



Economic & International Development

REQUEST FOR INTEREST ADAPTIVE REUSE OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTIES **REVISED 03-25-2024**

Issued: **Monday, March 4, 2024**

Please submit responses by **Friday, April 26, 2024** via email to

UnionPlazaRFI@elpasotexas.gov. Rolling submissions may be accepted after this target date *if capacity allows*.

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the City of El Paso, we invite expressions of interest from potential project sponsors who are exploring specific projects within the location footprint (Attachment 1).

The intent of this RFI is to gauge interest in adaptive reuse development of the site in order to inform the future disposition strategy.

BACKGROUND

On October 10, 2023, the City Council of the City of El Paso directed the Interim City Manager to begin soliciting and entertaining letters of interest from interested buyers for the purchase of the properties located in the Union Plaza area of Downtown El Paso.

Discussion included a strong preference for adaptive reuse of the site. Adaptive reuse refers to the process of taking an existing structure and updating or adapting it for a purpose other than its original intended use. The adaptive reuse process includes the renovation and rehabilitation of an existing building with a transformation of use. For example, vacant office buildings have been adapted to new forms as residential buildings, with either apartments to rent or condominiums to buy. Former industrial warehouses can be converted to restaurant or other commercial uses.

For applicable sites, project proposals must also include the establishment of a National Historic designation.

RECENT POLICY CHANGES

On July 5, 2023 the City of El Paso adopted the Downtown, Uptown, and Surrounding Neighborhoods Plan, a master plan for Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods of Segundo Barrio, Chihuahuita, Magoffin, Rio Grande, Rim, Kern, Mission Hills, and Sunset Heights. The objective of this plan is to improve livability, equity, economic prosperity, housing for all ages and incomes, expanded public amenities, and improve pedestrian connectivity to existing neighborhoods for a more sustainable city center.

The Plan's mission is to unlock the potential for positive change, including enhanced livability, economic opportunity, equity, and resilience while preventing displacement across the study area, El Paso, and the region. The Plan aims to promote a safe, inclusive, affordable, sustainable area that supports a high quality-of-life for existing and future residents.





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Key objectives of the Plan are to:

- Promote affordability with expanded housing options
- Create and improve public areas that focus on health and safety infrastructure
- Increase economic activity and talent retention with a vibrant downtown
- Establish a virtuous cycle between public transit and existing neighborhoods, new development, and active public transportation
- Celebrate El Paso's unique living culture, design heritage, and diverse community

Within the Downtown Core, the City seeks specifically to leverage entertainment and cultural assets to unlock extensive Downtown housing opportunities, which in turn brings streets to life, and attracts new jobs in the knowledge sector which leads to greater investment. This strategy is paired with robust workforce readiness and skills training to grow local talent.

The vision for the Downtown Core focuses on livable, connected, and safe neighborhoods with diverse and inclusive housing. This should be supported by infrastructure investments in street, sidewalk, and public realm improvements that include consistent planting of street trees, minimum 8-foot-wide sidewalks, expansion of street lighting to include pedestrian fixtures, and the installation of public art throughout.

Plan implementation seeks to realize Downtown's potential to unlock greater economic opportunity, equity, livability, resilience, and shared community across the city and region. This area leverages the existing employers, cultural facilities, parks, and infrastructure to create a vibrant and livable district. The Plan outlines policies and projects that will enhance the quality of life, character, and diversity of neighborhoods that envelope Downtown and provide infrastructure to safely and comfortably connect them with the amenities in Downtown.

On December 13, 2023, City Council adopted revised design standards for Union Plaza, the first major update since 1997. These changes to the Planning and Building codes intended to simplify the approval process and requirements for converting existing commercial buildings into housing. They also remove existing restrictions to allow for a greater variety of businesses and activities in Union Square and throughout downtown. The legislation received unanimous recommendations by the Planning Commission and Building Inspection Commission.

ELIGIBILITY

Expressions of interest are welcomed from project sponsors who are exploring specific projects within the subject area. Project sponsors may include, but are not limited to: development, real estate, or design professionals; non-profit organizations; and community organizations.

Projects may be at any stage of planning or design, and may or may not include architectural plans or other visualizations, however the description of the project should be detailed enough to understand how a specific building program would fit and perform on a specific site.



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CONTENT OF RESPONSES

The City expects that responses to this RFI will reflect projects at varying stages of planning, and therefore the content of the responses will necessarily vary in completeness and level of detail.

If possible, please format responses including attachments in a single **pdf file**. If information is provided that the respondent in good faith believes is a trade secret or confidential proprietary information protected from disclosure under existing law, please mark each page of that information accordingly and provide it as a separate attachment, as further described below in this section. (Also see **Public Records and Confidentiality** below.)

If needed, a separate pdf file for the drawings is acceptable. A link to a Dropbox, Sharepoint, or other similar file sharing site is acceptable in case of excessive file size.

At a minimum, responses should include the following information:

1. Provide the name, email, and phone contact information for the individual(s) that can be contacted by City staff regarding the submission.
2. Provide the project address or addresses.
3. Provide a narrative that explains the project concept. Projects can be at any stage of programming or design. Please incorporate the following information as part of the narrative:
 - a. Explain the motivation for the project and describe the intended development program with as much detail as is currently known. Include a description of proposed ground floor uses and other proposed uses throughout the project, and an estimate (range) of the number of housing units if applicable.
 - b. Describe any proposed modifications to the existing building envelope. Buildings identified as being individually eligible for historic registry may not be demolished or substantially altered (Attachment 3).
 - c. Describe any proposed exterior open space, streetscape or public realm improvements, either on the property or in the public right of way.
 - d. Describe any adaptive reuse and/or historic preservation aspects of the project.

REVIEW OF RESPONSES

After the submission deadline, City staff may contact respondents with clarifying questions. Respondents may be asked to provide supplemental information and/or invited to present their projects for further review or discussion.

This RFI, and any subsequent discussions with respondents, shall not constitute any promise of performance, funding commitment, or other investment from the City, or of any change in existing local laws. The City reserves the right, at any time and in its sole and absolute discretion, to not



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commence discussions with respondents, to issue a request for proposals, or to withdraw the RFI without notice. In no event shall the City be liable to respondents for any cost or damages incurred by respondents, team members, consultants, or other interested parties in connection with the RFI process, including but not limited to any and all costs of preparing cost budgets, architectural drawings and renderings or other submitted materials, and participation in any meetings or discussions.

PUBLIC RECORDS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Responses are subject to public inspection and copying under Texas Public Information Act (Texas Government Code Chapter 552) unless exempt from disclosure under federal, state or local law, including laws protecting trade secrets. Therefore, it is important for respondents to clearly identify in their responses those records or other information that the respondent in good faith determines to be a trade secret or confidential proprietary information protected from disclosure under applicable law. To the extent permitted by law, the City will attempt to reasonably maintain the confidentiality of such information. However, the City will not under any circumstances be responsible for damages or losses incurred by a respondent or any other person or entity because of the release of such information.

RFI SCHEDULE

The anticipated schedule for this RFI is below. Please check the website for updates as the schedule is subject to change.

RFI issued **Monday, March 4, 2024**.

Please submit responses by **Friday, April 26, 2024** via email to UnionPlazaRFI@elpasotexas.gov. Rolling submissions may be accepted after this target date if capacity allows.

Please format responses as described above in the **Content of Responses** section.

If you have questions regarding this RFI, please send an email to UnionPlazaRFI@elpasotexas.gov.

The deadline for substantive questions is **Wednesday, March 20, 2024**. The City will post a full copy of responses to all questions online by **Friday, March 22, 2024**. Substantive questions are questions that seek to clarify expectations about the RFI or administrative processes. However, you may continue to submit technical questions (e.g. "How do I complete the application?") to UnionPlazaRFI@elpasotexas.gov until the submission deadline and we will respond as soon as possible.

Any future updates regarding this RFI, responses to questions received, and information about potential information sessions will be posted online at <https://www.elpasotexas.gov/economic-development>



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SELECTED RESOURCES

- [Uptown, Downtown, and Surrounding Neighborhoods Plan \(July 5, 2023\)](#)
- [Union Plaza Design Standards \(December 13, 2023\)](#)
 - Also see [Title 20](#) of the El Paso City Code
- [Property Conditions Assessment Final Report \(February 12, 2020\)](#)
- [Historical and Architectural Survey Final Report \(August 19, 2020\)](#)
- Historic American Buildings Survey Drawings for:
 - [212 Overland](#)
 - [306 Overland](#)
 - [305 Chihuahua](#)
 - [309 Chihuahua](#)
 - [315 Chihuahua](#)
 - [325 Chihuahua](#)
- [Archeological Report \(July 10, 2018\)](#)

ATTACHMENTS

1. Location Map of Properties
2. List of Addresses and Property Identification Information
3. Independently Eligible Properties
4. **Questions and Answers**



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ATTACHMENT 1 Location Map of Properties*



*Properties highlighted in purple are not owned by the City of El Paso and are NOT included in this Request



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ATTACHMENT 2

List of Addresses and Property Identification Information

No. ▾	Address ▾	Owner ▾	Property ID ▾	Geographic ID ▾
1	215 W Paisano	CITY OF EL PASO	195454	M47399903209200
2	220 Overland	CITY OF EL PASO	392111	M47399903206400
3	216 Overland	CITY OF EL PASO	169529	M47399903205700
4	308 Chihuahua	CITY OF EL PASO	352702	M47399903207800
5	312 Chihuahua	CITY OF EL PASO	400913	M47399903208500
6	305 Chihuahua	CITY OF EL PASO	241117	M47399904500600
7	309 Chihuahua	CITY OF EL PASO	301837	M47399904501100
8	315 Chihuahua	CITY OF EL PASO	96941	M47399904502100
9	321 Chihuahua	CITY OF EL PASO	245979	M47399904502600
10	325 Chihuahua	CITY OF EL PASO	93216	M47399904503600
11	301 W Paisano	CITY OF EL PASO	225764	M47399904504600
12	224 Overland	CITY OF EL PASO	141079	M47399903207100
13	212 Overland	CITY OF EL PASO	360359	M47399903205000
14	307 Santa Fe	CITY OF EL PASO	394786	M47399903202900
15	309 Santa Fe	CITY OF EL PASO	46741	M47399903202200
16	325 Santa Fe	CITY OF EL PASO	47625	M47399903200800
17	306 Overland	CITY OF EL PASO	162938	M47399904500100
18	Chihuahua Private Alley	CITY OF EL PASO		
19	331 Santa Fe (Firehouse)	CITY OF EL PASO	253250	





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ATTACHMENT 3 Independently Eligible Properties

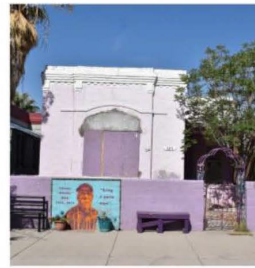
7 Structures Identified as Independently Eligible for Historic Designation by County Survey; Owned by the City:



ID No. **PA - 22**
AKA **Fire Station No.11**
A Trost & Trost in the Art Deco Style
Address **331 S. Santa Fe**
Year Built 1930 | Over 50
Owner City of El Paso
PID 85437



ID No. **PA - 03**
AKA **UK**
Address **309 Chihuahua St.**
Year Built 1956 | Over 50
Owner City of El Paso
PID 301837



ID No. **PA - 08**
AKA **UK**
Address **325 Chihuahua St.**
Year Built 1917 | Over 50
Owner City of El Paso
PID 93216



ID No. **PA - 05**
AKA **UK**
Address **315 Chihuahua St.**
Year Built 1917 | Over 50
Owner City of El Paso
PID 96941



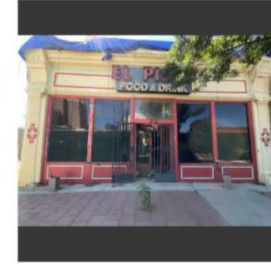
ID No. **PA - 01**
AKA **The Mansion House**
Address **306 W. Overland**
Year Built 1904 | Over 50
Owner City of El Paso
PID 162938



ID No. **PA - 02A**
AKA **Flor de Luna**
Address **Art Gallery**
Address **305 Chihuahua St.**
Year Built 1905 | Over 50
Owner City of El Paso
PID 241117



ID No. **PA - 02B**
AKA **UK**
Address **302 Chihuahua St.**
Year Built 1905 | Over 50
Owner City of El Paso
PID 241117



ID No. **PA - 14**
AKA **The Chinese Laundry**
Address **212 W. Overland**
Year Built 1901 | Over 50
Owner City of El Paso
PID 8360359

REQUEST FOR INTEREST (RFI)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Why so little time allowed to submit substantive questions? There is a large amount of material to review in the selected resources. Can the deadline be extended by at least 5 days?

Question and Answer period was extended through March 20th.

2. We are interested in the vacant lot at 321 Chihuahua St. Is this property also subject to this process?

Yes, 321 Chihuahua is one of the City-owned properties included in the RFI.

3. Can assumptions be made that purchase prices will generally relate to amounts the City paid for the buildings?

Potential sale of the properties will be addressed in a later stage of the disposition process.

4. Was there no assessment report on conditions for 325 Chihuahua St.?

325 Chihuahua St. was not included in the scope of work for the 2020 Property Conditions Assessment Report.

5. To what extent will the City look into an interested party's financial status, timeline and commitment to complete their project.

The RFI does not require any financial statements or disclosures. Financial capacity and development timeline may be considered in future stages of the property disposition process.

6. Will a project's proposed benefit to the residents' quality of life be given due consideration even if no economic activity is created?

The intent of this RFI is to gauge interest in adaptive reuse development of the site in order to inform the future disposition strategy. The RFI does not include specific evaluation criteria and proposals will not be scored. Responses will be compiled and shared with City Council in order to inform the next phase of the disposition process.

7. Are applicants required to participate in the RFI to be eligible for later parts of the process?

No, an RFI response is not required to participate in future stages of the disposition process. However, the City would encourage all interested parties to submit as part of the RFI so that Staff and Council can get a full picture of the interest in the Union Plaza properties.

8. What is the reason for continuing to maintain the green mesh on the chain link fences surrounding the buildings? Potential investors and the general public should be able to view these buildings without having to peer through these obstructions. These properties have been the subject of a long public controversy and were paid for with taxpayer monies, therefore should be visible.

Buildings that are partially demolished and vacant must remain closed off from any access in order to comply with the City's Vacant Building and Property Maintenance Codes to ensure public health and safety. Future stages of the disposition process may include walk-throughs of the buildings.

9. Were the cost estimates for needed repairs included in the attachments? I was unable to locate any cost estimates. (Even if out of date, they may still be of some use).

Cost estimates were not included in the final assessment report, as these can vary greatly upon the extent of work and decided new use for each individual building.

10. Would the installation of elevators be required in buildings with more than one floor, if the second floor was strictly for private use?

Developments would be subject to all applicable City Codes, and intended new use.

11. Will any incentives be made available to purchasers for the repair, rehabilitation of buildings, or is that something that is yet to be determined?

Potential incentives may be addressed in a future stage of the disposition process.

12. Will the City attempt any coordination, or incentivization of building uses or purposes, or will each property owner be completely independent to determine their own building's use?

The RFI is intended to gauge interest in the redevelopment of the Union Plaza properties. Information gathered during this stage will be used to inform the disposition strategy, including the potential coordination of uses.

13. Will the City itself provide any improvements to this area based on current lack of services, e.g. community center, expanded walking pathways and green spaces?

Public improvements and/or programming may be addressed in a later phase of the disposition process.

14. In the opening statement: "Rolling submissions may be accepted after this target date, if capacity allows." What does "if capacity allows" mean?

This statement refers to Staff capacity to review and assess submittals. Only responses received prior to the deadline are guaranteed to be reviewed.

15. Is a response to the RFI required in order to be eligible to respond/participate in any forthcoming RFQ, purchase, or other process related to these City Owned Properties?

No, an RFI response is not required to participate in future stages of the disposition process. However, the City would encourage all interested parties to submit as part of

the RFI so that Staff and Council can get a full picture of the interest in the Union Plaza properties.

16. Will the City make public all responses to the RFI (less any personal financial information)? If so, when?

All responses to the RFI process are subject to public inspection and copying under Texas Public Information Act (Texas Government Code Chapter 552).

17. Why did the City not acquire the two properties highlighted in purple? Is any information available for these properties as they are critical to best execution of any development in the area?

323 and 327 Chihuahua are not owned by the City and are not part of the RFI.

18. Please provide all available property level information in a public data room for the City Owned Properties (surveys, environmental reports, etc.) in order for responders to properly evaluate the feasibility of various development concepts.

All available documentation is linked in the RFI document and can also be accessed via the [OneDrive folder](#)

19. What type of community outreach, engagement, and involvement does the City plan to perform as part of the process to determine the best development plan for the area?

The RFI is an information gathering step intended to inform the rest of the disposition process. Community engagement plans would be developed as a later phase of the disposition process.

20. Will the City provide special consideration of the interests of existing owners, residents, and businesses in the subject area, and surrounding neighborhood, as they have been most negatively impacted by the City's performance to date and any development of the area most impact these individuals?

The intent of this RFI is to gauge interest in adaptive reuse development of the site in order to inform the future disposition strategy. The RFI does not include specific evaluation criteria and proposals will not be scored. Responses will be compiled and shared with City Council in order to inform the next phase of the disposition process.

21. What is the tentative schedule for subsequent steps in this process?

Information gathered via RFI will be compiled and shared with City Council along with recommendations on the next steps of the dispositions. No specific dates have been identified at this time.

22. Is there any ongoing litigation related to any part of the City Owned Properties?

There is no ongoing litigation at this time.

23. Is the City aware of the existence of any archeological items in the area?

A preliminary archeological assessment was conducted in 2018. That report has been added to the [OneDrive folder](#) and is also linked [here](#)

24. Has the City ordered new appraisals (since the acquisition of the parcels for the MPC)? If so, please provide copies of all existing appraisals for the City Owned Properties.

The City has ordered appraisals, and will review to see whether the reports can be shared publicly.