

# 2025 Mason Mile Master Plan



## Introduction

The Mason Mile is the City of Mason's oldest and most treasured neighborhood. It represents a one mile stretch of downtown Mason, from Reading Road to Main Street with a mile radius at the city heart at the Mason Public Library.

Over the past 50 years, Mason has grown significantly and become home to major attractions, innovative businesses, excellent schools, and around 34,000 residents. Mason is an ideal place to live, work, play, and learn, and its brand represents a strong, growing, vibrant community in many respects, save one notable exception: its downtown. Several attempts have been made in recent years to resolve the problem of the misalignment but have come to a stop for multiple reasons, but most notably due to not having continued leadership and vision around a common goal.

The Mason Deerfield (MADE) Chamber Community Development Corporation (MADE CDC) was established to foster collaboration and consensus in the Mason area and to advance policies and programs to support investment, implement a brand, create experiences, promote resilience & healthy living, and encourage downtown revitalization. Through extensive community engagement, MADE CDC has established a community vision, and is pursuing a future Mason Mile that is a vibrant, sustainable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use, cultural, civic & social heart of the Mason-Deerfield region. MADE CDC serves as the anchor institution to provide continued leadership in pursuit of the shared vision and goals.

In 2024, a conceptual development framework was released and included a five-year strategic plan – the *Make the Mile Roadmap*. In September 2024, Mason City Council authorized a five-year grant funding agreement between the City of Mason and MADE CDC for \$3.5 million to enable continued momentum for the *Make the Mile* program.

The *Make the Mile* initiative and Roadmap realize our shared vision for a revitalized downtown - where local businesses can thrive and our community can gather to dine, shop, and play. The improved Mason Mile aims to deliver a variety of new businesses, improved safety and walkability, and a more cohesive downtown experience.

## Purpose & Overview

The purpose of this RFP is to obtain competitive proposals from qualified, experienced, and dynamic professional planning firms to develop a downtown master plan for the Mason Mile. Proposers must become familiar with current plans, initiatives, and existing sources of data to effectively respond to the scope of work without duplicating past efforts.

As part of a multi-phase planning process, MADE CDC developed a vision for the Mason Mile through the Mason Mile Guidebook. The next phase was to take that vision and create a strategic plan rooted in market and financial analysis and community desires to create a community vetted conceptual development framework. This framework was released in 2024 and is known as the *Make the Mile Roadmap*. The next phase will be to translate the findings and recommendations of the Roadmap into a physical master plan and a separate set of development regulations.

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The master plan should include an implementation strategy and inform changes to development regulations necessary to realize the vision for the Mason Mile. The plan must identify funding models and financing strategies, assign responsibilities, and define action steps necessary to implement short-term and long-term recommendations. The physical plan should be founded on the project concepts, market findings, and other recommendations and strategies in the Roadmap. Perhaps most importantly, the process to develop the physical master plan should continue efforts to engage the community.

## Areas of Focus

The areas of focus for the Mason Mile Physical Master Plan include the following:

- Location and intensity of infill and mixed-use development, with emphasis on the project concepts identified in the Roadmap;
- Opportunities for increased residential and commercial density including infill development throughout the Mason Mile;
- Guidance on building form and design—not just land use;
- Mobility—particularly improving walkability;
- Streetscape concepts based on specific context;
- The location and management of parking;
- New and/or improved public spaces;
- Identification of infrastructure improvements (stormwater, utilities, etc.);
- Specific recommendations for unlocking the potential for layering existing and proposed incentives, including: Development incentives, Downtown revitalization incentives, and tools for attracting private sector development;
- Funding models for implementation;
- Regulatory changes necessary to support the community's vision as well as implementation of the Master Plan (see below)

The Development Regulations should be a separate document and should address the zoning standards (including guidance on the interface between private development and the public right-of-way) that are necessary to implement the Master Plan. The development regulations can be developed as a new zoning district, overlay zoning district, or a standalone code. If possible, the regulations should build on the recent proposed zoning changes developed by the City, which were paused before the Strategic Plan and Master Plan process were initiated. It is expected that the development regulations produced as part of this project be comprehensive and highly graphic for ease of use. At a minimum, the proposed development regulations should include the following:

- Purpose and intent;
- Territorial application in the form of a map;
- A regulating plan that establishes the various use and character areas within the Mason Mile;
- Definitions for design “standards” vs design “guidelines” as applicable;
- Provisions for the application of the regulations to transitional redevelopment (new development, additions, modifications, and repair/maintenance
- Integration/superseding provisions related to other requirements in the zoning ordinance and other City regulations (e.g. public works standards); Private property regulation elements (by character area):

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- Land use;
- Grading and drainage;
- Utilities;
- Lots;
- Building types (as applicable);
- Building placement including setbacks, frontage, encroachments, etc.;
- Building form including height, articulation, etc.;
- Building design including orientation, facade design, materials, openings, roofs, attachments, etc.;
- Parking and access;
- Streetscape (as applicable), public space (as applicable), landscaping, screening; and
- Signage;
- Administrative procedures for design review;
- Provisions for deviations and exceptions to the development regulations; and
- Definitions of terms used in the development regulations

## Deliverables

The primary deliverables for this project will be a clear, detailed, and highly graphic Master Plan report that provides a well-defined set of physical strategies and a highly graphic Development Regulations document with regulatory policies necessary to implement the vision of the Mason Mile. Both deliverables shall be in a digital format. The deliverables are expected to include maps, 2D conceptual plans, 3D illustrations, precedent imagery, tables, and other graphics as well as text necessary to convey the vision.

## Submission Contents

Submissions shall include the items described below. The format and sequence of the contents (other than the cover letter) shall be up to the consultant; however, the sequence below is preferred. Responses must be limited to 15 double-sided pages.

Cover Letter: Provide a letter which includes "Mason Mile Master Plan RFP Response;" name(s) and business(es) that will perform the work; name, title, mailing address, email address, telephone number of the principal consultant and point of contact; and a clear concise statement as to why the responder should be selected for this work.

Firm Profile(s): The response shall include a brief profile of the consultant or consulting team including specific roles. For consultant teams, an organizational diagram would be useful. The profile(s) should provide an area(s) of expertise overview.

Experience: The team should have experience managing downtown master planning studies that include the involvement of stakeholders and the general public. The team should also have experience in developing codes and guidelines relative to small and mid-size downtowns. Provide profiles for projects completed by the consultant that clearly demonstrate the experience of the consultant or consulting team in developing and facilitating implementable downtown revitalization projects and/or master planning efforts for communities similar to Mason, Ohio.

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References: Provide three (3) references for the lead consultant for similar projects completed within the last five (5) years.

Key Personnel: Provide resumes and/or bios for persons anticipated to directly participate in the project including a list of relevant projects for each.

Project Approach: Proposers should include information on how their approach and work product will meet the following objectives:

- Develop a comprehensive blueprint to guide the next decade of growth and investment in the Mason Mile
- Create excitement and engage stakeholders and residents in realizing the value of a vibrant suburban urban core that reflects its unique identify
- Reimagine the highest and best use for underutilized properties
- Attract additional retail, restaurants and other amenities
- Propose effective and innovative strategies for funding and implementing the plan recommendations
- Provide tactical development strategies for project concepts
- Provide a recommended sequence of timelines and prioritization of investment for major public and private sector projects

Project Schedule: Provide a proposed schedule for completion of the project by primary task or phase and include a timeframe for key milestones and engagement activities.

Proposed Budget: Provide a proposed cost to complete the proposed work plan by primary task or phase including expenses.

## RFP Timetable

12/17/2024	RFP released
1/10/2025	Deadline for submitting questions
1/17/2025	Answers to questions provided
1/31/2025	RFP submission due
2/17/2025	Interviews (if necessary)
3/1/2025	Tentative start of project
9/1/2025	Tentative completion of project

## Submission Evaluation Criteria

Responses will be evaluated based on the following weighted criteria:

- 25% The firm's understanding of the project and applicable experience with downtown plans, public engagement, and practical planning implementation
- 25% The qualifications of the team and the key members to be assigned to this project.
- 25% The proposed approach and work plan and the consultant's or consultant team's availability
- 15% References
- 10% Completeness and professionalism of the response

Send Proposals and questions to Sherry Taylor at [staylor@madechamber.org](mailto:staylor@madechamber.org) or 513-336-0125.