

Downtown Dover Strategic Master Plan - RFP Process and Timeline

January 7, 2022

Representatives of the Downtown Dover Partnership (DDP) met with representatives of Mosaic Development Partners (Mosaic) in February 2021 to gauge the firm’s possible renewed interest in redevelopment of the DDP-owned parcel at the former Acme site at 120 S. Governor’s Avenue. A Mosaic representative had visited Dover with interest on that very property approximately eight years ago. While the site remains occupied by Auto Plus Auto Parts and a day care facility, it is an underutilized parcel.¹

At the end of the February 2021 meeting between Mosaic and DDP, it was clear that DDP’s focus on promoting just this one property was simply too narrow. A more encompassing approach to redevelopment of numerous vacant and underutilized parcels within the context of the “heart of Dover” was necessary and would best be considered by developing a master plan that would take into consideration these parcels within the broader context of the commercial district and adjoining neighborhoods.

Therefore, the DDP initiated a thorough RFP (Request for Proposals) process to ensure responses from a broad range of possible vendors, and then the selection of the vendor most qualified to provide the necessary service – development of a community-based, comprehensive, strategic master plan to guide development that, upon implementation over eight to ten years’ time, would transform the heart of the Capital City of Dover.

The RFP was issued in June.² It was widely publicized regionally through traditional news media and the Delaware Planning Association (DPA) and nationally through the American Planning Association (APA) to invite responses from qualified vendors throughout the country. By the end of August, the DDP had received seven responses.

Because the DDP received several inquiries with questions and requests for clarifications during the open bid timeframe, a link was provided to give responders access to DDP responses to those inquiries/³

The DDP invited twenty key leaders and stakeholders from the city that represented both public and private interests to review the responses, giving each the opportunity to be either a “light reader” or a more formal “review panelist.” The latter would require in-depth reading of each response, attendance at multiple panel meetings and vendor presentations, and a key vote in the selection of the most qualified vendor. The “review panel” of eleven members was established and includes: Senator Trey Paradee, Representative Bill Bush, State Planning

¹ To capitalize on the unrealized potential of 120 S. Governor’s Ave., the DDP conceptualized redevelopment of the site over ten years ago to become a mixed-use facility of first-floor retail and upper-floor(s) of residential apartments and also to include a parking component.)

² https://www.downtowndoverpartnership.com/RFP_Dover_Strategic_Master_Plan_6-22-21.pdf

³ https://www.downtowndoverpartnership.com/1-Responses_to_questions_from_vendors_20210723.pdf

Director David Edgell, Choose Central Delaware Executive Director Linda Parkowski, Dover City Councilman Fred Neil, City Manager Dave Hugg, DSU Director of University Center for Economic Development and International Trade Mike Casson, NCALL Operations Manager Will Grimes, DDP Board President Todd Stonesifer, DDP Vice President John Van Gorp, and DDP Executive Director Diane Laird.

The seven responding teams included architectural and urban/city planners, revitalization and marketing/promotions professionals, transportation and community engagement experts, community engagement specialists, and market researchers/strategists. Responders included:

1. Arnett Muldrow & Associates
2. Asakura Robinson
3. Beyer Blinder Belle
4. Benchmark Planning
5. Mosaic Bernardon ESI
6. ESI (Econsult Solutions Inc.)
7. Yard & Company

When the review panelists came together in early September to jointly discuss the proposals of seven responding teams and team qualifications, they unanimously shortlisted three candidates that included Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP of Washington, DC, Mosaic Development Partners of Philadelphia, PA, and Yard & Company of Cincinnati, OH. The three firms were invited to present on site to the review panelists as well as to representatives of other key stakeholder groups, including the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce, Kent County Tourism, and several professionals engaged in the revitalization efforts of the DDP. All those originally invited to participate in the review process were invited to attend and provide input on the on-site presentations, as were professionals that work in related fields with the DDP, the City, and in Delaware.

On-site presenters were provided two hours to present, which included a Q & A and networking opportunities for all. Presentations occurred as follows:

- October 5 – Belle Blinder Belle
- October 21 – Yard & Company
- November 1 – Mosaic Bernardon ESI (Econsult) Kimley Horn Connect the Dots

The review panel reconvened on November 8 to discuss the presentations and presenting teams. It was apparent that qualifications of Mosaic stood out from the others. The ten-member presenting team represented not only the professional subject-matter experts consistent with other responders, but also provided for the investment and redevelopment possibilities that would set the stage for implementation immediately upon completion of the plan. Other factors noted by review panelists indicated that Mosaic was best qualified included:

- visible engagement of a diverse team of professionals familiar with the region, and specifically Delaware;

- ability, experience, and intent to help the DDP secure funding from non-traditional sources (as is their company “niche” or specialty);
- to introduce the DDP to investors – and desire to actually be considered as a potential investor after the plan is complete – to expeditiously begin the redevelopment of key downtown sites;
- experience working successfully in diverse communities.

To underscore that Mosaic Development Partners would like to be considered to be a developer and investor in downtown Dover after the plan is complete, Mosaic Principal Leslie Smallwood commented, “We believe Dover’s diversity and community characteristics fit the profile of a community that we would want to be a part of and would invest in,” and that “ideally a Dover plan must come with an investor mindset from the beginning .” Mosaic’s investment in projects includes a combination of direct investment partnership and local community investment, tax credit financing, grant programs and identifying and securing unique state and federal aid programs, such as low interest loans, tax credits and debt financing.

Mosaic has assembled a highly capable team of professional firms who have significant prior experience in the master planning process. Key team members include the firms of Econsult Solutions Inc. (ESI), a nationally recognized economic impact consulting firm; Bernardon, who ranks among the region’s leading architecture firms, with significant past experience in Dover; Connect the Dots, a Philadelphia based community engagement firm; and Kimley Horn, a nationally renowned transportation and planning firm. The team will work closely with the DDP to conduct a deep analysis of Dover’s existing infrastructure and will hold community engagement sessions and charrettes to discover together the best projects and locations for optimal impact going forward. See page 4 for Project Timeline (January 2022).

The Downtown Dover Partnership is committed to driving an improved quality of life for the residents and visitors of Dover, Delaware, through collective collaboration, economic development and promotion of downtown Dover’s unique historic properties.

For more information about the Downtown Dover Strategic Master Plan:

Downtown Dover Partnership: <http://www.DowntownDover.com> or call 302-678-2940

Mosaic Development Partners: <https://www.mosaicdp.com/>

Econsult Solutions Inc. (ESI): <https://econsultsolutions.com/>

Bernardon: <https://www.bernardon.com/>

Connect the Dots: <https://www.connectthedots.ie>

Kimley Horn: <https://www.kimley-horn.com/>

Jan-22			Feb-22				Mar-22				Apr-22				May-22					Jun-22				Jul-22				Aug-22					Sep-22			
18	24	31	7	14	21	28	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26
LISTEN																																				
Kickoff meeting & communication plan																																				
Key community information gathering																																				
Distribution of digital survey																																				
Identification of key focus groups																																				
Meetings with key stakeholders and focus groups																																				
DISCOVER																																				
Initial city assessment of roads & zones																																				
Understanding of Historic Districts																																				
Zoning evaluation																																				
Data analysis of demographics in Dover and surrounding communities																																				
IDEATE																																				
Assessment of financial incentives and tools																																				
Planning of locations and building design strategy																																				
Planning of open space, buildings, and new developments																																				
Communities/public amenities assessment																																				
Determination of parking, public trans, multi-modal assessment																																				
Retail strategy/ground floor activation strategy																																				
Residential assessment - rental and for sale																																				
PRESENTATION																																				
Compilation of reports & recommendations																																				
Presentation to stakeholders																																				
Feedback & review																																				
Final recommendations to DDP																																				

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