

CITY OF REHOBOTH BEACH, DELAWARE

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

RFI No. RB-RIR-2026

ReImagine Rehoboth

A Vision Planning Inquiry for a Built-Out Coastal City

Issued by:

City of Rehoboth Beach

229 Rehoboth Avenue • Rehoboth Beach, Delaware 19971

Responses Due:

May 13, 2026 • 4:30p.m.

Questions and Responses to:

Taylor Tedder, City Manager | ttedder@rehobothbeachde.gov
Evan Miller, Assistant City Manager | emiller@rehobothbeachde.gov

This RFI is issued for informational and planning purposes only. It does not constitute a solicitation, an offer to contract, or a commitment to issue a formal Request for Proposals.

1. PURPOSE

When Rehoboth Beach was founded in 1873, it was envisioned as a planned community — its name, meaning “broad places,” signaling a city created through order and intention rather than outward sprawl. Over the generations that followed, the city grew into a nationally recognized coastal destination, and that success brought increasing complexity to how space, mobility, commerce, and development interact in a place with no room to expand outward. The work before the Commission now is about ensuring that future change in this built-out city occurs intentionally, guided by the same spirit of stewardship that shaped Rehoboth at its beginning.

The City of Rehoboth Beach is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) to better understand how experienced planning and urban design firms’ structure and deliver downtown vision planning in built-out coastal communities. The City is not soliciting proposals and is not initiating a formal procurement process through this RFI. Responses will inform the Commission’s understanding of the approaches, capabilities, team structures, and resource ranges associated with comparable planning efforts, and may assist the City in considering how any future phase of downtown planning should be structured.

This RFI is a planning structure inquiry. The City seeks to understand how comparable planning efforts have been organized, what deliverables they have produced, how multidisciplinary teams have been assembled, and what timeline and resource commitments are typically required. The City also seeks to understand what may be possible through innovative, multidisciplinary planning approaches grounded in realistic implementation, governance, and resource considerations. Respondents are not being asked to propose performing the work described herein. The City is seeking professional perspective to inform the potential structure, sequencing, and scope of a future planning engagement.

The City of Rehoboth Beach Commission has identified downtown vision planning as a current institutional priority. Before committing to a specific planning structure or expanded scope, the Commission wishes to better understand the range of approaches available, the types of deliverables that result from comparable engagements, and how experienced firms integrate economic analysis, transportation planning, zoning reform, civic site evaluation, and implementation strategy within a unified planning framework.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Community Context

Rehoboth Beach is a compact, incorporated coastal city in Sussex County, Delaware, with a permanent population of approximately 1,500 residents. The City is substantially built out, with limited undeveloped land and a physical footprint that has remained stable for decades. Rehoboth Beach is a nationally recognized resort destination, drawing several million visitors annually during peak summer months.

Rehoboth Avenue serves as the City’s primary commercial corridor and the gateway connecting the midtown district to the oceanfront. It is both the daily main street for year-round residents and the defining arrival experience for visitors entering the beach district. For purposes of this inquiry, the City’s downtown and surrounding commercial context includes Rehoboth Avenue, the Boardwalk, Baltimore Avenue, Wilmington Avenue, and related gateway areas, including the western approach near Christian Street. These areas are characterized by small-scale mixed uses, high pedestrian activity during summer, significant seasonal variation in commercial demand, and increasing pressure on parking, mobility, and public realm infrastructure.

Strengthening the walkability, storefront vitality, and public realm of this broader commercial area is central to sustaining Rehoboth as a vibrant year-round coastal community — one that serves both its permanent residents and its seasonal visitors without sacrificing the character and identity that make it distinctive.

Because Rehoboth Beach is substantially built out, the City primarily shapes its built environment through regulatory tools such as zoning standards, design guidelines, and land use policy, as well as through strategic investment in public infrastructure and civic spaces. Governance clarity and regulatory precision are therefore central to the City’s long-term planning capacity.

2.2 Existing Planning Foundations

The City has adopted several planning documents that establish the framework within which this inquiry is situated.

The City of Rehoboth Beach Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP), certified by the State of Delaware in 2022, establishes the City’s adopted direction on land use, commercial district character, transportation, housing, and implementation priorities. The CDP is the primary policy authorization document for the City’s planning program.

The City of Rehoboth Beach 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, adopted in 2025, identifies downtown planning, code modernization, and downtown revitalization as institutional priorities for the current planning period. The Strategic Plan operationalizes the CDP’s goals within a defined resource and timeline framework.

These documents reflect the City’s commitment to deliberate, policy-grounded planning rather than reactive development management.

2.3 Initiatives Currently Underway

The City has several planning and regulatory initiatives currently in progress. These include code modernization efforts to align the City’s zoning, subdivision, and building regulations with contemporary standards and adopted policy direction; GIS and mapping system improvements to establish a modernized data infrastructure for development review and planning administration; ongoing downtown planning and regulatory analysis of the City’s three commercial districts — the C-1 Central Commercial District, the C-2 Commercial-Amusement District, and the C-3 Secondary Commercial District — with particular emphasis on the Rehoboth Avenue corridor, the Baltimore Avenue and Wilmington Avenue commercial areas,

and the broader City Center context anchored by the Christian Street area and municipal campus; and participation in the Delaware State Housing Authority's Zoning and Land Use Reform Pilot Program, through which the City is receiving technical assistance on targeted zoning and land use reform issues.

This RFI is intended to inform the Commission's decisions regarding how future phases of downtown vision planning should be structured, organized, and delivered. Responses to this RFI will supplement — not replace — the City's ongoing planning work.

2.4 The Governing Planning Challenge

Rehoboth Beach is a compact, built-out coastal community that experiences significant seasonal population swings. During peak season, the resident population is multiplied many times over by visitors and seasonal workers. During the off-season, the City functions as a year-round residential community with different service demands, economic conditions, and governance priorities.

This seasonal duality creates planning challenges that are distinct from those facing either purely residential communities or year-round tourism destinations. Zoning standards, parking requirements, commercial district policy, mobility infrastructure, and civic space programming must serve both populations without undermining the character and identity that makes Rehoboth Beach a desirable destination and a stable year-round residential community.

The City's planning program is therefore oriented toward renewing its founding vision in implementable form — translating the intentional character established through more than 150 years of deliberate civic development into modern standards that meet contemporary realities.

3. SCOPE OF INQUIRY

This RFI is organized around four primary areas of inquiry intended to inform the structure of a potential downtown vision planning engagement. Respondents are invited to address all four areas or to focus on areas within their firm's primary expertise. The City is particularly interested in understanding how these four areas are integrated within a unified planning engagement rather than addressed as separate projects.

3.1 Downtown Vision and Urban Form

The City seeks to understand how planning firms approach downtown vision planning in built-out coastal communities where physical expansion is not available and regulatory precision is the primary tool for managing character, density, and mixed-use activity.

Areas of inquiry include:

1. How commercial district strategy, zoning reform, building scale and character standards, and mixed-use programming are integrated within a downtown vision planning effort.

2. How the goals of an adopted Comprehensive Development Plan are translated into physical design standards and implementable zoning language.
3. How planning firms address the tension between seasonal tourism economies, and the governance needs of a year-round residential community in compact coastal settings.
4. What role community engagement and stakeholder input play in downtown vision planning, and how that process is structured to produce actionable outcomes rather than aspirational statements.

3.2 Christian Street Civic Anchor Site

The City of Rehoboth Beach owns a triangular parcel at Christian Street currently occupied by the Senior Center. The Commission has identified this site as a priority for evaluation as a potential cultural, civic, or mixed-use community anchor for the western gateway to Rehoboth Avenue.

The City seeks to understand how planning firms approach the evaluation of a city-owned civic anchor site within a broader downtown planning framework. Areas of inquiry include:

1. How programmatic alternatives for a city-owned site are evaluated, including cultural, civic, community services, and mixed-use options.
2. How site-level analysis is integrated with block-level urban form, surrounding zoning and development standards, and the pedestrian environment of adjacent streets.
3. How parking, circulation, and access implications of anchor site redevelopment are assessed and addressed within a planning framework.
4. How the economic viability of different programmatic options is evaluated, including the role of cultural venue feasibility analysis, market demand studies, and public-private partnership structures.
5. How comparable cities have structured funding partnerships for civic space improvements, including philanthropic contributions, sponsorship models, public-private partnership frameworks, and grant pathways — and what governance structures have proven most effective in guiding those efforts.
6. How comparable cities have successfully repositioned city-owned sites as civic anchors, and what implementation structures have been most effective.

3.3 Mobility, Public Realm, and Connectivity

The City seeks to understand how transportation analysis, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, parking management, and public realm improvements are integrated within a downtown vision planning effort.

Areas of inquiry include:

1. How multimodal transportation analysis is structured in a compact, high-visitation coastal community where seasonal traffic volumes significantly exceed year-round conditions.

2. How parking management strategies are developed and implemented in a setting where parking supply is constrained and demand is highly seasonal.
3. How pedestrian and bicycle connectivity improvements are coordinated with commercial district planning and zoning reform.
4. How public realm investments — streetscape, lighting, wayfinding, open space — are sequenced and prioritized within an implementation framework.

3.4 Implementation Strategy, Regulatory Tools, and Market Feasibility

The City seeks to understand how planning firms structure implementation strategies that translate vision planning into regulatory outcomes, capital investments, and redevelopment activity. The City is specifically interested in how economic and market analysis is integrated into implementation planning rather than treated as a separate study.

Areas of inquiry include:

1. What primary deliverables result from a downtown vision planning engagement, and how those deliverables are structured for adoption and use by a municipal commission.
2. How zoning text amendments and design standards are developed, sequenced, and structured for public hearing and adoption.
3. How implementation matrices are structured to translate planning recommendations into discrete projects with defined timelines, responsible parties, and resource requirements.
4. How economic and market feasibility analysis is integrated into implementation planning, including evaluation of year-round commercial demand, cultural programming potential, and the economic viability of catalytic redevelopment sites within Downtown Rehoboth.
5. How planning deliverables are structured to support grant applications, capital investment decisions, and public-private partnership development.
6. What a realistic timeline and budget range looks like for a downtown vision planning engagement comparable in scope to what is described in this RFI.

4. QUESTIONS FOR RESPONDENTS

Question 1: Firm Qualifications

Please provide a brief description of your firm, including its size, primary disciplines, and geographic focus. Identify key personnel who would be involved in a downtown planning engagement and briefly describe their relevant experience and how those disciplines would be coordinated.

Question 2: Comparable Project Experience

Describe two or three planning engagements your firm has completed that are most comparable to the scope described in this RFI. For each project, briefly identify the community context, the scope of work performed, the primary challenges encountered, the deliverables produced, and any outcomes that are particularly relevant to Rehoboth Beach's situation.

Question 3: Approach to Downtown Planning in Built-Out Coastal Communities

Rehoboth Beach is a compact, built-out coastal community that experiences significant seasonal population swings. How does your firm approach planning for communities where tourism-driven seasonal economies must coexist with the governance needs of a year-round residential community? What planning tools, analytical methods, and engagement strategies have proven most effective in comparable settings?

Question 4: Integration of Economic and Market Analysis

How does your firm integrate market and economic analysis into downtown planning and redevelopment strategy? Specifically, how do market findings inform planning recommendations, zoning calibration, mixed-use programming, civic site evaluation, and implementation sequencing? What disciplines or subconsultants does your firm typically engage to provide this analytical capacity?

Question 5: Civic Anchor Site Evaluation

How would your firm approach the evaluation of a city-owned site — such as the Christian Street Civic Anchor Site described in Section 3.2 — within a broader downtown planning framework? What analytical methods, alternatives analysis, engagement processes, and governance structures have been most effective in comparable situations? How do you address community concerns about the disposition or reprogramming of a city-owned facility currently in active use?

Question 6: Deliverables, Timeline, and Resource Requirements

Based on the scope described in this RFI, what primary deliverables would you expect a downtown planning engagement to produce? What is a realistic timeline and budget range for a comparable scope of work, and what major factors most affect those estimates? The City understands that precise figures cannot be provided without a formal scope, but is seeking professional guidance on reasonable expectations.

Question 7: Scope Refinement and Additional Considerations

Based on your experience with comparable planning efforts, what additional elements should the City consider as it structures the next phase of downtown vision planning? Are there aspects of Rehoboth Beach's situation — as described in this RFI — that suggest the scope described herein should be refined, expanded, deferred, or sequenced differently? The City welcomes candid professional perspective.

Question 8: Existing Planning Foundations and Policy Alignment

How would your team incorporate a city's existing planning foundations — such as an adopted comprehensive plan, strategic plan, ongoing code modernization, and related technical initiatives — in structuring a future downtown planning effort? How do you evaluate whether recommendations are consistent with adopted policy?

Question 9: Implementation Strategy and Risk Awareness

How do you translate planning recommendations into implementation tools such as zoning amendments, design standards, capital improvements, operational changes, or partnership strategies? Please also describe common implementation risks or causes of scope drift you have encountered in comparable projects.

5. IMPORTANT NOTICES

5.1 Not a Solicitation This RFI is issued for informational and planning purposes only. It does not constitute a solicitation for proposals, a request for qualifications, or a commitment to initiate a formal procurement process. The City of Rehoboth Beach is not obligated to take any further action based on responses received.

5.2 No Reimbursement The City will not reimburse respondents for any costs associated with preparing or submitting a response to this RFI. Participation is entirely voluntary.

5.3 No Preferential Treatment Submission of a response to this RFI does not confer any advantage in any future competitive procurement process the City may initiate. Firms that do not respond to this RFI are not precluded from participating in any future solicitation.

5.4 Public Records All responses submitted to this RFI are subject to the Delaware Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 29 Del. C. § 10001 et seq. Respondents should not include proprietary or confidential information in their responses unless they are prepared for that information to become part of the public record.

5.5 Right to Cancel or Modify The City reserves the right to cancel this RFI, modify its terms, decline to act on any or all responses, or initiate a separate procurement process at its sole discretion and without obligation to any respondent.

5.6 No Contract Formed This RFI does not create a contract or any contractual obligation between the City of Rehoboth Beach and any respondent. No representations made in any response to this RFI shall be binding on the City.

6. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

6.1 Response Format

Responses should be submitted as a single PDF or Microsoft Word document. Responses should not exceed ten (10) single sided pages, excluding cover page and any project photographs or graphic exhibits. The City is interested in substantive professional content; lengthy marketing materials are not necessary and are discouraged.

6.2 Required Information

Each response should include the following:

1. Firm name, address, and primary contact information.
2. Name and title of the individual authorized to represent the firm in connection with this RFI.
3. A brief firm overview, including disciplines, size, and relevant experience.
4. Responses to the questions set forth in Section 4.
5. Any additional information the respondent believes is relevant to the City's planning situation as described herein.

6.3 Submission Deadline and Method

Responses must be submitted by May 13, 2026 at 4:30 p.m..

Responses should be submitted electronically to:

Taylor Tedder, City Manager

Evan Miller

City of Rehoboth Beach

Department of Planning and Community Development

ttedder@rehobothbeachde.gov

emiller@rehobothbeachde.gov

Please use the following subject line: *RFI No. RB-RIR-2026 — City of Rehoboth Beach*

6.4 Questions Regarding This RFI

Questions regarding this RFI should be directed in writing to Tylour Tedder at ttedder@rehobothbeachde.gov. The City will respond to questions of general applicability in writing. No oral representations regarding the scope or intent of this RFI are binding on the City.

Thank you for your interest in Rehoboth Beach.

The City looks forward to receiving professional perspectives from experienced firms. Responses will be used solely to inform the Commission's decisions about how to structure the next phase of the City's downtown planning effort. No procurement action will result from this RFI.

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