



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT • 1140 Terex Road • Hudson, Ohio 44236 • (330) 342-1790

MEMORANDUM

To: City Council
From: Emily Fernandez, Community Project Planner
CC: Thom Sheridan, City Manager; Greg Hannan, Community Development Director; Frank Comeriato, Asst. City Manager-Operations
Date: January 30, 2024
Subject: **Downtown Master Plan RFP**

Background

Several transformative investments in Downtown, along with an increase in community events, have highlighted an opportunity to plan proactively for long-term design and use of City-owned property in Downtown.

Peg's Foundation purchased the Baldwin Buss House in 2020 and has been working on a multi-million dollar project to restore the historic house, create office space for the foundation, and develop art-focused public space on the Park Lane green. In 2023, Hudson organizations and the State of Ohio invested a combined \$250,000 to restore the historic Boy Scout Cabin at E Streetsboro and S Main. Long-time events such as the farmers market, bandstand summer concert series, HUDSONmART, Christkindlmarkt, Fun at First & Main, and others continue to draw activity to Downtown. Newer special events such as the holiday tree lighting and Veteran's Day ceremony will drive additional use of the greens.

A need has been identified for an effort to improve cohesiveness of the downtown greens and other City property, including considerations of landscaping, lighting, event management, public art, and overall branding. Council authorized \$40,000 in the 2024 budget to seek consultant services for a downtown master plan that would address these considerations.

Downtown Master Plans

Downtown Master Plans, sometimes also called placemaking or revitalization plans, are common in cities. Their primary goal is typically to reimagine public spaces in order to strengthen connections between community members and the physical spaces they share. Such plans often include recommendations to improve landscaping, organize event management and programming, inventory and highlight key assets such as historic properties, incorporate public art, enhance streetscapes, and incorporate strong branding into design decisions. Examples of

strategies from similar plans:

- [Essence of Athens](#)
 - o Enhance public seating with design elements that honor defining features of the City
 - o Beautify the parking garage by incorporating materials in the color of the City flower

- [Downtown Sandusky Master Plan](#)
 - o Incorporate shade trees and an interactive fountain to increase the sense of comfort and play
 - o Enhance streetscape design to create a stronger connection between the key downtown corridor and nearby mixed use district

- [Centerville Uptown Action Plan](#)
 - o Install branded signage to indicate the boundaries of the historic district

The recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan would be highly specific to Hudson’s unique landscape, architectural character, history, and community values.

Community Engagement

Community engagement will be a critical component of the plan process. Staff anticipates a variety of engagement activities similar to those completed during previous plans, such as the Connectivity Plan. The consultant would help design appropriate activities with City staff support on logistics and facilitation. Suggested activities are stakeholder focus meetings, interactive online activities, and popup engagements. Popup engagements would be unique to this effort and could include features like ‘popup parks’ or temporary art installations. The popup locations could be used to hold engagement conversations and to post information about how to share additional input online. A more detailed engagement plan would be determined once a consultant is selected.

Next Steps

The RFP would remain open for about one month to allow for staff-conducted interviews in early April. Staff would then return to Council at the April 23 workshop to report back on the RFP responses, seek confirmation on the preferred consultant, and request authorization to enter into a contract with the recommended firm. Public engagement would begin in early June, with the planning effort expected to last several months and a final plan anticipated by December 2024.

Staff is requesting Council input on the overall RFP and specifically on the Scope of Services (Appendix A of the RFP) in order to proceed with issuing.