

**DOWNTOWN DES MOINES (DSM) VISION PLAN AND ACTION PLAN
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP_5.14.2021**

INTRODUCTION

The Greater Des Moines Partnership (The Partnership) in conjunction with the City of Des Moines (City), Polk County (County) and Operation Downtown seek the services of a consulting team with broad experience in visioning, urban design, historic preservation, parking and transportation, market analysis, targeted retail development, citizen outreach and implementation for creation of an inclusive, community-owned new Downtown Vision and Action Plan for Des Moines, Iowa, along with a Strategic Plan for the Downtown business improvement district. The selected consulting team will be expected to use a multi-disciplinary approach that combines local knowledge and leadership with world-class expertise. The consultant will work closely with The Partnership, City and County staff and Downtown Vision & Action Plan Steering Committee to establish the framework, timeline, public outreach and deliverables. The Steering Committee is made up of funding partners, including The Partnership, City, County, Operation Downtown, Bravo Greater Des Moines, Catch Des Moines, Des Moines Regional Transit Authority (DART), Des Moines Downtown Chamber of Commerce, Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and FuseDSM.

The Downtown Vision and Action Plan will ‘roll up’ into a larger regional vision plan ([Capital Crossroads](#)), which will be updated in 2022.

In addition to a Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan, but in conjunction with this Plan and part of the RFP, Operation Downtown, Downtown Des Moines’ business improvement district, seeks a Strategic Plan to clarify vision and mission, and better define its scope of services. The consultant will work closely with the Operation Downtown Board of Directors on this component.

BACKGROUND

Downtown DSM, Iowa, is home to vibrant arts and culture, diverse festivals, fast-paced sports and so much more. Residents, workers and visitors alike can enjoy the activity that makes Downtown DSM the core that strengthens the entire region. Downtown has historically enjoyed serving as the region’s employment center with large corporate headquarters, regional corporate centers and a range of professional and small businesses. It also serves as the center of State, County and local government. This concentration of employees has been a strength of Downtown DSM for decades. Over the past decade, Downtown DSM has seen strong growth as a residential center. Downtown hosts a range of residential options in vibrant neighborhoods that house more than 12,000 people. Some of world's best festivals, events and venues call Downtown DSM home, including the Des Moines Arts Festival®, the World Food & Music Festival, Des Moines’ Downtown Farmers’ Market, Iowa Events Center, the Civic

Center of Greater Des Moines, Science Center of Iowa, Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden and Principal Park (home to the beloved Iowa Cubs baseball team). This combination of activity contributes to a lively hospitality market with a range of hotels and restaurants, some with nationally renowned local chefs.

Greater Des Moines is experiencing rapid growth as one of the fastest-growing Midwest cities in terms of percentage of population, real gross domestic product and employment growth. Data from a Global DSM study completed by Brookings and New American Economy show a large majority of population growth is foreign born individuals. The region's leaders have long recognized that a strong region needs a strong Downtown, and the growth of Greater Des Moines has mirrored the growth of Downtown DSM.

Downtown DSM has a rich history in planning and executing on plans in transparent public/private partnerships. We are looking for a new, collaborative, community-driven Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan to align stakeholders and resources to advance Downtown DSM.

The City, County, partner organizations and community members have spent a great deal of time developing plans and strategies that include or are relevant to Downtown. It is anticipated that the consultant team will review and incorporate these into the Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan, where appropriate, without replicating efforts. The following Vision Plans, Strategic Plans, Studies and Reports are available for reference (items without direct links are available by request). Some of this work has already been completed. Some is in implementation phase. Downtown DSM is ready for the next step and vision for the future.

- 2021 Downtown Asset Mapping Study, currently underway (ISU)
- [Capital Crossroads 2.0 Vision Plan](#)
- [Workforce housing plan](#)
- [Downtown Retail 2030](#)
- [2017 Downtown Retail Assessment](#)
- [Connect Downtown](#)
- [2019 Downtown Annual Business Climate Report](#)
- [2019 Downtown Perception Assessment](#)
- [2017 Regional Cultural Assessment and Metrics](#)
- [Catch Des Moines Tourism Master Plan](#)
- [Des Moines Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan, Live DSM](#)
- [DSM Data Hub](#)
- Downtown / Revitalization District -[Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Program Review](#)
- [Des Moines Downtown Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement District, Operation Downtown \(OD\)](#)

- [CAEL Preparing for Partnership: An Analysis of the Retail Industry in Central Iowa](#)
- [Des Moines Water Works Park Foundation Master Plan](#)
- Downtown Skywalk Improvement Report
- [City of Des Moines Resident Survey](#)
- [Market District of East Village Study](#)
- [MoveDSM](#)
- [InvestDSM](#)
- [PlanDSM](#)
- [DART – System Overview](#)
- Summary overview of major placemaking projects underway in Downtown DSM noted [here](#), with additional links to reports below.
- [Strategic Priority: Central Iowa Water Trails](#)
- [Central Iowa Water Trails Engineering Study](#)
- [Central Iowa Water Trails Economic Impact Study](#)
- Pro Iowa USL Study
- [Strategic Priority: USL Pro Iowa Stadium and Global Plaza Project](#)
- [Strategic Priority: Lauridsen Skatepark](#)
- [Public Market Studies](#) (Historic Firehouse No. 1 findings and ISU research)
- [Youth Connections Report](#)
- [Creative Economy Assessment](#)
- Greater Des Moines Partnership Downtown Branding Research
- Greater Des Moines Partnership Future World of Work Findings
- [“4 Equity” Tool and Overview](#)
- [One Economy Blueprint for Action 2020](#)
- [One Economy Report 2017](#)
- [Des Moines Area MPO: Mobilizing Tomorrow](#)
- [Polk County Housing Trust Fund: Housing Tomorrow](#)
- [Polk County 2050](#)

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND SCOPE

Objective:

The Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan will help position Downtown DSM for short-term economic recovery and long-term economic vitality and vibrancy with the goal of Downtown DSM maintaining its role as the center of the region, leader in the Midwest and an enticing option among U.S. cities. This process and plan will build upon the momentum Downtown DSM had prior to COVID-19, and set up Downtown for future success, benefitting all who live in, work in and/or visit Downtown DSM.

The selected consultant will create a shared vision for Downtown DSM, including implementation strategies to support the vision.

In addition, the selected team will create a Strategic Plan for Operation Downtown, Downtown Des Moines' improvement district, through a collaborative process to help shape their vision and mission and define scope of services.

Budget:

The Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan should be complete, in total, including all meetings, discussion groups, team time, contract labor support, etc. for approximately \$150,000. There is an option to stretch the budget up to no more than \$200,000 if there is an agreed upon need for additional budget to meet goals and deliverables outlined in the scope of work.

Key areas of interest and focus desired in the Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan post-pandemic, include but are not limited to:

- Business attraction and retention opportunities
- Placemaking: Branding and marketing distinct identities for each of the Downtown neighborhoods, including micro-placemaking; Strategic destination retail and locally owned business support; Continued focus on major placemaking projects in the works and potential for future projects.
- Connectivity & Wayfinding: Physical and perceived disconnect between areas of Downtown, including street level and skywalk level, Downtown core, Downtown districts.
- Mobility and pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Activation of public spaces, including green and urban spaces.
- Clean, safe and beautiful initiatives.
- Overall Downtown experience for employers, employees, residents, visitors and surrounding neighborhoods.

Key opportunities to address:

- Ensure the plan is inclusive, community-driven, aspirational and futuristic in thinking about preservation of existing assets and creating sustainability for the future to activate Downtown DSM.
- Leverage existing plans, projects and initiatives already in motion. Identify gaps and opportunities for cohesion and with an understanding that COVID-19 has changed the landscape and sharpened focus on gaps and opportunities that will position Downtown DSM for growth well into the second half of the 21st Century.
- Provide recommendations on how to best take care of what we already have (and what's in the works) including addressing infrastructure, maintenance, operations and usage perspectives.
- Consider recommendations through a sustainability and environmentally conscious lens.
- Input from, and connectivity with, the surrounding neighborhoods is key.
- Action plan outlining key next steps to realize the new Downtown Vision.

Study Area:

- Seeking input from the consultant to define Downtown boundaries through the process. Historically, we have used census tracts 27 and 51. There is an eagerness to expand outreach, strengthen relationships and connections with the surrounding neighborhoods.

Project Approach:

Involving multiple organizations and community users is key to a comprehensive and community-owned vision plan. More than 40 groups from multiple sectors will be consulted for input on the Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan, reinforcing the Community collaboration, interaction and feedback that will help ensure success for the Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan. A list of suggested organizations will be provided to the selected consultant, with an open invitation for the consultant to suggest additional organizations and community members to gather input from in order to achieve the goal of making this process inclusive.

At minimum, for the Downtown Vision and Action Plan to provide meaningful community direction and for this process to be effective, it must include open and meaningful engagement from the Downtown Vision Plan Steering Committee, Downtown Vision Plan Advisory Council (which needs to be fully built-out with consultant(s) input), Downtown business owners and employees, property owners, residents, elected officials, leadership and staff from partner organizations and members of the public, with an emphasis on the Downtown neighborhoods, associations and surrounding neighborhoods. One of the opportunities will be to find inclusive ways to meaningfully engage diverse groups and constituents that may not typically participate in public processes, but who have an interest in the area and can provide useful input and perspectives.

The consultant team should share creative strategies to obtain and conduct public input from a diverse array of perspectives in addition to hosting routine meetings, forums and online surveys in the most efficient and effective way possible. Proposed ideas should be itemized in the RFP. Examples might include engaging the public at the Downtown Farmers' Market and other community gathering places or conducting Downtown tours to gain feedback. Hosting interactive events appealing to all-ages and inclusive of all backgrounds will be critical to this process.

Downtown Vision & Action Plan Scope of Work & Deliverables:

- Make recommendations for how Downtown DSM can recover and proactively build momentum in a post-COVID 19 world to best position Downtown DSM and the surrounding neighborhoods for growth, success and enhanced connectivity.
- Identify and outline an action plan that leverages existing plans in a cohesive way and identifies strategies to build momentum Downtown post-COVID 19 for short-

term (next 24-36 months) and long-term (5-10 years) opportunities specifically for Downtown DSM and the surrounding neighborhoods.

- Complete review of existing plans, research, data and initiatives, including an existing conditions report from Iowa State University which will be complete in June 2021.
- Identify key development sites and catalytic opportunities, including placemaking and unique-to-Downtown DSM experiences and projects.
- Identify any market gaps and note recommended mix of office, retail, residential, hospitality, events and other uses.
- Identify strategies for aligning existing regulations with the Downtown Vision for issues such as zoning, parking, street use and signage.
- Review of existing quality of life amenities and offerings large and small, and recommend what other amenities are desired or needed for future talent and business attraction and retention strategies. (i.e., Projects as large as the Skatepark, Water Trails, Soccer Stadium and as small as dog-friendly outdoor dining or pocket parks.)
- Determine ways to further connect existing projects and amenities with planned projects and amenities, to make Downtown more connected with fewer gaps.
- Identify opportunities for creative public space activation, including consideration of alleyways, public art and temporary street closures.
- Identify potential opportunities to activate pop-up and/or permanent retail opportunities in Downtown.
- Identify enhancement opportunities and economic development potential for properties adjacent to the Downtown (referencing neighborhood revitalization work). Also provide recommendations to create a stronger connection between the near Downtown Neighborhoods and Downtown DSM, as well as Downtown DSM and surrounding communities.
- Identify public infrastructure, parking, transportation and connectivity opportunities, including street level and skywalk level, and incorporation of two-way streets.
- Assess public infrastructure needs and priorities, including mobility/accessibility, connectivity, green spaces, public areas, programmable areas, and best practices that connect pedestrians, bikes, transit, cars and other micro-mobility options to destinations and multimodal parking.
- Recommend ideas and practices with SMART city initiatives in mind.
- Develop strategies for efficient use of private and public parking resources for existing and future development. Provide recommendations on best practices to reduce future parking demand and to reduce negative impacts of parking on placemaking.
- Consider exploring the potential development of an International Business District.
- Recommend multimodal opportunities and future multimodal parking.

- Identify enhancement opportunities and inclusive economic development potential around DART transportation corridors.

Operation Downtown Strategic Plan Scope of Work & Deliverables:

- *Close Collaboration.* Work closely with the Executive Director, subcommittee and the Executive Committee to develop specific details of the planning process, including the timeline, logistics and deliverables. The Executive Committee expects the opportunity to provide suggestions and feedback with respect to the content and structure of board planning sessions.
- *Board Planning Sessions.* Conduct strategic planning sessions with the Board of Directors. Overall planning outcomes should include the review of mission, creation of vision and value statements as well as strategic goals, strategies and key performance indicators reflective of the mission statement.
- *Evaluate existing organizational information,* budget, SSMID petition and other related documents to understand current strategies and assess how they should be included in the Strategic Plan.
- *Inventory existing programs and partnerships* to serve as a baseline to identify service gaps and opportunities for delivery options, partnerships and collaborations.
- *Benchmarking or comparisons* showing other downtown improvement districts and what they do/how they have adjusted over time. Identify comparable and aspirational downtown improvement districts. Compare budgets, mission/vision, scope of services, changes over time, service delivery methods, and other relevant comparisons for Operation Downtown's consideration.
- *Recommendations* based on the above.

Submission Deadline & Proposed Timeline:

- **Friday, May 28: Electronic RFPs due from consultants.**
- **Wednesday, June 2: Hard copies due.** Upon receipt, Greater Des Moines Partnership staff prepares executive summary and shares RFPs with the Steering Committee.
- Week of June 21: Steering Committee interviews selected consultant finalists virtually.
- Week of June 28: Steering Committee notifies consultant(s) of selection.
- Week of July 12: Finalize consultant(s) contract and begin contract(s).
- July 19 – January 2022: Consultant reviews existing plans and conducts public input surveys, sessions.
 - Consultant to keep Steering Committee apprised of progress.
 - October – December: Consultant reviews preliminary findings and recommendations with Steering Committee
- January 2022: Consultant prepares final report.

- Week of February 3: Consultant reviews results and findings with Steering Committee. Consultant hears feedback and makes adjustments to proposed next steps and action plan as needed.
- Week of February 15: Consultant delivers final report with recommendations to Steering Committee.
- Week of March 1: Consultant shares final report with other stakeholders if requested.
- NOTE on timeline: Please include your suggested timeline, if expected to be different from the outline above, in your response.

Intent to Submit a Proposal:

- All interested consultants/firms are required to send an email to the contact below stating interest and identifying a point person as the primary contact for questions/answers and general information updates by May 20, 2021.
- Any questions regarding the proposal may be submitted by email only to the contact below. The deadline for submitting questions is May 20, 2021. All questions will be answered via email and shared with all consultants who have indicated their intent to submit an RFP.

Proposal Submission Requirements:

Respondents should submit two (2) unbound, 8.5x11-inch paper copies and one (1) digital copy of the proposal submittal, not to exceed 40 pages total. The Partnership encourages the use of recycled paper products and double-sided print and discourages the use of plastic products including three-ring binders, plastic folders, etc. for all submissions.

Respondents with a local (DSM area) tie or partner are strongly preferred.

The response should demonstrate a commitment to providing a high level of service, experience, passion and enthusiasm for the project and provide sufficient detail to enable the Selection Committee to thoroughly evaluate and compare it with other responses. The following should be included, at a minimum:

1. Letter of interest.
2. Statement of qualifications, including an executive summary of at least three other plans similar to this plan the firm has worked on, and what key elements each plan included. Provide original budget and timeframe identified when the firm was hired compared to final budget and final timeframe when project was deemed complete. If there is a difference on either budget or timeframe from start to finish, please explain why.
3. Include links to final vision plans and action plans the firm completed prior. Provide up to two references for each example, including contact name, organization, title, email and phone number. Include a description about

innovative methods you have used to broaden public participation and input into the planning process.

4. Firm background, including size, HQ location and a statement verifying your firm's capacity and ability to begin work on the Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan and complete the tasks identified in the "timeframe" section of this RFP.
5. A list of current active projects, including the name, type of project, location, firm's role in the project and status of the project and if the project stayed within budget.
6. Project team details (including sub-consultants and associates) including information on their area of expertise, professional registrations, years of service in their respective field and how each team member would interface with the Steering Committee and staff.
7. Information that demonstrates firm's understanding of the project and Downtown DSM needs, and addresses how the project team proposes to meet those needs, including project approach and methodology.
8. Proposed work plan and timeline. Include an estimated start date, with a detailed phasing timeline and key task list, estimated completion time of each task with the target completion date of March 1, 2022. (Note: If consultant recommends a different timeframe to complete a meaningful Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan, please clearly note this in your submission and why.)
9. An itemized, not-to-exceed cost breakdown of the Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan process, including total travel and material expenses as separate line items and breakouts by consultant. The Partnership staff will work with the selected firm to minimize time and expense related to data collection, scheduling meetings, public engagement opportunities, etc. Please also include estimated staff hours and cost in relation to objectives and methodology for project. Consultants are encouraged to provide as much detail and breakdown of hours and costs as possible for the various scope items.
10. Submit an itemized, not-to-exceed cost breakdown of the Operation Downtown Strategic Plan process separate from the Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan estimate.
11. (Optional) Provide other supporting information you feel may help the Steering Committee further evaluate firm qualifications and fit for completing the Downtown Vision Plan and Action Plan.

Any proposal received after the deadline will not be considered. The proposal should be submitted via email to ttauscheck@DSMpartnership.com and sent to The Partnership office at:

Tiffany Tauscheck
Greater Des Moines Partnership
700 Locust St., Ste 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

EVALUATION

Selection Process:

1. Each proposal submitted within the deadline will be reviewed to ensure whether all required materials have been submitted according to the guidelines set forth in this RFP.
2. The Downtown Vision Plan Steering Committee will serve as the Selection Committee and review the submitted RFPs based on predetermined evaluation criteria as identified below. The qualifications of each consultant and all submitted materials will be evaluated for compliance with the requirements and conditions contained in this RFP.
3. After the Steering Committee completes its evaluation of the submitted proposals, finalists will be selected to take part in an interview process. This interview process will include a brief virtual presentation by the consultant and a question-and-answer session led by the Steering Committee.
4. The Steering Committee will be responsible for selecting the final project partner consultant.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Proposed Approach and Scope of Work, Understanding of Project and Goal for Downtown Des Moines Vision Plan
2. Project Team Qualifications, Related Experience
3. Proposed Workplan and Timely Completion of Project (including engagement strategies and timeframe, and capacity to successfully execute the project as outlined)
4. Proposed Fees and Costs
5. Demonstrated familiarity with local context. Consultant's local knowledge and ability to timely serve the Downtown Vision Plan Steering Committee/Operation Downtown Board of Directors.
6. Commitment to Inclusive Process - Demonstrate a commitment to an inclusive vision plan process with outreach to the neighborhoods and community at-large.
7. Overall Fit and Approach as a Partner

All proposals submitted will become the property of The Partnership. All candidates will be notified of status, regardless of the outcome. The Steering Committee will consider applicants based on qualifications and without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, veteran status, disability, and any other legally protected status. The Partnership and partners reserve the right to not move forward with hiring a consultant for any reason.