

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS



Sweet Auburn Green and Equitable (SAGE) District Framework

12/15/2021



Contact:

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I. OVERVIEW

A. Introduction

A team of partners comprised of Central Atlanta Progress, Inc. (CAP), the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC), and Sweet Auburn Works (SAW) are seeking statements of qualifications from interested firms or teams of firms (the “consultant”) with the appropriate expertise and experience to coordinate the development of the Sweet Auburn Green and Equitable District (“SAGE”) Framework.

SAGE is envisioned as a coordinated and holistic strategy to guide desired investment outcomes and sustain Sweet Auburn’s re-emergence as an exceptionally diverse residential neighborhood and vibrant commercial center that demonstrates economic prosperity for all, is rooted in environmental sustainability and is built upon preserving its unique African American heritage.

The core objective of SAGE is to create and implement a community development infrastructure that is:

1. Developed with neighborhood residents to elevate the goals and indicators of success for this systematically disenfranchised community.
2. Complete with an intentional investment strategy to concentrate and coordinate resources – including funding, public policy, programming, and partners
3. An explicit and bold roadmap for economic inclusion in an era of climate change, income and asset inequality, and rapid urbanization and densification.

B. Background

Named for its concentration of black wealth and political prominence during the first half of the twentieth century, Sweet Auburn is arguably Atlanta’s most historically significant neighborhood. The district is notable as the home for many of the city’s first black-owned businesses and the bedrock of civil rights organizing decades later. However, desegregation, the construction of the Downtown Connector (I-75/85) and a lack of access to capital due to redlining ushered in an era of stark decline for Sweet Auburn through the 1970s and 80s.

Fast forward to 2020. Against the backdrop of an unrelenting pandemic, and during a national uprising sparked by the extrajudicial killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tony McDade, and far too many others, the fight for Black lives and Black communities continues in Atlanta and specifically Sweet Auburn. Couple this with encroaching development pressures and rising costs, and the mandate becomes increasingly clear: investments in community assets like affordable housing, healthcare, education, food systems, and livable wage jobs are desperately needed and increasingly overdue to deliver a more sustainable and equitable future.

In early 2021, a core group of stakeholders identified a need for a unified strategy to create an equity-focused district that leverages the current conditions, assets, and opportunities that exist in Sweet Auburn today. These stakeholders have conducted initial visioning work and data collection, but desire further evaluation to develop a tangible strategy. The selected consultants will work with these convening organizations and other community partners to: expand upon previous work; define goals, objectives, and vision for the effort; and develop an implementation strategy for driving sustainable and equitable development in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood.

C. About the Clients

The clients for this work are collectively Central Atlanta Progress, Inc./Atlanta Downtown Improvement District. (CAP/ADID), the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC), and Sweet Auburn Works (SAW)- collectively, the “Client Team.” CAP and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District (CAP/ADID) will serve as the fiscal agent and will thus hold the contract with the selected team and serve as the main point of contact.

Central Atlanta Progress, Inc. and Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, Inc.

CAP is a private, not-for-profit, 501(c)(4) corporation representing the interests of Atlanta businesses and institutions that share the vision of a thriving, secure and vibrant Downtown Atlanta. CAP focuses on economic development, the physical environment and marketing for Downtown Atlanta. With a Board of Directors comprised of the city’s top business leaders, CAP is funded through the investment of businesses, foundations, and institutions. CAP and its affiliate organizations are a driving force in shaping Downtown development and public policy.

The Atlanta Downtown Improvement District (ADID), founded in 1995 by CAP, with the support of commercial property owners and the City of Atlanta, is a public-private partnership that strives to create a livable environment for Downtown Atlanta. With a Board of Directors of nine private-and public-sector leaders, ADID is funded through a community improvement district within which private commercial property owners pay special assessments. Together, CAP/ADID is committed to a Downtown that is a central place for the diverse Atlanta community and all of Downtown’s property owners, employees, residents, students and visitors.

Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC)

HDDC is one of Atlanta’s oldest surviving community development corporations and the only non-profit organization specifically dedicated to preserving the availability of affordable housing in the Old Fourth Ward district. For nearly four decades, HDDC has been a catalyst for equitable urban revitalization in Atlanta. Founded to protect the residential assets surrounding Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birth site on Auburn Avenue, HDDC has demonstrated a concrete track record of success. The Sweet Auburn Historic District started as a thriving economic community for African-Americans. HDDC’s focus is to ensure that African-Americans always can consider Sweet Auburn a destination for continued support. The HDDC model of preservation focuses on three key components: Non-Displacement, Historic Preservation, and Sustainability.

Sweet Auburn Works (SAW)

Sweet Auburn Works is a nonprofit 501(c)3 whose mission is to preserve and revitalize the commercial and cultural legacy of the Sweet Auburn Historic District. Called the “richest Negro street in the world” by Fortune magazine in 1957, Auburn Avenue was once known for its economic, spiritual, and political vibrancy, home to a highly prosperous Black community in which people lived, worked, and invested. SAW works to guide the revitalization process in Atlanta’s Sweet Auburn community, promoting neighborhood assets and encouraging reinvestment in business and property development, while also protecting the historic character of the neighborhood. SAW is a registered Main Street organization through the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program.

II. PROJECT DETAILS

Responses are welcomed from either 1) individual firms or teams of firms that can accomplish the full scope as defined below or 2.) individual firms that can accomplish a portion of the scope as defined below.

A. Scope of Work:

The client team will collaborate with the Consultant(s) to develop a final scope of services; however, the anticipated services are expected to include the following tasks and deliverables. It is the expectation that the proposed scope of work be completed within twelve months of project kick-off, though a detailed project timeline will be developed in collaboration with the selected Consultant(s).

1. **Project Management** - Development of a work plan, schedule, and ongoing and active project management approach in collaboration with the client team.
2. **Documentation and Analysis of Current Conditions** - This task will draw on local knowledge and expertise, and will include collecting and analyzing the socioeconomic, demographic, housing, and investment data from existing institutional and civic partners. Client has compiled a list of possible data points to be collected during this effort ([Accessible Here](#)). Project tasks will include:
 - Participate as listeners in select community gatherings across the district to gauge which topics and issues are top of mind for the community.
 - Interview community leaders (staff, elected officials, residents, business owners, etc.) to ground truth the data analysis and capture lived experience insights.
 - Inventory and analyze all existing plans and policies impacting economic growth and inclusive prosperity (housing, land use, energy, safety and health) to determine baseline assets and needs.
 - Review available data sources to determine geospatial distribution of inequities and trends and conduct baseline data analysis including environmental (stormwater, green and energy infrastructure, etc.), economic (employment, tourism opportunity, small business revenue projections, etc.) and equity (resident training needs, assessment of homeless services gap, etc.) considerations for Sweet Auburn.
3. **Visioning and Facilitation Process** - This phase will facilitate feedback and consensus around the “problem” the SAGE District Framework seeks to solve, and the components that should be included in a multi-prong strategy. The Consultant will engage a core group of stakeholders (the “SAGE Advisory Committee”) and topical focus groups and/or subject matter experts to refine focus areas, Theory of Change, and ultimately inform an implementation strategy.
4. **Development of Implementation Strategy** - Leveraging feedback from items two through three above, compile an Implementation Strategy, complete with goals, guiding principles and detailed strategies to reach desired outcomes. This phase will need to include list of timeline, responsibilities, and key dependencies/partners. Thought will need to be given towards operational recommendations as to who and how the SAGE District Framework should be owned/governed/managed; whether that is through a new entity, or leveraging the collaborative of existing partners and resources.

- 5. Budget and Funding Strategy-** The Implementation Strategy shall include the associated costs to execute and achieve the resulting elements, inclusive of operational costs and development capital. This capital strategy should outline a financial framework for the implementation strategy, as well as the tactical needs and resources required. It will be necessary to identify sources of philanthropic, government, and partner support that could provide capital investment for the initial implementation cost of the strategy.
- 6. Identification of Success Measures -** Identify a comprehensive list of key performance indicators that should be routinely captured in evidencing impact and measuring success. Thought must also be given to methodology for collection.

Figure B-6.1 (Example):

GOAL	INTERVENTIONS	METRICS OF SUCCESS (INDICATOR)
Achieve food security, food justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban agriculture projects - equal access to land, knowledge, resources - recruitment of healthy accessible food options - grocery coop - weekly farmers market - Allocate 10% of landscaped square footage to edible landscaping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to fresh produce within X miles - Volume of food produced by small scale food producers by sex/race - Health indicators like asthma and diabetes

- 7. Plan Documentation and Presentation -** A final plan report should be compiled that includes communicates the need, vision and purpose of SAGE, as well as implementation recommendations, cost estimates for implementation strategies, and supporting maps and graphics. Presentation to Advisory Group and broader public audience. The final strategy for implementing SAGE District Framework should be based on not only the needs of the district but also the opportunities presented by stakeholders who are active in the areas of equity and sustainability. Additionally, the final strategy should consider programmatic approaches to driving sustainable and equitable growth as well as possible tangible or physical projects.

B. Public Engagement

Of paramount importance to this process is public engagement that involves non-traditional means of reaching the broader Sweet Auburn community. This element is not a standalone deliverable, but rather should be infused throughout the entire SAGE process. The approach to public engagement must be comprehensive, innovative, and inclusive – leveraging both existing institutions and stretching to reach new ones. Given the uncertainty of in-person gatherings at scale, creative thought should be given to engagement tools that meet respondents and stakeholders where they are, while still creating meaningful and helpful feedback to the process.

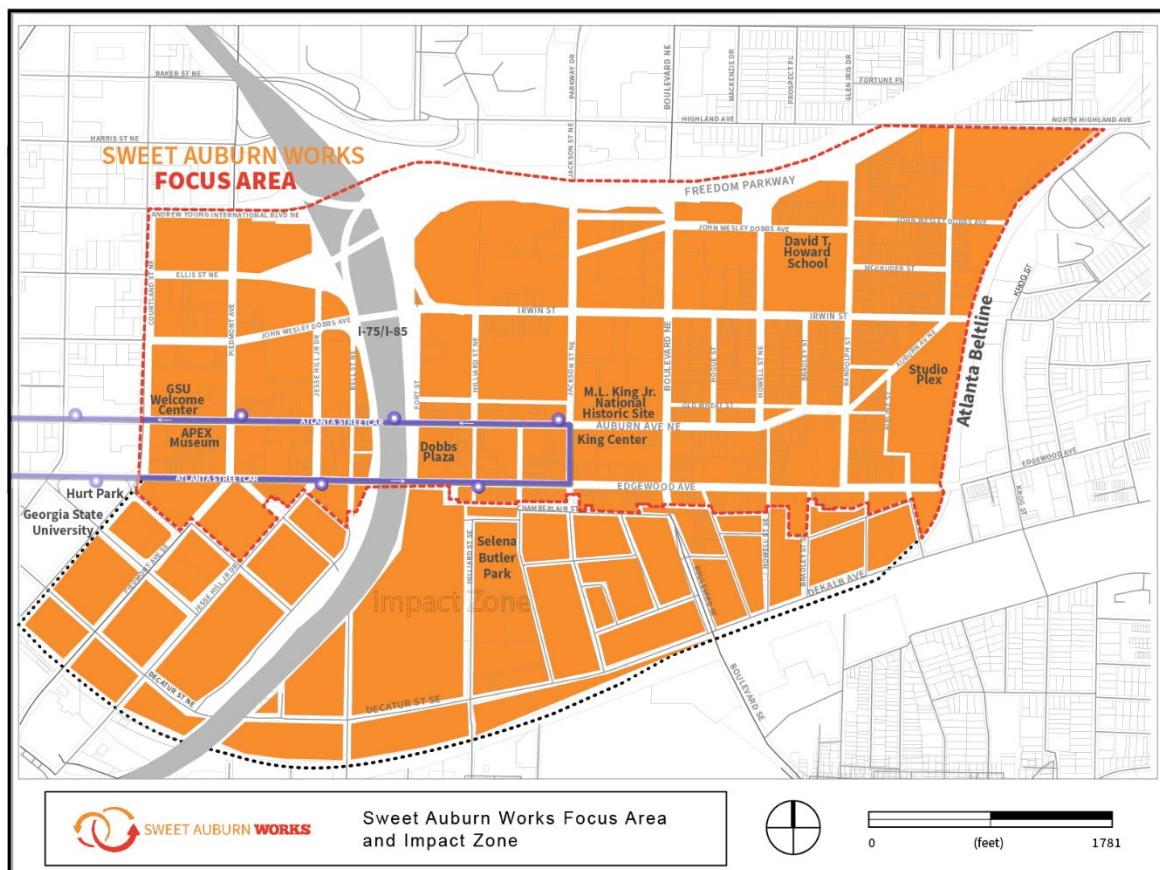
The client team will collaborate with the selected Consultant to refine a detailed outreach strategy and targeted interviews. Possible groups include:

- SAGE Advisory Committee
- Targeted Focus Groups
- Technical Experts
- Government and Public Officials
- Capital providers
- Visitors

- Property Owners
- Developers
- Business Owners / Tenants / Employees
- Residents (owners and renters) of all ages
- Institutions
- Night live consumers
- Creative, art, and music scene
- Georgia State University student population
- Social service providers

C. Study Area

The study area geography for the Sweet Auburn Green and Equitable (SAGE) District Framework is just over one half of a square mile, depicted below. The study area includes both the “focus area” and the “impact area” and is generally bounded by John Lewis Freedom Parkway, the Atlanta Beltline, Decatur Street and Courtland Street. However, this process should take into consideration plans, activities and development activity that are immediately adjacent to this boundary or include a larger area but impact this boundary. The Framework must also be coordinated with the existing adopted Plans whose boundaries intersect with the SAGE study area. This includes Atlanta Regional Commission Livable Communities Initiatives plans, City of Atlanta redevelopment plans and public and private property owner master plans.



D. Work To-Date:

The client partners are not new to this conversation and have endeavored specifically over the past couple of years to develop a strong foundation for the development of this framework. To that end, the following work has been conducted which is directly applicable to this scope of work and will need to be considered as the framework is developed. This work is available for download [here at this link](#).

- **Sweet Auburn Landscape Analysis** (*by APD Urban Planning + Management for HDDC*)
A Landscape Study Analysis was conducted in 2021 to document data regarding: black businesses in Sweet Auburn, workforce development, health and mental wellness, and affordable housing. *Deliverable Coming Soon*
- **ULI Atlanta mTAP**
An emerging leaders program for the Atlanta chapter of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) took a deep dive into case studies and possible impact metrics to consider for an “equity-focused” district
- **KSU Architecture Studio - Sweet Auburn Analysis** [[Viewable Here](#)]
A student-led master planning exercise focused on how urban design can regenerate the Sweet Auburn neighborhood as the beacon of African American businesses
- **Georgia Tech Studio**
A graduate studio focused on how to drive social equity and a more equitable historic district through measurable, social impact metrics
- **National Main Street Program Asset Mapping** – *Deliverable Coming Soon*

III. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The following items must be submitted in response to this request. The body of the submittal shall include a maximum of twenty (20) double-sided pages (equivalent to 40 single-sided pages) including any appendices. Every effort should be made to make proposals as concise as possible.

A. Letter of Intent

State the full name(s) and address(es) of the organization(s) and the branch office(s) or other subordinate element(s) that will perform or assist in performing the services described herein. Identify the firm contact name, phone and fax numbers, and email addresses. Indicate type of firm ownership (individual, partnership or corporation) and explain any proposed team or joint venture or partnership relationships. Include the state in which the firm is incorporated or licensed.

B. Statement of Experience

Submittals should provide a straightforward, complete, and concise description of the consultant’s capabilities to satisfy the requirements of this RFQ. Describe the experience, detailing a minimum of three recent, relevant projects in similar conditions and with similar size and/or scope. Summaries should include a narrative on the projects, the associated fees, and references.

C. Team Qualifications

Provide the names and résumés (including email addresses) of a principal and key staff members who will work on the project and a team organization statement defining their anticipated roles on the team. Indicate the percent of involvement of each team member and identify who will be the daily point of contact.

Also include, if applicable, a letter(s) from certifying entities identifying the firm's W-MBE/DBE status.

D. Statement of Project Understanding / Approach

Demonstrate project understanding, including details of the team's familiarity and experience with providing strategic and planning services focused on equitable and sustainable development, particularly in marginalized communities or communities of color. Provide any additional information that demonstrates the firm's understanding and insights related to the project.

A detailed scope of services and project schedule are not needed at this time, as the client team will develop the final scope of services with the consultant upon selection.

E. Fees and Budget

Provide standard 2021/2022 hourly rates for the Team Members listed in Team Qualifications.

IV. SUBMISSION PROCESS

A. Pre-Bid Conference

An optional, pre-bid conference will be held on Friday, January 7, 2022 at 11:00 A.M. EST.

- [Access the Zoom Meeting Here](#)

B. Questions

Direct any questions in writing to Alena Green via email at agreen@atlantadowntown.com by Friday, January 14, 2022 using the Subject line "Sweet Auburn Green & Equitable Framework Questions." Answers to questions will be made available to all respondents via email and the [SAGE website](#) by Wednesday, January 19, 2022.

C. Submittal Due Date

All statements of qualifications must be submitted electronically to Alena Green at agreen@atlantadowntown.com using the Subject line "SAGE Framework Qualifications" by 5:00 p.m. EST on Wednesday, January 26, 2022. Submittals received after this time and date will not be considered. Respondents should submit a digital submittal via email to the address above. Hard copies are not required nor encouraged.

V. SELECTION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. Selection Criteria

The Client Team reserves the right to reject any or all submittals, make modifications to the work after submission and waive any informalities in submissions if deemed in the client team's best interest to do so, without any liability on the part of the client team. The following criteria will be used in evaluating qualifications.

Stability of Firm - (15%)

Stability and resources of the submitting firm, including the firm's history, status, growth, overall resources of the firm, form of ownership, litigation history, financial information, and other evidence of stability.

Experience and Qualifications - (35%)

Consultant's relevant experience and qualifications, including the demonstrated ability of the firm in effective complex, historic district planning projects in communities of color, comparable in complexity, size, and function, for customers similar in scope. This includes relevant experience and qualifications of the principal and lead staff and level of experience in all aspects of the project and evidence of broad knowledge of best practices in urban district master planning and public engagement in communities of color.

Suitability - (35%)

Consultant's apparent suitability to provide services for the SAGE Framework, including the firm's apparent fit to the project including any special or unique qualifications for the project, current and projected workloads (available resources), proximity of office(s) and/or lead staff to project location and/or proven ability to gather resources in Sweet Auburn, special or enhanced capabilities, firm's non-discrimination and equal employment opportunities policies and evidence of efforts or success in W/MBE-DBE inclusion. As one of the primary guiding principles of this intended work is to support minority-owned businesses and leaders, it is our desire that the Consultant team be thoughtful in its embodiment of this principle, through the development of its team and/or approach.

Past Performance - (15%)

Evidence of the consultant's past performance, including level of quality of the services to previous customers, customer's statements of that quality, the firm's ability to meet established time requirements, the firm's response to project needs during the project and the firm's control of quality and budget.

B. Selection Schedule

RFQ Release Date	December 15, 2021
Pre-Bid Conference Date	Friday, January 7, 2022
Questions Due	Friday, January 14, 2022
Responses to Questions Posted	Wednesday, January 19, 2022
Submittals Due	Wednesday, January 26, 2022

Interviews (If Necessary)	Week of February 7, 2022
Consultant Selection	Week of February 14, 2022
Contract Negotiation and Finalizations	Week of February 28, 2022
Notice to Proceed	March 1, 2022

C. Equal Opportunity Statement

CAP/ADID is an equal opportunity employer and will select a consultant without regard to age, disability, religion, creed or belief, political affiliation, race, sex or ethnicity.

D. Contract Negotiations

The Client Team will negotiate the terms of a contract with the consultant(s) submitting the top-ranked response(s) or another ranked choice, should negotiations with the top-ranked firm fail. The client team will not reimburse any costs incurred prior to a formal notice to proceed should a contract award result from this solicitation. Submittal costs in conjunction with this RFQ shall be borne by the submitting firm.

This project will be supported by Invest Atlanta Eastside Tax Allocation District (TAD) grant funds as well as other philanthropic support and may be subject to certain contract and reporting requirements. These requirements are expected to relate to, but are not limited to, immigration law compliance and minimum general commercial liability insurance limits.