

FY2020 Planning Assistance Grant

ENV 20 DCS 11

Manchester-by-the-Sea Downtown Strategic Plan



From

Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea
10 Central Street
Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA 01944

To

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100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Planning Assistance Grant Program FY 20

A. INTRODUCTION:

The Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts (the “Town”) is seeking funding through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Planning Assistance Grant Program to conduct a series of inter-related evaluations of the Town’s downtown village area. If successful in securing EEA Planning Assistance Grant funding, the Town would release a Request for Proposals for assistance from a qualified planning firm to develop a “Downtown Strategic Plan”.

The Town is requesting \$50,000 from the EEA Planning Assistance Grant Program and proposes to provide the 25% match required as well as support the Planning Efforts with additional Town funded projects. The Town’s primary objectives are 1) to build consensus for the future of Manchester’s downtown by expanding on community engagement initiated in the development of the newly completed Master Plan and 2) to update existing zoning regulations and district boundaries to help achieve the agreed on future.

Manchester is in a new era of pro-active planning to address a number of challenges including lack of housing diversity and affordability, outdated and failing infrastructure and facilities, unbalanced land uses and the impacts of climate change. State and Federal agencies through grant funding and programs have been critical partners in the Town’s work as it strives to support local, regional, state and federal goals.

- The Town gained Green Community designation in 2014 along with a grant award for energy efficiency projects.
- The Town appointed a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust in 2016 and CPA funds have been granted to the trust in each successive year.
- The Town has an approved Housing Production Plan.
- The Town’s Community Compact agreement is helping the Town address:
 - Sustainable Development and Land Protection
 - Comprehensive Water Resource Management and
 - Complete Streets.
- Complete Street initiatives include a 2016 Complete Street policy, a 2017 Prioritization Plan, and funding for four priority project in 2018.
- Our recently updated Hazard Mitigation Plan and new Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan have outlined steps the Town can take to better prepare for and mitigate hazards, including the impacts of climate change.

- We have studied the town’s major drainage corridor and have begun implementing improvements to reduce flooding, improve water quality and enhance habitat.
- The Town’s recently completed Master Plan’s highest priorities are to:
 - Increase Town revenue through planned development within the Limited Commercial District and through incremental growth Downtown; and
 - Support a diversity of housing options throughout town.
- The Planning Board has secured a consultant to recodify and update the Town’s Zoning Bylaw.

B. PROJECT SUMMARY

The Town is seeking EEA Planning Assistance to hire a consultant team to undertake the appropriate studies to develop a comprehensive downtown strategic plan focused on increasing economic and residential growth and strengthening resiliency.

Proposed key tasks for the Strategic Plan include, but may not be limited to the following.

- Develop and lead a community engagement process to consider options for incremental growth in the downtown.
- Inventory, map and assess existing land uses in the downtown, including residential, commercial (by type), parking, municipal and other uses and recommend strategies to change the mix as desired.
- Review and assess the downtown’s vulnerability to climate change including rising sea levels and prioritize mitigation strategies.
- Assess ways that the harbor can serve as a stronger economic engine for the community.
- Explore potential re-use options for a limited number of key sites including the site of the current Wastewater Treatment Facility.
- Review and assess zoning regulations and the General District boundaries and identify strategies to support commercial, residential and mixed use development.

Developing a Strategic Plan for downtown Manchester will provide the Town with the information needed to foster incremental economic and residential growth with an understanding of how these uses can be supported by parking, be developed in a scale and style appropriate to community character and goals, can contribute to the Town’s housing diversity, improve the Town’s tax base, and be part of a resilient and sustainable town center.

C. PROJECT TASKS

The Downtown Strategic Plan Project will include the following tasks.

- I. Community Engagement and Downtown Vision - The Consultant Team will be asked to develop and lead a robust and interactive community engagement plan. Town Staff and project steering committee members will provide assistance as needed including identifying stakeholders, event opportunities, correspondence and other tasks.
 - a. Create an overall Community Engagement Plan that outlines objectives, strategies and success criteria for each stage and element of the project.
 - b. Assure a variety of opportunities to meet resident needs.
 - c. Present information visually, including maps, graphics, photos and illustrations.
 - d. Engagement interactions should to the extent practical result in quantifiable input.
 - e. Based on an understanding of existing conditions and viable opportunities, help the community to articulate a shared Vision for Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea.

Estimated Budget \$10,000

Estimated Timeline: Throughout the project, estimated 6 months, July – December

Deliverable: Community Engagement Plan, Outreach Support Materials, Outreach Summaries

Measure of Success: Variety of methods used, varied demographics reached, broad support of Downtown Vision

- II. Land Use Inventory, Evaluation and Recommendations: The Team will inventory and assess exiting conditions and land uses in the downtown and develop recommendations for improving the mix of uses, public infrastructure, parking, walkability, and community character.
 - a. Inventory and map existing land uses include number, size and type. Calculate tax revenue derived from various uses.
 - b. Evaluate the current mix of uses and identify a viable mix of uses based on market feasibility, regional trends and local, regional and state goals.
 - c. Consider desired changes to uses within the Limited Commercial District and how the two districts could work together to serve the greater community and region.
 - d. Evaluate opportunities for improving walkability, circulation and parking management to meet existing and desired use needs.
 - e. Identify key sites with the highest potential for redevelopment/re-use (see task IV).

Estimated Budget: \$14,000

Estimated Timeline: Three months: July – Sept

Deliverable: Maps, graphics and text to illustrate and compare existing and proposed conditions

Measure of Success: Supports community discussions and exploration of options

- III. Review Downtown’s Vulnerability to rising sea level, flooding, storms and other threats.
 - a. The Town’s MVP and HMP will provide baseline information.
 - b. Consider desired changes in light of vulnerability.
 - c. Identify and prioritize mitigation strategies to strengthen resiliency.

Estimated Budget: \$5,000
 Estimated Timeline: Two months: July - August
 Deliverable: Prioritized recommendations
 Measure of Success: Identifies short and long term actions

- IV. Identify, assess and recommend re-use options for potential redevelopment sites as well as harbor improvements that can help strengthen our economic vitality
 - a. Review identified sites with high potential for redevelopment.
 - b. Prepare illustrative conceptual design options for consideration.
 - c. Project income potential for use options.
 - d. Assist in evaluating options and recommend preferred options.
 - e. Outline next steps needed to support redevelopment as appropriate.

Estimated Budget: \$7,000
 Estimated Timeline: two months: August - September
 Deliverable: Maps, graphics and text to illustrate and compare existing, proposed and preferred conditions
 Measure of Success: Supports community discussions and exploration of options, prioritization of option has broad support

- V. Review and Assess Zoning Regulations and District Boundaries: The Consultant team will review existing Zoning Regulations and District Boundaries and recommend changes.
 - a. Identify Zoning Regulations and Boundaries that could help bring about the Downtown Vision.
 - b. Draft Zoning Regulations.
 - c. Identify new District Boundaries as applicable.
 - d. Identify any other regulatory, policy or operational changes the Town could take to support a vibrant downtown.
 - e. Outline the steps recommended for making the desired regulatory, policy, operational or other changes.

Estimated Budget: \$10,000
 Estimated Timeline: two month: October - November
 Deliverable: Draft Zoning Regulations and District Map
 Measure of Success: Supports Downtown Vision

- VI. Consolidation of Strategic Plan: The consultant team will consolidate the findings and recommendations of each of the tasks into a Downtown Strategic Plan.
 - a. Findings will be conveyed with maps, graphics and images and with text as needed.

- b. The Plan will include action items for the various strategies recommended to bring about the Downtown Vision.
- c. Recommendations will be prioritized.
- d. The Plan will be developed for easy access on the Town’s web site.

Estimated Budget: \$4,000

Estimated Timeline: one month: December

Deliverable: Downtown Strategic Plan

Measure of Success: Accessible Report with clear and concise Vision, Findings and Recommendations

D. BUDGET SUMMARY

The Town has estimated a budget for the project of \$62,500 with additional Town funds and services supporting the project as outlined below. The Town anticipates completing the Project during FY 2020.

Task for FY 2020	Total Est Cost	Town Match Funds/Services	EEA Planning Assistance
I. Community Engagement and Downtown Vision	\$12,500	\$2,500	\$10,000
II. Land Use Inventory, Evaluation and Recommendations	\$16,500	\$2,500	\$14,000
III. Vulnerability Review and Prioritization	\$6,000	1,000	\$5,000
IV. Redevelopment Site Study with Recommendations	\$9,500	\$2,500	\$7,000
V. Zoning Regulations and Districts Review	\$12,500	\$2,500	\$10,000
VI. Consolidated Strategic Plan	\$5,500	\$1,500	\$4,000
Totals	\$62,500	\$12,500	\$50,000

The Town’s Zoning Bylaw Recodification and Update Project as funded by the Town (\$40,000) will support the Downtown Strategic Planning efforts.

In addition the Town is seeking Local District Technical Assistance from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (\$25,000) for a Downtown Parking Study that if received, will also support the Downtown Strategic Planning efforts.

E. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The EEA Planning Assistance Grant will allow the Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea to plan for and implement recommendations in support of the Commonwealth's Smart Growth and Vulnerability Preparedness Agendas and its Sustainability Principles.

Advances Suitable Development

We believe that creating a Downtown Strategic Plan through a robust community process will allow the Town to advance key Baker-Polito initiatives through zoning changes that will allow new economic development and housing opportunities as well as enhance resiliency in the face of climate change. By right, multi-family, mixed use, and 40R Zoning are all thought to be reasonable outcomes of the study. The Town is already organizing a multi-board and staff working group to assess the potential opportunities of one or more 40R Districts in town.

Advances Recommendations of Local Plans

The Downtown Strategic Plan is an important step in the implementation of two priority recommendation of the Town's recently approved Master Plan, and three recommendations of the Town's 2016 Housing Production Plan.

Master Plan

ED – 2: Revise Zoning in the General District to permit more village-scaled commercial and residential opportunities Downtown in a manner sympathetic to existing character.

H – 1: Modify zoning to encourage housing of the size, style, and prices appropriate for downsizing households, elders, young families, singles, and couples (including as part of downtown development).

Housing Production Plan

8.2.1 Pursue 40R/40S Smart Growth Zoning

8.2.2 Modify multi-family housing requirements to encourage more housing diversity

8.3.1 Pursue opportunities for Mixed-use and Transit-oriented Development

25% Local Match

The Town is committed to providing a 25% local match and additionally will support the project with its Town-funded recodification and bylaw update and if successful in receiving MAPC funding through the LDTA program with a Parking Study.

Smart Growth Toolkit Technique

The Downtown Strategic Plan will position the Town to consider a number of the Smart Growth Toolkit Techniques including a 40R District, accessory unit zoning, mixed use zoning, and Transit Oriented Development. Identifying opportunities to increase housing in the town's downtown will also help the town protect other town owned land in its drinking water watershed. The Town will continue to try to balance land protection and development opportunities to strengthen its resiliency and maintain community character.

Pursues a Housing Choice Best Practice

The Town has initiated most Housing Choice Best Practices over the last four years. Another that the Downtown Strategic Plan may garner support for is a reduced parking requirement for downtown units within easy walking distance to the train and goods and services.

Demonstrates consistency with MA Sustainable Development Principles

The Downtown Strategic Planning Project is grounded in Sustainable Development Principles including in particular concentrated development and mix of uses, sustainable housing production, adaption to climate change and facilitation of walking, biking and transit use.

Attachments:

Letter of support and local match commitment

Master Plan – pages 21 and 27

Housing Production Plan – Pages 71-81