

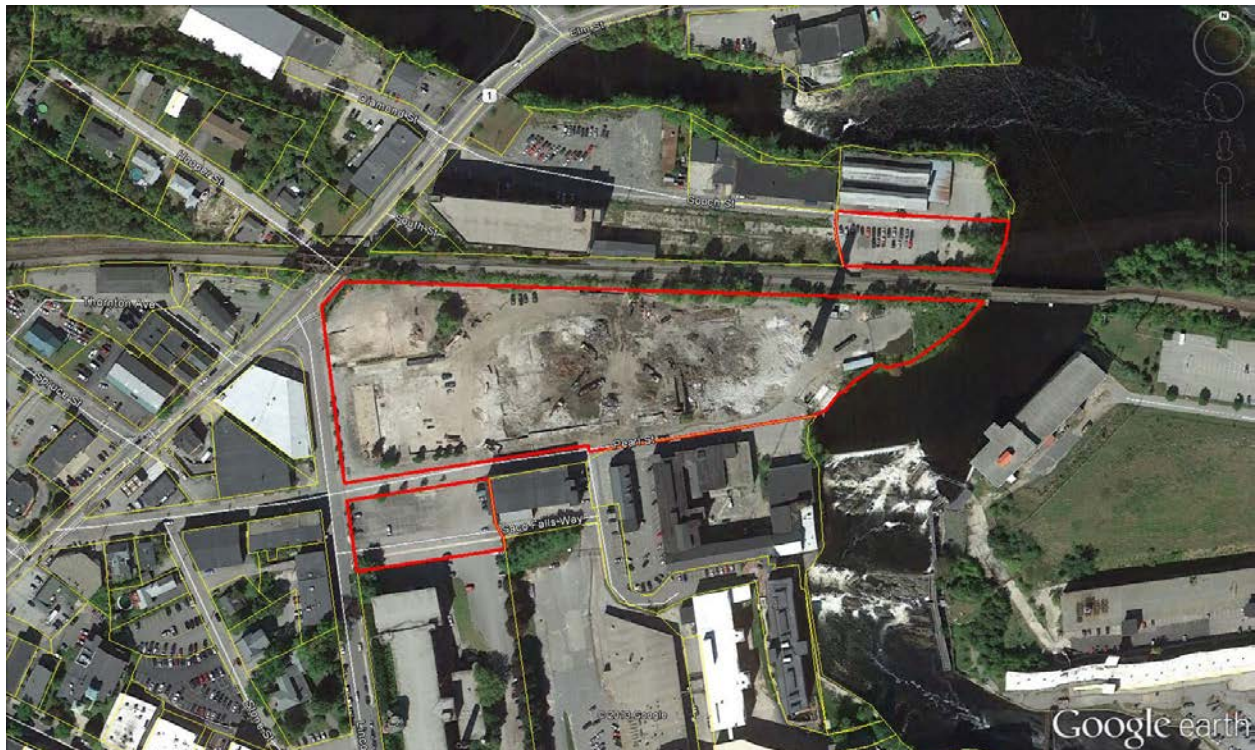
# CITY OF BIDDEFORD

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### **REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF INTEREST** **Acquisition and Development of a City-Owned 8.5 Acre** **Property in Downtown Biddeford** **Adjacent to Exceptional Amenities**

The City of Biddeford, Maine (the City) is seeking letters of interest from qualified real estate developers for the redevelopment of a city-owned 8.5 acre site located within the historic Mill District. The site is surrounded by exceptional adjoining and contiguous amenities including the Saco River, River Walk, commercial and passenger rail, bus services, and a growing list of diverse commercial, retail, and light-industrial businesses and residential housing.



Overview of Former MERC Site located within the Mill District Redevelopment area

#### **A. Community Overview**

Biddeford is Maine's sixth largest city with a community of more than 22,000 residents within a metropolitan statistical area population of roughly 515,000, with a labor force in excess of 209,000. The City is located 15 miles south of Portland and 90 miles north of Boston. Downtown Biddeford is enjoying an economic resurgence adding many new businesses in recent years.

Settled in the early 1600's, Biddeford and its sister City of Saco have a long and rich history as the commercial center of York County. Once a textile center of world prominence, Biddeford's economy has transitioned into a diverse mix of manufacturing, technology, and serviced-based companies and institutions. Anchoring the City's economic base is two of Maine's truly dynamic institutions: the award-winning Southern Maine Health Care and the University of New England – both of whom are experiencing impressive growth.

The downtown center features a vital small business community, two National Register historic districts and numerous historic commercial buildings, churches, homes, and major mill revitalization projects. Both cities participate in the National Main Street program, with the Heart of Biddeford and Saco Spirit actively drawing locals and visitors downtown with events such as the Sidewalk Arts Show, The Harvest Fest, Winter Fest, Chalk on the Walk, La Fete d'Hiver and Music in the Park. The Main Street programs support current businesses, recruit new businesses, and work to preserve the history, culture and beauty of the downtown. Biddeford promotes quality of life initiatives through easily accessible bike and walking paths, public art, enhanced greenways and upgraded streetscapes.

Biddeford is well served by numerous modes of transportation including I-95 and other roadways, commuter and regional bus service, and air service via the Biddeford Airport and Portland International Jetport. Passenger rail service is available through Amtrak's Downeaster.

## **B. Previous Site Uses, Site Offering and Project Description**

The site consists of 8.5 acres of land that is comprised of one irregularly shaped parcel bound to the west by Lincoln Street, the east by the Saco River, and to the north and south by a combination of Saco Falls Way, Pearl Street, the Boston & Maine Railroad, Gooch Street, and several commercial/industrial buildings. The City purchased the site in 2012 and removed the former MERC facility in 2013. Only the former building's concrete slab and the exhaust stack, currently in use as a cellular phone tower, remain on the site. This parcel of land is a highly visible, key component of Biddeford's downtown footprint, tying into the City's Downtown Mill District Master Plan <http://www.biddefordmaine.org/vertical/sites/%7BFAD9934F-594E-4DFE-8950-698C92DACFDD%7D/uploads/MilldistrictMPFINALREPORTReduced.pdf>

The parcel is currently zoned Main Street Revitalization District 3.

Mixed-use developments that provide commercial/office/light-industrial/retail space with strong pedestrian scale and urban design characteristics have been identified as preferred goals. Additional goals include promotion of pedestrian traffic and activity use throughout the day and evenings, as well as enhanced linkages to and compatible development with other downtown developments and businesses.

**The City may utilize various development incentives and/or participate in the project in order to produce development of exceptional quality and benefit to the City. The importance of this project for the community cannot be understated.**

## **C. Environmental Disclosures**

Prior to the City's purchase of the site, the following environmental investigation documents were completed:

1. Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), Credere Associates, LLC, September 18, 2012
2. Phase II ESA, Credere Associates, October 25, 2012
3. Supplemental Phase II ESA, Credere Associates, November 15, 2012
4. Dioxin Remediation Closure Report, Summit Environmental, March 2014
5. PCB Remediation Closure Report, Summit Environmental, June 2014

To date, building materials, surficial ash, and dioxin contaminated soils have been remediated from the site. PCB contaminated soils will be remediated as part of an EPA-approved work plan. Additional residual contamination will need to be addressed as part of the redevelopment. The City will retain ownership of the portion of the property located east of the railroad underpass and an area designated around the former combustion stack.

**All questions regarding environmental disclosures should be directed to Brian Phinney, Environmental Code Officer at [bphinney@biddefordmaine.org](mailto:bphinney@biddefordmaine.org) or (207) 571-0032.**

#### **D. Required Proposal Submittals**

Developers interested in responding to this LOI may discuss their interests with Daniel Stevenson, Economic Development Director, before preparing a written response to attain a comprehensive understanding and appreciation for the desired outcomes for this project. Mr. Stevenson may be reached at [dstevenson@biddefordmaine.org](mailto:dstevenson@biddefordmaine.org) or (207) 282-7119.

The following minimum information should be included in the LOI to receive full and fair consideration:

- Developer's name, legal address, office location and overall knowledge of real estate development practices
- Biographical information on key project participants and a summary of relevant development experience
- Listing of similar development projects summarizing the scope of each project, the proposed and final budget, and the proposed project timeline and actual completion timeline
- A brief narrative (two pages maximum) that describes the vision for this parcel including the architectural theme, proposed uses, and square footage allocation of each proposed type of use
- A preliminary conceptual plan depicting the general configuration and size of the development project including phasing
- An estimate of total development costs
- A summary of project financing and Developer's ability to fund the project through completion of all phases
- A description of expectations of City participation

## E. Evaluation Criteria

The City will evaluate submittals to identify the maximum potential net positive impact on Downtown and the City. Factors include the following:

- Compatibility of proposed development with other development in the immediate area, the Downtown Mill District Master Plan and the intent of city zoning
- Financial feasibility of the project
- Developer's experience in completing similar projects including partnerships
- Developer's financial capacity
- Level of demand for funding and/or assistance to accomplish project; and
- In addition, the City has a preference for projects incorporating sustainable design practices

No submittal will be accepted unless deemed by the City to be in the public interest in accordance with the laws of Maine. The City reserves the right to reject any and all submittals and to waive any and all irregularities.

## F. Submission Instructions

The official form of submittal to this LOI is electronic and all responses must be emailed to [MERCLOI@biddefordmaine.org](mailto:MERCLOI@biddefordmaine.org) for official cataloging purposes. Respondents are encouraged to provide a single PDF document no larger than 5 MB. Interested parties are encouraged to immediately notify Mr. Stevenson of their intent to submit and intended submittal date.

At the City's discretion, hard copies may also be accepted at the address listed below.

Daniel B. Stevenson  
Economic Development Director  
City of Biddeford  
PO Box 586  
205 Main Street  
PO Box 586  
Biddeford, ME 04005

Firms preparing a response to this LOI may seek procedural clarification by contacting **Daniel Stevenson** at [dstevenson@biddefordmaine.org](mailto:dstevenson@biddefordmaine.org) or **207-282-7119**.