

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Request for Proposals

**To Undertake a Proposed Feasibility Analysis and Develop a Conceptual Plan
for a Culinary Incubator in Amsterdam, NY**

**Issued: April 5, 2016
Due: May 4, 2016, 4:00 pm**

MENUS OF THE WORLD -- A CULINARY INCUBATOR

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Genesis of the idea and its intent

Amsterdam is a city comprised of many ethno-cultural traditions. These traditions are inherent in the intact, but largely disconnected populations of Latinos, northern Europeans, southern Europeans, African Americans and people from many other backgrounds. Amsterdam is a city where economic opportunities do not always mesh easily with the capabilities of the workforce. Amsterdam is a city in need of a unifying and inspirational economic muse, a vision that serves -- employing the patois of a place known as the “Rug City” -- as the warp on the loom, lending foundation and coherence to the pluralistic threads that must be woven together to form a vibrant community.

Amsterdam can never return to the times when the textiles mills provided that first step of economic opportunity; however, the City still possesses the raw material for renewal: its people and their culinary traditions. It is our conviction that the variegated cuisines of our many ethno-cultural communities are not only most venerable elements of Amsterdam’s distinct heritage, but, collectively, provide the unifying structure -- the warp as it were -- to both build community and create economic opportunity. We intend to do so by establishing a culinary incubator on the City’s Southside, contained along Bridge Street and adjoined to feeder streets, to effectively impart to prospective culinary entrepreneurs the sets of knowledge, skills and abilities needed to succeed.

The proposed project is designed to: [1] Grab hold of and celebrate the City of Amsterdam’s multi-cultural heritage; [2] Embrace the entrepreneurial zeitgeist permeating the City’s Historic Southside; and, [3] Build upon the magnificent addition to the civic estate that is the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook -- a serpentine pedestrian bridge and curvilinear park now under construction -- spanning the Mohawk River and stitching together the once rent fabric of the City.

Initial vision

The following narrative sets forth what is considered to be an initial, yet very pliable, vision for the project. The funding provided through the USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program is intended to assess the feasibility of the vision and to refine that vision so that it is viable in the harsh and unvarnished context of structural, financial, operational and market realities.

- Set along Bridge Street at the southern terminus of the forthcoming Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook (MVGO) in Amsterdam's culturally rich South Side neighborhood, the culinary incubator would weave itself into its surroundings, further complementing the historic sites and artistic renderings that reinforce a unique sense of place.
- The incubator would include up to 20 (this figure is, of course, quite mutable) restaurant locations all contained along Bridge Street and feeder streets. Each location would embrace a period or regional theme and follow a design pattern of one and two story structures, recessed and not, that would provide gated cafe space.
- A separate structure would house classroom, office and meeting space for the essential non- culinary exercises required of a successful restaurateur. Activities clustered there would include accounting, bookkeeping, code management, human resources, purchasing, marketing and more. It would also offer a large kitchen area suitable for prep work by incubator members as well as off premise catering ventures. Included among the array of buildings would be food supply shops and crystal and china shops connecting various ethnic themes. Further, the restaurant spaces would house smaller based kitchens and tables and chairs and offer every opportunity for creative expression by the occupant /tenant.
- Along with its feeder streets, Bridge Street would host a farmer's market and a community garden; the local farming industry would highlight its fresh and locally grown produce in keeping with a sound nutrition agenda. The program could also leverage the value- added of the local agriculture industry's bounty, including processed foods (i.e., tomatoes processed into a home brand tomato sauce).
- Functionally, the incubator would serve as a not-for-profit in partnership with local culinary schools, including SUNY Cobleskill, the Culinary Institute of America, Fulton-Montgomery Community College and Schenectady County Community College.
- An advisory committee of established and award-winning chefs and restaurateurs would guide the project and develop fee schedules for both diners and tenants.

Notable project linkages

The proposed project has a customer base of nearly one million people within 50 miles. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that this particular project is fundamentally linked to, supported by and supports a broad spectrum of assets/aligned endeavors that are planned, now underway or completed within the city of Amsterdam and the region. These include:

- Efforts to establish a multimodal transportation center, inclusive of a new Amtrak station at the northern terminus of the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook.
- A new Montgomery County agricultural plan that will focus upon economic development and farm to table connections.
- The Taste NY initiative intended to incentivize the craft beer, wine, cider and spirits industries.
- Aggressive investment now taking place on West Main Street on the north side of the Mohawk River.
- Location of the project within an historic neighborhood, within 1 mile of New York State Thruway exit 27 and adjoined to the aforementioned bridge, regional trails and a park system.
- The nearby locations of many heritage assets including Riverlink Park, Guy Park Manor and the South Side Veterans Park.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

Montgomery County will engage an economic development consultant, possibly in conjunction with an engineering firm (for Task 4), to conduct a feasibility study of the proposed culinary incubator. The consultant team will report to and be guided by the Advisory Committee.

The consultant's work will include an analysis of comparable culinary incubator models; interviews with potential tenants and partners; site identification and evaluation; an analysis of the funding necessary to develop and operate the incubator; and the development of a strategic plan for the facility with concise recommendations with respect to ownership, management, financing, marketing, and operations.

Task 1. Comparable Concept Research

The consultant will research models of successful shared-use commercial kitchen spaces in the United States to determine the success of similar initiatives in comparable markets, the desired role of educational institutions, the sources of operational financial support, management structure, services provided and/or amenities typically offered, as well as other critical aspects of successful culinary incubation. The consultant will summarize and share its findings with the advisory committee, and they will inform the deliverables in the remaining tasks.

Task 2. Market Analysis

The consultant will conduct a market analysis that determines who offers similar facilities in New York State, whether there is sufficient demand for the types of services and products to be offered, whether successful incubation will lead to business and job growth in the region beyond the incubation period, and the cost of competitive spaces. Please note that throughout this scope, the "market" includes two facets: The market of potential tenants and the market for the products and services those tenants will offer.

The consultant will analyze both retail market and restaurant market potential in the target area, including a leakage analysis of spending outside the county on goods and services to be provided at the incubator site(s). This may additionally include an evaluation of the sales volume of existing restaurants in the locality to determine the potential for the establishment of more viable restaurants.

In addition, a commercial space assessment will be conducted for the market area to determine current rental and property acquisition rates, the condition of available space, real estate trends and other factors affecting the market.

The consultant will also conduct high-level analysis of the tourism market, given the vision of attracting visitors to the incubator. The consultant will also conduct an analysis of the relevant

workforce segments and training programs, to illuminate the target tenants and workforce as well as surface further information about the proposed partnerships with higher education institutions.

The consultant will survey and interview potential tenants, including but not limited to local restaurateurs, chefs, graduates regional culinary training programs, food retailers, food processors, small family farmers, and relevant artisans. Surveys will be conducted via telephone and/or e-mail and will focus on the needs of the individual or business with respect to: the amount and type of space and location desired; the ability to pay rent; collective services and amenities that should be offered; telecommunication infrastructure needs; and; other pertinent operational/support requirements.

Based on these analyses, the consultant will provide findings and recommendations regarding:

- The type and number of tenants likely to utilize the proposed incubator;
- Characteristics of the space demanded;
- The likely rental revenue per square foot that could be generated;
- Recommendations for balance between industry focus and support for entrepreneurs or growth-oriented individuals/companies in the sector;
- Recommendations for the stages of development to be targeted (e.g. start-up, early stage, or growth stage)
- A refined concept of what specific types of products, services, and processes should be the focus of the incubator and its offerings

This information will drive decisions about recruitment, programs, services, physical space, and partnerships/networks.

Task 3. Exploration of Community Linkages & Partnerships

Based on consultation with the Advisory Committee, the consultant will interview potential partners in the venture including local governments, regional culinary training programs, existing restaurateurs, chamber(s) of commerce, any industry associations, prospective financiers, prospective developers, prospective landlords, and others in the entrepreneurial/culinary ecosystem. Fulton-Montgomery Community College (FMCC) has previously offered culinary curricula and will evaluate the training needs at the incubator.

The purpose of these interviews will be to identify possible links between the proposed incubator and local community organizations, agencies, and institutions. The interviews are expected to generate a list of complementary uses and respective roles that could enhance the work of local organizations as well as strengthen the sustainability of the incubator.

Task 4. Site Evaluation

Based on prospective sites identified by the advisory committee, potential tenant preferences, community benefit and economic feasibility, the consultant will work with the advisory

committee to develop criteria on which to base the site selection process for the restaurants and the separate shared space structure.

A matrix will be developed comparing preliminary cost estimates for acquisition and renovation, size and capacity, adaptability for various uses and types of businesses, the availability of amenities and services for tenant businesses, public access, and community benefit. Particular amenities identified as tenant needs in Task 2 will be considered, potentially including parking; telecommunications; and space for seminars, networking events, acceleration programs, training programs, etc. The consultant team, likely with the assistance of an engineering firm, will generate very preliminary cost estimates for renovation. The consultant team will prepare a written summary of the site evaluation for review by the advisory committee.

Task 5. Financial Analysis & Pro Forma Statements

To determine the financial viability of a culinary incubator plan, the consultant will conduct a financial feasibility assessment of the proposed concept. The consultant will identify key changes to the assumptions and design of the plan to make it more financially sound, and complete a phasing plan, cash flow analysis, performance analysis (including return on investment), and a financing proposal.

An important component of the financial feasibility study will be to determine a budget for pre-development activities (e.g., acquisition, architectural and engineering fees, and site preparation), construction, and operational costs. Based on these projected costs, the market analysis findings, and other assumptions, a 10-year pro forma statement for the proposed incubator will be developed. This pro forma will illustrate the annual estimated income and expenses associated with developing, operating and managing a culinary incubator facility in Montgomery County.

The deliverable will detail the needed levels of revenues to support operations at these facilities; the expected amounts and mix in terms of market rate rent, incubator rate rent, and service fees; the expected level of subsidy need and sources for that support; and the development of an annual budget for the incubator reflecting initial and ongoing expenses.

Task 6. Management & Operations Plan

Based on the aforementioned analyses, the consultant will provide recommendations for the planning and development of a culinary incubator that will lead to the greatest chances for success.

Based on the background research, interviews, market and financial analysis, site evaluation, and other tasks, the consultant will develop an incubator management and operations plan. This plan will include a vision or mission statement, goals, and benchmarks articulating how the proposed venture will advance the incubator's mission. The management plan will draw from best practices in non-profit management. It will also offer recommendations for the services and

infrastructure to be provided, staffing, facility ownership and leasing, insurance, policies pertaining to the responsibilities of tenants and landlord, accounting and recordkeeping practices, grounds and building maintenance, strategies for marketing the incubator and potential incentives, financing, and partnerships.

3. TIMEFRAMES

The project is expected to be generally completed within a six month schedule. The following milestones have been established:

- Project engagement and detailed analyses -- months 1-4
- Public meetings and web-based engagement -- months 2-5
- Issuance of deliverable -- month 6

4. PROJECT OVERSIGHT

The Montgomery County Business Development Center will undertake all administrative and oversight responsibilities for the project. A consultant will be hired, through an RFP process, to undertake the previously enumerated analyses. An Advisory Committee will be formed.

5. PROPOSAL FORMAT & SUGGESTED GUIDANCE

Respondents are, obviously, required to frame their responses in a manner that is generally arranged as follows. Yet, this is just a framework to guide the formulation of your firm's proposal. The Montgomery County Business Development Center is simultaneously desirous of soliciting responses that creatively and organically approach the assignment. Here are some principles and general guidance to keep in mind when formulating your response:

- Elements of the Scope of Work, as previously enumerated, reflect an earlier conception of the necessary individual tasks needed to accomplish the engagement. We do not expect respondents to simply regurgitate that specific scope; rather, **your response should reflect your firm's comprehension of how the job ought to be done, why it ought to be done that way and how specific tasks and deliverables should deviate from the current iteration of the Scope of Work.**
- The budget is established at \$70,000 -- the amount of the grant from USDA. The budget was calculated as follows. Your firm's proposed budget should not exceed \$70,000. The Montgomery County Business Development Center recognizes that undertaking certain tasks, in the manner previously described may be neither fiscally practicable, nor integral to achieving the desired project outcome. Accordingly, if compliance with that budget constraint requires your firm to adjust its proposed scope of

work, please simply do so and describe how the scope of work has been modified in order to accomplish the engagement with the available funding.

The following is what is expected in each of the major sections of your proposal:

Section A – Introduction:

This section should contain an Executive Summary which demonstrates your understanding of the project goals and objectives to prepare the plan. Please give this part of the response some careful and considered thought.

Section B – Company Profile and History:

- Name, phone number and e-mail address of person Montgomery County should contact with any questions on the proposal.
- The name and title of person submitting the proposal.
- Project team members and qualifications.
- Documentation of firm history, including capabilities in the area of services to be provided, number of years in business, number of years doing business in New York State, size and scope of the operation.
- Type of organization (corporation, partnership or sole proprietorship).
- Name of individual designated as the Project Manager for the project and a resume for this individual identifying past experience on similar projects.

Section C – Reference Related Materials:

Respondents should provide the following information with the proposal:

- Current client list
- Any services that will be subcontracted and the name of the subcontractor
- At least three (3) references that can provide an informed evaluation of your firm's capacity to undertake this project and identify engagements with other municipalities or local government agencies within the past five years.

Section D – Work Plan:

As previously discussed, the work plan should generally follow the framework outlined above in “2. SCOPE OF WORK.” However, your work plan should be adjusted and augmented as previously described.

Section E- Pricing Format:

Keep this simple: Break it down by primary work elements and other significant costs associated with the engagement. Again, you will need to work within a \$70,000 budget.

6. PROPOSAL DIRECTIONS & REQUIREMENTS

The County will oversee the RFP process, address all questions from the proposers and provide updates as necessary during the process. Any RFP related updates should be emailed to the list of participants as documented in the RFP.

Each Proposer must submit three (3) hard copies of the proposal to:

Scott Surento, Purchasing Agent
20 Park Street
Fonda, NY 12068

Proposals will be accepted until Wednesday, May 4, 2016 4:00 pm

Questions are to be submitted in via email to:

William Roehr, Senior Planner
E-mail: wroehr@co.montgomery.ny.us
Phone: (518) 853-8334

Specific procurement questions may be submitted to:

Scott Surento, Purchasing Agent
E-mail: ssurento@co.montgomery.ny.us
Phone: 518-853-3351

In order for a proposal to be evaluated, the following requirements must be met:

1. Proposals must be received by the due date and time established in the "Timeline for RFP Process". Any proposals received after the specified date and time will be disqualified from further evaluation.
2. The cover letter of the proposal includes the signature of a representative authorized to bind the Proposer.

Failure to meet any of these requirements is grounds for rejecting a proposal.

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider, and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD)”

The County reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to accept or reject any or all responses to this RFP, to negotiate with any or all firms considered, or to cancel this RFP in whole or in part. The County reserves the right to request additional information from any or all Proposers. The County reserves the right to waive any and all information and irregularities as it deems in the best interest of the County.

Timeline for RFP & Selection process

RFP issue date: April 5, 2016

RFP due date: May 4, 2016

Notice of intent to award: May, 2016