

**RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships**

***This is a Request for Information (RFI) ONLY and does not constitute a commitment, implied or otherwise, that Montgomery County (the County) will take procurement action in this matter.***

**A. PROJECT SUMMARY**

Montgomery County is seeking interest and ideas from for-profit, non-profit, and public (including various County departments) entities for short-term, trial business and programming activities to support the activation of the Trail Junction Center (TJC). When fully renovated, the TJC and its site will provide amenities and services for trail users, flexible community space, and potentially additional uses and programming resulting from this Request for Information (RFI) and a subsequent Request for Proposal (RFP) following. Currently, the County is developing plans to renovate the building for its adaptive reuse and to upgrade the surrounding site. The project site is located at the regionally-significant intersection of the Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) and the Chester Valley Trail (CVT) and the intersection of Lafayette and DeKalb Streets at [75 East Lafayette Street, Norristown PA, 19401.](#)

**B. PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Montgomery County purchased the TJC property in 2007 with plans to connect the CVT with the SRT at this location and to renovate the building (a former freight station) for adaptive reuse as a public facility with trail services and community space. Since its purchase, several studies, reports, and plans have been developed along with public outreach. In 2019, extensive site work was completed on the property in conjunction with the Lafayette Street Extension project (see attached photos). In 2022, the County hired an architectural firm to develop renovation plans for the TJC building, a process that has concurrently included additional community and stakeholder engagement; this work is ongoing. During this recent effort, it became clear that additional upgrades to the site, beyond the work completed in 2019 and the scope of work under the current architectural contract, are needed to better connect the building with the site, address site issues/deficiencies, and make the site itself a more desirable destination for the community; this additional site design work commenced in June 2023. In March 2023, the connection between the SRT and CVT at the TJC site was officially opened to the public, making nearly 20 miles of the CVT accessible from Norristown to Exton in Chester County.

Through the community and stakeholder engagement conducted since spring 2022 (focused interviews, in-person and online surveys, and two open houses), a set of seven project goals have been developed (see attached *Summary Graphic of Project Goals and Stakeholder Feedback*):

- 1. TRAIL SERVICES - *provide amenities for trail users.***
- 2. GATEWAY - *create bi-directional connection between trails and town.***
- 3. DESTINATION - *serve as a draw for both the trail and town communities.***
- 4. COMMUNITY BENEFIT - *provide social and economic benefits.***
- 5. FLEXIBILITY - *design to allow for creative evolution of uses and functions.***
- 6. GUIDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES - *create a sustainable, universally-accessible, historically-sensitive, and safe place.***
- 7. PLACE MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE - *establish an operational structure for long-term success.***

**RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships**

While the first five goals are self-explanatory, the last two warrant further explanation. The **Guiding Design Principles** include the following:

- Sustainable Design – incorporate sustainability, resiliency, and sound energy management.
- Universal Design – design to welcome and accommodate users of all abilities.
- Historic Character – maintain building’s existing form, integrity, and materials.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) – follow CPTED principles by designing with crime prevention in mind.

**Place Management and Governance** encompasses proactively planning for day-to-day operations and maintenance and potentially pursuing a hybrid structure between the County and non-governmental collaborators (through Activation Partnerships potentially resulting from this RFI and a subsequent RFP). A key part of this component includes marketing and communications efforts that will support and assist in achieving the above-stated goals.

**C. PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

Besides the design and implementation of physical improvements to the TJC building and site, the County recognizes that the management and governance of the facility is a key component of the project and will play a critical role in its long-term success. Furthermore, the County recognizes that partnering with for-profit, non-profit, and/or public entities in this effort holds great potential. By means of this RFI, the County is seeking potential partners interested in contributing towards making the TJC a vibrant and thriving community facility that provides needed services along with inclusive programming for both trail users and the community-at-large. The County seeks to encourage uses, programming, and activities at the TJC that would be quick-to-start and responsive to the seven project goals outlined above.

**D. PROJECT SCHEDULE**

It is anticipated that the architectural and landscape architectural construction documents will be completed in 4Q 2023 and 1Q 2024, respectively, with the intent to advertise and award a construction contract in 2Q 2024. Construction for the building and site is expected to last approximately 12 months, resulting in a completion date and public opening in 2Q 2025.

Based on responses to this RFI, the County intends to develop and issue an RFP seeking proposals for Activation Partnerships. Following responses resulting from the RFP, the County hopes to establish Activation Partnership agreements in advance of 1Q 2025 in anticipation of the facility’s opening in 2Q 2025.

**E. PROJECT SCOPE**

This RFI invites interested parties to suggest partnerships and uses for the TJC. Ultimately, through an Activation Partnership agreement resulting from a subsequent RFP, selected for-profit/non-profit/public partner(s) may potentially occupy a portion of the TJC building and/or site for services and programming that support and achieve the project goals for a defined period (this may potentially be two years). For example, some partnerships could be for full-time use of a dedicated indoor and/or outdoor portion of the site--or it is possible that some partners may only be interested in periodic use of a particular portion of the property on a weekly, monthly, or seasonal basis for programming or events. Periodic reviews and assessments would be established in the Activation Partnership agreement(s) to monitor progress toward achieving project goals.

**RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships**

**F. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**1. Activation Ideas and Focus Areas:**

A wide array of ideas for programming and activation of the TJC have been suggested through the engagement process, ranging from a bike share and repair shop to an artist-in-residence program to pop-up arts and wellness programs to a café and/or food trucks to programming and services provided by various County departments (e.g., temporary Code Blue shelter, Montco Trail Challenge events). Refer to the attached *Matrix with Project Goals and Stakeholder Interview Feedback* for some of the input and ideas gathered. The following themes have been frequently mentioned and represent high-priority focus areas (in no particular order):

- a) **Health and Wellness:** Uses, programming, and activities that relate to physical and mental health potentially involving bicycles, walking, or other types of exercise; these efforts could potentially connect with the adjacent trails.
- b) **Music and Arts:** Uses, programming, and activities that connect the TJC with local music and arts activities such as those already occurring in the vicinity on Norristown Arts Hill or through the area's nonprofit organizations.
- c) **History and Culture:** Uses, programming, and activities that highlight the rich local history including the railroad history at the project site and the area's diverse cultures.
- d) **Family and Kid Friendly:** Provide families and children with a range of free or low-cost activities that would ideally provide hands-on experiences. Partnering with local institutions such as the Elmwood Park Zoo has been mentioned.
- e) **Food and Beverage:** A desire for food and beverage concessions has been consistently expressed. It may start small just on weekends through food trucks or carts and could later evolve into a café. These services would benefit Norristown residents and businesses as well as the hundreds of thousands of people who use the SRT and CVT annually.

Please note that the County, and many of the stakeholders engaged, believe it will be important to have uses, programming, and activities that span all four seasons in order for the site to thrive as a community and trail hub.

**2. Vehicular Access and Parking:**

The project site does not have on-site parking and has limited vehicular access (note: vehicular access will be addressed in the site design work). Free public parking is currently available at the nearby SEPTA garage located across DeKalb Street and a short walk down the SRT. Additional parking arrangements with other nearby property owners have been explored and may also become available in the future. Activation Partnership agreements could allow for controlled vehicular access onto the site from Lafayette Street for temporary loading and unloading purposes. An Activation Partnership agreement could accommodate this periodic vehicular access as required with a focus on keeping trail users safe from vehicular conflict. Interested parties may mention whether vehicular access onto the site would be desired or required; if applicable, please specify for what purpose and how frequently vehicular access would be needed.

**RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships**

**3. Storage:**

The TJC facility will have a few storage areas that could potentially be utilized and incorporated into the Activation Partnership agreements as needed:

- The large multi-purpose flex space will have a storage area located in its northeast corner that could be used for things like exercise equipment or outdoor umbrellas. This flex space will also have a small janitor closet with a utility sink in its southwest corner and may have some limited space for storage (e.g., electrical cords, cleaning supplies).
- Stairs will lead from the lobby up to the attic above the restrooms and annex space. The attic could provide some storage space for items that are light and infrequently accessed.
- Stairs along the western wall of the annex space will lead to a basement area. This basement area could provide some storage for users of the annex space.

Interested parties may indicate whether any of these storage spaces would be desired or required; if applicable, please specify which storage space would be desired and approximately how much space would be needed.

**4. Maintenance:**

Activation Partnership agreement(s) would clearly delineate maintenance responsibilities. It is expected that the County Division of Parks, Trails, and Historic Sites will continue to care for the CVT and SRT while other County Assets and Infrastructure staff may maintain the four (4) public restrooms and public entry lobby. Maintenance and other custodial needs within the building's interiors would likely be the responsibility of the partner(s) using particular spaces.

**5. Financial:**

It is anticipated that the County will be financially responsible for the general upkeep and maintenance of the TJC structure and site. Partner(s) would be responsible for all expenses related directly to their business operations, programming, and activities. Expenses related to County facilitated/sponsored programming and activities would be the responsibility of the County. Details regarding the assumption of utility costs are yet to be determined. Specifics regarding financial responsibilities would be addressed in Activation Partnership agreement(s) potentially resulting from a subsequent RFP solicitation.

**G. LETTER OF INTEREST SUBMISSION**

Parties interested in responding to this RFI, should submit a 1 to 3-page letter of interest, which includes the following information:

1. Name of interested entity or organization.
2. Name of primary contact and contact information (street address, phone and email address).
3. Description of proposed business/program/activity plan, including a concise summary of how the proposed idea/activity would respond to the TJC project goals. Please also describe how the proposed idea/activity would produce positive social, environmental, and/or cultural impacts on the TJC and its community resulting in a positive experience for all users.
4. Concept plan including a description of space and utility needs for the proposed idea/activity in narrative form. If appropriate, interested parties are welcome to attach a simple sketch plan, other graphics/images of the concept, and/or site photos of areas of intended use. The attached site and floor plans are available for this purpose if desired.

**RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships**

**H. SITE MEETING**

While all interested parties are encouraged and welcome to visit the project site at any time, an on-site meeting with the opportunity to tour the building's existing interior spaces will be held at 75 East Lafayette Street, Norristown PA, 19401 on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. Firms attending the on-site meeting arriving by car should park in the SEPTA garage at the corner of Lafayette and DeKalb Streets. (This parking garage is free and open to the public).

**J. BONFIRE**

All questions must be submitted thru Bonfire by the date found in the events section for "Vendor Discussion Due Date" for this solicitation.

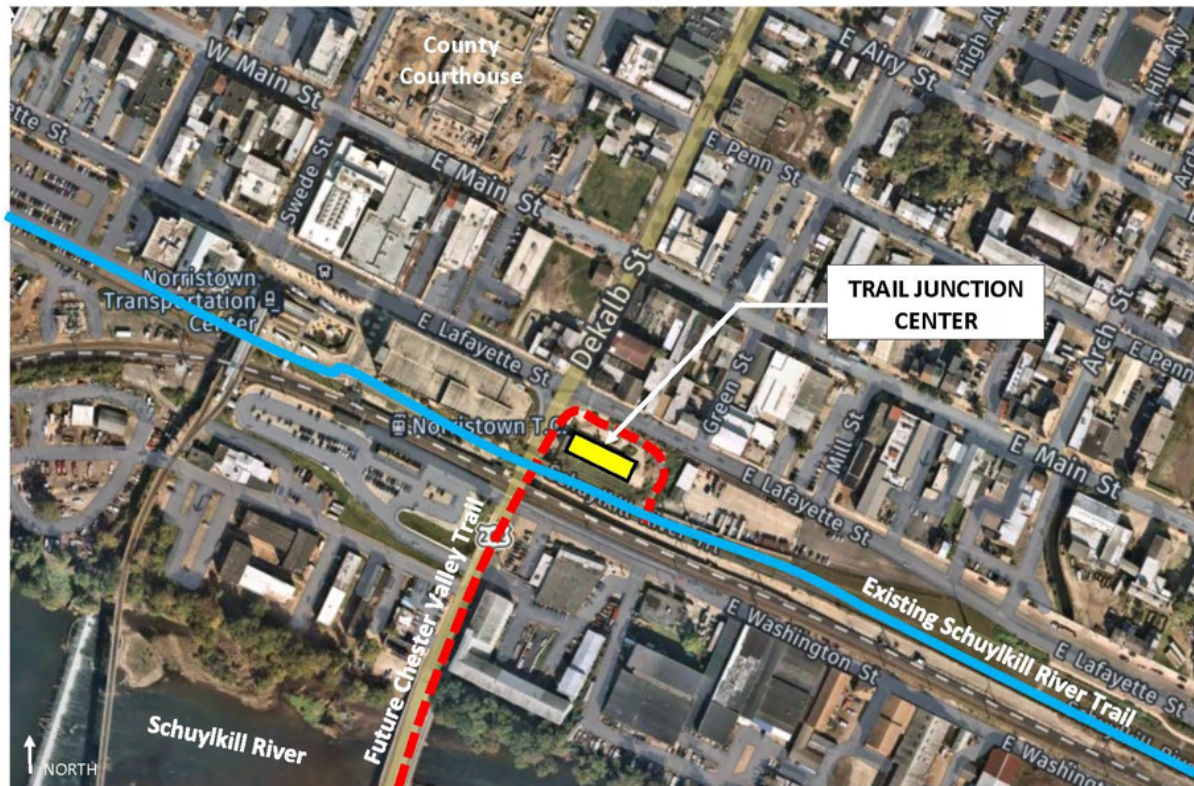
All Submissions for this solicitation must be submitted thru Bonfire by the "Close Date" found in the events section of this solicitation.

**K. ATTACHMENTS**

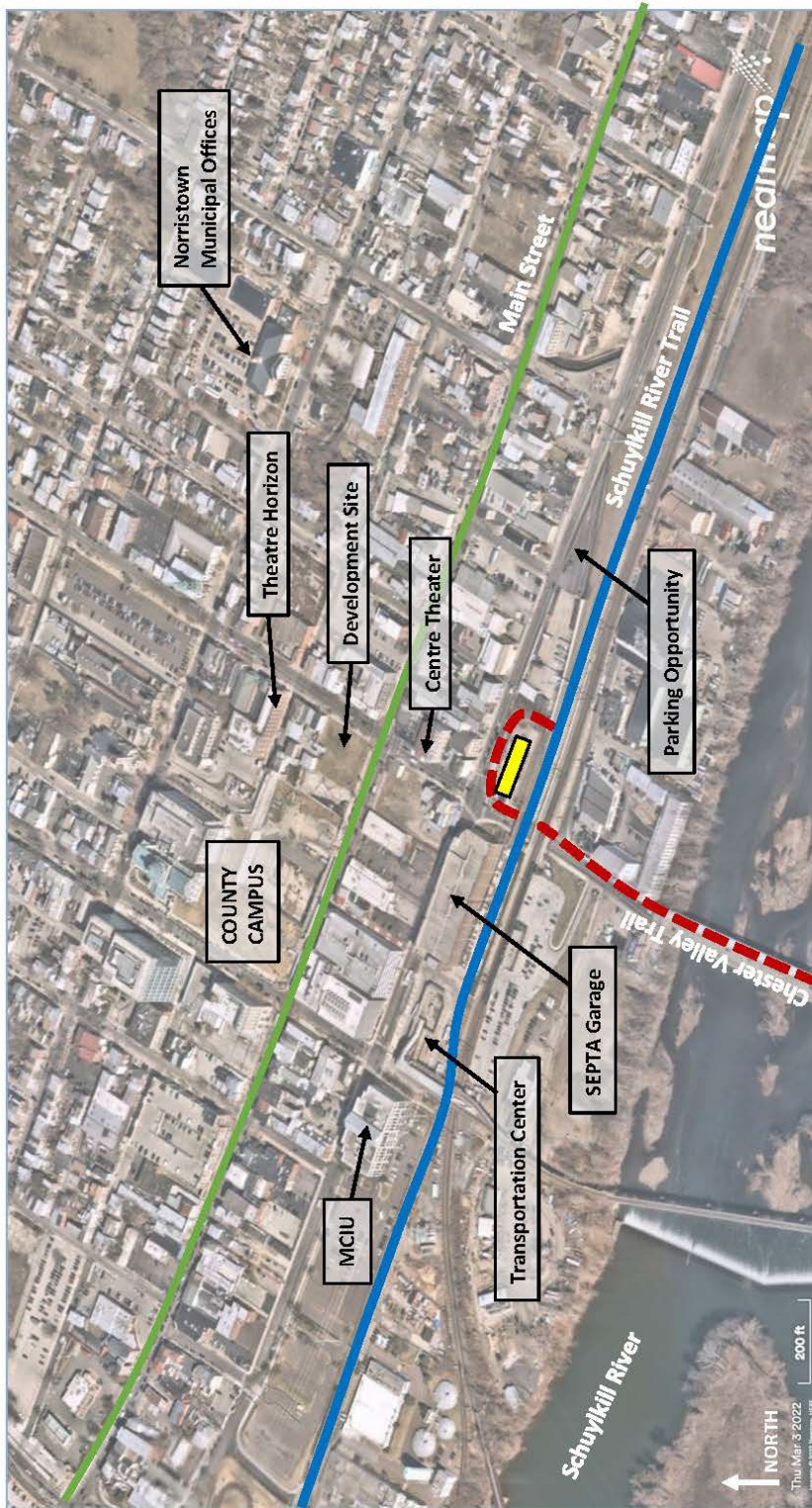
- Project Location and Context Maps
- Site Photos
- Summary Graphic of Project Goals and Stakeholder Feedback
- Matrix with Project Goals and Stakeholder Interview Feedback
- Existing Site Plan
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans

RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships

Project Location and Context Maps



RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships



**LEGEND**

- Trail Junction Center
- Schuykill River Trail
- Chester Valley Trail (under construction)
- Main Street corridor

**Trail Junction Center  
COMMUNITY CONTEXT MAP**

**RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships**



Aerial view of building before changes to site.



Aerial view of building during site work construction.

RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships



South side of building before construction, looking east.



South side of building during construction, looking west.

**RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships**



Schuylkill River Trail and south side of building during construction of retaining walls.



East end of building following site work.

RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships



South side of building.



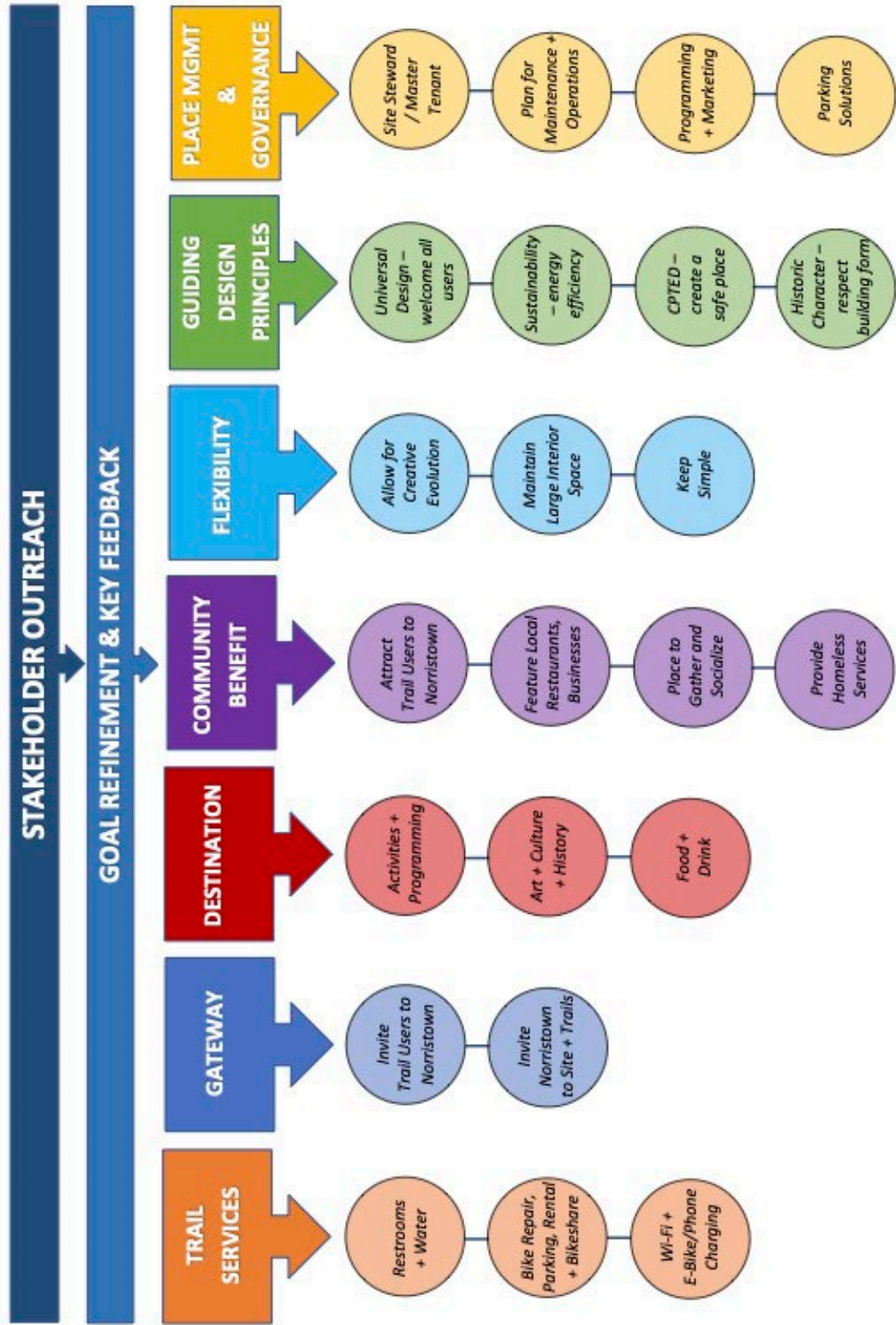
North side of building.

RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships



Trail Junction Center and site following site improvements in 2019.

TRAIL JUNCTION CENTER  
Summary Graphic of Project Goals and Stakeholder Feedback



RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships

TRAIL JUNCTION CENTER  
Advances with Project Goals and  
Stakeholder Interview Feedback

Project Goals:	TRAIL SERVICES	GATEWAY	DESTINATION	COMMUNITY BENEFIT	FLUIDITY	GUIDING PRINCIPLES	PLACE MGMT + GOVERNANCE
<b>Feedback from Stakeholder Interviews:</b>							
<b>TRAIL SERVICES - provide amenities for trail users</b>	✓						
core function of site should be to serve the trails							
clean, accessible, permanent restrooms are a must (accommodate family bathroom needs)			✓	✓		✓	✓
include bike repair stations, bike parking, bike rentals and bike share			✓	✓			✓
provide bike/trail-related services - ideally with bike shop or bike non-profit			✓	✓			
include classic trailhead features: water, restrooms, bike repair, shade, food			✓	✓			
outdoor drinking fountains (year-round if at bldg; integrate dog water bowl)				✓	✓		✓
look to Longford Road trailhead in Phoenixville as prototype for features/ideas			✓	✓			
providing free bikes are key to introducing lower income minorities to trail (bike lending library)			✓	✓			
charging outlets for e-bikes are critical and would be popular			✓	✓			
consider public self-cleaning, pay showers for homeless community and trail users			✓	✓			
include trail counters with live restrooms (e.g., "Totems" by Delaware River Waterfront Corp)			✓	✓			
needs visible parking in order to serve as trailhead				✓			
measures to slow down bicycle traffic near site should be taken				✓			✓
activities at site should not interfere with or block trails, carefully design areas adjacent to trails				✓			✓
design should "showcase" Montco trail system				✓			✓
site and banking should be a trail and parks asset, could use some area for County parks equip.		✓					✓
<b>GATEWAY - create an attractive gateway entrance trails and users</b>							
facility should be a destination for town and trail alike		✓		✓			✓
an important place to share information about both the trails and Mariestown		✓		✓			✓
design should recognize project is a "gateway" for Mariestown to access the trail and vice versa		✓		✓			✓
project serves as opportunity to introduce trail users to Mariestown (include signage with local destinations)		✓		✓			✓
project must be physically well connected to rest of community		✓		✓			✓
tailor site uses to local community, encourage local access, attract new users to trails	✓	✓		✓			✓
invite local, diverse communities to site and trail through food and programming		✓		✓			✓
site should serve and be attractive to Mariestown residents		✓		✓			✓



RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships

TRAIL JUNCTION CENTER  
Meets with Project Goals and  
Stakeholder Interview Feedback

Project Goals:	TRAIL SERVICES	PATHWAY	DESTINATION	COMMUNITY BENEFIT	FLUIDITY	GUIDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES	PLACE MOMENT + GOVERNANCE
<b>Feedback from Stakeholder Interviews:</b>							
<b>FLEXIBILITY - design to allow for creative evolution of uses and functions</b>					✓		✓
the space should be designed for uses to evolve over time					✓		✓
design should not be too complex, draft "overhead" design				✓	✓		✓
large existing interior space should be kept intact for flexibility and adaptability					✓		✓
keep existing flex space "raw" without added finishes					✓		✓
glass roll-up doors and interior partitions could add to flexibility					✓		✓
it's an awesome space - there are many ways we could use the building - the sky is the limit		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
flexible space could be used for County trainings, meetings, events, workshops					✓		✓
include exterior outlets for events					✓		✓
covered outdoor space important for dining, gathering, programming (music, movies, open mic, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>GUIDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES - create a sustainable, universally-accessible, historically-sensitive and safe place</b>							✓
aim for LEED-like energy efficiency, consider solar panels (SD)							✓
natural gas is preferred; building should be sustainable with all electric (no gas/fail) (SD)				✓			✓
remove exterior grade changes in paving to extent possible; incorporate accessible entrances on both sides (UP)	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
make northbound light at DeKalb "no turn on red" (UP)							✓
refurbish clear story windows on Lafayette side for operability; replace clear story windows on trail side (HC)		✓	✓				✓
use sectional metal frames with glass panels for roll-up doors (HC)							✓
could be a fancy pavilion with colorful, modern adaptations rather than a restored structure (HC)			✓				✓
good lighting, security cameras, no dead-ends and regular occupancy are key to a safe site (CPTED)			✓	✓			✓
large homeless pop. uses site now as restroom and for drug use; need to provide for homeless needs (CPTED)			✓				✓
security cannot be solved through design alone - cameras (link to main), active site stewardship also key (CPTED)				✓			✓
lighting and security presence after hours is important for public safety (CPTED)				✓			✓
project could be set up to fail if bad things happen during initial opening (CPTED)							✓
bathrooms should be accessible, single-occupant, secure, easily maintained and visible from trail (CPTED and UP)				✓			✓
incorporate electric car charging at parking areas				✓			✓

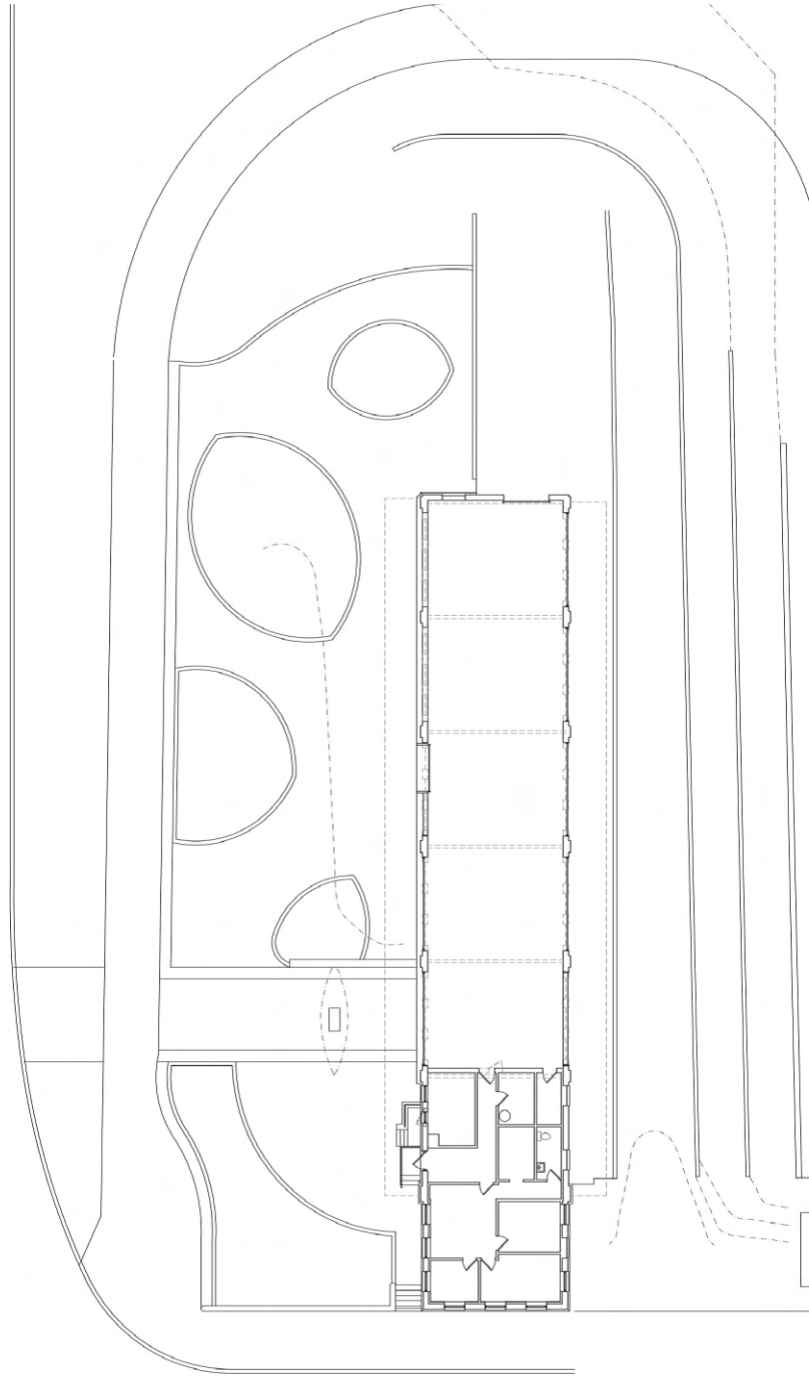


RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships



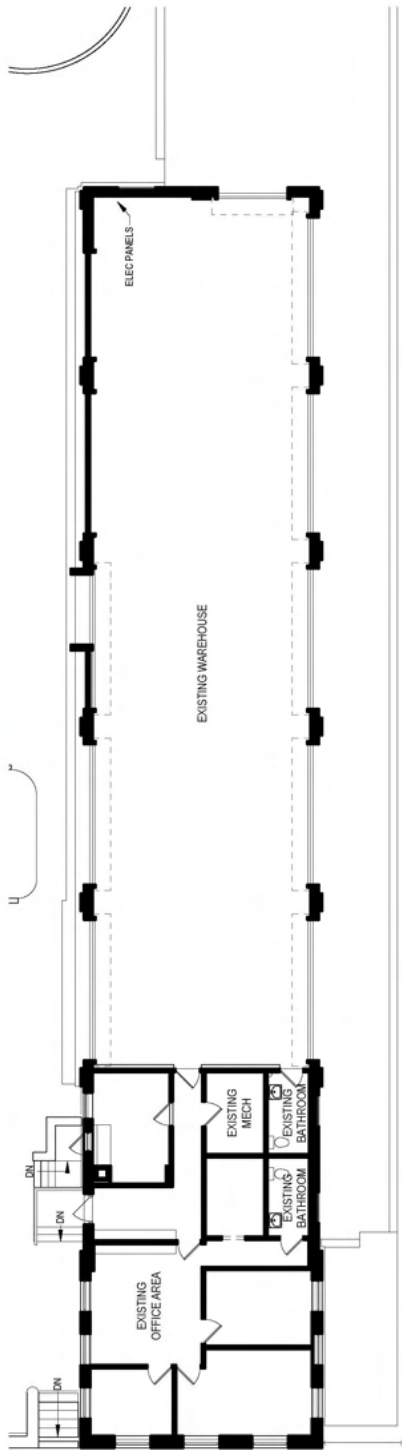
**TRAIL JUNCTION CENTER**  
EXISTING CONDITIONS - SITE PLAN

SEILER + DRURY  
ARCHITECTURE

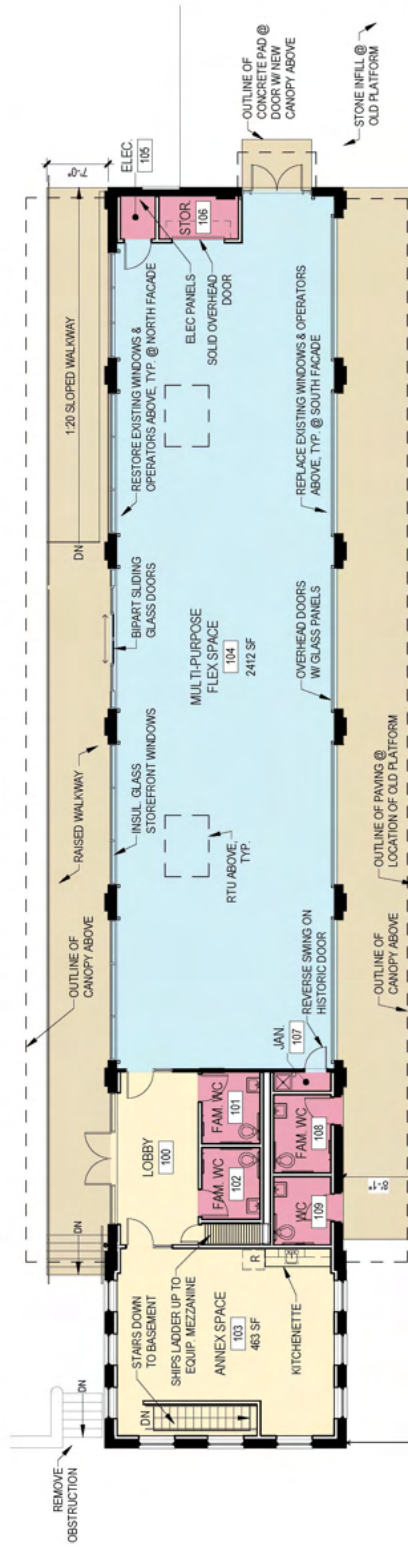


RFI 23-60 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
Trail Junction Center Activation Partnerships

TRAIL JUNCTION CENTER  
EXISTING & PROPOSED PLAN



EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN