	█	█	█	█

**Phase 1 (January – May 2024)**

City staff to coordinate all Phase 1 meetings. Staff will coordinate an online survey and online public engagement platform to include public feedback, mini-surveys, and shared links and document updates.

**Stakeholder One-on-One Meetings**

- Identify stakeholder issues and opportunities

**Stakeholder Meeting #1**

- Staff to provide a review of overarching plan goals, layout, timeline

- Review potential priority redevelopment areas, priority street redesign areas, and priority public spaces
- Review public engagement strategy (to include preliminary issues and opportunities survey)

#### **Focus Group Meeting #1**

- Comprised of representative from each aldermanic district
- Identify issues and opportunities

#### **Community Meeting #1**

- Downtown Master Plan kick-off meeting

A summary of public engagement findings and raw data to be delivered to the Consultant.

#### **Phase 2 (June - December 2024)**

Consultant to coordinate Stakeholder Group Meeting #2 and Community Meeting #2. Staff to coordinate all other Phase 2 meetings.

#### **Staff and Consultant Meeting (virtual – to occur on a monthly basis through Phase 2)**

- Consultant will provide an overview for structure and desired outcomes of the Community Visioning Meeting
- Consultant will provide an overview of preliminary rendering for priority redevelopment, street redesign, and public space areas
- Consultant will provide staff with a detailed implementation plan
- Consultant will provide documents/information for various benchmarks as described

#### **Stakeholder Group Meeting #2 (virtual)**

- Consultant will provide an overview for structure and desired outcomes of the Community Visioning Meeting
- Consultant will provide an overview of preliminary rendering for priority redevelopment, street redesign, and public space areas

#### **Community Meeting #2 (in-person)**

- Community meeting to include visioning and discussion about the various renderings prepared by the Consultant
- Through discussion, begin to shape plan recommendations

#### **Focus Group Meeting #2**

- Review design concepts and identify recommendations



### **Stakeholder Group Meeting #3**

- Prioritize recommendations and review draft document

### **Phase 3 (January - June 2025)**

City staff to coordinate all Phase 3 meetings.

### **Community Meeting #3**

- Review final recommendations
- Review plan components

### **Stakeholder Group Meeting #4**

- Review final document

### **Plan Adoption**

## PLAN CONTENT

The Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Master Plan will include the following:

#### A) Introduction

- a. Comprehensive review of past planning efforts related to downtown
- b. What items have been developed from the 2009 Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Waterfront Plan

#### B) Existing Conditions

- a. Demographic data
- b. Market data
- c. Development patterns
- d. Physical conditions/building use inventory (staff to complete/consultant to prepare the graphic)

#### C) Planning Process

- a. Identify planning process and timeline
- b. Outline stakeholder outreach/public engagement strategy
- c. Establish small downtown areas, for example:
  - i. Community Confluence – Centralia, Moravian Church, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, VA Clinic, City Hall
  - ii. Commercial Core – business district/Downtown Commercial (B-1) District Zoning
  - iii. Riverfront Neighborhood – parking, Farmer’s Market, housing
  - iv. Wood County Campus

- D) Overarching Themes/Big Ideas
  - a. Identify elements of the plan that deserve the most attention arising from stakeholder engagement and community outreach.
- E) Catalytic Projects
  - a. A total of 6-8 detailed urban design renderings and project descriptions will be provided, likely to be broken down as follows:
    - i. 4-6 priority redevelopment areas
    - ii. 1 priority street redesign
    - iii. 1 priority public space
- F) Opportunities
  - a. Various opportunities will be identified and ideas further built out and expanded, will likely include, but not be limited to:
    - i. Commerce and industry
    - ii. Housing
    - iii. Bicycle/pedestrian planning and infrastructure
    - iv. Historic preservation/façade improvement
    - v. Land use connectivity and transition
    - vi. Placemaking including public art
    - vii. Sustainability
- G) Recommendations
  - a. Recommendations for overarching themes, catalytic projects, and opportunities will be summarized.
- H) Implementation
  - a. A detailed implementation plan will be outlined including a timeline, project lead, and potential funding sources.

## DELIVERABLES

1. Preliminary Plan – Provide the City an electronic format of the Preliminary Plan including maps, graphics, public input, and survey data and recommendations.
2. Final Plan –Provide the City one digital copy that can be edited for future updates. The final plan shall also include an electronic package of original file types for images, videos, graphics, charts, models, tables, maps (shapefiles, etc.), and any other supporting documents.
3. **Detailed invoices must be submitted for services rendered.** Reimbursement will be made based on services and costs outlined in invoices. All activities contained on the invoice for reimbursement must be allowable as per the scope of work outlined in this RFP. Unapproved activities will not be reimbursed.

### III. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The proposal should describe your approach to the project Plan. The proposal should provide enough detail to enable the oversight committee to thoroughly evaluate and compare it with other proposals. It should include the following information and any other information your firm believes is pertinent to this project.

1. Provide a description of your firm's work approach to the tasks and objectives identified in the Scope of Services. Any concepts, techniques, and tools which your firm intends to utilize in the project should be included. Describe your firm's competitive edge.
2. Identify data that will be needed in the project.
3. Describe your firm's intended relationship with City Staff and the oversight committee, and other partners, including the level of assistance anticipated for completion of the proposed necessary tasks.
4. Provide a description of all additional subcontracts and associations with other firms your firm proposes to utilize in the performance of this work. Explain fully the intended working relationships and responsibilities of each firm, and the number of projects worked on together.
5. Provide a cost estimate of professional fees which include direct labor costs, any mark-up for fringe benefits, overhead, profit, and other direct expenses such as transportation, housing, printing, and per diem for the design as indicated in the Scope of Services.
6. Provide a list of references for projects which your firm and firm teams have completed in other communities which are similar in scope. The dates during which the projects occurred should be included, as well as the type of project, budgets, and contact information.
7. Provide 1-3 samples of comparable projects undertaken by the Project Manager your firm is proposing for this project. The Project Manager is defined as the person designated as having day-to-day responsibility to perform the work or to supervise the work of others very closely in the development of this project. Digital samples are acceptable.
8. Provide resumes of all professionals who will be actively working on this project. Resumes should list related project experiences and general project duties.

#### PROPOSAL SPECIFICS

1. Any restrictions on the use of data or any proprietary or other information contained within a proposal must be clearly stated in the proposal itself. Non-disclosure cannot be guaranteed at any stage of this procurement due to public records law considerations,

- although the City will protect such information to the extent allowed by law
2. The City reserves the right to reject in whole or in part any and all proposals, to waive any informalities, to negotiate directly with proposers, and to accept the proposal that, in the City's sole discretion, is determined to be in the best interest of the City. This request for proposal may also be canceled in whole or in part if determined to be in the best interest of the City.
  3. Submit Seven (7) copies of the proposal within a single sealed envelope or container. The **outside** lower-left corner of the envelope should have the following notation: "**PROPOSAL FOR WISCONSIN RAPIDS DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN**"
  4. Proposals shall be received by **4:00 P.M., February 23, 2024**, by:  
Kyle Kearns, Director  
Community Development Department  
Wisconsin Rapids City Hall  
444 West Grand Avenue  
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495  
(715) 421-8228

An electronic copy of submitted materials must also be emailed to [kkearns@wirapids.org](mailto:kkearns@wirapids.org)

5. The City of Wisconsin Rapids will respond to written or emailed requests concerning the project. Responses may be through mail, email, phone, or virtual meeting. These questions shall be directed to Kyle Kearns, 444 West Grand Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495, (715) 421-8225, [kkearns@wirapids.org](mailto:kkearns@wirapids.org) no later than 4:00 p.m. February 16, 2024. Answers to questions which are determined to be relevant and helpful for other proposers will be posted on the City's website project page (below) by February 24, 2024. <https://www.wirapids.org/downtown-master-plan.html>
6. All planning work shall be completed within 16-20 months of issuance of the notice to proceed.
7. All proposals shall become the property of the City.
8. The proposal must remain open and valid for at least 90 days from the deadline specified for submission of proposals. In the event the award is not made within 90 days, the City will send a written request to all proposers deemed susceptible for award asking proposers to hold their price firm for a longer period of time.

#### **PROPOSAL DUE DATE**

Responses to the RFP will be due in the Community Development Department by **4:00 p.m. February 23, 2024**. Proposals received after that day and time will **NOT** be accepted. Actual receipt by said time is required and deposit in the mail is insufficient.

#### **IV. SELECTION PROCESS**

The consultant selection process will involve the evaluation of the consultant's responses to the elements of the proposal described above. The project oversight committee will review proposals and may hold interviews before selecting an experienced consultant to develop the Plan and initiate implementation. City staff, leaders from regional entities, elected officials, and representatives from other agencies may make up the oversight committee.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

The oversight committee will consider the following criteria in the evaluation of the proposals and any subsequent interview presentation:

1. Background and experience of the firm and personnel, including demonstrated contribution to a multidisciplinary design process (planning, urban design, engineering, and landscape architecture).
2. Past record of performance of the firm and project team on similar projects, e.g. demonstrating actionable means of the creation of economic vitality in similarly sized community downtown districts, including the status of implementation of these projects.
3. Demonstration of expertise in creating design concepts and scenarios for catalytic sites with constructability in mind.
4. Understanding of infrastructure improvements, funding/grants, and implementation considerations.
5. Quality and content of the written proposal.
6. Ability to complete the project within the necessary time frame.
7. Cost of project.

## INSURANCE

If selected, the consultant shall provide appropriate levels of insurance coverage, as required, by the City in an agreement for services.

## HOLD HARMLESS

Consultant hereby agrees to release, indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the City of Wisconsin Rapids, their elected officials, officers, employees, and agents from and against all judgments, damages, penalties, losses, costs, claims, expenses, suits, demands, debts, actions and/or causes of action of any type or nature whatsoever, including actual and reasonable attorney's fees, which may be sustained or to which they may be exposed, directly or indirectly, by reason of personal injury, death, property damage, or other liability, alleged or proven, resulting from or arising out of the performance of Consultant, its officers, officials, employees, agent or assigns.

The City of Wisconsin Rapids does not waive, and specifically reserves, its right to assert any and all affirmative defenses and limitations of liability.

## V. ATTACHMENTS

Links:

1. Wisconsin Rapids Comprehensive Plan  
[https://www.wirapids.org/uploads/1/0/3/3/103347874/adopted\\_full\\_comp\\_plan\\_-\\_2018\\_-\\_reduced.pdf](https://www.wirapids.org/uploads/1/0/3/3/103347874/adopted_full_comp_plan_-_2018_-_reduced.pdf)
2. Wisconsin Rapids Interactive Zoning Map  
<https://wisconsinrapids.zoninghub.com/home.aspx>
3. Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Waterfront Plan  
[https://www.wirapids.org/uploads/1/0/3/3/103347874/downtown\\_riverfront\\_plan.pdf](https://www.wirapids.org/uploads/1/0/3/3/103347874/downtown_riverfront_plan.pdf)
4. Wisconsin Rapids Riverfront Park Plan  
[https://www.wirapids.org/uploads/1/0/3/3/103347874/copy\\_of\\_may\\_2\\_riverfront\\_presentation.pdf](https://www.wirapids.org/uploads/1/0/3/3/103347874/copy_of_may_2_riverfront_presentation.pdf)
5. City of Wisconsin Rapids Housing Study and Needs Assessment  
[https://www.wirapids.org/uploads/1/0/3/3/103347874/housing\\_study\\_and\\_needs\\_assessment.pdf](https://www.wirapids.org/uploads/1/0/3/3/103347874/housing_study_and_needs_assessment.pdf)
6. Wisconsin Rapids Recovery and Redevelopment Plan  
<https://www.wirapids.org/recovery-and-redevelopment-plan.html>
7. Wisconsin Rapids Public Art and Creative Placemaking Plan  
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/34e1342cb7d14073b7fc18057355a48f>
8. April 2023 UniverCity Alliance article <https://university.wisc.edu/2023/04/11/university-year-projects-propel-wisconsin-rapids-toward-public-arts-culture/>
9. Safe Routes Project Wisconsin Rapids  
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d6fbb92d5839425e98b653481f3a6ac6>
10. Safe Routes Project Wisconsin Rapids webinar  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLCN8Ab0mXE>