



**The Town of Leonardtown, Maryland
Request for Interest (RFI)
Waterfront Parcel “The IceHouse”**

The Town of Leonardtown is pleased to announce a unique opportunity for interested developers to submit letters of interest for the development of a food hall on a prime waterfront parcel in Leonardtown, Maryland, referred to as The IceHouse at the Wharf. We are seeking visionary developers who can transform this location into a vibrant culinary destination that will enhance the community's quality of life and evolve Leonardtown’s Wharf District with visitor amenities that would include authentic dining options, craft beverages, gathering spots, and family-friendly amenities.

The Location:

The Leonardtown Wharf, a waterfront with a rich history and spectacular view of Breton Bay, is located a few blocks down the hill from Leonardtown Square along Washington Street. Already popular as a location for private events and weddings, the Leonardtown Wharf offers outdoor enthusiasts access to the water with SUP/kayak rentals, afternoon or sunset cruises, boat docking facilities, an interpretive park and green space, and a waterfront boardwalk with plans for expansion.

The waterfront parcel at the Leonardtown Wharf offers a picturesque setting with scenic views of Breton Bay, creating an ideal backdrop for a food hall concept. The name “The IceHouse at the Wharf” reflects the wharf’s history and the icehouse that once stood at the site. Applicants are free to suggest alternative names for consideration by the Town. The location boasts high visibility and accessibility and is situated blocks from the town center. Leonardtown has a rich history, a vibrant arts scene, and a strong local community that embraces local businesses. By capitalizing on these advantages, the chosen developer will have the opportunity to tap into a burgeoning market and establish a landmark culinary destination.

See Exhibit 1 for a vicinity map

See Exhibit 2 for site photos

Historical Background:

The Town of Leonardtown, which celebrated its 300th birthday in 2008, is located at the headwaters of Breton Bay on the western coast of the southern Maryland peninsula and was originally established in the mid 1650's, making it one of Maryland's oldest towns. The town served for many years as the center of commerce and social activity for Southern Maryland. For much of Leonardtown's history the wharf area at the bottom of the hill on Washington Street was a lifeline to the outside world, receiving boats and steamships full of supplies before roads were commonplace.

Steamboats carried goods and passengers all over the Chesapeake Bay area and the James Adams Floating Theatre, a showboat company, docked each year at the port, providing entertainment and band concerts to sellout crowds of local citizens every summer from 1915 to 1940. The theatre held an audience of 850 patrons on two levels and had a cast of 24 to 30 actors and musicians who performed six different productions during their stay in Leonardtown. Edna Ferber's classic novel 'Showboat' was based on this theatre.

In the 1880's, the steamships Sue, Dorchester and Wakefield served Leonardtown. In 1885, the Leonardtown Joint Stock and Transportation Company of St. Mary's County managed the Leonardtown Wharf. This increased the tempo of activity at the wharf and spawned other adjacent development, including the construction of several homes near the wharf area and the St. Mary's Ice and Fuel Company. In 1925 a 40-horsepower electric power plant was installed at the foot of Wharf Hill and began providing electricity throughout the town. The ice plant offered a source of refrigeration to the town and an ice cream plant was also established there. In the ensuing years though, with the rise in popularity of other modes of transportation, activity at the Wharf began to decline.

In January 1948, Frank Combs built the Leonardtown Wharf and Bar and opened it as a popular destination for dinner and dancing. But a devastating fire destroyed the Wharf building in 1985 and by the late 1980's the Wharf property had fallen into disrepair; burnt pier posts and abandoned buildings were all that was left of the once thriving area.

Interest in redevelopment of the property in 2000 launched the collaboration between the St. Mary's County Commissioners and the Town of Leonardtown. In the fall of 2001, the Commissioners of Leonardtown pursued and received a \$104,000 Community Legacy grant to demolish the deteriorated buildings. Developer Ron Russo of RAR Associates entered into a partnership with the Town, and Phase I of the Leonardtown Landing Project, 26 townhouses built on a bluff overlooking Breton Bay, was completed in 2007.

Funding for the Leonardtown Wharf Waterfront Park came from numerous sources, including the Department of Natural Resources and the St. Mary's County Commissioners, and construction of the project was coordinated by the Town staff. A grand opening ceremony was held in May, 2008. The finished park, accessible by boat or car, consists of a brick promenade along the waterfront, with historical markers providing information on the Wharf and Leonardtown's past. A boardwalk through a wetland area with informational signs, a visitor's pavilion and concession stand with restrooms, a large observation deck inlaid with a compass rose, lawn, a playground, a picnic area and transient boat slips are also available.

The Wharf also provides a kayak/SUP landing and is the terminus of a roughly 3-mile water trail along McIntosh Run that originates upstream at the Port of Leonardtown Public Park.

Today the Town of Leonardtown remains the only incorporated municipality in St. Mary's County, and its county seat. During the last two decades the downtown area has experienced a renaissance, rebounding with new and varied shops, galleries and restaurants. It has a rich historical and cultural small-town feel, with a strong community government and active citizen and business participation. Several large, upscale housing developments in Leonardtown have added considerably to the Town's population in the last 15 years.

The Town has received several state designations; its Sustainable Community Designation, which will open up potential grant funding streams for various projects, and Main Street and Arts and Entertainment District designations which bring statewide marketing and tourists into the Town. The Leonardtown Business Association, founded in 2000, is an active participant in many Town events and strong advocate for the local business community; they work hard to ensure the success of all of the Town's local businesses.

Adjacent to the Wharf is a 400 acre, undeveloped, waterfront farm called Tudor Hall. Many hours of conceptual planning have been done to ensure that the development happens in a seamless approach that expands the existing downtown instead of creating a new downtown. A copy of this vision plan is included as Exhibit 3 of this RFI.

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See Exhibit 3 for Downtown Development Phase III Map

For additional economic data:

See Exhibit 4 for Retail Recruitment sheets and Market Analyses

See Exhibit 5 for Census Data

The Concept:

Site-specific plan concepts for a food hall have been included in this RFI, as well as comparable food hall plans from around the country. Design concept elements include a food hall that includes a covered space for the historic carousel, an outdoor dining deck, a splash pad or interactive water feature, an outdoor gathering space incorporating the building remnants of the past icehouse, outdoor common areas, and an optional rooftop for additional seating and/or private events. The Town envisions the architecture of the food hall as a contemporary interpretation of the historic building forms once present at the wharf.

The concept provides a casual dining experience suitable for families which may include multiple food vendors, a tap room, an open “commons area” dining, and a rooftop dining option that can be reserved for private parties. The Town of Leonardtown envisions this location as an opportunity for existing restaurants to explore expansion concepts, a lower threshold of entry for start-up dining options, and a collection of spaces that will have appeal throughout the year in a highly-flexible space in a signature location. Specific components that are important to The Town include:

- flexible hours of operation

- public access

- variety

- family friendly atmosphere

The Town is open to hybrid concepts and other proposals within the framework of this RFI and Exhibit 6.

See Exhibit 6 for The Icehouse at the Wharf

Statement of Interest and Questions:

To maintain equal communication with all interested parties, a statement of interest should be submitted that includes proposer’s name, address, phone number, email, and any questions the proposer may have. These shall be submitted by January 8th, 2024 to Laschelle McKay, Town Administrator, at Laschelle.McKay@leonardtownmd.gov.

Information Session:

We will invite all interested developers to attend an information session on a date to be determined, where Town representatives will provide additional details and address any preliminary questions.

Flexibility of Concept:

While this RFI outlines a proposal for a food hall, the Town of Leonardtown invites creative interpretations of this concept provided they address the following key principles: family friendliness, diverse price points and options for dining (including on site and takeaway), and relationships to the open spaces and envisioned amenities. Overall, the goal is to enliven the waterfront with more activity.

See Exhibit 7 for Statement of Interest Form

Terms of Submittal:

Interested developers are invited to submit proposals outlining their vision for the food hall development.

Submittals should include at a minimum the following:

- The statement should include a thorough understanding of the project's objectives, including the concept of creating economic opportunities for business expansion and recruitment, sustainable practices, and community engagement.
- A description of the developer's concept and how it may reflect or differ from the plans identified in this RFI. While the Town of Leonardtown has stated its goals, differing concepts are welcomed and encouraged provided they meet the overall goal of a more vibrant waterfront.
- An outline of the preferred operational plan, and an outline of financial projections.
- An outline of the developer's experience in delivering successful projects of similar scale and complexity.

Public-Private Partnership:

The Town of Leonardtown is committed to fostering a public-private partnership to ensure the success of the project. We envision collaborating closely with the selected developer to create a mutually beneficial arrangement that leverages the strengths of both parties. This selected developer will be involved in creating a comprehensive development agreement that outlines the responsibilities, investment commitments, and revenue-sharing mechanisms. The Town will provide support throughout the development process, including assistance securing necessary permits and facilitating community engagement efforts. The Town envisions a leasehold arrangement with the selected developer.

By engaging in a public-private partnership, developers will benefit from the Town's local expertise, streamlined regulatory processes, and community connections.

The partnership will allow for integration of the privately operated portion of the facility and the public spaces that surround it. Additionally, the development of the food hall should have a positive economic impact, generating jobs, boosting local business activity, and increasing tourism revenue.

Developers may submit RFI information that may contain proprietary and confidential information of the submitting party. Such information includes, but is not limited to, trade secrets, financial data, intellectual property, and other sensitive details. The Town of Leonardtown and its designated representatives are obligated to treat all such information any information marked confidential and shall not disclose it to third parties without the express written consent of the submitting party, unless required by applicable law.

Key Dates:

- Release of Request for Developer Interest (RFI): December 4th, 2023
- Deadline for Submission of Statement of Interest and Questions: January 8th, 2024
- Hybrid Virtual/In-Person Information Briefing: To Be Determined
- Developer Presentations and Interviews: To Be Determined

The Town of Leonardtown reserves the right to select a single submittal, multiple submittals, or refuse all submittals at its sole discretion.

Notice:

The Town of Leonardtown hereby issues this Request for Information (RFI) for developers interested in participating in the development of a new food hall on the waterfront. The Town reserves all rights to amend, change, or modify the terms and conditions of this RFI at any time, without prior notice. Respondents to this RFI shall be responsible for regularly reviewing this RFI and any subsequent updates or amendments.

By responding to this RFI, all respondents acknowledge and accept that the Town of Leonardtown may, at its sole discretion, make changes to the RFI, including but not limited to deadlines, eligibility criteria, evaluation criteria, or any other aspect of the RFI. Any such changes will be communicated via written notice or updates to the RFI document on the Town of Leonardtown's official website.

Furthermore, any approvals, negotiations, agreements, or contracts resulting from this RFI process shall be subject to all applicable open records laws in the State of Maryland. All documents and correspondence related to this RFI, including but not limited to submissions, evaluations, and agreements, may be subject to public disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act.

Please be advised that the ultimate approval of any project resulting from this RFI process is subject to review, consideration, and approval by the Town Council of Leonardtown. The Town Council reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal, negotiate terms, and make the final decision regarding the selection of a developer or development project.

The Town of Leonardtown retains full discretion throughout this process, and all respondents are encouraged to seek legal counsel and clarification regarding any aspects of this RFI or its subsequent processes.

This RFI disclaimer is an integral part of the RFI document and shall be binding on all respondents and any parties involved in the RFI process. By submitting a response to this RFI, respondents acknowledge and agree to abide by the terms and conditions outlined herein.

The Town of Leonardtown is excited about the potential of this project and looks forward to partnering with an innovative developer who shares our vision. We believe that the IceHouse at the Wharf will not only enhance the local community but also serve as a regional attraction. Together, we endeavor to create a dynamic destination that celebrates the culinary arts, supports local businesses, and enriches the lives of residents and visitors alike.

We anticipate receiving your compelling proposals.

Please contact Town Hall at 301-475-9791 or email Laschelle.Mckay@leonardtownmd.gov with questions.

Laschelle McKay
Town Administrator
Commissioners of Leonardtown