

Dunkirk Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Local Planning Committee Meeting #2 Summary

June 27, 2023 | The Clarion Hotel, Bayside Ballroom

Attendees

Local Planning Committee

- 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, Bidell, NYS Department of State (DOS)
- NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR)
- Erin Corrado, Empire State Development (ESD)
- Mo Sumbundo, Governor's Office

Consultant Team

- WSP
- Highland Planning
- Prospect Hill Consulting

City of Dunkirk

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

Meeting Summary

1. Meeting Introduction

- Stephanie Camay (WSP/DRI consultant) called the Local Planning Committee (LPC) meeting to order and introduced the consultant team. She noted that the meetings is a working meeting of the committee and members of the public will be able to make comments at the end of the meeting. Comment cards are also available for written comments. She then completed roll call.
- Hon. Mayor Rosas, LPC Co-Chair, gave opening remarks, highlighting the excitement that the DRI program is generating. Mike Metzger, LPC Co-Chair read the Code of Conduct Preamble, reminding LPC members that they should recuse themselves from any votes or conversations on projects that they have an interest in to avoid any conflicts of interest. Ben Bidell (DOS) highlighted the importance of the preamble to disclose potential conflicts, especially once the LPC reviews proposed projects.

2. LPC Meeting Schedule Review

- Stephanie provided an overview of the six-month DRI process to develop a Strategic Investment Plan that will be submitted to the Department of State for review. She then recapped the agenda and decision points from the first LPC meeting and summarized the agenda for LPC meetings #2 and #3.

3. Open Calls for Projects

- Katie O’Sullivan (WSP) presented an overview of the Open Call for Projects. Simple Project Interest Forms (optional) are due by June 30, and the full Project Form (application) is due by July 17. The consultant team will work with project applicants to translate the application information into project profiles, which the LPC will evaluate for potential inclusion in the DRI Strategic Investment Plan.
- Ben explained that much of the technical aspects of the project profiles will be expanded during the project development stage, after the Project Forms are submitted. Katie provided stated that 18 project interest forms have been received to-date, and that WSP will be hosting open office hours for potential project applicants on Friday, July 7, 10:00am-2:00pm at the Fredonia Technology Incubator. She also noted that ad-hoc technical assistance will be available upon request, and that a handful of meetings have already been scheduled.
- Katie reviewed additional guidance for the Small Project Fund, which the LPC may decide to include in their recommendations. She reviewed eligible and ineligible projects under the optional Small Project Fund, highlighting that the fund is a reimbursement, matching grant program. She explained that the minimum match requirement is 25% of the total project cost on a per project basis, but the LPC can choose to increase this percentage. The LPC can also choose to narrow the set of eligible project types under the fund. Ben Bidell added that the LPC can also set the minimum and maximum grant amounts for the Small Project Fund. The total amount of funding available can be up to \$600,000

4. Planning Process and Engagement Updates

- Katie provided an update on public outreach and engagement including the DRI website, three public workshops, local outreach activities such as pop-up events, and monthly LPC meetings.
- The consultant team set up a table at the first Music on the Pier event on June 8th to share DRI program information and the public survey. Future pop-up events are as follows:
 - August 8: Chautauqua Center Family Fun Day
 - September 1: Dunkirk Latino Lakefront Festival
- Katie provided an update on other outreach activities including the public survey, which is open until July 17 and has received 98 responses to-date. She recapped Public Workshop #1, which was attended by 50+ members of the public. The agenda included an overview of the DRI program; an activity to identify needs, challenges, and opportunities in the DRI area; and a solicitation of project ideas. For those who were not able to attend the workshop, an online engagement activity is posted on the DRI website to collect feedback.

5. Downtown Profile & Assessment Highlights

- Laura Evans (Prospect Hill Consulting/DRI consultant) provided updates on the Downtown Profile and Assessment report. She presented the regional context and an overview of demographics in the DRI area, the City of Dunkirk, Chautauqua County, and New York State. Hon. Mayor Rosas noted that school district data provide a more accurate estimate of Dunkirk’s Hispanic population compared to Census data.
- Laura then presented maps on the DRI area’s physical setting including flooding, zoning, land use, and vacant and public parcels. Ben reminded the LPC that the city is working on a zoning update, and there is a good opportunity to make changes to zoning as projects move forward. Ben also noted that not all lots shown on the vacancy map may be vacant.

6. Vision, Goals, and Revitalization Strategies

- Katie presented a refined vision statement and goals for the DRI. Updates were informed by feedback from LPC members during the first meeting, from the public during Public Workshop #1, and the online engagement activity.
- Stephanie facilitated an activity to finalize the DRI vision and goals statements. LPC members were given worksheets to make edits to the vision statement and goals, and shared the following comments verbally:
 - Add “to create business opportunities” to the vision statement
 - Add “to attract private investment” to the vision statement
 - Add a goal related to walkability and bikeability, especially on Central Avenue
 - Reordering the words in the vision statement for a better feel. Move “welcoming” to the first adjective listed.
- Brendan Kelly (WSP) led a storytelling activity to inform strategies for achieving the vision and goals. The following stories were shared verbally:
 - Through the Dunkirk DRI, we brought back the vitality and pride of Dunkirk’s unique and rich history.
 - Now, a young person is able to say “I have a great downtown apartment where I can walk to the waterfront, go to a coffee shop, and walk to work”.
 - Educational resources connect Dunkirk to opportunities and essential needs. We have a more lively and professional environment thanks to our expanded educational centers.
 - We were able to turn Dunkirk into a natural stopping point between Erie and Buffalo. Now, Dunkirk is a hub for boaters, cyclists, and pedestrians that capitalizes on its waterfront.

7. Next Steps

- Stephanie closed the meeting by summarizing next steps, which include the following upcoming meetings:
 - July 25: LPC Meeting #3
 - August 22: LPC Meeting #4
 - Late August: Public Workshop #2

8. Public Comment

- Stephanie opened the floor to public comments. One member of the public made the following comment:
 - I’m excited for this initiative. However, I’m concerned that I couldn’t find the names of the LPC members on the DRI website. Can LPC members be added to the website, and PowerPoint slides? Stephanie responded that both will be added.

9. Closing Remarks

- Hon. Mayor Rosas gave closing remarks, thanking the LPC and emphasizing the excitement the DRI is generating in Dunkirk.