

2022-2023 Mason Mile Conceptual Master Development Plan



RFP Posted: June 28, 2022

Response Due: July 15, 2022

Introduction

MADECDC is seeking proposals from qualified firms for professional planning services, community engagement and facilitation, and marketing and placebranding to complete a robust community engagement process to inform the development of a conceptual master development plan for the Mason Mile. Guided by the Downtown Mason Mile Guidebook, the selected consultant(s) will be responsible for assisting the MADECDC Board with developing a brand for the Mason Mile that is supported by SMART and community shepherded goals and vision for appropriate growth.

There is no expressed or implied obligation for MADECDC to reimburse responding firms for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to the request or for attending any meetings or conferences related to preparing or presenting proposals. To be eligible for consideration, the proposing firm(s) must be capable of providing the services described herein and must meet all other criteria outlined in this Request for Proposals (RFP). Firms are eligible to respond to any one, two, or all three areas of services needed as outlined in the Mason Mile Project Scope of Work.

MADECDC Background

In 2018, following nearly 20 months of broad-based participation, coordinated by consulting firm, Market Street Services, the Mason-Deerfield, Ohio (MADE) region published its holistic, consensus-based, Strategic Action Agenda. Its purpose was to initiate a collaborative effort toward building a stronger, more competitive community for jobs, talent, and investment.

One important recommendation that came out of the action agenda was for the Mason Deerfield Chamber to create a connected non-profit to advance regional community development initiatives. Several members of the steering committee, in partnership with the Downtown Mason Association Board of Directors and MADE Chamber Board of Directors established MADECDC, a 501c3 non-profit community development corporation, to focus and coordinate public and private efforts to grow our region into a more globally recognized, dynamic, healthy, and resilient place.

With a goal to create a unified community vision for the MADE region, the first priority for MADECDC was to develop a Strategic Prosperity Plan (SPP) that would aggregate plans from across the MADE Region's organizations, create a framework for long-term success, and utilize available resources to grow our community.

The strategy being implemented by the SPP has a sectional (i.e., a portion of the region) focus. It relies on identifying places where conditions indicate underperformance can be remedied by employing existing resources and attracting new ones to enhance capacity, improve assets, increase property values, and create on-going economic and social activity. A list of criteria was established to identify and prioritize projects or places from across the Region in which to work, and four places have been identified for consideration.

Within those sections/ places, MADECDC intends to initiate projects to address underperforming conditions using existing or newly created programs implemented via two techniques: **community development** and

private/public partnerships. As progress is made on those projects in those places, the people who live and work there will have a greater opportunity to increase their wealth, improve their health, and contribute to the overall quality of life of the community. This approach presumes that improved outcomes in those sections of the Region will have a secondary effect of contributing to improved conditions in the MADE Region as a whole. Each program will identify its vision; outline a strategy and approach; and identify a tactical plan for implementation including the resources needed. MADECDC's first regional project is the refresh of the Downtown Mason Mile.

Mason Mile Background

In 2019, MADECDC in partnership with the MADE Chamber engaged the community to discuss its vision for the future of the MADE Region. Its goal was to capture data, conversations, and recommendations from a diverse group of stakeholders across the region, to look for shared themes and commonalities from residents, employers, workers, students, and visitors regarding their experiences in Mason and Deerfield, and to provide greater specificity to future goals that represent specific industries & communities within the MADE Region. These stakeholder engagement meetings included individuals from:

- Local Government
- Public Safety Services
- MADE Region Schools
- Workforce
- Property Owners
- Religious Institutions
- Healthcare & Senior Services
- Attraction & Tourism Industry
- Arts & Culture Organizations
- Other Institutions, Groups & Key Influencers

This process resulted in hundreds of enthused community members engaging in dialogue to share their vision for the future. It identified a number of shared perspectives about the community, as well as hopes for the future. This public input provided a clear public perception that **the Mason brand represents a strong, growing, vibrant community** in many respects, save one notable exception: its downtown, or city heart. Summarized, public feedback regarding Downtown Mason included:

- Tired, not vibrant, a pass-through rather than a destination;
- Vacant, underused properties & buildings;
- Older but generally not historic feel;
- Smattering of stores, limited restaurants;
- Little to no foot traffic; minimal attractive gathering spaces;
- Several out of place offerings
- State highway runs thru town; heavy with rush hour traffic;
- Needs help and stable leadership

Even a cursory glance at economic conditions in Downtown Mason shows they lag the MADE Region and are out of line with the City's and the Region's brands. The City of Mason, the MADE Region, and its residents should be very wary when the center of their community conveys an impression that is inconsistent with the community's brand promise. Ed Burghard, 33-year veteran brand manager from Procter & Gamble who served three Ohio governors as leader of the Ohio Business Development Coalition, and world-renown place branding expert, describes brand as "a promise that sets an expectation of an experience," and goes on to posit a challenge of which all branded places should be wary: "Nothing will destroy your community brand equity with a site selector more than an experience that is inconsistent with your community promise."

We want to resolve the problem of having a Downtown that's misaligned to the Mason and MADE brands in our pursuit to strengthen existing businesses and attract world class talent, and we are seeking partners who can help us anchor a vision and direction for years to come.

Phase Two Objectives: The Mason Mile Project planning horizon is ten plus years, and is currently anticipated to have four phases, all of which include specific milestones, yet overlap somewhat in time. Planning phase

one has already concluded, and we are currently in phase two which is where work begins on taking steps to resolve the brand misalignment, set goals to improve neighborhood economics, and further align interests of stakeholders of the community to advance the neighborhood forward.

Vision: We are pursuing a future Downtown Mason that is a vibrant, sustainable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use, cultural, civic & social heart of the MADE Region.

Strategy and Approach: Implement a public (not government) led process that orients toward the future, but doesn't forget to honor our history through community development, placemaking (great design, unique sense of place, walkable and vibrant, interesting architecture, mixture of uses), focus on connecting people to support physical and emotional wellness, private/public partnerships, and project goals and tactics that support extensive collaboration and public participation in the governing of the project and its coordinating organizations in order to foster cooperation and move toward consensus.

Tactical Plan: The residences and businesses whose occupants spend a significant portion of their day up and down Reading Road/Main Street make up the approximately 400 acres in the area of consideration that we refer to as the Mason Mile. The approximate center of the area is the Mason-Deerfield Library at 200 Reading Road, just about ½ mile from its border north/south along Reading and east/west on Main, making the area under consideration approximately one square mile - one reason for the nickname of the Mason Mile. It contains approximately 850 parcels of land; 555 (65%) are residential, 235 (27%) are commercial and 66 (8%) are exempt (owned by non-profits or government).

A preliminary market study and analysis was conducted by following principles developed by Easton & Owens through the American Planning Association that include sufficient walking traffic is necessary for retail centers to thrive, current households within ¼ mile walking distance should establish what the area can sustain in the way of retail space, and in a situation such as ours which would entail infill growth, the goal must be to design an authentic, lively, inviting place, and the key is careful planning and good design. Based on well accepted national planning standards, our preliminary analysis indicates we should be aiming for 1,400 households and 60,000 square feet of downtown shopping and entertainment in the area which will need to be validated through a market study.

We've laid out ten planning considerations that should focus and guide discussion toward the critical issues of redevelopment.

We've committed to create, and continually nourish, a shared vision between local government, neighborhood organizations, developers, and financial institutions through four core processes.

While MADECDC has taken the leadership role in proposing and coordinating this overall project, MADECDC is not directly responsible for selecting which physical redevelopment projects and programs are pursued.

We are pursuing six goals that support our focus areas. Each goal is associated with one or more tasks we intend to tackle during the community development process with the help of engaged community members. When accomplished, these tasks and goals will promote an environment that's ripe for engagement by the private sector through active (re)development projects.

Our attention will be focused on actively encouraging and attracting development projects that deliver: a focus on people, connections, wellness, inclusiveness, walkability and design; better infrastructure like streets, parking & transportation; enhancements to existing neighborhoods and buildings; historic building rehab/preservation; multi-unit residential including for-rent apartments & flats, and for-sale townhouses & flats; multi-story, mixed use retail/office; local, family friendly dining & entertainment.

Mason Mile Project Scope of Work

MADECDC is pursuing a master development framework that incorporates a conceptual development plan (defined boundaries, targeted development themes, rough timeline of order), a market study that supports viability of uses and density goals, identifies most important considerations given where we are, the workable components we should prioritize, some achievable objectives (social outcomes), obstacles to timely execution, and tools to increase effectiveness (i.e., tax subsidies and development techniques), and the community leading the team of teams approach and implementation of the goals and tasks list in the Guidebook.

A preliminary market analysis has been conducted that will need to be validated with the support of downtown redevelopment and community engagement experts. The Mason Mile Project Guidebook draws on prior studies, preliminary market analysis based on fundamental planning concepts, and initial community engagement feedback which laid the groundwork for us to identify the need to develop SMART and community shepherded goals for appropriate growth for our community. Our expectation is to have a qualitative input process (team of teams approach) in combination with a quantitative input process (SMART goals) guided by the initial work we have already done. We are seeking partners willing to come alongside us in our established approach and direction as we develop a conceptual master development planning framework.

Consultants are encouraged to be creative and propose a scope of work they believe best serves the constituents and stakeholders of the Mason Mile.

MADECDC has three main areas of professional service needs for the scope of this project: Planning/Data Gathering; Facilitation/Community Engagement; and Marketing/Placebranding. Firms are eligible to respond to one, two, or all three areas of services needed, but should minimally include elements outlined below.

Planning/Data Gathering Scope of Work

MADECDC is seeking a partner to dive into the data of the Mason Mile area under consideration to assist in the establishment of SMART and community shepherded goals for the neighborhood based on the quantitative and qualitative intersection for success.

- In partnership with the facilitation/community engagement scope, establish the defined area of interest with clearly defined boundaries
- Establish the baseline of the defined area of interest
- Establish SMART goals for the neighborhood, including residential and commercial density goals
- Identify and recommend comprehensive use of realistic funding mechanisms

Facilitation/Community Engagement Scope of Work

MADECDC is seeking a partner to keep the Mason Mile Guidebook on track strategically through structuring of messaging for project leads to educate the public, seek answers to questions in the guidebook at public meetings to inform the planning/data gathering scope of work, facilitate dialogue among the public as needed, conclusion summarize useful information and less useful information of findings, and set expectations for upcoming public meetings and conversations.

- In partnership with the planning/data gathering scope and marketing/placebranding scope, structuring engagement/planning processes to best inform the Mason Mile Guidebook in order to best capture the qualitative and quantitative information needed to translate into action.
- Creating action plans from a redevelopment standpoint that are built in reality to take into context the community's goals, financial feasibility, political feasibility, etc.
- Incorporating strategies that have taken a growing community development corporation from the start-up phase into a mature, effective organization to ensure an established coordinating agency exists

for ongoing project support over the ten year plus planning horizon.

- Designing and implementing effective programs to test the business market and prototype community-based ideas and initiatives.
- Facilitate meetings and discussions with the public and project advisory council as needed.

Marketing/Placebranding Scope of Work

MADECDC is seeking a partner who is a fast thinker who can aggregate public opinion and findings from the planning/ data gathering scope of work and facilitation/ community engagement scope of work with a long-term outlook on the theme/brand creation for the Mason Mile.

- In partnership with the planning/ data effort and community engagement/facilitation effort, identify the brand/theme for the Mason Mile defined area of interest.
- Support the initial standup of the communications strategy and implementation for the neighborhood based on the Guidebook.
- Create demand and identify for the business district through placebranding strategies.

All three professional areas will require the following from the consultant(s):

- Conduct a pre-meeting with Mason Mile Core Team and MADECDC Board and staff to clarify expectations and desired outcomes
- Review relevant documents identified by the Board and staff including Mason Mile Guidebook
- Work with the Mason Mile Project Advisory Council as needed to ensure that there is thorough engagement and understanding
- Provide Mason Mile Project Advisory Council with documentation of findings and preliminary direction as needed

Project Schedule

Proposals must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on July 15, 2022. Proposals received later than the date and time specified will not be considered unless previously arranged. MADECDC assumes no responsibility or liability for late delivery or receipt of responses. In order to be considered eligible for the project, the consultant(s) who would be assigned to the project, must be available in person or by phone/videoconference to respond to questions the week of July 17, 2022. The project(s) will be awarded and terms finalized on July 22, 2022 or a date thereafter. Selection of a consultant(s) under this Request for Proposal does not commit MADECDC to procuring any services pursuant to this Request for Proposal. MADECDC will negotiate contract terms and timelines upon selection.

Proposal Contents, Requirements, and Selection Criteria

The following information is required for the proposal submission(s) to be considered:

- Firm name, address, contact name, title, phone number & email address
- Scope(s) of Work including an outlined approach and strategy to complete the requested Scope(s) of Work
- Cost estimate for the proposed Scope(s) of Work, and any other project-related costs
- Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your firm as it relates to the Scope(s) of Work outlined. Identify the name and title of the primary consultant and any other key team members who will be assigned to this project. For each, provide a summary of qualifications and experience and bio. For each team member, provide the name, telephone number, and email address of at least two references that can attest to the quality and effectiveness of his/her work.

The following criteria will be used in the consultant selection process:

- Strength of project manager and strength/experience of key team members

- Past performance and experience with projects of similar scope and size
- Demonstrated understanding of issues facing the City and region
- Innovative approaches to achieving desired outcomes and working with an agile team
- Value of services proposed for the project budget

Send proposals and questions to Sherry Taylor at connect@madecdc.org or 513-336-0125 on or before Friday, July 15, 2022.