

City of Troy Downtown Revitalization Committee  
Local Planning Committee Meeting Five  
June 9, 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 #5 provided a continued opportunity to evaluate the eligible projects submitted through the City of Troy DRI Open Call for Projects. HR&A made opening remarks and reviewed the code of conduct with LPC members. LPC members discussed and evaluated the merit of project proposals based on the established DRI criteria updated project due diligence presented by HR&A.

**LPC CO-CHAIRS PRESENT**

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

**LPC MEMBERS PRESENT**

- 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
- Alejandro Griffiths-Diaz– Small Business Owner

**LPC MEMBERS PRESENT**

- Tom Hulihan – Troy Housing Authority
- Zack Metzger – Troy Farmers Market
- Emily Menn – Troy City Council Member
- Kate Manley, RCRCC
- Kim Fredericks, The Sage Colleges

**STATE PARTNERS PRESENT**

- Lesley Zlatev– Revitalization Specialist, NYS DOS Planning & Community Infrastructure
- Mike Yevoli - Regional Director, Empire State Development
- Heidi Pasos – 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**

- 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**

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

## Meeting Notes:

HR&A made opening remarks, reviewing meeting ground rules and reading the conflict of interest. Members with conflicts were reminded to recuse themselves from discussing and voting on projects with which they were related, aside from answering technical questions about the projects. Several LPC members identified conflicts of interest regarding involvement on submitted projects (Mayor Patrick Madden, Kate Manley, Liz Reiss, Tom Hulihan, Emily Menn, Zach Metzger, Chris Nolin, Geoff Brault).

HR&A provided overview of LPC role in evaluating projects:

- Goal for meeting is to narrow down projects based on selection process.
- Likely will have a follow up work sessions since many members are missing this evening.
- LPC members will receive final project profiles and ask LPC members to vote on final slate of projects at date TBD at end of June.
- Will discuss increasing or decreasing funding amounts for projects and projects that may have to move off the list.
- Lesley (DOS) emphasized the importance of all LPC members participating and communicating about different projects; supported idea of additional work session as needed.

HR&A reviewed feedback from LPC and community on projects: (see 6/9/22 presentation for details):

- At community meeting solicited input from community members on projects under review.
- Online polling and a public survey after public meeting has received over 450 responses. Polling is still open.
- **Highest priorities on online survey:** Troy Waterfront Farmers Market, American Theater, Public Library, Capital Roots, Bargain Grocery.
- **Lowest priorities on survey:** Rare Form Brewing, Rock Gym, Cannon Restoration, Trojan Hotel Conversion
- Walkable, accessible and connected downtown was ranked highly as a DRI goal.
- **Community meeting polling rated as High:** Monument Square, Troy Music Hub, Farmers Market, Congress St, Capital Roots
- **Community meeting polling rated as Low:** Rare Hotel Gym, American Theater and Cannon Restoration
- Flagged that people filling out online polls don't always have access to as much robust information.
- Reviewed **LPC member feedback on priorities**, including high priority projects as Riverwalk Wayfinding, Monument Square, Taylor Apts, Congress Street Bridge, Riverwalk Mural Program, Capital Roots Greenhouse, Troy Public Library, Farmers Market, Riverwalk Marina North and American Theater.
- **LPC member lowest priorities:** Bargain Blocks Rock Gym, Trojan Hotel Conversion, Rare Form Brewing, Cannon Restoration, Bargain Blocks Multifamily and Senior Housing.
- Was pointed out that Library and Music Hub had a strong presence at the community meeting, which may have skewed the results. This information is rounded out by significant online polling.

## Questions:

- **How should LPC handle differences in priorities?**
- HRA: Public support is one criteria that should be considered along with the other evaluation factors.
- **Will there be additional feedback? How long will survey be open?**
  - No additional community workshops for feedback.
  - Survey can be open as long as LPC would like. Likely until June 25<sup>th</sup> Open House date.
- **Where was survey distributed?**
  - Survey physically distributed at farmers market (QR code), everyone on contact list, promoted at Farmers Market, City mailing lists, and on project website.
  - Margaret noted a main takeaway is that the priorities align well with what LPC was discussing.
  - Bargain Block – a lot of concern in our group about how viable this project would be. Does public have additional information? Public does not have the extensive information that the LPC has.

### HRA reviewed Major Project Updates (see 6/9/22 presentation for details):

- **Updates addressed:** Changes in status in funding sources for JP Taylor Apts, Downtown/Riverwalk Wayfinding & Identity Plan; updated requirements for the Downtown Façade Program as a grant fund (rather than loan fund); scope and funding updates for Congress Street Bridge; timeline updates for Capitol Roots project, Bargain Block Bargain Grocery; project scope update for the Troy Farmers Market Atrium; funding gap and DRI request from Troy Music Hub; financial details provided for Bargain Block Multifamily Housing and Senior Housing; updated funding request for Trojan Rising.
- Productive meeting held re: **Monument Square** addressing project updates, funding gap and potential cost savings. Still a gap even with DRI sources. There are some pathways to filling this gap.
- LPC will receive these updates to the Project Profiles.

### Questions re: *One Monument Square*

- Can 1MSQ apply for other funding, such as Restore NY?
  - Challenge is that the space is not greenfield, brownfield or tax credit but want a huge amount of public space. Huge priority for us to get this together. If we can help with constructive ideas for 1MSQ, act as translators for community, etc. – would be good role for LPC.
- Mayor Madden – Early iterations were rejected by public and this design was embraced because public had role in designing it – but does not leave enough rentable square feet to support the project that community wants.
  - Aesthetics will be massive in developing film and television for DT; potential cost cutting option. If developer has sense of how many more units would make it viable that would help.
- Discussed funding gap in project, including whether the \$15M gap makes it ineligible (State has to approve and won't approve projects with large gap); with DRI funding the gap would lessen to \$11.5M; DRI ask is just for the public portion. LPC member noted that DRI funds are to fund doable projects. This is very complex project with many triggers. If we presume funding it will create site upon which developer can build it's an easier conversation. City is considering many options including funding public parking, building façade, etc. City noted issue of extreme fluctuation in price of materials. Currently using budget from March and prices have changed since then. Large amount of contingency in project currently – being cautious to ensure escalations covered. \$15M gap is the high end of the range.
- Reality is that won't have answers on 1MSQ by the time LPC goes to vote.
  - What is the community's appetite for making changes to the site?
    - Margaret – Someone should go back to the public and ask them that question. Public took seriously the complexities of this site.
  - Increase in height? People more willing to take more height than losing square footage on the ground. ANSWER: It is not possible structurally to increase height.
- Key point City wanted to share was about the hurdles faced. City in ongoing conversation and hope to have additional information in next 2 weeks.
- HRA hope is that by time voting occurs the LPC could put it on the list knowing that it may not be funded if the gap can't be reduced, etc.

### Question: *Farmers Market Atrium.*

- *Saw public notice that building will be demolished.*
  - ANSWER: The atrium is not going to be demolished
- Revised scope of atrium is for interior improvements only so that regardless of what happens with surround structures this could move forward.

## LPC DISCUSSION

**Need to get to core list that LPC feels confident moving forward with second set of projects that may be on the list but have slightly more risk. Need to discuss the pathways to get here.**

HRA reviewed the criteria for project evaluation.

- LPC will recommend \$12-16M worth of projects but there must be \$9.7M viable projects there.
- Pathways include funding 1.) all viable projects with support and some funding increases; 2.) most of viable projects with support plus one of the major public realm improvements; or 3.) some of the viable projects with support plus all public realm improvements.
- Reviewed projects that fit under each category (see 6/9/22 presentation).
- Q: Is it too late now for project sponsors to change details to ensure viability? *No, there is still time to have conversations if projects are important to LPC.*

### **Discussion re: Projects with Low Support or Not Viable**

*Cannon, Rare Form, Bargain Block Gym, Senior Housing, Multifamily Housing, Trojan Hotel Conversion, Music Hub*

**Are there any of these projects LPC feels strongly should be considered to move forward or should they be removed from list? HRA noted that there is an option to still include these in the Plan – would not receive funding but it would indicate some level of public support for pursuing other funding. Noted also that District Geothermal being retracted.**

- **Cannon:** Sidewalks around Cannon is interesting so would be good to keep on list to hear more information. Could this go under the DT Façade Improvement Program?
- **Troy Music Hall** – Hall is a huge piece of DT cultural attraction. Could see ways DRI could enhance this so shouldn't necessarily take off list.
- Agreed they need to be better understood or somehow helped along, so moved into Viability TBD.

### **Discussion re: Projects with Strong Support, Viability TBD**

**Are there any of these projects LPC feels strongly about getting over the finish line?**

- Q – Why is Farmers Market in this category?
  - A – *Needs new scope of work because as originally designed considered part of whole redevelopment. City wants to retain ownership of the parcel/Atrium itself. Not within City's control what happens with surrounding buildings. Building scope of work that can work on interior regardless. Farmers Market coming up with Contingency Plan.*
- What is long term relationship between City and Bryce for FM?
- How much does Bryce charge rent for FM?
  - *\$20K plus maintenance for half year.*
- Liz noted some projects that the committee and community like the most are in this TBD category. Can we lower some funding requests to make enough room? Some in the Strong Support/Viable category could receive lower amount.
- HRA – Question today is are some moving off table; is grey box list the right starting point; if there are gaps, what should we move hard to move into that first category or out of first category? Don't necessarily have to choose which go into the primary category – we can try as hard as we can to get them all into that first category.
- Four in TBD (Blue) – work on these to move into viable category.
  - Congress Street – Is this reflective of just Phase I? *Yes.*
- Don't want less than \$9.7M fully viable in first category in case something fell out. What is finally funded will be ultimately filtered through the State. More information may be available on projects in TBD category by the time State reviews.

## Discussion re: Projects with Strong Support & Viable

Are there projects in this category that LPC questions should be on this list, or where funding should be reduced or increased? Will survey LPC members after meeting to get written input. If reducing funding will confirm with sponsors that project would still go forward and is viable.

- Hart Cluett – Requesting additional funding? *Yes – suggested raising to cover their funding gap.*
- **Discussed reducing funding for Bargain Grocery, American Theater, and Capital Roots.**
  - American Theater has multiple funding sources. Is \$500K really needed for it to happen?
  - HRA: American Theater and Capital could likely move forward without this funding. Bargain Grocery already moving forward this summer.
  - Moving the \$750K away from those towards other projects would be helpful.
  - Bargain G – If we think it will move forward this summer would rather give funding to others.
- **Which grey boxes would be reduced depending on what we learn in next few weeks?**
- Projects that wouldn't work if reduced:
  - Is there wiggle room in Taylor Apts? *Not from HRA perspective. Also only project that invests in affordable housing which is a DRI priority.*
  - Could HVAC system ones be reduced and go through? *Unlikely. This reflects the lowest end of what they would need.*
- **Troy Public Library –**
  - Huge priority for people, only public restroom downtown – understanding is sponsor is the Library and they are contributing – would like to discuss funding amount compared to what Library is putting in. This doesn't attract private investment but important to public.
  - Library has strong experience fundraising. Growing DT footprint significantly through private funding. How much growth is needed?
  - How do we make funding for Library align with DRI goals? HVAC not compelling in this way so need conversations about quality of life for residents, attracting people downtown and other private investment dollars.
  - To what degree does library offer enhancement for economic development benefit (e.g., employment opportunities, research, job searches, only place to fax downtown).
- **Capitol Roots:** Has proven they will use the money to great impact.
- Crystal (State) – Currently list is short of \$9.7M so wouldn't recommend pulling funds out of the ones that are currently viable. Adding more funding to projects that aren't yet viable won't make them viable. Suggest identifying phasing within projects which would leave room for State review to drop funding out later if needed.
- Cannot prioritize projects within the final list.
- HRA: Will get sponsor input on if project would move forward if reduced, getting additional information on TBD projects. If not ultimately \$9.7M viable, where will we increase funding amount to get it to that point?

## Public Comment

- Tours come from all over to see Library's Tiffany window – less in summer because there is no AC.
- I live in DT – I wonder if there is additional outreach that could be done or promoted? Helpful to get this out more to the public.
  - LPC discussed putting posters in downtown windows with the survey QR code (DMW, liquor stores, CVS, bus stops, coffeeshops, restaurants).
  - Broadcasts with Sanctuary for Independent Media – offered to put together a segment.
- Public member noted it seems like survey information already coming in is not being looked at by Committee members.

## Next Steps

- Will likely have a follow up work session and then hold a vote in late June or early July.
- LPC will be able to review updated Project Profiles.
- Team can hold Office Hours for questions and comments.