Downtown Cleveland’s Main Avenue Bridge

Underpass Improvement Competition

Project Summary

Downtown Cleveland Alliance seeks a creative professional or team (architect, designer, artist, engineer, landscape architect or combination thereof) to propose unique and attractive design solutions for the area under and around the Main Avenue Bridge Underpass, centered at the intersection of West 9th Street and Main Avenue in Downtown Cleveland. This location is a critical pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connection between the Warehouse District and the Flats East Bank, with infrastructure, history, and functional potential to inspire the highest level of creative treatments.

Background

Downtown Cleveland Alliance recently completed a strategic planning process to create a holistic vision and tactical plan for improving the physical connectivity of Downtown Cleveland. The resulting plan, Step Up Downtown, enumerates eighteen (18) key connections where real or perceived gaps or barriers impede the experience of Downtown Cleveland as continuous and traversable. The full plan can be found at www.stepupdowntown.org.

The Project Area lies largely in the shadows of the Main Avenue Bridge, a historic structure widely recognized as an integral part of Cleveland’s rustbelt landscape. Opened in 1939, designed by Cleveland based architects Walker and Weeks and Osborn Engineering (still headquartered in Cleveland today), the Bridge was the longest span in Ohio until the Toledo Skyway was built in 2007. Today, however, the underpass creates a dark and uninviting pedestrian environment as well as a challenge for vehicular wayfinding. It creates division within neighborhoods that could otherwise feel connected as two complementary mixed-use environments.

Downtown Cleveland’s Warehouse District, located just east of the Cuyahoga River, comprises the former wholesale and commercial center of Cleveland. This historic district includes warehouses that contained large hardware distributors, marine suppliers and garment manufacturers; smaller wholesale and retail establishments for dry goods, grocers, and tool suppliers. Major office buildings of the iron, coal, railroad and shipping industries were also centered here.
Today the buildings are filled with loft apartments, businesses, restaurants and entertainment. The tree lined streets bustle with activity as residents, office workers and visitors enjoy all the Warehouse District has to offer.

West 9th Street is a major north/south street of the Warehouse District. Main Avenue is an east/west street that leads from the Warehouse District down to the Flats East Bank, where major redevelopment is underway.

The Flats are a significant part of Cleveland’s history. Once the home of our rich industrial heritage and later a thriving waterfront entertainment district, today the Flats are experiencing another renaissance as a true mixed use environment serving industry, business, recreationists, residents, and maritime interests. On the north side of Main Avenue, a new 23 floor office tower and Aloft Hotel featuring three restaurants opened in 2013. Phase two of this project is soon to be complete, bringing additional office space, 243 residential units, and more restaurants, retail and entertainment to the river front, as well as a public board walk that will provide Downtown with renewed access to the water.

The southwest corner of West 9th Street and Main Avenue is the site of Cleveland’s original lighthouse, and the Warehouse District’s public realm plan includes the creation of a pocket park along West 9th overlooking Main Avenue as it descends into the Flats. This gathering spot would serve the many residents in and around the Project Area.

### Project Area Images and Maps

- West 9th Street at the top of Main Avenue – the site of Cleveland’s original lighthouse
- Top of Main Avenue looking west
- Bottom of Main Avenue looking east
Main Avenue Bridge Underpass Improvement Competition – Downtown Cleveland Alliance

Area of Scope
About the Competition

This is an open Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from established creative professionals based anywhere in North America who are interested in a highly visible and impactful project in Downtown Cleveland, Ohio. Up to three (3) respondents will be chosen from the submitted RFQs to develop design solutions for this project (referred to hereafter as Proposers).

The Proposers will be chosen by a committee of distinguished professionals in urban design, architecture, the public and nonprofit sectors, as well as the Project Site’s private sector stakeholders.

The Selection Committee will review each RFQ for the following:
1. Statement of interest in the project
2. Understanding of project goals
3. Description of design team
4. Relevant experience
5. Artistic elements in work samples
6. Demonstrated ability - either directly or through collaboration - to carry design concepts through construction documents and project management

Requirements of Selected Proposers

Selected Proposers will be expected to make an initial exploratory site visit, as well as a second visit to present final proposals. A presentation to a jury and stakeholder group will be considered the final submission for the competition. A representation of the final submission must also be provided in electronic format for the jury to consider.

The presented proposals should consist of a design strategy for the designated Project Area, including but not limited to streetscape elements, lighting, and artistic treatments. Final design work and engineering will not be expected to be completed for this competition, but the proposal must include cost estimates for that work.

Detailed guidelines, site plans, development context, and budgetary constraints will be provided to selected Proposers upon the exploratory visit. Proposers can expect an approximate total budget of $800,000 inclusive of all professional fees, expenses for design, fabrication, shipping, engineering, insurance, site preparation, and installation costs. Preference will be given to phase-able projects to allow for staged fundraising efforts.

Stipend for Selected Proposers

Selected Proposers (or Proposer Teams) will be paid an honorarium of $8,500 plus reimbursable travel costs of up to $3,000. The honorarium will be paid 50% up front and 50% upon completion of the competition.

Competition Evaluation and Criteria

The final proposals will be presented to a jury and stakeholder group qualified to select a design strategy that is unique to Cleveland and accomplishes a set of objectives that will include:
• To improve real and perceived safety of the Project Area through creative solutions that include lighting.
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- To create a positive experience as pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers traverse the Project Area
- To enhance physical connectivity between the Warehouse District and the Flats, with consideration for Cleveland’s seasons and variable conditions within those seasons.
- To create an identity for the Project Area, going beyond beautification to truly achieve creative placemaking.
- To take into consideration future repair and maintenance that will need to be done to the Main Avenue Bridge.

**Project Timeline**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>March 6th, 2015, 4:30pm</td>
<td>Deadline for Request for Qualifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>On or before April 1st, 2015</td>
<td>Up to 3 finalist Proposers invited to participate in Competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2015</td>
<td>Exploratory Site Visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week of July 13th, 2015</td>
<td>Presentations of final proposals</td>
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<tr>
<td>On or before August 7th, 2015</td>
<td>Winning design selected</td>
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<tr>
<td>August – September, 2015</td>
<td>Contract negotiations, final design work and engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring, 2016</td>
<td>Fabrication and installation</td>
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**RFQ Submission Instructions & Contact**

Please submit materials on or before March 6th, 2015 at 4:30pm. Refer to the “About the Competition” section above for RFQ guidelines.

Digital submissions in a single PDF file are preferred and can be submitted by email to Laura Wiegand at lwiegand@downtowncleveland.com (maximum file size 50MB) or via flash drive to:

Laura Kushnick Wiegand  
Director, Development & Community Relations  
Downtown Cleveland Alliance  
1010 Euclid Avenue, 3rd Floor  
Cleveland, OH 44115

Questions may be addressed to Laura at 216-325-0975 or the email above, or to Thomas Starinsky, Associate Director of the Historic Warehouse District Development Corporation, at tstarinsky@warehousedistrict.org, or 216-325-0937.