
Proposal for Professional Services

Redevelopment of Maplewood Village Post Office Site

RFQ/Letter of Interest
Maplewood Village Post Office Rehabilitation Area



September 11, 2013

Kander ♦ Sechzer
Architectural Partnership



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September 11, 2013

Attn.: Mr. Joseph Manning, *Township Administrator*
Maplewood Township Committee

Township of Maplewood
574 Valley Street
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040

Reference: Proposal for Professional Services

- **Redevelopment of Maplewood Village Post Office Site**
- **RFQ/Letter of Interest for the Maplewood Village Post Office Rehabilitation Area**

Dear Mr. Manning & Maplewood Township Committee:

We are delighted to submit this proposal for services to the Township of Maplewood. We are presenting this proposal as a response to Item #5 in the FAQs Section of the Maplewood Township Post Office Redevelopment webpage in which it is stated “...*the Township is also open to creative proposals in which it would continue to own the land.*”

We are presenting a conceptual building and site plan that could easily be built and maintained by the Township while retaining ownership of this centrally located gem of public land.

The resurgent focus nationally on the importance of walkable towns and convenient mass transportation has made what is old in Maplewood new again. What is treasured about Maplewood is that which other towns aspire to and emulate.

Our project concept stems from gleaning Maplewood’s history, as it relates to the train and to the site. As has been documented in a number of historical sources, the original train “flag stop” was called Maplewood because of a large Maple tree in the vicinity. The erection of the current train station at the turn of the last century was a pivotal point in Maplewood’s history, facilitating the development of the town essentially as it still exists today. The completion of the train station was quickly followed by the incorporation of the Township of Maplewood, along with a burst in housing construction, creation of streets, electrical infrastructure, and development of businesses in the Village. Much of Maplewood remains the same as it was almost a century ago.

We are proposing a building which will be a set piece in a traditional village green setting, an expanded and more generous green space than exists today. This would be a more formal village green in contrast to the rambling Olmstead-designed park on the other side of the train tracks. The view from the train would be green on both sides – how welcoming that would be to anyone disembarking at Maplewood Station! The proposed building will be a public space, integrated with the landscape, the context of Maplewood Village, and the train station. This proposed



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building retains the low scale intimate character of the surrounding area while providing a much needed 21st century amenity which will entice people to linger in Maplewood Village.

The twin set of buildings conceptually speaks of the railroad. The buildings are oriented parallel to the train track, centered on and retaining an enlarged Ricalton Square as a traditional village green, with glass walls that provide a vista into Maplewood Village and back over to the train station and tracks. The buildings will have a service connector linking them, as two train cars might be linked on the rails. The functions of these “Cars” would be flexible, and could change by time of day and time of year. On a daily basis, they would be open to the public for sitting, reading, visiting, meeting, or waiting and would be a WIFI hotspot for Maplewood Village. One side could be designated a “Quiet Car” while the other could be a “Social Car”. At other times one “Car”, or both, could be used for private or community meetings, or rented to the public for events. The platform and steps extending from the buildings would be an extension of this public space, providing outdoor areas for holiday gatherings, presentations, and other town events.

The site is designed to celebrate the town’s connection to the train, with allées of Maple trees created at points of access to the station, both at the main stairways to the underpass and train station and at the tunnel at the opposite side of the site which discharges onto Dunnell Road. The site design will have extensive use of xeriscaping, or naturally sustainable plantings, reducing the need for irrigation and maintenance. This expanded village green will provide more generous space for ongoing and new village events, including the annual *Dickens Village*. Maplewood could even consider sponsoring an outdoor holiday market, similar to that which takes place in so many small European villages.

Sustainable design for the project includes both the buildings and the landscape. Along with xeriscaping, we plan for storage of rain run-off and gray-water for drip irrigation, use a green roof/wall installation which would be visible from both the ground and through the skylights, and install pervious paving for areas of hardscape.

For the building construction we will endeavor to use materials that are locally sourced, natural, and recycled; materials that are safe, healthful, and energy efficient in both manufacture and installed use. Examples of sustainable building systems include geothermal HVAC, heat recovery systems, water saving plumbing, daylight sensors to control LED lighting, and a solar/PV grid on the insulated glazed areas.

This proposal represents many positive goals and amenities for Maplewood Township:

- Maintain precious publicly owned property in the center of the village
- Provide a delightful year round public space
- Emphasize the connection of the town and the train with clearly demarcated pathways
- Increase revenue for the Township through event rentals
- Create an enlarged landscaped open space - a traditional village green



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To ensure successful completion of the project, we have assembled a comprehensive team, including Architecture, Landscape Design, Structure, MEP, and Site/Civil Engineering. HazMat, Traffic, and Environmental, and other consultants will be brought on board for investigation, inspection, and study as required by the town and project requirements.

This small scale building intervention in Maplewood can be a demonstration building for energy efficiency, sustainability, and 21st century systems - it can be model for the area. The proposed building can be a continuing case study for the community in general and for our school children.

Over the last century, Maplewood developed around and because of the train. The visual connection and integration of the Village and the train are of utmost importance. Ricalton Square and the Post Office site are imbued with history as well. James Ricalton was Maplewood's first permanent schoolmaster. The first schoolhouse, Maplewood School, was located at the site of the current Post Office.

In the recent half century, Maplewood has developed as a community that takes pride in celebrating its diversity and its inclusiveness. In so many ways, in distant and more recent history, Maplewood has been ahead of its time. This building proposal has the potential to expand upon this proud history. Rather than obliterating the history of the site and obstructing the visual connection and integration of the train and the Village by inserting an over-scaled building (as has been inappropriately thrust upon so many other small communities), Maplewood has a once in a century opportunity to again move forward with a unique, innovative idea that honors and respects the history of the site and the intimate scale of Maplewood Village while retaining precious public space. The legacy left by such an effort today can be as powerful as that which was left by those who are immensely respected - those who built Maplewood a century ago.

The enclosed site plan and building sketches are conceptual in nature. Should this concept be of interest to the Township, we would be delighted move forward and develop a more detailed design.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,



Inda M. Sechzer, Assoc. AIA, LEED AP, *Principal*
Deborah C. Kander, AIA, *Principal* |

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October 2, 2013

Maplewood Township Representatives
Township of Maplewood
574 Valley Street
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040

Reference:

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- **RFQ/Letter of Interest for the Maplewood Village Post Office Rehabilitation Area**

CONCEPT 2 - Addenda to September 11, 2013 Proposal:

Concept 2 builds upon our initial submittal which is an extension of Ricalton Square including a new Public Space. (Please see concept drawings in conjunction with this narrative.) This submittal was based on the statement on Maplewood's website that *"...the Township is also open to creative proposals in which it would continue to own the land."*

Concept 2 continues our emphasis on the train and town interplay as a basis for master planning the area. It creates a new focus next to Ricalton Square and continues to integrate pathways and connections, both physical and visual, to the train while preserving the intimacy and scale of the Village. As an addition to our prior proposed public "living room" buildings within a newly enlarged Ricalton Square, the proposed new buildings in Concept 2 are located toward the southern end of the site.

The Concept 2 buildings are linked by a skylight covered pedestrian "street" from Maplewood Avenue to the NJ Transit tunnel and a walkway/bridge on the second level. The buildings are surrounded by a colonnaded perimeter providing additional covered circulation as well as shading for the first level. Design details for the buildings will be drawn from the adjacent context of the Village as well as from the train station, including brick, stone, columns and details, etc. with large glass storefronts.



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The buildings provide 8 tenant spaces on each of 2 levels, totaling 16. These spaces vary in size from approximately 600 SF to 800 SF. The total leasable tenant space is approximately 11,000 SF.

First floor tenant spaces would have the option of entries from both the central “street” as well as from the colonnaded perimeter. Some second floor tenant spaces are larger because they are built out over the colonnaded perimeter. There is also the possibility of some 2 story spaces. The basement level would house systems (as described in our prior proposal), storage for the building and for tenants, as well as common toilet facilities. Options for basement retail spaces could be considered.

The potential uses for these tenant spaces vary. A number of combinations are possible: specialty retail shops, offices, studios, galleries, and services. In many European cities and towns, there are narrow, picturesque streets with small specialty shops. The advantage of smaller tenant spaces is that the financial risk for a tenant is inherently lower, so creative variation in uses and in types of sales may be facilitated and could become quite interesting.

We are enclosing photos and information about projects that inform and inspire this building concept. We are specifically excited about one of the possibilities - creating an arts district within this building. It is known that Maplewood has a multitude of resident artists and craftspeople. Reasonable rents in the Village for studio/gallery space would facilitate many artists to set up shop close to home, perhaps even within walking distance. We refer you to the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia for this functional concept, not for the aesthetic of the building. This a wonderful reuse of an old military building which has now been subdivided into individual and shared studios/galleries at reasonable rental rates. Artists and craftspeople work in their studios while exhibiting and selling their artwork/products in the same space. It is a working studio milieu, open to the public to see artists at work and to buy their goods. This has become an ongoing attraction for the public and is extremely successful.

There are many other combined ways in which the proposed buildings could be used: small retail shops on the first floor with offices above; shops with studios above, galleries with studios above, and more.

Our intentions in terms of sustainability and construction of the buildings would be similar to that already expressed in our proposal submitted on September 11, 2013. We would endeavor to use local materials and references to Maplewood’s building stock, including the existing buildings in the Village and the train station. (Please refer to prior submittal.)



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With clear goals and these proposed new buildings, it is possible for Maplewood to retain ownership of the land, lease the site, or sell a smaller portion than originally intended for redevelopment.

Our proposals celebrate Maplewood's long, proud history. These plans meet our goals which include creating an overall integrated Master Plan for the area including:

- Creative new uses and buildings of an appropriate scale
- A well delineated, more useful village green/Ricalton Square
- Organized, consistent parking
- Clearly demarcated paths to the train station

We sincerely hope the Township representatives and citizens will seriously consider the ideas incorporated in the proposals we have submitted. We would be delighted to work with the Township to develop these concepts to fruition. Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,



Inda M. Sechzer, Assoc. AIA, LEED AP, *Principal*
Deborah C. Kander, AIA, *Principal* |

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