

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Dulci Sweets' Expansion Offers Revitalization for Ashland**

**CEDARVILLE, OHIO** – As the City of Ashland, Ohio, continues its Pump House District revitalization efforts two blocks from the downtown strip, a local chocolatier is taking a significant step forward with a new expansion that aims to enhance both economic growth and community engagement in the heart of the city.

Dulci Sweets, a faith-based, family-owned candy company, is preparing to open a 16,000-square-foot storefront in the historic Pump House District. This expansion is expected to bolster foot traffic, create a welcoming community gathering space and contribute to the city's broader developmental initiatives. The store's relocated and restructured main entrance will provide greater reception space, ensuring Dulci Sweets' new location is a welcoming and accessible environment to all patrons.

To ensure a successful transition into its new space, Dulci Sweets partnered with students from [Cedarville University's industrial and innovative design program](#), housed at the International Center for Creativity (ICC) in Columbus. The students worked directly with company co-founders Mike McPherran and Brock Meadows to develop architectural and interior design solutions that align with Dulci's vision of fostering community through handcrafted chocolates.

"This project is about more than just expanding a business — it's about creating a destination," said Meadows. "We want to establish a space where people can connect, and the insights from Cedarville's design students have helped us refine that vision."

Over eight weeks, 19 senior design students collaborated on site plans, exterior and interior layouts, branding elements and customer

experience enhancements. Their recommendations contributed to design aspects that could be implemented early, including a revised main entrance location and a welcoming reception area that will enhance accessibility, as well as concepts and strategies for long-term creative planning.

In addition to assisting Dulci Sweets' immediate efforts, the students expanded their vision to encompass several city blocks in the broader revitalization area. Their master planning concepts were shared with city officials, offering insights on how upcoming development projects could complement the Pump House District's revitalization. Some of these ideas may have unforeseen impacts through the mayor's office and city council as Ashland looks to attract further investment.

"This was an incredible opportunity for our students to work on a real-world project that blends business innovation with community development," said **Jim Stevenson**, president and co-founder of the ICC. "Dulci Sweets' expansion represents the kind of transformational impact that thoughtful design can bring to a city."

Cedarville's industrial and innovative design program is the leading program of its kind among Christian universities in the United States. Housing its students within the ICC near the heart of Columbus provides opportunities to partner with real businesses and projects like Dulci Sweets to provide design opportunities like no other.

"All of the courses in the program are based on experiential learning opportunities, and ideally, those opportunities include real-world projects," said Stevenson. "Dulci's master plan project was a perfect fit for our interior and exterior architectural space design courses because, in addition to having fun subject matter and an actual site to work with, the Dulci team members are inspiring, faith-based business owners who show what honoring God with your business can look like."

The students' work is expected to bring both immediate and long-term benefits to the sweet Ashland shop.

"It was a great opportunity to share some of these renderings with the city about what we might build and how the area could be repurposed," said Meadows. "We don't know what the impact may end up being at the higher level, but the ideas that were taken and actually applied for us are no doubt going to be pretty significant not just for our company but for the Ashland community as well."

With the support of Cedarville's design students and the momentum of Ashland's redevelopment efforts, Dulci Sweets is positioned to become a cornerstone of the revitalized downtown, fostering economic growth and strengthening the sense of community for years to come.

Cedarville University, an evangelical Christian institution in southwest Ohio, offers [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) programs across arts, sciences, and professional fields. With 6,384 students, it ranks among Ohio's largest private universities and is recognized by the Wall Street Journal as being among the nation's top three evangelical universities. Cedarville is also known for its vibrant Christian community, challenging academics, and high graduation and retention rates. Learn more at [cedarville.edu](http://cedarville.edu).

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