

Request for Proposals - Downtown McKees Rocks Development

Development Opportunity

The objective of this RFP is to identify a developer, or developers, to redevelop four properties located in the commercial center of McKees Rocks. These properties are currently owned by the McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation (MRCDC). They are located at:

- 507 Chartiers Avenue
- 533 & 597 Chartiers Avenue
- 1 Furnace Extension

While MRCDC is hopeful that we can work with a single partner on this bundle of properties, proposals may include one, all, or any combination of these properties. Developers whose proposals are best aligned with the expectations of the community – whose views will be reflected through this RFP process by the CDC’s staff, board and real estate advisory committee – will be invited for in-person presentations and further discussion. MRCDC is looking particularly for developers interested in inspiring the community and for development that furthers MRCDC’s mission of fostering inclusive and equitable economic growth, generational wealth building, new affordable housing & commercial spaces, and creativity.

The Community

McKees Rocks has been identified by the Heinz Foundation as an area of growth and the Allegheny Conference has included McKees Rocks among the select number of target areas to which it prioritizes a devotion of its resources. It also lies in an Opportunity Zone, providing significant tax incentives for investment.

The community is rapidly becoming recognized as an emerging location for entertainment and food, while maintaining its strong industrial base, and has taken major steps forward in stimulating revitalization and economic growth. In 2019, the renovation and reopening of the historic Roxian Theatre was a milestone for McKees Rocks. With assistance from MRCDC, the Hillman Foundation, the Heinz Foundation and the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), a private partnership group completed this nearly \$10M project. The Roxian Theatre is now a venue operated by Live Nation Entertainment, a global live entertainment company, and is home to performances drawing thousands of people each week. It serves as an economic driver, and a vivid symbol of the potential for growth, in our downtown and for the community.

There are several arts, food, and music venues in close proximity to the Roxian including Black Forge Coffee, Black Tea Brown Suga Recording Studio, Rocks Landing, Hollywood Music & Sound Store, Love Rocks Café, the Father Ryan Arts Center, and Radiant Hall artist studios.

Through the cultivation of numerous unique spaces, McKees Rocks has become a destination for a large number of visitors.

Lower Chartiers Avenue, the historic downtown commercial corridor of McKees Rocks where these properties are located, is at an important junction. There are a variety of public improvement projects occurring here, including a major streetscape redesign and reconstruction, plans for connections to public outdoor greenspace, and investments in several nearby properties for commercial and residential development. All properties listed in this request are within walking distance of the Roxian and other arts and music venues. This compact area is the community's downtown and commercial core and the redevelopment of these properties will have a catalytic impact on the town as a whole.

Development in downtown McKees Rock is occurring in tandem with the above noted investments in its public spaces and right-of-ways. Most immediately, the first phase of the redesign and reconstruction of our downtown is already funded and is nearing commencement for design work for the project. This phase will focus on creating a safer and more attractive gateway into the downtown from the bridge coming over Chartiers Creek. The focus of the work will be on safety; with a roadway redesign that calms traffic through the corridor, the creation of safer pedestrian crossings, and the installation of ample lighting. It will also prioritize walkability and building welcoming, public, non-vehicular right-of-ways and spaces in order to optimize its potential as a pedestrian and business friendly corridor.

Waterfront Property

McKees Rocks is bordered by Chartiers Creek and the Ohio River. We believe that the community's proximity to waterways is an important amenity and that it should be taken advantage of. All listed properties are within a couple hundred feet of Chartiers Creek while 1 Furnace St. Extension sits directly on this waterway. MRCDC has been coordinating with The City of Pittsburgh to create a more accessible public greenspace along this waterway. Planned trails and a pedestrian bridge will eventually become direct access into Sheraden Park, located just across the creek from McKees Rocks' downtown. Proposals should take into account this waterfront proximity and look to support and take advantage of the infrastructure investments along it.

We are excited to enhance our waterways and also build along them. In a study conducted by the Urban Land Institute (ULI), recommendations were made to expand residential use along Chartiers Creek, particularly on the McKees Rocks side. The ULI study suggests that the community should take the opportunity to either create an extension of green that mirrors the City of Pittsburgh side or to establish more active private uses. MRCDC has been working towards those ends along Chartiers Creek and the downtown masterplan calls for implementation of greenspace improvements there in our next phase of work.

Community and Nonprofit Engagement

Innovative community service providers are plentiful in McKees Rocks. The Grow Sto-Rox Collaborative, comprised of MRCDC, Communities in Schools of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County

(CISPAC), Focus on Renewal (FOR), the Sto-Rox School District, and the Zellous Hope Project, is designed to increase the collaborative capacity of local community partners and nonprofits organizations. It aims to grow good, accessible jobs; to increase economic security for vulnerable Sto-Rox populations; to cultivate home-grown talent through a “cradle-to-career” program that supports our youth and provides career readiness and educational programs; and to create a healthy, opportunity-rich neighborhood for all. Development partners here benefit from the engaged involvement and support of MR CDC and the local nonprofits that we collaborate with.

Selected developers for these properties will also receive strong community support, as represented by the engaged group of experts and stakeholders of MR CDC’s Real Estate Advisory Committee which will be involved in the evaluation of submitted development proposals. Through this committee, and the community engagement efforts led by MR CDC’s Director of Community Engagement, MR CDC will be able to assist and provide developers with input and communication between themselves and the community. MR CDC is committed to helping developers with building relationships and support throughout McKees Rocks.

Economic Growth

Arts and Culture

The Roxian Theatre, at 425 Chartiers Avenue, is a landmark and cornerstone of downtown McKees Rocks’ revitalization. The venue is a catalyst for economic development, creating jobs and commercial activity, revenue for the municipality and other Lower Chartiers Avenue businesses, and a reassertion of cultural vibrancy to our downtown and the greater northwestern Pittsburgh metro area. The Roxian Theatre is complemented by other up-and-coming arts and music venues in the downtown area. These businesses, located within a five minute walking distance from the properties, include Black Forge Coffee, Rocks Landing, the Father Ryan Arts Center and library, and the newest location of Radiant Hall artist studios, with the Parkway Theater and Black Tea Brown Suga Recording Studio just a little further up the road.

In cultivating unique spaces, McKees Rocks looks to appeal to younger demographics that have been drawn to, and are investing in, other areas around the city such as Lawrenceville and East Liberty. The Hollowood Music & Sound retail store and the discontinued “Feastival” music and food festival series are leading examples of McKees Rocks’ untold economic picture. Both pull from outside the study area for the majority of their customer base and audience but also help to define and grow the McKees Rocks brand.

Market Study

In 2015 Delta Development Group completed a market study of downtown McKees Rocks as part of our downtown masterplan work. Salient points to highlight from this study include a high capacity for additional housing as well as restaurant and service industry businesses, amongst many other indicators. The market study is available upon request by interested parties.

Location and Transit

McKees Rocks' location is a prime advantage.

- The Lower Chartiers Avenue business district is located just over 4 miles from downtown Pittsburgh, and roughly three miles from the Rivers Casino, Carnegie Science Center, Heinz Field, and PNC Park.
- McKees Rocks enjoys short commutes and has ample bus service into Pittsburgh (13 minutes to downtown, 8 minutes to the Northside, or 5 minutes to Sheraden).
- The Allegheny County Port Authority (PAT) also extends public transit access to Pittsburgh International Airport and other major employment and shopping centers from McKees Rocks.
- This proximity to Pittsburgh and access to public transportation are key assets that make McKees Rocks very attractive to businesses and residents. Much of the greater city can be accessed without traveling through major city bottlenecks like the Fort Pitt, Squirrel Hill, or Liberty Tunnels.
- This location lends itself well to young workers and professionals commuting to the City. Young professionals specifically, 29 years old or younger, have a high mobility rate and generally seek a walkable urban environment, with housing in proximity to transit, shopping, and nightlife. According to our market survey, there are nearly 1,200 young professionals, earning more than \$3,000 per month, working in the City and living in the communities of Bellevue, Avalon, Ben Avon, Emsworth, Ingram, and Crafton -- all good analogs for McKees Rocks.

Properties

- 507 Chartiers Avenue (0.35 acres): Located at the corner of Chartiers Avenue and McDonald's Way, a small side street, beside the Roxian Theatre. Vacant lot - cleared and ready for development.
- 533 & 597 Chartiers Avenue (0.22 acres combined): Two adjacent vacant lots - cleared and ready for development. These two parcels are combined as a singular development opportunity. .
- 1 Furnace Street Extension (approx. 0.35 acres of developable land): a creekfront property with the additional upside potential of integration with planned waterfront public space to the benefit of development on this property as well as in the support and enhancement of the downtown renewal.. It presents potential as a site used to support the pedestrian bridge that will connect McKees Rocks downtown to the Sheraden Park expansion as described in the City of Pittsburgh's Sheraden Park Masterplan. A small building currently occupies this property which we expect will be demolished to optimize the property's potential in order to allow redevelopment to take advantage of the property's full footprint.

Floodplain

- All properties lie in the FEMA 100-year floodplain and as such are subject to additional requirements for their future redevelopment.

- 1st floor commercial development allows for floodproofing at Base Flood Elevation (BFE)
- Raising property elevations is likely unsuitable and prohibitive option for development of these parcels
- An independent engineering firm was retained to produce a Floodplain Evaluation report with related details and development requirements for all properties - this report is available to interested parties upon request.

Proposals

Responses to this RFP should include all of the following items in the order provided.

The Project Narrative

- Must not exceed a maximum of twenty (20) single-spaced pages in length. Pages refer to one-side of a single-spaced typed page. Font size should be no smaller than 10 and the proposal must be submitted on 8 ½" x 11" format pages. The cover letter is not included in this 20 page limitation.
- The narrative will include a cover letter that includes:
 - Applicant Information
 - Applicant (Organization) Name:
 - Address (Street, City, State, Zip):
 - Office Phone and Fax Numbers
 - Contact Name, Email address and Website (if applicable)
 - Which parcels (addresses) the developer is interested in developing.
- After the cover letter the narrative will include:
 - A response to the following question:
 - How do you envision your proposed development will bring increased vitality and economic development or foster an equitable, liveable, safe, creative, and thriving community?
 - Identify between one and three previous developments, with short descriptions for each, which showcase the ways that your past projects have furthered the above stated goals for a community.
 - Proposed timeline of development.
 - Proposed plan for these lots, including building types, industry types, and usages.
 - The role of all team member entities, project partners, or contractors, involved in the proposed developments.
 - Information on the sustainability of the project, including a discussion of who or what organization(s) will retain ownership of the parcels.
 - Describe the development team and past qualifications.
 - Present the potential funding strategies and sources, along with financial capacity to complete project.
 - Proposed price for purchase of properties.
 - Information on how the project might deviate from zoning requirements.

- Deviation from current zoning requirements is possible and may, in some situations, be recommended. Proposals will not necessarily be penalized for deviation from zoning and will not be disqualified for deviating from zoning that will require future requests for relief from local zoning code.

Design:

- Preliminary massing plan including, but not limited to:
 - Proposed size of buildings
 - Approximate square footage
 - Orientation
 - Egress and ingress
- Design team with description of roles and relevant experience, along with examples of past projects.

Written response (under 5 pages) to Rubric, Category 2: “Design elements” discussing what aspects of the rubric the proposal and design meet.

*More detailed design proposals will be requested at a later stage from teams invited to continue forward in the selection process.

Rubric Response:

After the narrative and design response, the proposal should then include a written response, under 15 pages, to any aspects of the scoring rubric not already addressed within the narrative or building design aspects of the proposal.

Rubric:

Category 1 (requirements)

- No heavy industrial usages will be considered.
- First floor must be commercial retail or businesses, without private offices or residential spaces. Hotels will be allowed and private offices or residential spaces are allowed on second or higher floors of buildings.
- Loading and disposal areas must be out of sight and off of the main street.
- Floodplain and stormwater mitigation must be considerations of the proposal.
- Observation of deed restriction at 507 Chartiers: restaurant chains with more than 3 locations prohibited on this property

Category 2 (priorities)

Design elements

- To fit within, and enhance, the downtown’s existing context, aesthetics, and architecture; strong preference is that buildings be a minimum of 2 stories and a maximum of 6 stories - negotiable depending on the usage, style, and placement of the building.
- High longevity of materials in construction, lighting, storefront and signage.

- Environmental sustainability - examples include:
 - Stormwater and floodplain management plans
 - Commitment to energy efficiency
 - Prioritization of local sourcing (examples include: locally sourced materials and products, native plants in landscaping, recycled and salvaged materials, etc.)
- Buildings reach the sidewalk with facades facing the main street - build to the property lines.
- Activated storefronts and facades that open onto main street.
 - Showcase an understanding of the main street context in the architecture and design
 - Parking is deprioritized and should be out of the line of sight - not on main street
 - Showcase of creativity and artistic design in the facade

Usage and economic development

- Proposals that look to develop more than one of our properties are preferred, with highest preference for proposals to utilize all of these properties.
- Preferred usages:
 - Non-chain restaurants or businesses are strongly preferred
 - Speciality and novelty retail
 - Arts and culture destinations
 - Restaurants and food - particularly sit-down restaurants
 - Light industry and specialized crafts are acceptable
 - Usages that are unique or uncommon to the area or region
 - Housing - 2nd floor and higher
 - Private offices, artist studios or lofts - 2nd floor or higher
 - Multi-use buildings are desired by the community and will be prioritized
- Priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate partnerships with other organizations, businesses, and the community.
- It is recommended that proposals discuss how they complement existing downtown businesses and amenities.
- Proposals that clearly explain how they support economic development, particularly in the revitalization of the business district as a whole and in an equitable manner, will be prioritized.
- Local hiring is preferred, including using First Source Hiring Strategies.
- Developers are encouraged to highlight and provide details of any public space investments that are included in proposals.
- Proposals should demonstrate how they will take advantage of the context and location of these properties.
- Allowances for provision of affordable spaces, residential or commercial, that will help us meet our goal of creating an inclusive and diverse downtown.

Significant effort went into gathering community input on priorities for development of these sites. That input has guided the priorities presented in the included evaluative rubric and submitted proposals will be weighed based on their alignment with these preferences. However, we want to have the opportunity to consider as many strong, creative, proposals as possible

that will benefit the community. Therefore, please consider these preferences as a guide rather than as a checklist.

Response Evaluation

Timeline of proposals

- This RFP has been issued on September 21, 2022.
- Proposals will close on December 23, 2022 at 5pm EST, after which no more proposals will be accepted.
- Questions should be directed to office_admin@mckeesrocks.com
- Proposals will be evaluated by MR CDC staff on a rolling basis based on Category 1 of the rubric. Category 1 lists the only non-negotiable items that are required within a proposal.
- Projects that meet Category 1 of the rubric will move to the next stages of the evaluation. Projects that do not meet these requirements will not be considered and developers will be notified.
- Proposals that move ahead will be sent for evaluation by MR CDC's Real Estate Advisory Committee.
- The Real Estate Advisory Committee is a group comprised of local business owners, residents, stakeholders, and real estate and community development professionals.
- Names of Real Estate Advisory Committee members are included in Appendix A. If developers see a conflict of interest related to any of the committee members they may contact office_admin@mckeesrocks.com.
- Committee members will discuss proposals at set meeting dates. Developers may be asked additional questions or be asked to give a presentation/attend an interview with the staff and committee at this time.
- All proposals will be reviewed by both the committee and the CDC staff based on the proposal's narrative section (on page 5) and the rubric shown as Category 2. Items in Category 2 are preferences and recommendations, and proposals will earn points by including or giving thought to the items in Category 2. The committee and staff will also be evaluating the narrative element of the proposal, mainly to judge the feasibility of the project and the suitability of the developer.
- The committee and the staff will choose their recommended proposal(s) from this pool.
- Recommended proposals will then be brought by staff and the advisory committee to the MR CDC Board of Directors. The Board then has final say over approvals of the proposals that have been recommended by the staff and advisory committee.
- Once the board has voted to approve a proposal, its development team will be notified and MR CDC will begin work to enter into agreements with respective development lead.