

Mosaic Development Partners/Downtown Dover Partnership

Master Plan Development

Progress Report #1

4-18-22

Introduction

The Downtown Dover Partnership (DDP) selected Mosaic Development Partners (Mosaic) to lead the development of a comprehensive master plan for downtown Dover. The Mosaic team includes:

Bernardon – a full-service architecture, interior design, and landscape firm. Bernardon has expertise in re-imagining communities and implementation in cities such as Allentown, PA. Bernardon is developing transformative concepts for downtown Dover.

KimleyHorn – a top firm in transportation planning. KimleyHorn helps communities determine the best way to move people into and around towns through extensive expertise and study in multi-modal transportation and building destination places.

Econsult Solutions – a leading economic analytical and consulting firm. ESI is leading the market and data analysis and advising on strategic insights and approaches.

Connect the Dots – is a community and stakeholder engagement company. CTD is developing and implementing the community engagement strategy.

Mosaic is leading these partners in an inclusive process to create a strategic master plan for downtown Dover. This is a 10-month process and will include several rounds of iterations and feedback.

Quarter 1

Kickoff Meeting

The Mosaic team and DDP began the process with a kickoff meeting at the Schwartz Center. The community and stakeholders were invited to meet the team and share their thoughts. The meeting was attended by dozens of community members, officials, and organizations. After the official presentation of the Mosaic team, people were able to break into smaller conversations to talk about specific issues with relevant members of the team. This helped the team establish relationships to learn and build upon for future work.

Review of Prior Plans

Our next step in the process was to review the strategic work which was completed before this master plan process. DDP supplied the previous plans to the team. Each relevant team member reviewed the plans to learn what was done in the past including what worked.

The plans we reviewed include:

- Dover Opportunity Zone
- City of Dover Comprehensive Plan 2019
- Dover Transit Center Neighborhood Plan and Design Book
- Dover Capital Gateway Plan and Design Book
- Restoring Central Dover Plan
- Bike-Ped Plans 2017
- DDP-led process for Development of City of Dover Comprehensive Downtown
- Parking Solution
- Downtown Dover Partnership Annual Report

In addition to those plans, gathered key information on:

- Demographic data
- Transportation data
- Downtown Dover maps
- Community safety information
- Population and income data
- Business category data
- Land ownership data

Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Mosaic and DDP coordinated a series of key stakeholder meetings for the month of March. The information gained from these meetings was invaluable. Together with the review of prior plans, we were able to establish a foundation of knowledge from which to operate. Each partner attended meetings relevant to their area of work. Participants included:

Stakeholder Meeting Participants

- ❖ Property Owners
- ❖ Realtors and Real Estate Agents
- ❖ NCALL
- ❖ Habitat for Humanity
- ❖ Dover Interfaith Mission for Housing

- ❖ Bayhealth
- ❖ Dover Police Department
- ❖ Merchants
- ❖ Visit Delaware
- ❖ Axia Hotel Group
- ❖ Westin Wilmington
- ❖ Shaner Hotel Group
- ❖ Delaware Restaurant Association
- ❖ Dover Housing
- ❖ Biggs Museum
- ❖ Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce
- ❖ First State Heritage Park
- ❖ Kent County Tourism
- ❖ Dover City Council Members
- ❖ Kent County Commissioners
- ❖ Dover Air Force Base
- ❖ Dover Residents
- ❖ Delaware Department of Transportation
- ❖ State Planning Director
- ❖ Colonial Parking
- ❖ Becker Morgan Group
- ❖ Delaware State University

Key Insights

From all of these meetings, we learned many key insights to help us in our concept design and master plan preparation. We found a strong desire to be a part of the change to create a new Downtown Dover which attracts people to live, work and play.

What we have learned, initial impressions

- Perceptions of safety are real, even if exaggerated
- Businesses are concerned about generating foot traffic and safety
- Property owners are concerned about renovating properties and the burden of upgrading spaces in older buildings
- Residents are concerned about parking
- Local elected worry about gentrification and housing affordability
- Anchors are concerned about the lack of attractions for their community
- Location economic development officials want a single entity to turn Dover around ie. sports, new theatre programming,
- Three key anchors (Bayhealth, DAFB, DSU) all expressed interest in placing hundreds of their employees and students downtown
- Nonprofits want to provide more affordability

- Most want Loockerman street to be vibrant again
- Most are interested in supporting change that will lead to a vibrant downtown district
- State officials looking for new financing options to jumpstart downtown
- Local officials and business owners interested in ordinances that activate vacant properties

For a detailed list of findings, please see attachment.

Community Engagement

We created an online survey to reach the community. To support this survey, we created signs and sandwich boards to place strategically around downtown Dover. These signs have QR codes to lead residents and visitors to the survey. Mosaic is hosting the survey and will collect and analyze results.

Team Work

Bernardon

- ❖ Reviewed all previous plans
- ❖ Built a map for development
- ❖ Identified several potential development opportunities
- ❖ Researching the potential for the sites

Econsult Solutions

- ❖ Completed a comprehensive market overview
- ❖ Presented concrete examples of financing tools to support the plan
- ❖ Researching potential economic benefits

KimleyHorn

- ❖ Researched all existing conditions
- ❖ Summarizing the mobility network
- ❖ Met with Colonial Parking
- ❖ Reviewed transit opportunities
- ❖ Created a draft of existing conditions

Next Steps

Mosaic and DDP will lead in-person community outreach meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to reach people who are not being captured by the online survey or stakeholder meetings. These meeting will take place in early May.

KimleyHorn is creating a future looking plan which will take into consideration how to accommodate more people, what are the best transportation options, how do we create a more walkable community, and addressing the concerns raised in the stakeholder meetings.

Bernardon is working to identify the detailed work needed for each potential development site. It is developing design solutions and will hold a design charrette with key leaders. From this work, it will begin developing detailed concepts to serve as the foundation for the master plan.

Econsult Solutions will take the potential development sites and plan and build out the economic impacts from each site. They will also investigate and document things DDP and the City of Dover can implement to support the plan.

Attachment A – detailed feedback from Stakeholders

❖ Amenities

- Activate the Schwartz Center
- No enrichment activities for children or families – experiential enrichment
- Leggo land
- Need more dining options – several more restaurants
- Need a place to see film
- Have access to services and support such as doctors and other medical
- More street markets
- Outdoor concerts and artists
- Need a bar and grille
- Need a microbrewery
- Need a modern hotel downtown
- Need river development
- More family events
- Not a lot to do downtown
- A lot of the historical locations are not taking full advantage of who they are and how to attract people – the Golden Fleece Tavern is an example
- No restaurants for lunch
- No real gift shops
- Bike paths and walking trails

❖ Building Conditions

- Need capital to rehab existing properties
- Need capital to replace aging and inadequate infrastructure
- Raise the height limits
- Keep colonial facades

- Go after absentee landlords who don't fix up their places
- ❖ Businesses
 - Need more foot traffic
 - Need to create a better experience to draw people downtown
 - Need things you can't buy on Amazon
 - Bayhealth looking to add floors on hospital and grow
 - Graduate health program – 120 in training within 5 years
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- ❖ General Changes Needed
 - Better branding of Downtown Dover experience
 - Include the community in the planning, sustainability, expansion – comprehensive community involvement in every phase
 - In the past, Creative artists and entrepreneurs are not at the table
 - Advertise the capital
 - Look at Charleston and Williamsburg
 - Need to draw on the richness of the diversity in the community
 - Stronger connection with the university is needed
 - Focus on 25-45 year olds
 - Races are slowly coming together after a history of racial division
 - Need a more effective system of advertising events
 - Need more downtown marketing materials like a simple downtown map
 - People from shelters need access to services
 - More help for low-income, elderly, and those who need access
 - Need lots of job training
- ❖ Housing
 - Need more middle income rentals
 - Need housing to accommodate artists, college students
 - The more people who live downtown the safer it will feel
 - Bayhealth – potential for 500+ team members to live downtown
 - DSU would like to place hundreds of graduate students downtown
 - Need more density
 - Strong demand for quality apartments
 - Many nice housing places have long waiting lists!
 - Need housing for DAFB personnel downtown
 - Need more creative thinking in building capital for affordable housing
 - Need more shelters
 - Mismatch between housing size and the actual family size
 - Need alternative higher density approach
 - Would like to see courtyard style housing and apartments
- ❖ Incentives and Tools to Strengthen Downtown
 - Neighborhood Improvement Zone?
 - Financial Tools
 - Grant money for small businesses
- ❖ Neighborhood/Streets
 - Need more smart lighting
 - Needs to be made much more walkable

- Make Loockerman a pedestrian only street
- Make Loockerman one-way
- Move parking off Loockerman to bring sidewalks out
- Poor sidewalk conditions
- ❖ Parking
 - Need a new comprehensive parking plan
 - Visitors don't know where to park/signs are confusing
 - Need more spaces
 - Need a convenient parking garage
- ❖ Safety
 - Significant homeless problem
 - Too many panhandlers
 - Perception of safety is worse than actual safety
 - More cadets
 - More blue light phones are needed
 - Need merchants to support anti-vagrancy efforts
 - Ensure the path from the car to the attraction is safe
- ❖ Strengths of Downtown Dover
 - Great anchors
 - State capital
 - Bayhealth
 - Dover AFB
 - Delaware State University
 - Historic architecture
 - Walkable downtown
 - Beautiful trees and landscape
 - Downtown Dover Partnership
 - Library
 - Jones River/Mirror Lake
 - Former Wesley College campus
 - Military friendly
- ❖ Transportation
 - Lots of backup on side streets
 - Mass transit not fully utilized
 - No rail service despite a rail present
 - Transportation for airmen
 - Mass transit
 - Weekend and evenings
 - About half have cars
 - Out of dorms they need a car
 - Many don't have vehicles
 - Shuttle service to DAFB, DSU, Bayhealth?
 - Entertainment shuttle
 - Need more consistent public transportation