

November 15, 2024

Department of Planning & Inspections
City of Dover
PO BOX 475
Dover, DE 19903

The Dover Mobility Center will be a newly constructed 4-story, 400-space multi-purpose garage in the heart of Downtown Dover. The structure will be situated at 133 S. Governor's Avenue, Dover, DE 19904, a future consolidation of six contiguous parcels currently known as 133 S. Governors Ave., 139 S. Governors Ave., 145 S. Governors Ave., 136 S. Bradford St., 148 S. Bradford St., and 150 S. Bradford St. The intended lot consolidation will require vacating a portion of an existing paper alley that currently runs through the boundaries of the project parcels. The site is located one block north of Loockerman Street, the site is bordered by S. Governors Avenue to the west, S Bradford Street to the east, and Minor Street Alley to the south. Currently, surface parking lots on this site serve as public and permit parking for the downtown district.

The proposed Mobility Center aims to accommodate the increased parking demands resulting from incentives outlined in the *Capital City 2030: Transforming Downtown Dover Master Plan*, which anticipates greater business activity and an influx of new residents downtown in mixed-use redevelopment projects. The Center's parking infrastructure is crucial in supporting the transformation of the Capital City into a vibrant hub for commerce, living, and cultural activities projected through 2030 and beyond.

Architectural Design and Adherence to Historic District Guidelines

The architecture of the Mobility Center is crafted to creatively reflect and honor the historic district while adhering to its guidelines. The design aligns with the Historic District Zone's standards, emphasizing that:

“...the slavish and literal copying of architectural styles and elements will trivialize and confuse the genuine historic architecture of the City of Dover... Contemporary architecture should be representative of the time in which it is created and should thus contribute to Dover's architectural diversity for the appreciation of future generations.”¹

Although “contemporary” in style, the Center's architecture respects the historic context rather than replicating neighboring structures. Drawing inspiration from the tectonics of early Victorian-era carriage and horse stables—the antecedents of modern automobile garages—the building incorporates their guiding principles of scale, rhythm, proportion, and materiality. This approach enables the structure to harmonize with its surroundings and avoid appearing contextually foreign.

¹ *Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone*; John Milner Associates, 1992; 4-2

Aligned with the Design Standards and the new C-2 zoning regulations, the building's massing incorporates a tripartite form with a six-foot setback. This setback, applied on both frontages after the second floor, scales the building comfortably for public interaction. It also enables the use of materials on the first two levels that correspond with the historic context by aligning with elements like the historic cornice lines prevalent within the historic district.

With the core approach of respect rather than replication, the building takes cues and architectural style from the buildings downtown, rather than direct forgery. An example of which is the building's brickwork, which takes cues such as the size, shape, color variation, and uniformity of bricks prevalent downtown. The patterning of the brick, mainly running bond with accents of soldier coursing, is a common theme downtown and serves as an acknowledgement and method of folding the building into the fabric of Dover.

On the upper levels, contemporary materials and forms predominate. Precast concrete spandrel panels reference historic cornice styles, incorporating dynamic spandrel panels with historically inspired insets. The exposed stair towers on S Governors and S Bradford introduce modern glass construction, serving as a wayfinding beacon. To acknowledge the building's place in the ongoing history of Downtown Dover, the glass also serves as a mirror to reflect its neighboring architecture and sky.

Site

The building is designed to adhere closely to C-2 zoning requirements, which call for a zero-foot setback, positioning the Mobility Center directly along the sidewalk edge. At the entry points, the sidewalk will be expanded to enhance pedestrian flow and create a welcoming, accessible frontage. This expansion is further supported by thoughtfully planned site elements such as light poles and wall sconces that provide essential lighting while complementing the architectural design.

In addition, a selection of street trees and landscaped plantings along the building's perimeter will create a comfortable, shaded environment for pedestrians, contributing to a pleasant streetscape. To the north of the structure on S Bradford Street, a greenspace area is proposed, incorporating trees, shrubs, and various plantings to enhance the aesthetic quality of the site and provide a natural respite within the urban landscape. This greenspace will serve as a "pocket park", offering a convenient and valuable amenity for residents and visitors with pets.

All site elements, including landscaping and lighting, will be carefully positioned to ensure they do not obstruct visibility for drivers or compromise pedestrian safety in addition to limiting light pollution for neighboring properties. Special attention will be given to sightlines at entry and exit points, promoting a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment that aligns with the broader vision of Downtown Dover as a vibrant and accessible community space.

Ground Floor Programming and Design

The ground floor of the Mobility Center is thoughtfully programmed to serve a variety of needs, enhancing both functionality and accessibility. Key features include a welcome center with public washrooms accessible through the welcome center during business hours to support visitors, as well as a bicycle repair hub that encourages cycling as a sustainable transportation option. The ground floor also houses a management office and designated parking areas for bicycles and scooters, which will be complemented by lockers to facilitate secure package delivery and retrieval. Vertical circulation elements, including stairwells and elevators, connect this level to the upper floors, while back-of-house spaces support the operational needs of the facility.

In addition to general garage parking, the ground floor is designed with a number of specialized parking spaces, such as accessible spots, including those designated for van access, as well as designated electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and short-term 30-minute parking spaces. These additions promote inclusivity, sustainable transportation, and convenience for short-term visitors.

An exterior location along Governors Avenue is designated for bikeshare docks, aligning with the objectives of both the Kent County MPO's strategic plan and the *Capital City 2030: Transforming Downtown Dover* plan by the Downtown Dover Partnership (DDP). This bikeshare docking area supports regional and local goals to encourage sustainable transportation options and increase bike accessibility for residents and visitors. The placement along Governors Avenue strategically situates the bikeshare docks for easy access, allowing users to seamlessly connect to other downtown destinations and transportation nodes. The integration of bikeshare infrastructure into the Mobility Center not only supports eco-friendly transit but also contributes to Dover's vision of a more connected, pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly urban core.

Garage entrances and exits are strategically placed on both S Governors Avenue and S Bradford Street, enhancing access to the facility while limiting a burden of vehicles on either side. The S Governors Avenue entrance is expected to handle a higher volume of traffic due to its status as a state road with larger traffic flows, allowing for efficient circulation in and out of the garage. This thoughtful layout ensures a streamlined experience for all users, aligning with the Mobility Center's goals of accessibility, sustainability, and integration within the downtown infrastructure.

Façade Design and Materiality of the Pedestrian zone

The Mobility Center's garage façade will feature primarily precast architectural concrete with brick cladding that matches the color and scale of surrounding buildings. This material selection, as well as the overall design, reflects the input gathered from the public at the October 23, 2024 Open House, where attendees helped shape the aesthetic by voting on their favorite of three pre-selected brick samples that range in color and shape. The brickwork employs varying orientations, particularly within column bays

and at the cornice level, to introduce architectural texture and provide a contemporary nod to traditional Victorian brickwork. This technique ensures a harmonious blend with Dover's historic aesthetic while expressing a modern identity.

Both street-facing elevations follow this brickwork pattern up to a setback above the second floor. Beyond this setback, the façade transitions to decorative precast concrete spandrels, which, in color and form, were also selected with public input. The thoughtful progression from brick to concrete on the upper floors emphasizes the building's contemporary character while maintaining visual cohesion with the district's architectural language.

Along Minor Street, the brickwork and decorative detailing wrap the corner up to the second structural column, then simplify into a streamlined design. This strategic simplification allows flexibility for future transformations of Minor Street Alley, envisioning a shift from a car-dominated space to a pedestrian-friendly zone. The simplified façade is primed for future additions, such as murals, supplementary lighting, and screening, giving the Downtown Dover Partnership the agency to shape this side of the building as the surrounding area evolves.

The north elevation, which will function as a party wall due to fire safety regulations of proximity to the building's property line and existing adjacent neighbor, has limited openings but retains visual interest through adjacent landscaping. A pocket park with trees, and greenery will create a collaborative public space that draws people into the area. This elevation is specifically designed to host a large mural, turning the party wall into a canvas for public art and adding vibrancy to this side of the building. Together, these design choices reflect a commitment to honoring public input, integrating contemporary style with historical context, and aligning with the Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone.

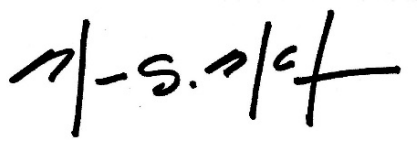
Windows, Openings, and Canopies

The windows in the Mobility Center's welcome center, retail, and office spaces are proportioned to align harmoniously with those of neighboring buildings, creating a cohesive streetscape. For the parking garage's pedestrian entries, double doors are planned to match the proportions of surrounding storefronts, integrating seamlessly with the architectural rhythm of the street.

Extending across the length of the ground floor, canopies with dark painted metal fascia will be installed, designed with detailing that complements the brickwork and adds an additional layer of architectural refinement. These canopies are topped with a landscaping tray system, which serves the dual function of managing stormwater runoff and visually lowering the building's scale to create a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

In the main body of the parking garage, much of the structure is open above the safety railing and spandrel panels, maximizing airflow to meet the ventilation requirements of a parking facility. This open design supports efficient air exchanges, enhancing both the comfort and safety of the garage environment. The design choices throughout the structure focus on balancing functionality, historical alignment, and pedestrian comfort, reinforcing the Mobility Center as a well-integrated, accessible element of downtown Dover's urban fabric.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M.S. McCloskey".

Michael S. McCloskey, AIA, LEED AP

Vice President

215.609.4609 | mmccloskey@core-states.com