

DOWNTOWN MASON MILE

Where *progress* and *nostalgia* meet

The Mason Mile project is a community led, market driven project. We are honoring our history while building into the future a fresh, healthy, and sustainable place for people to live, work and play.

Update for City Council – Monday February 13, 2023

Work Completed to Date

Work completed by the team to date includes field reconnaissance and review of past documentation, plus initial baseline analyses and stakeholder input. Since the kick-off meetings held in December, the following has been accomplished:

- Office Market Analysis - RGDE completed initial work on an Economic Baseline Assessment as well as an Office Market Analysis. When the market analysis is complete, this information will forecast the Mason Mile's potential for certain employment-generating businesses and development of office space.
- Existing Development Context - Simultaneously, Common Ground has reviewed existing land use, zoning, natural features, and development regulations in order to assess the general development context in the Mason Mile.
- Stakeholder Engagement - In addition to the office market analysis and existing development context work that is taking place, community stakeholders have been engaged with the consulting teams in various ways. Examples of the community involvement include, but are not limited to, the several focus groups that were held the first week of February with various groups including downtown restaurant & retail business owners; real estate brokers, developers, downtown property owners; and downtown area residents. In-person meetings were also held with the MADECDC Board and with the Project Advisory Council. Interviews have also been conducted with individual business and property owners, real estate brokers and others who are providing information and input. Several meetings have been facilitated such as the Mason Mile Quarterly Meetup that took place on February 2nd, that had around 50 people in attendance, to discuss this effort and to gather input on the proposed Activation Campaign. Further meetings will be held soon with larger businesses and major employers. The key observations and takeaways from the consultants on those meetings include:
 - An appreciation of the community being included in the process and of being kept well-informed of progress on the plan.

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- Direct community input on the market, business & development opportunities and challenges, the regulatory environment, and other topics to help guide strategies in the plan.
- Direct community input on selecting the branding and approach for the Activation Campaign.
- The communities desire to remain involved and have an overall positive attitude about the Mason Mile and the planning effort.
- The Activators will be given specific assignments to help implement the Activation Campaign.

Communications

The BLDG consulting team has developed an Activation Campaign in coordination with stakeholders in order to communicate about the planning effort and engage with the broader community. The campaign gained input through meetings with the MADECDC Board, the Project Advisory Council, and the residents who attended the Mason Mile Activator Meeting and Quarterly Meetup. Key elements include the following:

- The process is branded as “MAKE THE MILE,” which was well-received by the various stakeholders.
- Branding elements were developed and summarized into two finalists, with the final version selected to include a highly visible “brick” theme that was preferred because of its eye-catching graphics and a nod to the concept of making or building something together. The selected concept also evoked the City’s heritage while also stepping away to create something new.

Work Underway This Month

- Implementation of the Activation Campaign to raise awareness of the strategic planning effort among the general public. Yard signs and other materials will be developed in coordination with the MADECDC and local vendors. The community activators will play an important role in helping to spread the material throughout the area.
- Follow-up Meetings will be held, including a focus group with large businesses and major employers, to gain information and insights. Additional interviews will be held virtually with more businesses and real estate professionals, as well as representatives of municipal departments as necessary.

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- The Residential Market Analysis is underway, with initial findings anticipated in early-to-mid March on the housing potential within the MASON MILE.
- Overall Branding and Place Making work will continue, building on the findings from the Activation Campaign, stakeholder input, and further output generated from the market analyses.

Thank you to everyone that has been involved thus far and thank you Mason City Council for partnering with us to make all of this happen. We are honored to build on all of the good work that's been done over the years and continue to move at the speed of trust.

For those interested in more details on the project as they become available, please visit our website at madecdc.org/downtownmasonmile, join our Facebook group, attend a quarterly meetup, or get involved by becoming a project activator.

Downtown Mason Mile Team of Teams/Community Engagement Effort:

The administrative staff consists of **Sherry Taylor** (Executive) and **Sidney Hayes** (Project Manager). The Downtown Mason Mile Volunteer Core Team consists of: **David Charpentier** (Lead/Teams Champion), **Kacey Richards** (Board liaison/Governance Team Champion), **Annie Droege**, and **Chris Heim**. Consulting team consists of **Randall Gross Development Economics (RGDE)**, **BLDG Brands**, & **Common Ground Urban Design & Planning**.