

City of Delaware, Ohio
Downtown Hotel & Mixed-Use Development
Request for Proposals (RFP)



1. Overview

The City of Delaware, Ohio is inviting pre-qualified development teams, previously selected through the City’s Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process, to submit proposals for the purchase and redevelopment of a key downtown site into a hotel-anchored mixed-use project.

Only pre-qualified teams selected through the RFQ process are eligible to submit proposals. Other developers are not eligible to respond to this RFP. The pre-qualified teams are already familiar with the site, surrounding context, and the City’s objectives via the RFQ selection process.

2. Project Purpose

Downtown Delaware is a vibrant district with strong restaurants, local businesses, events, and proximity to Ohio Wesleyan University (OWU). Despite this activity, downtown currently lacks walkable lodging accommodations.

The City's primary goal is to deliver a high-quality downtown hotel that supports visitors, OWU-related activity, and business travel. The hotel is intended to be the anchor of a broader mixed-use development that may include residential, retail, dining, office, or public space components.

The City has assembled approximately 0.9 acres along Spring Street in the downtown core and is prepared to work with the selected developer on approvals and, if needed, a public-private financing structure to support project feasibility.

3. Site Description

The redevelopment site is located along Spring Street between South Franklin Street and South Sandusky Street, within walking distance of Sandusky Street and adjacent downtown destinations.

Current conditions include:

- North side of Spring Street: vacant gravel lots abutting small retail/office buildings.
- South side of Spring Street: surface parking and grass lots abutting the University's Ross Art Museum, Mowry Alumni Center, and the Hamilton-Williams Campus Center.

The site presents a rare opportunity for a centrally located, walkable infill project that can serve as a downtown destination.

4. Key Site Conditions (Summary)

Zoning:

The site is currently zoned for Civic/Institutional District (C/I) and Neighborhood Mixed Commercial District (C-NX). A rezoning to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) will be required to allow for flexibility through the development process. Assuming a strong site plan, the City will support the entitlement process.

Environmental:

Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments have been completed. No significant environmental barriers to redevelopment were identified, and no regulatory cleanup is required at this time.

Floodplain:

FEMA has issued a Conditional Letter of Map Revision Based on Fill (CLOMR-F) confirming that, if developed as planned, the applicable portion of the site will be removed from the Special Flood Hazard Area and is reasonably safe from flooding. The City has completed all required acknowledgements. The selected developer will complete standard post-construction certifications to obtain the final FEMA map revision. The FEMA documents will be sent to pre-qualified developers for review along with the other available due diligence items.

5. Development Requirements

Hotel (Required): Every proposal must include a hotel. Proposals without a hotel will not be considered. The City anticipates a boutique or select-service hotel in the range of approximately 75–120 rooms, subject to the proposer’s market analysis. Food and beverage space, meeting rooms, and/or rooftop amenities are encouraged where feasible. Proposals should clearly describe:

- Hotel concept and positioning
- Target customer base
- Brand or operator (if known)
- Market rationale for downtown Delaware

Mixed-Use (Encouraged): In addition to the hotel, proposals may include complementary uses such as:

- Residential units
- Ground-floor retail or restaurant space
- Office or institutional space
- Public or semi-public spaces (courtyards, plazas, pedestrian connections)

Developers have flexibility in how uses are arranged, provided the project is cohesive, financially viable, and supportive of downtown activity.

6. Design Expectations

- Height: The City generally anticipates the hotel building to be in the 4-6 story range, ultimately the height of the building is largely dependent on the parking solution/s and potential participation of adjacent property owners. Taller proposals are not encouraged unless clearly justified.
- Architecture: High-quality design using durable materials that do not clash with OWU's campus or the historic character of downtown.
- Parking: A clear parking strategy is required. Integrated or structured parking solutions are preferred over large surface lots.
- Pedestrian Orientation: Buildings should help activate Spring Street and strengthen walkability.
- Review: The project will undergo standard City design review and any applicable historic review processes.

7. Financial Approach and Potential Incentives

The City recognizes that downtown hotel infill projects often face financing challenges. In coordination with partners, the City is open to considering a tailored incentive package to support project feasibility and lender requirements, including a target 1.40 debt service coverage ratio (DSCR).

Potential tools may include:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Property tax abatement (CRA)
- Grants or low-interest loans
- Reduced or nominal land pricing
- Other creative structures proposed by the developer

Proposals must include a realistic development budget, capital stack, operating projections (especially for the hotel), and a clear description of any requested public assistance.

Detailed pro formas suitable for securing traditional financing must be included.

8. Land Transfer and Development Agreement

The City plans to convey the site through the Delaware County Community Improvement Corporation (CIC). The timing of the transfer will be coordinated with zoning approvals, financing, and other project milestones.

A development agreement will be required and will include performance benchmarks, timelines, and standard clawback provisions to ensure project delivery.

9. Proposal Requirements

Each proposal must include:

1. Cover Letter and Executive Summary
2. Development Team Qualifications and Relevant Experience
3. Project Concept and Design (site plan and renderings strongly encouraged)
4. Hotel Plan and Market Rationale
5. Financial Plan and Pro Forma, including DSCR and incentive request (if applicable)
6. Development Timeline and Key Milestones
7. Statement or Analysis Regarding Public Benefits and Community Impact
8. Supporting Materials (as applicable)

Submissions should be clear, well-organized, and realistic.

10. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Development team experience and capacity (10%)
- Quality of the concept and design (30%)
- Financial feasibility and realism (30%)
- Community and economic impact (10%)
- Ability to implement the project on schedule (10%)
- Completeness and clarity of the submission (10%)

The City may request interviews and reserves the right to negotiate with one or more proposers.

11. RFP Schedule and Submission Instructions

Questions Due: Mon, February 2nd, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. (EST).

Proposal Submission Deadline: Monday, February 23rd, 2026 at 8:00 a.m. (EST). Late submissions will not be accepted.

Submission Method: All questions and final proposals must be submitted electronically to:

Nic Langford
Economic Development Director
City of Delaware, Ohio
nlangford@delawareohio.net

Proposals should be submitted as a single PDF. If file size is an issue due to graphics or renderings, a download link may be included. Flash drives are not acceptable.

Communication Protocol:

All communication and direction regarding this RFP should be with the contact above to maintain a fair and transparent process for this property disposition.

12. General Terms

- The City is not obligated to select a developer or enter into an agreement.
- All proposal preparation costs are the responsibility of the proposer.
- Proposals may be subject to public records laws.
- The City reserves the right to negotiate, reject proposals, or terminate the process.

The City of Delaware views this project as a critical opportunity to deliver long-needed downtown lodging and a high-quality mixed-use development that will serve the community for decades.

The City looks forward to reviewing proposals from the pre-qualified teams and selecting a partner capable of delivering a successful, well-designed, and financially sound project in Downtown Delaware.