

City of Troy Downtown Revitalization Committee  
Local Planning Committee Meeting Two  
March 10, 2022  
11:00 to 1:00 PM (Virtual on Zoom and In Person at HVCC)  
RECORDED

The Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Local Planning Commission (LPC) Meeting #2 provided an opportunity to discuss plans for the first community workshop on March 14, 2022, preliminary insights from the Downtown Profile and Assessment, and to review projects proposed to date. Mayor Madden thanked Dr. Ramsammy and his HVC team for providing hybrid meeting space and meeting. The requirement for disclosures was reviewed with LPC members. Following this, participants convened in breakout groups in which HR&A and LPC members discussed current proposals for Troy DRI projects.

**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
- Heidi Knoblauch –SUNY Albany
- Alejandro Griffiths-Diaz– Small Business Owner

**LPC MEMBERS PRESENT**

- Mike McLaughlin – North Central 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
- Kate Manley, RCRCC

**STATE PARTNERS PRESENT**

- Lesley Zlatev– Revitalization Specialist, NYS DOS Planning & Community Infrastructure
- Mike Yevoli - Regional Director, 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

## Meeting Notes:

Mayor Madden made opening remarks, thanking Dr. Ramsammy and his HVC team for providing hybrid meeting space and meeting support. He read the conflict of interest.

HR&A, the consultant lead on the Planning Team, reviewed input on vision and goals for Downtown Troy that emerged from LPC meeting #1:

- Prominent key words that emerged included historic, walkable, events, diverse, vibrant community
- Themes that emerged characterized Troy as an authentic place with a strong culture and high quality of life, technological edge, historic, blue-collar, and with the need to connect communities north/south of DT.

HR&A presented the objectives of the meeting:

- Discuss plans for first community workshop on March 14, 2022, and broader engagement strategy.
- Present preliminary insights from Downtown Profile and Assessment for discussion.
- Review projects proposed to date for LPC to give input on what has been submitted so far.

Margaret Irwin, River Street, discussed community engagement and the first community workshop:

- Meeting site and materials will be made as accessible and inclusive as possible with great help from HVCC's Center for Access and Assistive Technology.
- Consider COVID-19 an accessibility issue given number of people who are vulnerable or immunocompromised
- Hybrid meeting components will entail having both zoom and in person meeting.
- Thanked LPC and City for assistance getting information out to public about workshops.
- Reviewed additional community engagement to include: 3 community workshops, including a hybrid workshop, an open house in May and second open house in July; pop up event at the farmers market outdoors; Troy 100 Forum and other scheduled events; small group and individual stakeholder interviews.

HR&A described the Downtown Profile currently underway:

- Downtown Troy has driven City's population and economic growth in recent years.
- TROY DRI area growing faster than rest of city.
- DRI area and Troy increasingly diverse
- Fastest growing employment sectors
- Industries such as restaurants that declined during the pandemic.
- Targeted investments needed to sustain positive trends
- Income in DRI study area lower than Troy overall
- Growing interest in downtown living with increased demand for new rental housing
- Office vacancies low with rents ticking up – unclear how this will trend
- Physical infrastructure issues have left parts of downtown physically and economically disconnected. Important to address these through investments to promote access to all parts of the DRI area. Particularly at northern and southern boundaries, residents do not have equitable access to open space or downtown amenities.
- Fu Wilmers Design will study urban design, open space and environmental concerns.

HR&A reminded the LPC that the Public Open Call for Projects is now underway and being promoted through multiple avenues and encouraged LPC members to spread the word.

## LPC Comment Session

- Emily – Consider that the creative class lives in mid-range cost housing – can't get subsidies, can't afford new construction. Need investment in smaller, mid-sized buildings, 4-plexes, ADUs, and infill which are very important to maintain the accessible price point. 2-bed, \$1300-1500 is affordable for this budget and satisfies need for primary growth demographic downtown. Majority of housing stock in Troy already laid out as multi-

family. For every house you have 2 or 3:1 renter/owner ratio, based upon existing stock. Financing for larger than 1-4 unit housing difficult. Homeownership expanding into surrounding neighborhoods because you can get a different loan.

- Denise – Regarding walkability of Troy and accessibility - one of the biggest issues is inconsistent sidewalks and difficulty people have in walking. Snow removal issues create tremendous barriers for people in Troy.
- Liz – As we inventory buildings – track those needing tear-down or condemned in any way so we can see areas of stress or areas in need.
- Heidi – DRI is really for capital projects – in Troy we struggle with maintenance of capital projects. Need public-private partnerships to maintain assets we’re building.
- Chuck – Why are there so many renters? What is driving this the supply, economics, or preference?

## Breakout Groups

HR&A and LPC members convened in smaller break out groups to discuss initial set of projects included in the DRI application. New projects will be added and additional details may be added to existing projects as proposals are submitted. LPC members with conflicts of interest recused themselves from discussion around those specific projects. HR&A described each project then facilitated conversation, with comments from the LPC members detailed below:

### Proposed Projects in and around Monument Square including:

- **Monument Square Civic Plaza**
- **Riverfront Park 2.0**
- **District Geothermal**
- **FOCUS Lab**
- **1 MSQ-Farmers Market Incubator**
- **Riverwalk Murals**
- **Craft Pop-Up**

### **Monument Square Civic Plaza**

- Liz – Retain permeability of first floor of Monument Square for public good as much as possible. Continue to reinforce how important it is to make sure that development has some public good deeply built into it.
- Heidi – Seems City of Troy contributing parking garage which will be under Monument Square build – keep this in the conversation. It’s a big thing that Troy is taking on to make this happen. People want the detail and see how the pieces fit together. *Note that the city is financing this and this and it’s central to spurring efforts like the focus lab – the sequencing, legwork and infrastructure City is committing to make sure site is buildable is very important.*
- Heidi – A question that has and might come up again is that we already have a descent to the river from one side that is poorly maintained – so why do we need another if you can do this 2 blocks down? If river accessibility is important, we should ensure we’re also talking about other spaces where river is NOT accessible.

### **FOCUS Lab / District Geothermal**

- Liz – What is the plan for operating the FOCUS Lab - will the City take on operations for this and is it in partnership with higher ed institutions and potential private industry partner? Important to know who is ultimately responsible. *“Shared responsibility is failed responsibility.” Noted it is operated by institutional and private partners in concert with the City. Waiting on more detail through open call process to have these things confirmed. Can provide details on financial maintenance moving forward.*
- Liz – Key to identify the targeted public audience and establish a clear business plan around its purpose, efficacy, and sustainability. Who is going here, how are they using it, how are they learning? Office-based support lab or hands-on museum style? What is the square footage needed and what is needed to maintain it? Noted that the size of the space needed to match demand.

- City doesn't have welcome site – should this SF be dedicated to this or is this opportunity for it to be a general orientation to Troy?
- Consensus that the FOCUS lab should be permeable and open to those on the street.
- Kate – Buildout of FOCUS lab is to ensure we have companies buying in – what businesses are we going to have connected to that? We want to be sure businesses are driving gaps they need. And need public to use the space as that gets built out.
- Dr. Ramsammy – There is synergy between FOCUS Lab and Geothermal projects and HVCC's planned \$65M [Applied Technology Education Center](#) (ATEC).
- Heidi – Will also have people from the COG so ensuring this adds to rather than detracts from dwindling membership is important. We need clarity on the focus of the FOCUS Lab. Green energy focus is paramount - if around clean energy this gives specific cluster aspect to it. Can also tie this into offshore wind things happening downriver. Tie into all partners. Need someone to take ultimate responsibility for this. An innovation lab is not sustainable but ok with energy lab.
- Crystal – Look at all projects with this lens. A lot of great ideas get on the list but can't be a project without a solid plan to form and implement and deliver it. Ask who will run it, is there clear demand for this use downtown? Is this actual project that can go to contract and happen in next few years? Need a clear path for who is signing and making project happen.

### **Riverwalk Murals**

- Liz noted that the team may want to change or annotate the description of the Riverwalk Murals, as they are more related to the North/South Hoosick bridge than Monument Square.
- Steve mentioned that the Arts Center would take the lead on the murals, rather than the City of TLDC.

### **Craft Pop Up**

- Liz – Was fascinated by this in the DRI proposal. Troy has craft fairs already but would be interesting to have a craft program in DRI around the Riverfront/Riverwalk to safely incubate small businesses without fixed costs that rely on bricks and mortar.
- Ariel noted this is may not currently be a full-blown project as it was originally tied into the Riverwalk and proposed as a phase II component. Team will check with sponsors on whether this could happen in conjunction with initial project rather than waiting

### **Proposed Projects around Taylor Apartments including:**

- **Taylor Apartments Phase I**
- **Front Street Riverwalk**
- **Congress Street Bridge Ramp Reconfiguration**

### **Taylor Apartments**

- Affordable housing very important DT.
- Heidi – Taylor Apartments project didn't get affordable tax credits needed – had to go back to Planning Board and now project is taller + 2 stories. If receiving DRI funding as well – why did they need those extra two stories? Question will be why does this project need assistance even though it's getting tax credits?
- Liz – If built, access to river deserved by all citizens so this is key.
- Zack – If you accept idea that there's a walkable riverfront this is an important area to focus on. Safe bridge crossing needed for food access to grocery store. Frightening traffic speeds through area.

### **Congress Street Bridge**

- Chuck- Image shown makes it look like they are getting rid of tunnel? Need clarity on exactly what is going to happen if this receives investment.

### **Front Street Riverwalk**

- Steve – The pedestrianized riverfront is dependent on the completion of the Congress Street Bridge realignment (removal of offramps), so this project won't be ready for DRI \$ / can be a future priority.

### **Proposed Projects in North Central and Around Federal Street:**

- **CEO Community Center**
- **Riverwalk North Central**
- **Rock Climbing – 545 River Street**
- **Senior Housing**
- **Federal Street Roundabout**
- **669 River Street**

### **CEO Community Center**

- Denise – Area really needs help.
- Marie (Community Member)– Is there a need for this service?
- Chuck – Absolutely, we have a pandemic of youth problems, desperately needed, should support them in any way we can.
- Margaret – There is an important link between affordable childcare and residents' ability to work / support their families.
- Steve – CEO's proposal may focus on a new playground programmed into the redevelopment, which would address a lack of open space in the neighborhood.

### **Rock Climbing Gym – 545 River Street**

- Chuck – No, First Columbia can do it themselves.
- Samantha (Community Member, BID Member)– Model would not be accessible to the folks that we are trying to serve here.
- Mike – Not about social services, it's about economic development.
- Chuck – Community goals important.

### **Senior Housing**

- Sponsor is also First Columbia so will need to see if both come through the open call.

### **669 River Street**

- Denise - Approve of affordable housing and commercial mix.
- Chuck – Could it be owner-occupied condos?
- Owner may not be ready to seek DRI funding / may need more time to secure private funding.

### **Federal Street Roundabout**

- Marie - Hardest road overall to cross Federal Street, terrifying to cross there.
- Zack – Scary how the traffic would stop within a circle format. Concerns that this would be difficult to change.
- This is a very dangerous intersection, 4 people supported this proposal.
- Emily – Concerns about how pedestrians will cross this circle and safety issues.

### **Other Proposed Projects in Core Downtown:**

- **Troy Music Hall**
- **The Dockside Lofts**
- **American Theater**
- **Trojan Hotel**
- **Farmers Market Indoor Location**

- **Uncle Sam Garage Redevelopment**
- **Riverwalk Branding/Wayfinding**
- **Hart Cluett Museum Accessibility**

#### **American Theater**

- Zack – Noted that in downtown Schenectady, the redevelopment of their theater has allowed for major changes within the downtown.
- Looking for \$1M ARPA funds too.

#### **Riverwalk Branding/Wayfinding**

- Can this be updated and part of the \$600K fund for smaller improvements and ongoing activity?

#### **Farmers Market Indoor Location**

- Liz – Troy has leaned very heavily on the farmers market as a key cultural asset.
- Critical to get the owner of the building involved as well.

#### **Uncle Sam Garage Redevelopment**

- Zack – All downtowns would benefit from the redevelopment of Uncle Sam’s Garage.
- Liz – As the ARPA money begins to be allocated, how do these go together? Some of the projects are on both lists; hopeful that the city and state consider the opportunities in front of Troy.
  - Zack – Mayor is on both planning teams [ARPA and DRI], a reasonable concern.

#### **General comments:**

- Dr. Ramsammy – Our study area is large, and there is a risk that if we spread out investment too much, we won’t see a visible difference and the impact of the \$10M won’t be felt. We should consider concentrating investment to maximize impact and understand that other investments will build from there.
- Marie – If an organization is involved in one of these projects already can organization still apply for another?
  - Yes, there is no limit to project submissions. The LPC will decide whether to recommend more than one project from a single sponsor.
- Patricia McKee (FWD) – What do residents feel about river and relationship to river, what types of projects would achieve that new relationship, since so many projects are about connecting with and building on the river? What type of riverfront does public want? What kind of development would encourage people to come back to river? Do we want industrial relationship, green ecology?
  - Chuck – The river is beautiful, makes being DT pleasant. One Monument Square is currently a huge giant hole. This would go a long way to improving accessibility to the water. Jobs created through innovation center, farmers market.
  - Marie – For many years felt cut off from river even though lived a few blocks away. Many improvements made that make it feel more accessible/part of my area. Path between river and dinosaur was huge improvement. Eating by river, enjoying sunset – adds to quality of life.
  - Denise – Not Troy resident but there all the time. Support any projects that provide river access and help connect to it. That path was wonderful amenity.
- Emily – Outreach going forward should be targeted towards the schools and churches.

#### **Meeting Wrap Up**

After breakouts everyone reconvened as one group.

HR&A reminded everyone again about the Open Call for Proposals:

- Original proposals need to resubmit (except City-sponsored projects)
- Deadline is April 1<sup>st</sup>
- Reaching out to project sponsors and getting this information out to community
- Any new project will be judged by same standards and eligibility
- Reviewed DRI project eligibility and requirements

Upcoming meeting dates are the second Thursday every month (April 14, May 12, June 9, July 15 from 5-7pm.) Will keep people updated on hybrid versus in-person meetings and will broadcast whenever possible. Presentations will be posted online.

#### ***Next Steps***

- Team will continue to receive applications and next time can talk through all proposed projects
- Finalizing DT profile
- Asked LPC to spread word about Monday workshop, promote open call application
- Sign code of conduct form if not yet submitted to Lesley at State

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- None

#### **LPC COMMENTS**

- Chuck – Data presented earlier re: majority of new people moving into S Troy are renters? Is there data that shows they are renting because they like flexibility versus homeownership not being feasible in DT S. Troy for these folks?
- Group discussed possible reasons for this data point.