

## Purpose

The Stamford Downtown Special Services District (Stamford Downtown) seeks a Statement of Qualifications from prospective urban design and engineering firms to oversee the multi-step, scope of work related to the *Main Street Corridor Improvements Project*. The selected vendor will complete:

- 1) Conceptual planning,
- 2) Design drawings including creation of a construction bid package,
- 3) Procurement of construction services and
- 4) Construction administration on behalf of Stamford Downtown.

## Project Background

Stamford Downtown is the recipient of a \$5.6 million grant from the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's (DECD) *Urban Action Grant Program* to plan, design and implement streetscape infrastructure projects.

Stamford Downtown will implement a multi-faceted project with these the Urban Act funds. First, the first project will completely or partially demolish the vehicular ramp which extends Atlantic Street to the public parking garage located above the Stamford Town Center. The modification of the ramp will allow for greater visual access to Stamford Town Center and facilitate additional opportunities for development on adjacent parcels. This investment will fundamentally transform the section of the east side of Atlantic Street from 160 through 234. Underneath and adjacent to the ramp along Town Center Drive, Stamford Downtown will construct streetscape improvements to enhance the public realm under the remaining ramp structure and on public streets located on City and Urban Redevelopment Commission-owned properties connecting the area under the ramps to the surrounding city streets. In doing so, these streets will function more as an extension of Main Street. Further, these funds will be used to improve the pedestrian connectivity between Downtown, Stamford Veterans Memorial Park located adjacent to the ramp, Stamford Town Center, and the former Main Street corridor which during urban renewal had a section of the public street decommissioned and incorporated into the Landmark Square / Town Center redevelopment and is in need of enhancement to return it to a strong pedestrian connection between sections of Downtown. The exact scope of work that can be funded with available resources will be determined through the conceptual design and feasibility phase.

The project site is co-owned by the City of Stamford and City of Stamford Urban Redevelopment Commission. Built in 1982, the vehicular ramp is characterized by cement construction and measures forty feet in width and approximately 350 feet in length. The ramp rises from the ground level at Atlantic Street and provides both access and egress to level six of the upper parking structure. The ramp is supported by eight, multi-leg cement trusses. The ramp passes under the helix-shaped, vehicular ramp that originates at Edith Sherman Drive, connecting this garage to Tresser Boulevard, US Route 1. These public access roads, infrastructure, and parkland are contiguous to privately owned redevelopment sites at 160 Atlantic Street, 184 Atlantic Street, and the former central anchor to the mall which is an independent commercial box without its own street address. These two- and three-story historic structures and vacant mall anchor have hotel, residential, and retail/entertainment proposals for redevelopment respectively.

Stamford Downtown will administer this grant in coordination with the City of Stamford, Stamford Urban Redevelopment Commission, and ownership of adjoining properties, including, but not limited to, the owners of the Stamford Town Center retail mall.

Over the course of 2023, Stamford Downtown will first procure a multi-disciplinary urban design and engineering firm that will move from conceptual design to construction drawings. Stamford Downtown forecasts demolition and streetscape improvements will be implemented in 2024.

Stamford Downtown is contemplating four improvements including:

- 1) Surgical removal of the vehicular ramp structure leading to-and-from Atlantic Street and the seventh floor of the parking structure serving the Stamford Town Center Mall.
- 2) Realigning the space resulting from the partial removal of the vehicular ramp to support planned and future development.
- 3) Design and construction of a new bi-directional road, at-grade, linking Atlantic Street to Edith Sherman Drive; and
- 4) Design and construction of a new gateway that turns Stamford Town Center towards the Downtown by integrating this new surface street, the space made available from ramp removal, Veterans Memorial Park and, potentially, a new hotel being planned for 160 Atlantic.

The full site detail and project description is included as **Attachment 1 Restoring the Vitality of Atlantic St East (#s 150-300)** to this document.

Note, the City of Stamford is the recipient of a separate grant award from the State of Connecticut to design and construct sidewalk and streetscape improvements along Atlantic Street (from Broad to Bell Streets) including the construction of a raised intersection at Atlantic and Main Streets (Atlantic + Main Intersection Project). Stamford Downtown will charge its vendor with closely coordinating its activities with the City of Stamford's vendor for the Atlantic + Main Intersection Project.

### Submission Format

Stamford Downtown requests a Statement of Qualifications from interested parties.

This Statement of Qualifications must include a:

- 1) Summary of firm history and leadership such as a brochure, written description, or presentation,
- 2) Description of the project management and client support structure,
- 3) Summary of three (3) projects of similar scope including the design and implementation of streetscape infrastructure improvements,
- 4) References for three (3) clients and
- 5) An hourly rate and expense schedule.

Stamford Downtown may schedule interviews with prospective vendors. Interviews, if necessary, will take place during the work week of September 11 – 15, 2023.

Prospective respondents should submit responses by Noon on Thursday, August 31, 2023. Respondents should submit the Statement of Qualifications in .pdf format via email to Michael Moore, Vice-President of Operations, at [moore@stamford-downtown.com](mailto:moore@stamford-downtown.com).

## Selection Criteria

Stamford Downtown seeks a vendor with successful experience with the design and implementation of streetscape infrastructure improvements within the dense, built environment of an urban center. The vendor must possess experience with the requirements of the State of Connecticut DECD's *Urban Action Grant Program* including, but not limited to, conformance with Connecticut Environmental Policy Act requirements and *Bidding, Contracting and Construction Guidelines for State Programs*.

Stamford Downtown will evaluate submissions according to a pre-determined, sixty (60) point criteria including:

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 1) Qualifications of project team including experience with completing DECD funded projects | 10 points |
| 2) Ability to provide services within the proposed project schedule                         | 10 points |
| 3) Awareness of project issues, opportunities, and constraints                              | 10 points |
| 4) Quality and performance of past services   | 10 points |
| 5) Hours fees and expense schedule  | 10 points |
| 6) References feedback record.  | 10 points |

Stamford Downtown has established a selection committee to screen and evaluate Statement of Qualification submittals. This committee will identify a short-list of qualified firms from which Stamford Downtown will request fee proposals, participate in the interviewing process for qualified firms, and make final selection.

This committee will screen all responses received for compliance with the RFQ. Responses that do not comply with the intent of the RFQ will be considered in the selection process. Stamford Downtown reserves the right to reject all responses and to re-start the procurement process.

Stamford Downtown will contract directly with the selected vendor.

## Reference Documents

Stamford Downtown will provide prospective respondents with access to existing mapping, including GIS images and public realm, and supporting documentation including:

Project Narrative – Restoring the Vitality of Atlantic St East (#s 150-300)  
*Bidding, Contracting and Construction Guidelines for State Programs*  
*City Standards for Sidewalk Design* (2014) and  
Stamford Downtown Public Realm Enhancement Plan (2021).

## **Attachment 1 Restoring the Vitality of Atlantic St East (#s 150-300)**

### **The Context:**

The eastern frontage of Atlantic Street from Tresser Boulevard to Veterans Memorial Park holds great under-realized potential to contribute to the vitality and value of Downtown. Originally part of one of the great stretches of ground floor retail and upper floor uses in the city, linking the South End with Atlantic Square, it's role within the Downtown has been compromised by planning decisions of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Specifically, the conversion of Atlantic Street to a divided arterial, the construction of the ramp to the Stamford Town Center at Main Street, and the lack of upper floor reinvestment have held this block back from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century revitalization seen elsewhere throughout the Downtown. Demand for downtown living and spaces for innovators and entrepreneurs has resulted in significant redevelopment in the surrounding blocks and the soft sites and vacant historic structures along this block could be the next location for private investment.

### **The Opportunity:**

The City is reshaping the public realm and setting the stage for near-term private development on this block. The soon-to-be-completed redevelopment of Veterans Memorial Park creates a modern public space at the core of the Atlantic Street corridor and will anchor future development. Additionally, the intersection of Atlantic and Main Streets will soon be raised and reconstructed to balance the needs of walkers with use by automobiles, and the removal of the median will both enable the incorporation of bike infrastructure and calm traffic with a more context sensitive design. The introduction of on-street parking to the east curb will add value to the ground floor for prospective retailers and commercial establishments.

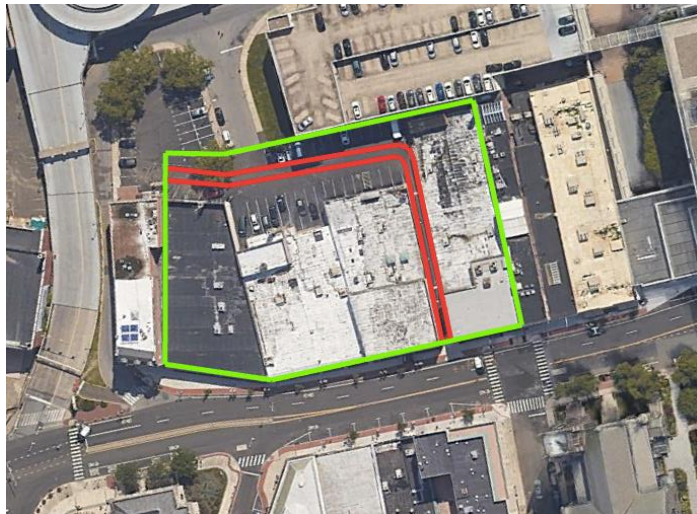
In response to these public signals, the private market is proposing action of their own. There is an active private redevelopment proposal for a hotel at 160 Atlantic Street. The owners of Safavieh have in the past discussed potential redevelopment of their properties located at 200, 210, 234, and 252 Atlantic Street. That entity's recent purchase of the Stamford Town Center, while not likely resulting in wholesale redevelopment, provides a moment to rethink the relationship between that structure and the surrounding parcels. A recent conversation with the new owners contained their acknowledgement that the "mall faces the wrong direction and should be easier to walk into from Downtown." Further, the vacant historic building at 258 Atlantic Street is one of the most interesting in the Downtown and the adjacent building at 262 Atlantic Street has recently received the owner's investment in a new brick façade.

### **The Challenge:**

Specific constraints limit the potential of these larger projects to reshape this block:

- While the redesign of Veterans Memorial Park is of a high quality, the lack of surrounding active uses will limit the space's utilization and risks congregation of undesirable elements currently frequenting Heritage Park next door; the park remains in many ways a physical cul-de-sac,
- The hotel project demands a pullout for drop-off and pick-up, but the City has objected to one located at the corner (for both park impact and traffic flow reasons), and the developer has indicated that this amenity is a condition precedent for construction and has expressed an unwillingness to locate it "in the back, under the ramp,"
- The ramp presents a significant detriment the walkability of Atlantic Street given its width and its looming presence, conveying automobile dominance of the area, and
- Any potential redevelopment of the Safavieh sites is hindered by the recently court-upheld presumptive easement located through the alleyway between 234 and 252

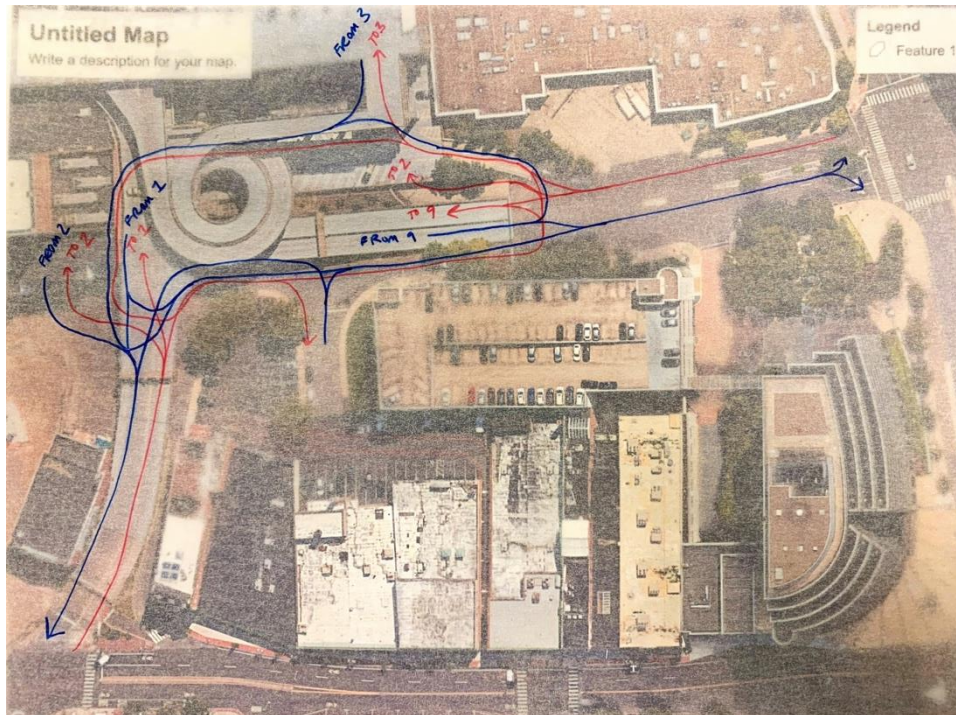
Atlantic Street and within the paved area behind that row of buildings in the vicinity of the former Quintard Place (see image below); this easement allows for access to the parking behind 184 Atlantic Street from those heading southbound on Atlantic Street.



### **The Solution:**

A surgical removal of a portion of the ramp structure, owned largely by the City of Stamford and partially by the Urban Redevelopment Commission, could simultaneously solve all of the challenges described above and unlock the significant potential of this transformative block. It is physically possible to remove ~275 feet of ramp structure from the point where it leaves the ground ~35 feet east of the intersection with Atlantic Street to its joint with the helix structure ~45 feet west of the Saks' façade. The upper floors of the garage will still be accessible from Tresser Boulevard. Specifically, the northbound ramp from Edith Sherman Drive provides direct access to the 9<sup>th</sup> level parking which then has ramp connections up to the roof parking and down to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> level parking. While furthest, the 6<sup>th</sup> level contains the least amount of parking due to the impact of the 7<sup>th</sup> level food court on that parking footprint.

Following the removal, a new bi-directional road can be constructed at-grade linking Atlantic Street to Edith Sherman Drive. This roadway will provide direct access into 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level parking as it does now, but will provide new direct access from 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level parking out to Atlantic Street that does not currently exist. Further, access to these parking areas will be possible from southbound Atlantic Street where only upper garage levels are presently. This new road, coupled with a conversion of the northern section of Edith Sherman Drive to a bi-directional roadway would also provide direct access to and from Atlantic Street and Main Street to the surface parking located behind 160, 184, 200, 210, and 234 Atlantic Street. If it is not physically feasible to convert the entirety of Edith Sherman Drive to a bi-directional road because of spatial constraints between the 300 Atlantic Street garage and the mall ramp, the parking "Annex" contiguous with the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of the parking garage can be utilized to provide the northbound connection for Edith Sherman Drive to Atlantic Street. See below for (confusing) diagram of enhanced access to existing parking resources in the mall structure and behind Atlantic Street.



The new surface road where the ramp previously existed would provide quality frontage for the proposed hotel tower which would provide perfect location for the turnout facilitating that project's construction. Additionally, direct access to the parking behind 184 Atlantic Street from both northbound and southbound lanes would negate the need for the presumptive easement behind the Safavieh properties, enabling their redevelopment. The helix, now visible from the new surface road and the intersection of Atlantic Street and Main Street provides a phenomenal marketing canvas for advertising the Stamford Town Center.

Finally, though costly and challenging, this new surface road and the exposed western façade of the mall present an opportunity for a new entrance integrated with this street, Veterans Memorial Park, and/or potentially the hotel that, at long last, turns the Town Centre towards the Downtown.

**Next Steps:**

First and foremost, the City needs to determine whether any agreements or deed restrictions with the Stamford Town Centre would prevent the removal of this portion of the ramp structure. Additionally, the City needs to confirm that reduced access to the parking would not compromise its building permit or other regulatory approvals and that the remaining single ramp access will be adequate for traffic flow and safety.

If confirmed, a conceptual site plan and rendering should be commissioned (in partnership with Stamford Downtown) to be presented to the private property owners (individually at first) to garner feedback and buy-in.