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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ERIE DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCES PETER J. SMITH TO CONDUCT PHASE 1 OF MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Cooperation and cohesion in planning, programs, services, materials focus of analysis

Erie, Pa.- The Erie Downtown Partnership (EDP) is pleased to announce that Peter J. Smith & Company, Inc., has been chosen to conduct phase one of the Downtown Master Plan update. This appointment effectively launches the master plan update aimed at developing downtown Erie through 2020.

Peter J. Smith & Company, Inc., is a full-service urban design, urban and regional planning, and economic development firm with offices in Buffalo, New York, and Fort Erie, Ontario. The firm is recognized for big-picture planning; effective, creative public input programs; and innovative physical designs. Smith and his team have served organizations and governmental agencies in communities of all sizes across 16 states, four Canadian provinces, and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in their 25-year history. The firm is currently working to complete the final phase of Destination Erie's plan, which takes into account downtown Erie.

John Buchna, the EDP chief executive officer said, "Peter J. Smith's global and local experience and planning expertise are exactly what we need at the EDP to fulfill our vision for a vibrant downtown. The initial steps in phase one are critical as we assess where we've been and how, what, and where we need to revitalize in order to compete to attract investors, consumers, and tourists."

In phase one of the Downtown Master Plan update, scheduled to begin immediately, Peter J. Smith & Company will oversee a background analysis and literature review to analyze current plans and strategies and documents that include downtown, including those generated by the city of Erie, Erie County, local economic development and tourism entities, and downtown neighborhood and nonprofit organizations.

Buchna said, "The firm will look at our plans and others' plans and ensure cohesion and help to foster collaboration. They will also help reduce programmatic, data collection, mapping, and other areas of redundancy. These efforts will help us build the kind of clean, safe, bustling downtown residents and businesses hope for."

Peter J. Smith & Company, Inc., was thoughtfully chosen. In May 2013, an independent review committee of planning, development, and government professionals was assembled to write a request for qualifications (RFQ). The RFQ was submitted to six prospective firms across the country to respond by June 30, 2014. After ranking the four proposals received according to a point scale system outlined in the RFQ, the EDP board of directors determined Peter J. Smith & Company, Inc., to best meet project requirements.

Findings from phase one will be announced this fall and will put be into action during phase two. Phase two of the Downtown Master Plan update will commence in late 2014. An independent review committee will be assembled for phase two and an RFQ will be written and submitted to prospective firms. Public input sessions will be planned during phase two; check local media and www.eriedowntown.com for dates and times of sessions.

The Downtown Master Plan update was funded in-part by The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), which injected \$25,000 into the plan revision. The project aligns with DCED's mission to foster opportunities for businesses to grow and for communities to succeed and thrive in a global economy.

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) invested \$12,500 into the project as part of its 2013 Mission Main Street Grants program. Established to develop Erie County's commercial corridors, Mission Main Street Grants serve to buttress those distinct geographic districts, known as "main streets," that incubate and host small businesses, special events, historic structures, and central parks. In accordance with Mission Main Street Grants guidelines, EDP committed \$12,500 of matching funds to updating the plan.

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A nonprofit organization, the Erie Downtown Partnership is dedicated to the revitalization of downtown Erie by improving its image, business climate, physical environment, and design. The EDP represents more than 400 merchants, property owners, businesses, and organizations, co-hosts thousands of visitors each year, and presents just under 15 unforgettable events annually. The EDP district extends from Presque Isle Bay to the north to the 14th Street railway bridge to the south and stretches west to east from Sassafras Street to Holland Street.

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