

# Dunkirk Downtown Revitalization Initiative

## Local Planning Committee Meeting Summary

June 1, 2023 | Dunkirk High School, Large Group Instruction Room

### Attendees

#### Local Planning Committee (LPC)

- Honorable Wilfred Rosas, Mayor
- Mike Metzger, WNY Regional Economic Development Council
- Liz Cardona, Dunkirk Housing Authority
- Rebecca Ruiz, Chautauqua Center
- Nathan Aldrich, Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth
- Gina Paradis, Chautauqua County Land Bank
- Dan Beckley, Advanced Production Group, LLC
- Rebecca Wurster, Chautauqua County Dept. of Planning & Development
- Thomas Panasci, Pizza Village
- Miriam Lugo-Alfaro, Dunkirk High School
- Frank Torain, Open Door Church of God in Christ
- Virginia Harper, Resident
- Ellen Luczkowiak, Dunkirk Community Chamber of Commerce
- Beth Starks, Jamestown Community College

#### State Partners

- Ben, Biddell, NYS Department of State (DOS)
- NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR)
- Erin Corrado, Empire State Development (ESD)
- Mo Sumbundo, Empire State Development (ESD)

#### Consultant Team

- WSP
- Highland Planning
- Prospect Hill Consulting

#### City of Dunkirk

- Vince DeJoy, Planning and Development
- EJ Hayes, Planning and Development

### Meeting Summary

#### 1. Welcome & Introductions

- Ben Bidell (DOS) provided welcoming remarks and introductions, followed by Erin Corrado (ESD), and the LPC Co-chairs, Honorable Wilfred Rosas (Mayor), and Mike Metzger (WNY Regional Economic Development Council). Other LPC members introduced themselves, followed by the consultant team.
- Ben reminded attendees that a public comment period will be held at the end of the meeting and all feedback will be incorporated into the planning process. However, LPC meetings are working committee meetings and not question-and-answer sessions for the public. Members of the public who have questions or want to submit comments another way should see the DRI team after the meeting, attend the public workshop, or contact the team via email or the website.

#### 2. DRI Program

- Stephanie Camay (WSP) provided an overview of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) program and the roles and responsibilities of the LPC, State partners, City of Dunkirk, and the consultant team. She reviewed the scope and schedule of the DRI planning process and development of the Strategic Investment Plan, the types of projects that are eligible for DRI funding, the Open Call for Projects, and the project funding process.

### 3. Dunkirk DRI Application

- Vince Dejoy (City of Dunkirk) provided an overview of Dunkirk’s DRI application. Vince highlighted goals of the application; supportive policies, initiatives, and investments; and potential projects included in the application.
- Katie O’Sullivan (WSP) presented proposed revisions to the DRI boundary that was submitted in Dunkirk’s DRI application. The new boundary is more compact and focuses on the downtown core area, including the pier and marina. The LPC discussed adjusting the boundary to include parcels on both the east and west sides of Main Street. The LPC agreed to the new proposed boundary, with the provision that parcels on both sides of the street be included.

### 4. Community Engagement

- Katie O’Sullivan (WSP) presented on planned public outreach activities and gathered the LPC’s input on the public engagement plan. Outreach activities include the public survey, project website, three public workshops, local outreach activities such as tabling at community events, and six LPC meetings. The LPC raised concerns about the public’s potential misconception of how DRI funds are allocated. The LPC also emphasized the importance of awardees understanding their exact award amounts by each state agency before undertaking their projects.

### 5. Activity: Identify Opportunities and Challenges

- WSP led an activity to identify opportunities and challenges within the City and DRI boundary to inform the Downtown Profile and Assessment, which is an analysis of existing conditions included in the Strategic Investment Plan. Each member of the LPC was asked to identify five of the most pressing challenges that need to be solved in downtown Dunkirk and five of Dunkirk’s greatest opportunities and assets. Common themes from the responses are summarized below:

#### **Challenges:**

- Need for housing
- Lack of business/activities/food options
- Vacancy/poor conditions of buildings
- Need for bike/pedestrian infrastructure
- Streetscape improvements

#### **Opportunities:**

- Waterfront
- History
- Diversity
- Available space
- Young people/schools

- WSP presented the DRI vision from the City of Dunkirk’s DRI application to the LPC, then asked LPC members to provide three words they would like to use to describe Dunkirk 15 years in the future. The most common themes in the vision words were related to quality of life, people/community,

business/commercial activity, and history/culture. Specifically, a few words that respondents would like to use to describe Dunkirk 15 years in the future are: “waterfront, diversity, and recreation”.

### 6. Next Steps

- WSP summarized upcoming outreach, the Open Call for Projects, and elements of the Strategic Investment Plan. Upcoming opportunities for engagement include:
  - Pop-up event at Music on the Pier: June 8, 6:00-9:00pm
  - Public Survey: Open June 8 to July 8
  - Public workshop #1: June 13, 5:30-7:30pm
  - LPC Meeting #2: June 27, 6:00-7:30pm

### 7. Public Comment

- Ben Bidell (DOS) opened the meeting to public comments. Members of the public made the following comments and questions:
  - There is an opportunity to build smaller, patio style homes for seniors to buy and live in.
  - Was funding already received to improve the break walls included in the new proposed DRI boundary?
  - Money should not all be allocated to the waterfront. Dunkirk needs businesses and jobs elsewhere downtown.
  - LPC members should think about what they want and what they enjoy from the places they visit and bring that to Dunkirk.
  - This is a great opportunity to excite and inspire other communities.