

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**RECONNECTING SWEET AUBURN STRATEGY**

January 29, 2024

Issued by:

**ATLANTA DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT, INC.**

In association with  
**SWEET AUBURN WORKS, INC.**



Contact:

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Proposals are being requested from interested firms or teams of firms with the appropriate expertise to assist with the implementation of the Reconnecting Sweet Auburn Strategy (the “Project”).

Sweet Auburn Works and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District (ADID) seek technical assistance from qualified teams to develop a strategy to remediate the lasting impacts that construction and widening of the Downtown Connector interstate has had on the Sweet Auburn neighborhood. The successful firm will demonstrate competence and experience in all areas of expertise required by the scope of services, including, but not limited to: urban planning, urban design, landscape architecture, engineering, environmental impact assessment, community engagement, construction and finance. It is desirable that firms demonstrate familiarity and experience in projects funded by federal sources, the City of Atlanta, and GDOT.

## **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.

The Downtown Connector continues to cut through the neighborhood, creating a barrier to mobility and economic opportunity. In the last few years, multiple programs, initiatives, and planning processes have focused additional resources in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood; however, none of directly assessed the need to invest in infrastructure to negate the impacts of the construction of the Downtown Connector.

The 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act established dedicated funding at the federal level to remediate the historic damage to US communities that was created by the construction of the Interstate Highway System. Federal funding and technical assistance programs like the [USDOT Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods discretionary grant program](#) are helping communities advance projects that reduce or eliminate the negative community impacts of past transportation infrastructure investments and restore lost community linkages.

## **PROJECT SPONSORS**

The Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, Inc. will be the contracting entity and the project manager for this effort, and will work collaboratively with Sweet Auburn Works, Inc. to successfully execute the scope of work and achieve the stated goals and objectives for the engagement.

### Atlanta Downtown Improvement District

ADID is a not-for-profit corporation organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. ADID is funded through a Community Improvement District (CID) within which commercial property owners pay special assessments and is governed by a Board of Directors of nine private-and public-sector leaders. Founded in 1995 by Central Atlanta Progress, with the support of property owners and the City of Atlanta, ADID is a public-private partnership that strives to create a livable environment for Downtown Atlanta. 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. More about ADID can be found at [www.atlantadowntown.com](http://www.atlantadowntown.com).

### 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.

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Sweet Auburn Works and Atlanta Downtown Improvement District are interested in identifying infrastructure project(s), supporting programs, and developing a corresponding implementation guide that identifies appropriate steps to secure approvals and resources to carry-out the recommendations. The project will be managed primarily by Sweet Auburn Works, with input and assistance from the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District and other neighborhood partners & stakeholders.

The proposed solutions will help heal the divide caused by the construction of the Connector through Sweet Auburn by addressing issues that have stymied the connectivity, economic success, and safety of the neighborhood. The effort to identify and prioritize solutions must be grounded in significant public and stakeholder engagement activities that acknowledge and address historic harm to the community. Furthermore, solutions should maximize the potential for success and maximize the potential to leverage implementation funding sources at the local, state, and federal level.

The Reconnecting Sweet Auburn Strategy should acknowledge other infrastructure projects and initiatives that are currently underway within the surrounding community. See Attachment A for a summary of these efforts.

#### Scope of Services

A final scope of services will be negotiated among the selection committee and the selected team in order to refine the work tasks and deliverables with input from the consultant. However, the following core topics are expected to form the basis of the scope of work. It is the expectation that the proposed scope of work be completed within six months of project kick-off, though a detailed project timeline will be developed in collaboration with the selected firm or team.

A. Existing Conditions Assessment

Develop an understanding of the existing infrastructure, land use, and programs around the Connector in Sweet Auburn and its context within the greater neighborhood. The assessment should include an inventory of applicable physical, social and environmental existing conditions. Existing conditions should also review current plans for the neighborhood and use data to evaluate the impact of the interstate on the existing community.

B. Best Practices

Identify national best practices for remediating barriers to community connectivity. A variety of types of projects across the spectrum of cost and complexity should be included. Projects should be selected based on their potential relevance to Sweet Auburn's condition.

C. Community Charette

Develop and execute an intensive charette that facilitates broad stakeholder and public input into developing potential reconnection projects. Engagement should be conducted throughout the entire process and use non-traditional means to reach

the broader Sweet Auburn community. Stakeholders are expected to include—but not be limited to— property owners, business owners/tenants/employees, residents, institutions, government, and non-profit organizations.

The result of the charette should be a draft list of recommendations for infrastructure, public art, policies, and programmatic solutions to address the barriers and community loss created by the Downtown Connector, ranked by their priority.

**D. Action Plan**

The results of all tasks and thorough documentation of the community charette should be integrated into a final Action Plan for Sweet Auburn Works and its partners to use as a guide for implementation. The action plan should identify short-term and long-term action items, order of magnitude cost estimates, potential funding strategies, implementation champions, and capacity-building steps for the recommendations.

Expected Deliverables

The deliverable should be a final formatted, illustrated easy-to-read summary document with photos, diagrams, and renderings that successfully communicate the planning process and recommendations. An executive summary should also be included.

**SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Consultant Selection Schedule

RFQ Release Date	January 29, 2024
Pre-bid Meeting	February 12, 2024
Questions Due	February 16, 2024
Responses to Questions	February 23, 2024
Submittals Due	March 15, 2024
Interviews (if necessary)	Week of March 25, 2024
Selection	Week of April 1, 2024

Questions

Direct any questions in writing via email to [proposals@atlantadowntown.com](mailto:proposals@atlantadowntown.com) by February 16, 2024, at 5pm EST using the subject line “Reconnecting Sweet Auburn Strategy.” Answers to questions will be made available to all respondents via email and the ADID website by February 23, 2024.

### Submittal Requirements

Respondents should submit a digital proposal in PDF format via email to [proposals@atlantadowntown.com](mailto:proposals@atlantadowntown.com) by 5pm EST on March 15, 2024. Submittals received after this time and date will not be considered.

### Required Submittal Items

- A. Letter of Intent (no page limit) - 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 (3 pages maximum)- 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. Examples should show the team's familiarity and experience with providing construction program management services in dense urban, mixed-use city centers. Summaries should include a narrative on the projects, the associated fees, and a point of contact who can be contacted as a reference.
- C. Team Qualifications (no page limit) - Provide the names and résumés (including email addresses) of a principal and key staff member(s) 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. Sweet Auburn Works and ADID recommended that, at a minimum, the following subject-matter experts be represented on the team:
  - a. Community Planner
  - b. Landscape Architect/Urban Design
  - c. Engineering/Infrastructure Expert
  - d. Community Engagement Specialist
  - e. Equity and Restorative Justice Specialist

- D. Statement of Project Understanding / Approach (5 pages maximum) - Demonstrate project understanding and any additional information that demonstrates the firm's understanding and insights. While a detailed scope of services and project schedule are not needed, teams are invited to suggest additional services or alternative approaches that could add value to the project. If electing to do this, teams should provide sufficient scope and budget detail to effectively explain these services. ADID will develop the final scope of services with the team upon selection.
- E. Budget (no page limit) - Provide a budget estimate to accomplish the scope of services, subdivided by major tasks. Standard 2024 hourly rates for the team members listed in Team Qualifications should also be included. ADID's anticipated cost for this scope of services is between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

#### Selection Criteria

ADID 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 and proposals.

#### *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.

Acceptance of Proposals

ADID reserves and holds without any liability on the part of ADID the following rights and options:

- To select a consultant to perform the scope of work described in this request
- To reject any and/or all submittals or portions of submittals
- To accept submittals in any order or combination
- To reject a subconsultant
- To re-advertise if deemed necessary
- To interview candidates prior to making a selection
- To issue subsequent Requests for Proposals
- To not negotiate or contract for the services
- To approve, disapprove, modify or cancel all work to be undertaken

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.

Equal Opportunity Statement



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.

## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **Existing Sweet Auburn Projects and Initiatives**

#### Sweet Auburn Pre-Development and Technical Assistance Program

The Sweet Auburn Pre-Development and Technical Assistance Program—funded through the Eastside Tax Allocation District (TAD) deployed strategic resources to help ameliorate identified obstacles to real estate and economic vibrancy in the neighborhood. Assisting 20 distinct sites in the neighborhood, early investment led to the successful award of \$7.3 million in Eastside TAD construction funding. Altogether, the work is supporting an estimated pipeline of \$400M worth of real estate investment potential.

#### Sweet Auburn Community Infrastructure Initiative

Following the successful Sweet Auburn Pre-Development and Technical Assistance Program, the Eastside TAD invested an additional \$2.585 million in the community to support Sweet Auburn's growth as a revitalized community firmly rooted in its historical significance. The funding supports:

- Investments in public safety in partnership with the Atlanta Police Foundation
- Investments in transportation and public space in partnership with the Atlanta Department of Transportation and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, including:
  - Sidewalk, wayfinding, street and exterior building lighting, parklet pop-ups, and traffic calming
  - An investment in underpass enhancement on Edgewood at the I-75/85 Underpass, which is funding this Reconnecting Sweet Auburn Strategy.

#### HERO Walk

The HERO walk is a public streetscape infrastructure and placemaking project that extends from the Jackson Street Bridge to Historic Oakland Cemetery and the King Memorial MARTA Station. The curated pedestrian experience project includes lighting, security, public art, and streetscape improvements and will celebrate Sweet Auburn's identity by weaving together the tapestry of Sweet Auburn's heroes past and present.

#### Sweet Auburn Green and Equitable (SAGE) District Framework

Given the expected economic growth in the neighborhood and accompanying development pressures, a core group of stakeholders in Sweet Auburn are currently developing a coordinated and holistic strategy to guide desired investment outcomes and sustain Sweet Auburn's re-emergence as a diverse residential neighborhood and vibrant

commercial center. The framework includes goals and indicators of success, an intentional investment strategy, and an explicit roadmap for economic inclusion.