



To: Downtown Memphis Commission (DMC) Board of Directors
From: DMC Staff
Date: December 16, 2021
RE: Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines Update

Background:

Formally established as a technical committee of the DMC Board, the Downtown Design Review Board (DRB) administers the Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines and the Central Business Improvement District (CBID) Sign Code. Using the Guidelines, the DRB manages the review and approval process for architectural design and public realm improvements associated with 1) public projects, and 2) private development projects that receive a DMC incentive. The eight members of the DRB are appointed by the DMC Board of Directors. The DRB Chair is also selected by the DMC Board per the DRB bylaws.

Last revised over 8 years ago, the Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines are in need of an update to improve their usability and continue to raise the bar on design excellence. Just like each of the DMC incentive programs and economic development tools, the Design Guidelines should be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect current priorities and best practices for downtown revitalization.

Why Update the Design Guidelines?

The current Design Guidelines have served their purpose since their adoption in 2013. However, with a total length of over 180 pages, an opportunity exists to revise and shorten the document to provide clear direction to property owners and incentive applicants about the type and quality of development that our community expects. A shorter document, with an emphasis on pictures and illustrations over long paragraphs of text, will be more effective for use by prospective developers, architects, DRB members, and DMC staff.

Moreover, updated Design Guidelines can also more closely align with plans created subsequent to the current version, including the Memphis 3.0 Comprehensive Plan and the BuildDowntown Master Plan. New emphasis can be placed on emerging priorities such as enhanced walkability, public realm and streetscape design, ground-floor transparency and activation, and high-quality exterior materials. Additionally, the current design guidelines are primarily focused on properties located within the CBID. The revised document can offer additional guidance for all projects that fall under the purview of the DRB, including projects located outside the Central Business Improvement District (CBID) but within the Parkways.

Request for Qualification (RFQ) Process:

DMC staff partnered with the DRB Chair to prepare a RFQ to identify a design firm or team to assist in updating the Design Guidelines. The RFQ was published in August 2021 and sent out widely to local, regional, and national firms with experience in this field. A maximum budget of \$50,000 was anticipated for this update effort.

Nine responses to the RFQ were received. After conducting 5 interviews with finalists, the DMC staff recommends a team comprised of Self + Tucker Architects and MKSK, a design firm based in Columbus Ohio. While many of the respondent firms were qualified and capable, the MKSK and Self + Tucker team approach stood out for their relevant experience and powerful combination of fresh outside perspective with the local knowledge of a Downtown Memphis architecture firm.

Estimated Project Cost:			
	MKSK	Self + Tucker	TOTAL
Base Fee	\$31,500 (68%)	\$14,500 (32%)	\$46,000
Reimbursable Expenses	\$3,500	\$500	\$4,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$35,000	\$15,000	\$50,000

Key Milestones:

Following approval by the DMC Board, staff will move forward per the schedule below:

- Dec. 31, 2021 Target to select consultant, negotiate scope of work, and sign contact.
- Jan - April 2022 Background work, stakeholder engagement, and draft content creation.
- May 2022 Deadline for first draft of revised design guidelines.
- June/July 2022 Goal: Revised Design Guidelines adopted by DMC and DRB.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends selecting the **MKSK and Self + Tucker Architects** team for the attached project scope with a total budget up to \$50,000. Following Board approval, the DMC President will negotiate and sign the final contract and issue the notice to proceed.

Supplemental Attachments:

1. Downtown Memphis Design Guideline Update RFQ
2. MKSK and Self Tucker Architects RFQ Response

MKSK + STA Team Proposal

Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines | 11.08.21 draft

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Task 0: Project Management

0.0 Project Administration – Upon selection, the leadership for the consultant team will work with DMC staff to refine the project scope of work, project schedule, and to identify the key stakeholders to be involved throughout the process. Additionally, we will determine the best tools and software to use for file-sharing, collaboration, and engagement.

0.1 Bi-Weekly Calls –We recommend establishing a recurring schedule for regular calls. This allows our team to have a standing meeting time to share project updates, and to ask questions and prepare for upcoming events and engagement throughout the project. We assume approximately 10-15 calls across the duration of the project based on the scheduled we have provided.

Task 1: Project Initialization

1.1 Kick-Off Meeting - The MKSK + STA team will hold a kick-off meeting to review the overall project scope and schedule, discuss initial project goals, and finalize the engagement approach. This meeting will be conducted over Zoom.

1.2 Data Gathering – The MKSK + STA team will work with city and county staff to gather the necessary data to support the project. This may include GIS Data, previous plans and studies, and more. MKSK and STA will provide a OneDrive link for file transferring throughout the planning process.

1.3 Existing Design Guidelines Review Workshop – Based on our current understanding of the project, MKSK and STA will hold a workshop meeting with DMC staff focusing on a review of the previous design guidelines and establishing a framework for this new guideline document. This will include discussing key principles and goals of the guidelines that will frame the overall structure and content of the document. This will include a discussion of what components were successful and what components are missing. Additionally, this workshop would include a walking tour of the study area with DMC staff to visit local examples that may be cited in the new document.

1.4 Best Practice Examples Research – In addition to the Workshop, our team will research best practice guideline examples that could help address some of the goals and intent of the client to serve as reference for the development of the updated Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines. This step is especially critical given the desire to have a condensed, succinct document. This will be an important tool in reaching agreement on effective approaches to conveying the desired information graphically.

1.5 Draft Guidelines Framework/Outline – Collectivity, MKSK, STA and the DMC will create a draft outline/framework for the document that will identify the key sections, principles to be communicated, the necessary graphics, and further research to be conducted.

Task 2: Stakeholder & Public Engagement

2.1 Engagement Plan – MKSK will work with the DMC to finalize an appropriate community engagement plan and strategy for the process. The engagement process will likely utilize a variety of methods and will rely on DMC staff for a bulk of the work hours needed for one-on-one and small group engagement.

2.2 Online Engagement –MKSK will establish an initial online survey for gathering feedback on the effectiveness of the current design guidelines, satisfaction with recent developments, and what are the most important attributes for the Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines moving forward. This will be shared with identified stakeholders for their input.

2.3 Stakeholder Meetings – We understand critical stakeholders in this process include developers, architects, landscape architects, landowners, DMC staff, DRB members and elected officials. We will convene a series of stakeholder meetings during the process. Where appropriate, we will try to conduct these in a group meeting format but recognize individual meetings may be necessary. Individual meetings will be conducted by DMC staff as warranted. We anticipate up to four (4) group stakeholder meetings during the process. These meetings should be conducted virtually, if possible, but we understand the potential benefits to conducting in person review and discussions. In such a case, the in-person meetings should be planned during scheduled visits for other tasks.

2.4 Public Engagement – Our team recognizes that public input may also be important to build support for this effort. To avoid engagement fatigue and gather focused input, we recommend conducting a single public open house, paired with an online engagement offering, when the draft guidelines have been developed to gather feedback to guide refinements to the new guidelines before finalizing and adopting (likely after Task 3.4 – see below).

Task 3: Draft Design Guidelines

3.1 Design Guidelines Mockup and Outline - The MKSK + STA team will create a document mockup and outline that reflects graphically oriented, user-friendly, and functional design guidelines. This mockup and outline will be the first draft of the guidelines that we will review with DMC staff. This first mockup will be critical to establishing a visual consistency and agreed direction for the document as content continues to be developed.

3.2 50% Draft Design Guidelines – After approval of the document’s layout mockup and outline, our team will commence creating graphics and elements of the document key to communicating the messages of the guidelines. MKSK and STA specialize at creating graphically oriented documents and we see the potential for this document to be a functional toolset for the Design Review Board, DMC and City Staff, and private developers. This draft will serve as an approximately 50% complete draft, with the most critical content and graphics being developed as a part of this draft. This draft will include annotated 2-D and 3-D diagrams as well as benchmark photos of desired architectural and design elements. This draft should be reviewed by stakeholders to ensure initial feedback about goals and direction is accurately being captured and communicated.

3.3 Design Guidelines Review and Refinement – Our team will work with DMC staff to further review and refine the design guidelines to advance to a next draft of the document.

3.4 75% Draft Design Guidelines – MKSK and STA will incorporate feedback given to date by DMC staff and stakeholders to create a 75% draft. It is anticipated that the document will consist of 20-30 pages and be highly illustrative. It will include the draft review checklist. This draft should only be missing smaller pieces of the content and should be developed enough to feel comfortable sharing with the public. This draft should also be reviewed by DMC staff, key stakeholders, and the public to ensure this is meeting their expectations.

3.5 Design Guideline Testing – MKSK shall host a workshop with DMC and DRB members to evaluate the functionality of the 75% draft of the guidelines. Utilizing recent, current, or hypothetical development proposals gathered by DMC staff, the project team will test the design guidelines to see if any content is missing, needs clarification or refinement to be an effective tool in the future.

Task 4: Final Design Guidelines

4.1 Design Guidelines Review and Refinement – Our team will work with DMC staff to review and refine the design guidelines to advance to the final draft of the document.

4.2 Final Design Guideline Document - Incorporating the final input and feedback from City Staff, the Stakeholder Committee, and Public, our team will make the changes approved by DMC to create the final Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines document. Our team will provide the final files to the DMC. These will include the original source files (packaged InDesign), electronic versions for web sharing, and high-quality print versions of the PDFs.

Assumptions

Given the budget and complexity of this project, MKSK presents the following assumptions on the scope of work as described above.

- Bi-weekly calls, and as many other meetings as possible should be conducted using Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or another video conferencing service to ease the need for travel and expenses of the project.
- MKSK is planning on no more than three (3) trips to Memphis to attend in person meetings or events. MKSK will include an expense budget in a refined fee schedule as part of this approach.
- Meetings with stakeholders, DMC staff, and the public should be coordinated to occur over periods of 2 days or less to maximize the efficiency of engagement and minimize travel expenses.
- The DMC staff will participate and cover the majority of work-hours necessary for in-person engagement events. MKSK and STA will work with the DMC staff to ensure at least one member from the consultant team is physically in attendance at milestone large group meetings, but all parties recognize that in-person gatherings of the consultant team members will not be feasible other than the designated three trips.
- The DMC will cover the costs of any large format printing needed for public or stakeholder engagement during the process. Additionally, the DMC will cover the cost of any desired printing and reproduction of the Design Guideline document during the process.