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Three Firms Shortlisted for Downtown Master Plan

23 firms applied for the opportunity to lead Plan Baton Rouge III

Baton Rouge, LA – Baton Rouge civic leaders announced the planning firms shortlisted for the Plan Baton Rouge Phase III Master Plan, a comprehensive planning process aimed at revitalizing and enhancing downtown Baton Rouge. Community champions, the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge, Downtown Development District, Visit Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge Area Chamber, and Baton Rouge Area Foundation have partnered to sponsor Plan Baton Rouge III. The plan will focus on the intersections of design, public space activation and placemaking, commerce, and mobility to invest in the next chapter of downtown development.

The shortlisted firms who have been invited to participate in oral presentations in mid-December are Sasaki, SOM, and WXY. The finalist will be decided after the oral presentations and the planning process is anticipated to kick off early January 2025.

Baton Rouge Area Foundation, on behalf of project partners, issued an RFP in early August and received 23 responses from nationally and internationally respected firms. The complete list of submittals, as well as their firm’s primary location, is as follows:

- Agency – Birmingham, AL
- Cooper Carry – Atlanta, GA
- Design Workshop – Houston, TX
- Dover, Kohl & Partners – Houston, TX
- DPZ – Miami, FL
- EDSA – Dallas, TX
- Field Operations – Philadelphia, PA
- Gensler – Dallas, TX
- HKS – Houston, TX
- Interface Studio LLC – Philadelphia, PA
- Mend Collaborative – Minneapolis, MN
- MICA – London, United Kingdom
- MKSK – Atlanta, GA
- NBBJ – Columbus, OH
- Page/SWA – Austin, TX
- Perkins & Will – Austin, TX
- Public Works Partners – New York, NY
- Replace Urban Studios – New York, NY
- Sasaki – Denver, CO
- SOM – Chicago, IL
- WSP – Baton Rouge, LA
- WXY/Reed – New York, NY
- Yard & Co – Cleveland, OH

“We were thrilled to see the interest by these world-class firms who have previously worked on the downtown plans of many of the most attractive riverfront cities in the world,” said Eric Dexter, vice president of Civic Leadership Initiatives at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. “We are confident by the end of this process we will have the top experts working with our city

leaders to shape the future vision for our downtown. The interest exhibited by these firms represents the opportunities and possibilities they see in our community.”

The top selected team will start their work in January 2025. Significant community engagement efforts will be required in the contract, ensuring residents and stakeholders can provide their feedback on the plan during its creation. The final plan will set a vision and framework to guide comprehensive growth that prioritizes reinvestment in our downtown area. Potential considerations include the development of new residential opportunities, enhancing the riverfront, improving infrastructure and connectivity, and attracting new businesses. An implementation plan and accountability structures to ensure the plan is fully implemented will be provided at the completion of the planning process.

“The engagement and commitment shown by these top-tier firms reaffirm our belief that we are on the cusp of something truly transformative for downtown Baton Rouge. Their passion and vision align with our goal of revitalizing and enhancing this crucial part of our city,” said Marty Engquist, co-chair of the Plan Baton Rouge III planning committee.

Previous downtown master plans, Plan Baton Rouge I (1998) and Plan Baton Rouge II (2009), established a framework for coordinated actions that have fostered public and private partnerships, resulting in over \$3 billion in new investments downtown in the last two decades.

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About Plan Baton Rouge: Plan Baton Rouge is a long-term initiative to continuously invest in downtown Baton Rouge through comprehensive master planning efforts. First launched in 1998, the plan has leveraged \$500 million in public investment with more than \$3 billion in private funding over two iterations. Its success is evident in projects like the Shaw Center for the Arts, the Capitol Park complex of state government buildings, and revitalized hotels such as the Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center and Rivermark Centre. Ongoing work aims to enhance downtown's livability, vibrancy, and connectivity, including initiatives for new housing, green spaces, and entertainment districts.

About the Baton Rouge Area Foundation: Among the largest community foundations in the country, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has sought to improve the quality of life in greater Baton Rouge and across south Louisiana since 1964.

The Foundation pursues its mission by serving donors to build the assets that drive initiatives and solutions, supporting local nonprofits to ensure overall impact and sustainability, engaging community leaders to develop appropriate responses to emerging opportunities and challenges, and by partnering with others to leverage collective resources and create the capacity to be a stimulus of positive regional change.

For more information, visit BRAAF.org.