

City of Troy Downtown Revitalization Committee
Local Planning Committee Meeting Three
April 14, 2022
5:00 to 7:00 PM (Virtual on Zoom and In Person at EOC)
RECORDED

The Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Local Planning Commission (LPC) Meeting #3 provided an opportunity to review and discuss the 24 projects submitted through the Troy DRI Open Call for Projects. Mayor Madden made opening remarks and HR&A reviewed the code of conduct with LPC members. Following this, HR&A reviewed input from the community meeting, reviewed the draft vision and goal statements, then presented the project proposals and fielded project questions and discussion from LPC members.

LPC CO-CHAIRS PRESENT

- Mayor Patrick Madden – Mayor, City of Troy
- Roger A. Ramsammy, Ph.D. – President, Hudson Valley Community College with Susan Kalkbrenner

LPC MEMBERS PRESENT

- Chuck Conroy – South Troy Resident Osgood Neighborhood Association
- Denise Figueroa – Center for Independent Living
- Elizabeth Reiss – Arts Center of the Capital Region and Troy Cultural Alliance
- Geoff Brault – Downtown Troy BID
- Heidi Knoblauch –SUNY Albany
- Ivan Mugerwa – Franklin Square Inn
- Kate Manley, RCRCC

LPC MEMBERS PRESENT

- Lee McElroy - RPI
- Mike McLaughlin – North Central Troy Resident
- Richard Kiernan – Troy Resident
- Steve Flenory – WB Games
- Tabitha Dunn – Unity House
- Tom Hulihan – Troy Housing Authority
- Zack Metzger – Troy Farmers Market
- Emily Menn – Troy City Council Member
- Kim Fredericks, The Sage Colleges

STATE PARTNERS PRESENT

- Lesley Zlatev– Revitalization Specialist, NYS DOS Planning & Community Infrastructure
- Joe Landy – Empire State Development
- Darren Scott– Director of Development, NYS Homes and Community Renewal
- Crystal Loffler– President of Community Renewal, NYS Homes and Community Renewal

HR&A CONSULTING TEAM MEMBERS PRESENT

- Bret Nolan Collazzi, HR&A
- Christiana Whitcomb, HR&A
- Ariel Dames-Podell, HR&A
- Anna Gallicchio, HR&A
- Jonie Fu, Fu Wilmers Design
- Patricia McKee, Fu Wilmers Design
- Margaret Irwin, River Street Planning
- Christina Snyder, River Street Planning

CITY OF TROY STAFF PRESENT

- Steve Strichman, Commissioner of Planning and Development
- Dylan Turek, Director of Economic Development
- Chris Nolin – Deputy Mayor

Members of the Public

- Marie Gavazzi
- Katherine Dunham
- Peter Gross
- Marilynne Mahoney
- John Kane

Meeting Notes:

- Mayor Madden made opening remarks, expressing thanks for everyone's participation and hope that more will be able to join in person for future. It's an exciting stage of the process with collaborative review of projects.
- HR&A, the consultant lead on the Planning Team, reviewed meeting logistics and ground rules and read the conflict of interest. Several LPC members identified conflicts of interests.

HR&A provided an update on events since LPC meeting #2:

- Community workshop with 30+ attendees
- 4 stakeholder group discussions
- Office hours with 6 project sponsors
- Halfway through planning process. Next 2.5 months will focus on strengthening and refining projects and working as group to prioritize the list of projects and recommendations for submissions for state funding.

Objective for today's meetings:

- Share insights from community and stakeholder engagement about aspirations for downtown
- Discuss updated DRI vision and goals
- Review submitted projects to gather feedback and questions. 24 projects received with \$340M in potential investment and \$22M requested DRI funds.

HR&A reviewed input and takeaways from community workshop on March 14:

- Vision for downtown (See word cloud)
- What people enjoy downtown (See PPT charts)
- What investments would improve downtown (See PPT charts)
- What investments would create a cohesive connected Troy (See PPT charts)
- How has Downtown evolved? (See PPT charts)
- A range of additional themes emerged from community input (e.g., adding young people, community amenities and housing; complete Monument Square and bridge plans, protect downtown's historic neighborhoods from inappropriate development scale, etc.)

Reviewed additional themes from stakeholder group discussions:

- Lack of connectivity and accessibility is a barrier
- Riverfront access is top priority
- Young families need amenities
- Grocery stores are scarce
- Parking is a barrier to downtown visitation
- Need for year-round programming
- Lure talent and employers downtown to build economic base
- Anxiety over declining housing affordability

Reviewed draft vision statement and set of revised goals for LPC discussion. Invited LPC to comment on draft **vision statement**:

- Lesley – Would like to solidify goals and vision now so we can progress to focusing on the projects.
- Patricia McKee – When looking at projects next we will be evaluating them on how well they accomplish these goals.
- Heidi – Suggested a minor edit to replace "its" with "will build on City's authentic charm and DIY spirit"

HR&A invited LPC to comment on revised **draft goals**:

- Heidi – #3 could include "welcoming" downtown.
- Liz – Seems like we're moving into set of goals focused on livability and accessibility. Likes this but wants to ensure people recognize the shift from investing in emerging industries to improving spaces and street life. Appreciates that there is an accessibility factor here, including physical accessibility.

- Bret – Some speak to different downtown uses and whether they meet needs of residents, visitors, businesses. Is there a good mix of destinations and services?
- Emily – Shift from economic development to things that are supportive of ED. Is ultimate goal with DRI to extend economic impact or to make things “nice”? They can be complementary. Little bit of a loss of attracting innovation and talent; more placemaking for those industries. Some projects asking for funds that are about the “stuff” that makes places function as a business.
- Heidi – Stakeholder group talked about whether DRI creates space for knowledge workers or whether meant to spur industry. Strong view that DRI is meant for downtown revitalization – the placemaking piece of economic development. Likes where goal #1 went because it focuses on that. Other pieces of industry will flow from that.
- Bret – In thinking about projects there is emphasis on catalyst projects that create ability to attract future investments.
- HR&A will make the few adjustments discussed and send revised vision and goals to LPC.

HR&A reviewed projects at high level and shared prioritization framework:

- 24 projects submitted. In process of following up with sponsors to ensure projects are complete, feasible, meet the 2-year timeline for breaking ground, etc.
- HR&A will also analyze the economic spillover impacts to bring back to LPC.
- Shared prioritization framework (i.e., is the project DRI eligible and ready, is the funding need substantiated, does the project address the DRI goals and vision/does impact justify the funding request, is there community support, and how could/do proposed projects support each other).

HR&A took questions on the framework – are there other questions team should be considering?

- What about impacts? *Implicit in #3 but will communicate these to the team.*
- Heidi– #3: Does project address DRI goals and vision? Rework as “Does it align with vision”
- Reviewed the 4 goals under which projects are grouped.
- Shared map showing project locations and groupings under DRI categories.

HR&A reviewed project details for the following areas and LPC provided comments:

Quality Public Spaces and Street Life

- **Monument Square Civic Plaza**
- **District Geothermal (under Riverfront Park)** – One of the first in the country
- **Downtown Troy Façade Improvement Revolving Loan Fund** – 0% interest loans with goal to enhance appearance and strengthen downtown tourism.
 - BID interested in expanding boundaries.
 - Lesley responded that fund would be restricted to DRI boundaries.
 - Sponsor – May preclude viability of being lead applicant – may not be able to bring program to community that excludes some of them.
 - What if there was another capital source for other buildings – could it be administered as one fund?
 - Lesley – Would be an administration issue of checking which would apply to DRI and which comes out of other allocated funding source.
 - John Kane – Can the DRI Boundary still be moved?
 - LPC could amend boundary – but seems like a large amendment. LPC can discuss this.
 - Heidi – With applications already submitted, there might be push back on amending. But could LDC be good sponsor of this?
 - Steve – LDC could be a sponsor – however it is a great program for BID if can figure out way to accommodate with additional funds.
 - Liz – Asked whether the fund would be for building owners or business owners. Renters may not own building but be passionate about how building looks.
 - Sponsor (Geoff Brault, BID) is open to that and proposal written as such.

- Emily – Of all the applications this has broad impact for smaller existing businesses and property owners which creates great economic leverage. Can be a game changer. Very difficult to get access to capital for multi-unit properties for façade work when you just need a small amount.
 - Sponsor, (Geoff Brault, BID): That is exact genesis of proposal idea. Our boundaries are similar to resembling DRI boundary. So many people have said this same thing – that they just need a little money to make improvements that are otherwise inaccessible. Value in this application. Could be proposed from another entity if that made more sense.
 - Public comment/BID member – Might be okay to exclude those outside boundary as BID does other things that may not benefit all. Recommend bringing to BID Board.
- **The Cannon Restoration**
- **Rare Form Brewing** – Bring full brewing operation to 1 MSQ with test kitchen. Very tied to timing of 1MSQ so may or may not be shovel ready within 2 years.
 - Denise – What happens if selected projects have delays (e.g., if attached to other construction)?
 - Lesley – When weighing projects select those that will most likely be shovel ready in 2 years. There are always delays. Each agency has different requirements but typically 5-year contract. Do your best. **LPC goal should be to examine readiness and capacity of the project to be shovel ready in 2 years.**
 - Kim – What is the scope of projected impact?
 - HR&A reviewing project impact and will be adding these details for the next LPC meeting.
 - Liz – Can we clarify if the brewery is in the space, where the innovation lab is going, and if that application was retracted?
 - A: The innovation lab decided not to move forward with the application. The brewery space will be located in the ground level of the building

General comments:

- Liz – Would any of these projects say they couldn't go forward without DRI funding? Does this matter?
 - HR&A – Team is working on figuring out funding status of other funds for each project so we're clear on what is secured or not. Some projects that are more civic will have to make determination about whether other funding sources will become available. For private projects will have to make a judgment and vet the projects.
- CFA Funding will be announced after DRI – after projects selected then CFA might contribute to some of the funding for these projects. To the extent that some project funding sources are still up in the air – want to make sure that if those sources don't come through, there is still a project that can move forward. Need this assurance.
 - Lesley – Can't rely on CFA – must be able to continue without that award.
- Heidi – Can you put conditions on projects, like rent caps?
 - Lesley – LPC can set requirements, especially affordability requirements. These might affect project viability so consider the baselines.
 - HR&A can take feedback back to project sponsors with requested LPC changes.
- Kimberley – Agrees that the LPC needs an understanding of likelihood of additional funding. Are we reaching out to those stakeholders directly impacted by projects? Is there specific information on impact and length of impact of some of these projects – important consideration.
 - HR&A – Great flag and this is great role for LPC to make sure this type of outreach is completed and stakeholders are on board.
- What does it look like if putting requirements on projects; how are they monitored? Do we tie requirements to project completion? Who will be monitoring affordability, for example? Need measurable conditions.
- Kim – Could have sponsoring entity follow up to check on requirements to be sure implemented. Who enforces/what are the consequences if not followed?
 - Lesley – There would need to be some level of State monitoring. Sponsors are reimbursed by the State, whoever is receiving the award. Depending on agency – they need to be able to prove they met requirements in order to be reimbursed.
- Kim – Would be nice to know what some ED impacts are – jobs created, etc.
 - HR&A is currently working on a detailed profile will be provided of each project to LPC.

Walkable, Accessible and Connected Downtown

More spread out with projects at key points:

- **Riverwalk Marina North** – Revised application that was originally 2 projects now combined into one. Extends Riverwalk north to Jay Street from Hoosick Street Bridge. Brings tourists, residents along riverfront with access to north central DT and creating open space. Would eventually connect to riverfront entertainment complex.
- **Congress Street Bridge Ramp Reconfiguration** – Location currently has 2 off ramps and cannot drive north/south in this area by Taylor Apts. Very connected to the Taylor Apts project – they need ramps removed. Reconnecting River Street and creating new 4 lane intersection at bridge to replace off ramps.
- **Downtown/Riverwalk Wayfinding and Identity Plan** – Build on success of Riverwalk, drive tourism and help residents access Riverwalk. Consistent messaging across Riverwalk with strategic branding.
- **Riverfront Mural Program** – Create murals in and around Riverwalk – revitalizing public spaces and bringing public art to light through 7 murals. Mural selection would be part of program.
 - Heidi – Can we make some of these revolving, like Cannon or murals, etc.?
 - Revolving is about pool of money, but the Murals project already has clear site locations.
 - In revolving loan proposal, public art was included as potential use of fund.
 - Lesley – fund can cover more than one thing but is total \$600,000. So could cover art project as either stand alone or could fit into fund.

General LPC Comments:

- When we talk about walkability, three are city projects and we have one with Art Center that is about placemaking. There are projects on connected downtown that didn't apply like walking tours, etc. – was there a missed opportunity here?
- **Evaluating DRI initiatives in the past** – Small amount of money might impact multiple sites. Have past initiatives had more successful approach – touching a larger area of district versus large amount of capital in one area? Would help me be able to evaluate projects.
 - Lesley – Very tailored to specific downtowns. Goal is for overall catalytic revitalization of whole area. Some DRI asks are very high – consider how individual sponsors can minimize their ask. Consultants will go back and ask if they have capacity to reduce.
- Can we request reduction? Sponsor must still have capacity to carry project forward in this case.
 - Yes this is possible. It's key to figure this out at this point in the process – how much money is truly needed to go forward.

Quality Housing and Neighborhood Services

- **Taylor Apts Phase I** – Comprehensive redevelopment of sites. Phase 1 develops 141 units. Affected by Congress Bridge ramps. Most substantial affordable housing contribution.
- **Capital Roots** – A net zero greenhouse facility to support job readiness programs – based on Curtis Project. Kitchen, market, food hub and skills training.
- **Trojan Rising** – Renovation of Trojan Hotel into 20-28 apartments.
- **Troy Public Main Library Indoor Air Quality System** – Improving ventilation/HVAC system. No cooling so difficult to use building in summer. Request is almost the full cost of project.
- **CEO Community Resources Center Bridge** – Pursuing addition that creates indoor programming space. DRI would provide outdoor structure to host events and additional services. This and greenhouse among projects that are most about creating access to services in North Central Troy.
- **Bargain Block Projects: Bargain Grocery and Fitness Center** – Increasing food access and amenities for future residents. Some questions on timing of project. Additional projects under this: Two residential projects that would need to have a partnership with affordable housing developer to move forward.
 - HR&A will need to confirm that costs will not be incurred until after the fact.

Year-Round Destination

- **Troy Waterfront Farmers Market Atrium Improvements** – Rehabilitate atrium as year-round/winter home for FM. Demolition and new construction and rehab of public space.
 - Steve F – Troy Waterfront Farmers Market – Is this within the current atrium building and inside would be redone? Or exterior?

- Sponsor: The roof is a large part of the cost as well as the interior.
- Multiple owners of different parts of the structure.
- Would FM function only in winter months?
 - Yes, the intent is to be outside in the summer.
 - Would use the space in summertime for addition – permanent food spaces and makers market, mid-week access. In winter it would be just the winter market.
 - Also hoping to use the space for youth programming in the summer.
- **Collar City Waterfront Entertainment Complex** – Mixed use commercial entertainment space with food, hospitality, entertainment spaces. Specific uses not yet fully formed. Riverwalk could connect to this. Adding amenities along river and in downtown.
- **American Theater** – Non-profit performing arts organization with experience doing historic preservation projects – Restore theater to original use as arts venue. Currently not used for this purpose.
- **Troy Music Hub** – Renovation to transform vacant lobby into arts and culture space functioning year round and increasing programming in the Tory Savings Bank Music Hall. Create an amenity for existing residents and to attract people DT.
- **Hart Cluett Museum Accessibility Improvements** – Preservation of historic documents. HVAC system not up to par for preserving assets. Replace HVAC and increase deck space to increase programming.

HR&A identified 3 additional projects with uncertain eligibility:

- **Embankment Slide Park** – Rocky parcel with proposed build of series of waterslides on to create neighborhood park and amenity. No current project sponsor and currently working with property owner.
 - Outside DRI area?
 - LPC can consider amendment if requested.
 - If this area could be activated with public art, it would be very meaningful. Shouldn't be completely dismissed if it could be part of the process.
 - Who would be responsible for liability and maintenance?
 - Site control and long-term operations are the two big questions here.
 - What constitutes a large slide?
- **Bargain Block/Multifamily Retail and Bargain Block Senior Housing** – Would need to have a partnership with affordable housing developer to move forward.

HR&A asked LPC to send questions and comments by April 28, 2022. Will have follow up workshops. Planning team will continue to gather information about projects.

Public Comment

- **If a project is rejected, will we be notified?**
 - If project is determined to be ineligible, planning team will let sponsor know.
- **Packet passed out to LPC committee – will that be available online?**
 - Yes, we will make full project list available online.
- **When reviewing projects is there any favorability towards non-profits or larger companies who might gain money from project being completed?**
 - Part of what the role of the LPC is to determine is how they want to view the funding and its impact.
- Lesley – Noted the current ask of projects is \$22M. In recommendations end goal is between \$11-13M.

Next Steps

- Next meeting May 12, 2022 – may need to reschedule. Will discuss prioritization of projects at this meeting and begin drafting final plan in June.
- Community workshop – will begin planning for this soon.
- Looking for volunteers to staff DRI projects table at Farmers Market, which opens May 1st.