

Dunkirk Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Local Planning Committee Meeting #3 Summary

July 25, 2023. 6:00-8:00 PM | Fredonia Technology Incubator | 214 Central Ave., Dunkirk, NY 14048

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

City of Dunkirk

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

State Partners

- Ben Bidell, NYS Department of State (DOS)
- Lenny Skrill, NYS Homes & Community Renewal (HCR)
- Erin Corraro, Empire State Development (ESD)
- Mo Sumbundu, Governor's Office

Consultant Team

- WSP
- Highland Planning
- Prospect Hill Consulting

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome & Introductions

- Stephanie Camay (WSP/DRI Consultant) called the Local Planning Committee (LPC) meeting to order and introduced the consultant team. Each of the LPC Members, representatives of the City of Dunkirk, and representatives of State partners introduced themselves. Stephanie noted the meeting is a working committee meeting and that members of the public will be able to make comments at the end of the meeting.
- Hon. Mayor Rosas, LPC Co-Chair, gave opening remarks, emphasizing that this is an exciting and critical part of the DRI timeline. Mike Metzger, LPC Co-Chair, read the code of conduct and reminded LPC members to recuse themselves from any votes or discussions on projects that they may have a real or perceived interest in to prevent any conflict of interest. The following LPC members recused themselves from respective projects at this time:
 - Liz Cardona recused herself from the Dunkirk Housing Authority (DHA) project

- Beth Starks recused herself from the Jamestown Community College (JCC) project
- Gina Paradis recused herself from the Ehlers Building project and the Coburn Block project.
- Miriam Lugo-Alfaro recused herself from the JCC project
- Ellen Luczkowiak recused herself from the Matt's News project

2. LPC Meetings and Planning Process

- Stephanie provided an update on the status 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 LPC meeting #2 and summarized the agenda for LPC meetings #3 and #4.

3. Engagement Updates

- Katie O'Sullivan (WSP/DRI Consultant) provided an update on public engagement. She highlighted the consulting team's recent efforts to diversify public engagement, specifically to better reach Hispanic and African American community members. The consultant team interviewed LPC members and stakeholders on engaging hard-to-reach populations. Based on these discussions, the consultant team incorporated outreach tactics including Spanish translation of the public survey, website, social media content, and Open Call for Projects form; attending community events; distributing announcements through trusted community networks; and hand-delivering or mailing informational packets on the Open Call for Projects to 16 minority-owned businesses and nonprofit organizations. She then recapped a pop-up event in Washington Park on July 15th (the Vendor Fair at the Square event) to promote the public survey and share the Open Call for Projects with local businesses. She provided an update on the status of the public survey, emphasizing that the consultant team is aiming to collect 500 survey responses.
- Katie then presented highlights from the Public Engagement Plan for the LPC's review, asking for any missing topics. Mike Metzger thanked the team for targeting populations that were missed earlier in the DRI process. The LPC agreed the engagement plan is comprehensive as is.

4. Vision, Goals, and Strategies

- Katie presented the revised Dunkirk DRI vision statement and six goals for the LPC's review. The LPC approved the vision and goals as final.
- Katie presented draft revitalization strategies developed from the storytelling activity at LPC Meeting #3, the Downtown Profile & Assessment, and public input. The LPC provided positive feedback on the draft strategies, with one member commenting that the strategies focus on the critical issues raised during the last meeting. The LPC will formally approve the draft strategies at the next meeting (LPC meeting #4).

5. Project Submissions

- Stephanie explained that the Open Call for Projects was originally scheduled to close on July 17th, but was extended to July 21st to accommodate additional outreach efforts to minority-owned businesses.

She then presented an overview of project applications received through the Open Call. There were 29 projects submitted representing \$138,435,000 in total project cost and a total DRI request of \$26,933,000.

- Stephanie, Brendan Kelly (WSP/DRI Consultant), and Katie O’Sullivan presented key information on each of the submitted projects including project sponsor, project type, a short description, location, DRI funding request, and total project cost.
- Vince DeJoy noted that the Marina West Side Improvement project is not a public improvement project since the applicant is not a municipality.
- Mike Metzger asked for the LPC’s thoughts on inviting project sponsors to the next LPC meeting for a short presentation on their project. The LPC determined that presentations from applicants would be useful, but questions should be provided in advance of the meeting to help applicants.
- Mike Metzger commented that many of the projects include façade improvements and is wondering if those would be subject to review for consistency with historic preservation standards. Ben Bidell (Department of State) and Vince DeJoy clarified that the city has a historic overlay district in its zoning code, but does not currently have a historic preservation commission or architectural design guidelines, however projects would likely require some level of review by the city planning board.
- The LPC asked which projects were included in the city’s initial application to New York State.
- Ben Bidell reminded the LPC that a project’s inclusion in the City’s DRI application does not indicate that a project will receive funding. The State will ultimately decide on which projects are funded based on the LPC’s recommendations.
- The LPC determined the following projects should be eliminated:
 - Lakeshore Grillwork’s Four Seasons Dining Area project because its location is outside of the DRI boundary.
 - Lakeshore Grillwork’s Water Garden and Recreation area project because the sponsor does not have site control.
- The LPC formally agreed to establish the Small Projects Fund, with the fund amount and eligible activities to be determined at a future meeting.
- Ben clarified parameters of the Small Projects Fund. He explained that the fund would remain open until all funds are exhausted, which is usually within five years. Applicants that submitted an initial DRI application would need to reapply through the Small Projects Fund.
- The WSP team noted that projects will be refined during the project development process, and some may be rightsized and recommended for inclusion in the Small Projects Fund.

6. Project Evaluation Criteria

- Katie presented on the State evaluation criteria that will be used by the LPC to evaluate projects for inclusion in the Strategic Investment Plan.
- Katie also presented a list of potential local criteria to be considered by the LPC for inclusion in its project evaluation worksheet. LPC members provided feedback on up to five local criteria that are most

relevant to Dunkirk and should be included in the DRI project evaluation worksheet. The local criteria selected by the most LPC members were:

- Ability to provide a sustainable impact in the downtown
 - Capacity of the responsible parties to implement the project
 - Potential to leverage additional private and/or public funds
 - Catalytic effect
 - Transformational potential
- Katie presented examples of evaluation worksheets from other DRI communities and explained that the consultant team will use the LPC's feedback to create an evaluation worksheet tailored to Dunkirk.
 - Katie presented the four-month project evaluation timeline. The consultant team will draft the Dunkirk DRI project evaluation worksheet and develop initial project profiles prior to LPC Meeting #4, when the LPC will hear presentations from project sponsors. Between LPC Meetings #4 and #5, LPC members will review project evaluations from the consultant team and also evaluate projects individually. At LPC Meeting #5, the LPC will discuss individual evaluations and select a preliminary slate of projects to recommend for funding. After LPC Meeting #5, the LPC will review refined project profiles, and then at the final LPC Meeting #6, the LPC will develop and vote on the final slate of projects to recommend for funding, which will be included in the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP).
 - Ben clarified that some projects may be included in the (SIP), but recommended for funding other than DRI, which could include grants through the State's Consolidated Funding Application process. This could include priority projects that are not ready for implementation and need further development.

7. Next Steps

- Stephanie presented the next steps of the DRI process, which are focused on project development and the Strategic Investment Plan.
 - Project Development: The consultant team will work with project sponsors to further develop and refine their projects. The consultant team will then draft project profiles for review by the LPC.
 - Strategic Investment Plan: The consultant team will finalize the Downtown Profile and Assessment, and draft sections on the Vision, Goals, and Strategies and Public Engagement.
- Stephanie presented upcoming events, which include the following:
 - August 22: LPC Meeting #4
 - LPC members discussed moving the meeting earlier in the day and incorporating a virtual option for LPC members who are unable to attend in-person.
 - September (day to be determined): Public Workshop #2
 - September 26: LPC Meeting #5
- Hon. Mayor Rosas gave closing remarks, thanking the LPC for their time and engagement.

8. Public Comment

- Stephanie opened the floor to public comments. The following public comments were made:
 - The public engagement process does a good job of targeting youth, the elderly, and hard to reach populations, but it should make more of an effort to engage high school students around ages 14-17, who will soon be deciding whether to stay in Dunkirk.
 - Dunkirk should open a dialogue about becoming a certified local government.
 - There are plenty of buildings in Dunkirk that should be considered for placement on the Historic Registry.

- When evaluating projects, the LPC should consider the importance of creating a “continuous façade” to keep people interested in walking down commercial corridors.

Other Information
