



MITHUN

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MITHUN CHOSEN TO DESIGN STATE-OF-THE-ART CAMPUS IN DOWNTOWN MORGANTON, NC

After a Thorough Search for the Design and Development of The Innovation Campus in Downtown Morganton, The Industrial Commons (TIC) Has Selected Mithun; Project Moving to Schematic Design Phase

Morganton, NC:

The Industrial Commons (TIC) is thrilled to announce the selection of Mithun, as the lead architect for the design and development of the Innovation Campus. Mithun is a multi-disciplinary design firm headquartered in Seattle that was honored in December with the 2023 AIA Architecture Firm Award, the highest honor bestowed by the American Institute of Architects. The firm will help transform the 27-acre tract of land from a neglected brownfield into a thriving and sustainable hub of manufacturing and community activity.

“We’re thrilled to move to the next step of design and development for the Campus,” said Sara Chester, TIC Co-Executive Director. “We have full confidence in Mithun, and the team of engineers and consultants we’ve assembled collectively, to design a space that is the physical embodiment of our values — including manufacturing innovation, as well as our deep commitment to environmental sustainability and to our community.”

The Innovation Campus will be a catalyst of growth for the region. The multi-faceted project will house TIC’s work, which focuses on creating economic opportunities for manufacturing workers and rural people. It will include training spaces for upskilling workers and provide much needed manufacturing space for new and existing social enterprises as they grow and expand at the campus. The development will be a regional center that energizes the next generation of workers and creates high-quality, skilled jobs.

“This project represents a remarkable opportunity to resurrect the industrial heritage of this site and create a high-performing, sustainable campus that will support workers and businesses in North Carolina — and serve as an exemplary model nationwide,” said Mithun President David W. Goldberg. “We are excited to collaborate with the excellent team of national and local experts already assembled, and to contribute to the innovative work of TIC in support of a diverse working class and inclusive economy.”

TIC purchased the former Drexel 3 & 5 property, located at 211 East Fleming Drive in Morganton, in early 2021 with support from an anonymous donor and secured a grant from the EPA in May 2022 to begin site remediation. That process is underway, and clean up work will begin this winter. Design and engineering will

continue through 2023, with a goal of breaking ground for construction in early 2024. The organization hopes to complete construction on the first two buildings of the project by mid 2026.

A Steering Committee composed of representatives from local government, education, economic development, utilities, local businesses and workers has provided critical guidance during the vision process. TIC has conducted several community design charrettes and events to gather input from workers, families, neighbors, business owners and other community members about what the Campus should include, and how it should look and feel for workers and visitors. TIC will continue to gather community input as the project now moves into the Schematic Design phase.

“We had an overwhelming response to the RFP process, with 17 of the country’s leading architects submitting proposals,” said Erin Kizer, TIC Director, who is leading the project. “After an interview process that included workers and members of our Steering Committee we selected Mithun and couldn’t be happier with our decision - especially considering they were named Architects of the Year just a few weeks after we selected them.”

Mithun is a nationally recognized multi-disciplinary design firm with deep experience in multi-phased campus projects, built at the highest level of environmental sustainability. They are also widely known for their work with social equity, integrated place-based design, and research and development helping to advance the profession as a whole.

The next phase will build off the exceptional [Vision Plan](#) developed by [NVERSE](#) (local architecture firm), [Nelson, Byrd, Woltz Landscape Architects](#), and [Baumgartner Urban Systems Strategy \(BUSS\)](#).

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About The Industrial Commons:

The Industrial Commons is a 501(c)(3) founded in 2015. Their mission is to rebuild a diverse working class based on locally rooted wealth. They do this by founding and scaling employee owned social enterprises, creating industry networks and delivering a suite of workforce development and youth engagement programs. To learn more about TIC, visit www.theindustrialcommons.org or sign up for their next community open house at www.theindustrialcommons.org/connect.

About Mithun:

Mithun is an integrated design firm dedicated to creating positive change in people’s lives. The firm’s team of architects, landscape architects, interior designers, urban designers and planners work in a wide range of typologies and scales — with a focus on urban environments and places where people live, work and learn. The firm is nationally recognized for excellence in design and sustainability; honors include the 2023 American Institute of Architects (AIA) Architecture Firm Award and seven AIA Committee on the Environment (COTE) Top Ten Green Awards. www.mithun.com.

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