



Downtown Revitalization Initiative

TICONDEROGA DRI

05.19.2023 | LOCAL PLANNING COMMITTEE (LPC) #1 MEETING SUMMARY

In Attendance:

NYS	Ticonderoga LPC	Consultant Team
Steve Hunt, ESD Erin Hynes, ESD Susan Landfried, DOS Kylie Peck, DOS	Mark Wright, Co-Chair James McKenna, Co-Chair Stuart Baker John Bartlett Carol Calabrese Matthew Courtright June Curtis Nicole Green Beth Hill Jaimee Kuhl Robert Porter Megan Scuderi Donna Wadsworth Donna Wotton	Bill James, Camiros Chris Jennette, Camiros Arista Strungys, Camiros
		Support Staff
		Mary Jane "MJ" Lawrence, ROOST

Meeting Summary:

Kylie Peck, Project Manager for the New York Department of State opened the meeting and led introductions for the State team, the Local Planning Committee, and the Consultant team. Kylie then handed the presentation over to Arista Strungys (Camiros) to proceed with the meeting.

Arista introduced the agenda and objectives for the meeting:

1. Welcoming the team and the LPC, outlining roles and responsibilities
2. Providing an overview of the DRI process and schedule moving forward
3. Discussing the Town's DRI application, confirming the vision statement from the application and establishing some preliminary goals
4. Discussing strengths and weaknesses to be leveraged or addressed during the process
5. Confirming the DRI area boundary with the group
6. Discussing an overall public engagement strategy, specific techniques, and logistics for upcoming meetings
7. Establishing a release date for the open call for projects

Arista addressed roles and responsibilities of the group, covering responsibilities and expectations for the LPC, the State Team (DOS, ESD, HCR, NYSEDA), and the consultant team.

Arista then read the conflict of interest statement as a reminder to the group:

"Each Local Planning Committee Member is reminded of their obligation to disclose potential conflicts of interest with respect to projects that may be discussed at today's meeting. If you have a potential conflict of interest regarding a project you believe will be discussed during the meeting, please disclose it now and recuse yourself from any discussion or vote on that project.

For example, you may state that you, or a family member, have a financial interest in the project, or you are on the board of the organization proposing the project."

Kylie Peck reminded the group that as the process proceeds and projects are discussed, members of the group will need to submit recusal forms to the State to ensure that there is a record of any potential conflicts.



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Arista Strungys proceeded with an overview of the DRI process, clarifying that these are working meetings and anyone from the group should feel free to jump into the conversation to ask questions or provide clarification or additional information. This is the 6th round of the New York State Downtown Revitalization Initiative, with 10 new DRI communities being awarded a total of \$100 million in funding - \$10 million allocated to the Town of Ticonderoga. The planning process culminates in the submittal of a Strategic Investment Plan, identifying a slate of specific projects that should align with both state and local goals and objectives, and have the potential to effect catalytic change in the community.

She covered the overall goals for the DRI program; creating an active downtown with a strong sense of place, attracting new businesses and growing job opportunities in the community, enhancing public spaces for arts and cultural events, building a diverse population with complementary housing and employment opportunities, growing the local property tax base, providing amenities to support downtown living and enhance quality of life, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping the community become more climate resilient.

Next, Arista discussed the key deliverables that will come out of the DRI process:

1. Public Engagement Plan

The overall process and approach to public engagement was discussed, including an outline of upcoming LPC meetings and Public Workshops with proposed dates for events. This item was discussed in further detail later on in the presentation.

2. Downtown Profile and Assessment

The elements of the Downtown Profile and assessment were introduced, along with clarification of why this is an important element to contextualize the community through presentation of existing conditions, demographics, regional and historical context, recent planning and investment in the Town, trends and opportunities, strengths and challenges.

3. Community Vision, Goals, and Revitalization Strategies

The connection between the vision, goals, and strategies was discussed:



4. Project Development and Profiles

Arista provided a brief overview of the types of projects eligible for funding through the DRI, as well as those projects that are not eligible. Additional requirements for projects were also outlined, including elements of timing (able to break ground in within two years), site control, project size and scale, sponsors, financing, matching and leverage, and building decarbonization. She clarified that as sponsors are completing the required project form, the consultant team will be available to provide guidance.

5. Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)

The strategic investment plan is the culmination of the process, presenting all the elements created during planning, and containing the final list of projects being submitted by the LPC to the State.

The presentation paused to allow for questions and comments.



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Matt Courtright mentioned that the TACC is working with the consultant team on the project website – ticonderogadri.com – which will be updated soon to reflect all relevant information and provide a portal to follow the process.

Beth Hill requested that the consultants speak more about the firm's background and similar projects that have been undertaken. Arista, Chris, and Bill introduced themselves further, and provided context related to the experience and expertise of the consultant team.

Nicole Green asked about a project match, stating that other communities have required a project match. Chris Jennette clarified that no match is required for Round 6 of the DRI, with the exception of the small project fund, which requires a 25% match. James McKenna added that a match is critical in evaluating projects, as it can have an impact on the success of projects and represents a sponsor's "skin in the game."

Kylie Peck brought up a match as a potential decision for the LPC – the LPC has the discretion to require a match as part of project submittal.

The group had a lively discussion around the potential of requiring a match for projects to be considered, or using a match as a component of project evaluation to determine project strength. Additional considerations brought up are that Ticonderoga is a small community and some projects may have difficulty coming up with a liquid cash match, and if there are options for the LPC to consider alternatives such as equity in their buildings, loans, etc. that the committee can consider in lieu of a match. The LPC identified that this is an important consideration for the DRI process in Ticonderoga, and agreed to have further structured discussions around this topic. This additional discussion will be scheduled as an additional LPC meeting, to be held virtually at a date and time to be determined and publicized in the near future.

The group also discussed logistics around the Small Project Fund, and how the fund would be administered if such a project were to be awarded after submittal in the Strategic Investment Plan. There is great interest in the small project fund, as the LPC is aware of specific projects that may be small in nature, but could become transformational for downtown if considered in total.

Arista Strungys resumed the presentation with a discussion of the overall project timeline. Multiple workstreams are in process to produce deliverables, and the LPC, State, and consultant teams will be working together and with the public to produce a final Strategic Investment Plan by November 2023.

Town Supervisor Mark Wright briefly discussed the Town of Ticonderoga's DRI Grant Application, speaking about the process that led to the application, as well as changes that have occurred in the Town during the period between the preparation of the application and the kick-off of the DRI process. Nicole Green, as part of this discussion, clarified that one of the projects within the Town's application – the Sawmill project – is no longer a financially feasible project. The project would not generate any income for the Town, and would likely incur additional expenses for the Town, so the project – though it resulted in some great research and ideas – will not move forward as part of the DRI process.

Kylie Peck stated that projects often "fall-off" or move forward on their own in the interim between grant application and award, and that the community should be aware that this is a common occurrence. Public participation was cited as a key factor in the successful application, and the LPC members encouraged all members of the public to continue to be involved in the DRI process, both LPC meetings in the Public Workshops that are upcoming.

Arista Strungys covered some highlights from the Town's DRI Grant Application related to strengths and assets within the Town, highlighting significant recent investment in downtown, new employers and job growth, and a wealth of downtown assets including recreational amenities, shopping, and dining, among others.

The presentation moved on to a discussion of the Vision Statement established within the Town's DRI Application, to ensure that the LPC is in agreement that the statement continues to reflect the community's



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vision for the future. The vision statement establishes a framework for moving forward with goals and strategies related to revitalization. It is understood that this statement may evolve during the process to reflect community input as well as State/DRI program guidance. The group confirmed that the current vision statement continues to reflect the Town's aspirations for the future as developed during the grant application process.

Initial goal setting was the next topic of conversation, and the floor was opened for LPC members to discuss their thoughts and ideas for the DRI process, and what success might look like for Ticonderoga coming through this process. Discussion highlights are summarized below.

- Goals and strategies should be focused on making downtown a vibrant area during the workday, during the evenings and on weekends. The era of the sidewalks rolling up at sunset needs to be done.
- There is much good content in past reports and studies, looking at the centuries of stories in Ticonderoga, that the community can build upon.
- A goal should be to ensure that downtown is a vibrant place not only daily and nightly, but also year round. A vibrant regional center will function year-round, and downtown Ticonderoga should appeal to visitors to come to Town, stay, shop and enjoy year round, not just during the summer.
- Downtown Ticonderoga should be a destination in and of itself, and attract visitors from the region. 85% of visitors to the Fort come from 100+ miles away – the Town can leverage this market and needs to be able to capture that spending and not let it move to other communities in the region.
- A major marketing issue for the region is the availability of accommodations locally. This is an opportunity, though constraints exist such as available real estate and investment interest.
- The downtown corridor should look more unified and aesthetically appealing. This process can be a boost to the downtown business owners to help with this. Existing aesthetic improvement programs should be expanded.
- Regional and local transportation connections abound in the area, with the airport, the ferry, the train station. Downtown should also leverage these areas.
- The green space along the LaChute river is currently underutilized and should be better connected to the Montcalm Street corridor.
- The Town's marketing and rebranding that has already begun can be expanded on to help attract more new visitors to the community. Branding is a key component for the community.
- Revitalization of performing arts spaces in Town should be prioritized – the pavilion and the Knights of Columbus building (103 Montcalm). A critical mass can be achieved to attract performing arts festivals, year round. The Town's existing events and festivals can also expand to be larger attractions within the region.
- Investments made through the DRI should be sustainable, able to carry-through into the future.

Chris Jennette opened a discussion of the DRI boundary with a brief description of the area and remarks based upon a walking tour of the downtown. He introduced the potential for the LPC to adjust the boundary if desired, or to confirm the boundary understanding that there were multiple discussions during the grant application process to establish the boundary. The DRI program's guidance around the boundary was presented, including that it should be compact, mixed-use, generally consistent with the central business district, and compact enough to encourage synergies between projects and to spur catalytic change.

Chris clarified that the reason this is an important decision for the committee is because all projects must be within the DRI boundary to be eligible under the State guidelines.

Discussion acknowledged that a recent Economic Development Commission meeting identified that the ballfields had been left out of the boundary, however the consensus achieved was that the boundary should not be expanded or shrunk, but rather should remain consistent with what was established collaboratively with the community during the grant application process. Additionally, the group spoke of how a large boundary would not have been competitive to win DRI funding, and how investments in this area will "spill-over" to surrounding areas and the community overall.



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Chris Jennette presented an overview of the consultant team's typical approach to public engagement, and a discussion of the community's unique needs and expectations related to engagement around this process. The presentation covered various approaches for the LPC to consider in engaging the community, particularly focused around interactive engagement and structuring public workshops as "open-house" style meetings rather than top-down presentations. Options for the public to provide feedback, even if not able to attend an in-person meeting, were also presented, including online surveys, videos, and comment mechanisms available through the Ticonderoga DRI website.

Goals for the first public meeting were presented: to share information about the project and process, seek public feedback on initial ideas related to the vision, goals, and strategies, connect the community to the process and increase awareness, and introduce/check in with the community about the status of the open call for projects.

Chris opened the floor to discussion of logistics and LPC ideas for the first workshop and future meetings, including local events:

North Country Community College was brought up as a potential venue for future meetings. Matt Courtright from the TACC agreed to reach out to the College to coordinate if this is a possibility for future meetings.

The committee members discussed a time for public workshops, agreeing that meetings should be held in the evenings to be most accessible, and that additional options outside of evenings should also be considered to capture feedback from as broad a sector of the community as possible. The group discussed a "drop-in" open-house format that might occur between the hours of 4:00pm and 7:00pm to allow for interested members of the public to attend at their convenience.

Virtual options were discussed, including surveys, concurrent virtual meeting options, videos, etc. It was discussed that a virtual option would be useful if practicable.

Potential local events discussed included StreetFest, attendance at the local farmer's market, "drop-in" hours at Burleigh's Luncheonette. The committee discussed that there are numerous public events held throughout the summer, and future coordination will be needed to ensure where resources are best put forth to get the word out and get feedback from the community. Matt Courtright will provide the team with a list of upcoming events for consideration.

Arista Strungys discussed the Open Call for Projects, with tentative dates for opening on June first and closing on July 30th. She covered requirements from the project form, highlighting that the project form will require significant effort on the part of project sponsors, and that the consultant team will be coordinating times to be available if guidance is needed.

Arista also discussed next steps for the process, including preparation of the Downtown Profile and Assessment, refinements to the Town's vision statement, goals, and strategies, and publicity for the Open Call for Projects once dates are finalized. Public Workshop #1, scheduled for June 28 and LPC meeting #2, scheduled for June 29th, were discussed. The committee had a brief discussion regarding holding meetings at a regular time slot of 9am, or if meeting times should vary. The group acknowledged that the goal should be to accommodate as many members as possible, settling on a tentative schedule of meetings at 9am and 3pm, to be confirmed following the meeting.

The meeting was then opened to public comment:

An attendee commented that the website and other materials need to clarify what the DRI funding can be used for. There is little understanding within the community that the funds are limited to certain expenditures; clarifying this will help to ensure that feedback received is actionable. Further, the Town's YouTube channel would be a useful platform for posting meeting videos, and the Town should consider using the "Everbridge" public announcement system to publicize future meetings. Signage should be posted in every single business within the DRI area to ensure



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everyone is aware. Signage and publicity to those members of the community who may not be online or on social media should be emphasized.

Regarding the project match, a member of the public stated that the community often struggles with inclusivity in the business realm. Some are fortunate enough to have businesses on Main Street, some have already invested before the DRI and should also be considered even if they don't have the ability to put a match up at this point; they could be fantastic transformative projects.

A member of the public pointed out that this is the sixth round of DRI, and that the team should look to other communities to see what worked, what didn't work, and to take advantage of the lessons learned from the five previous rounds.

A member of the public spoke about transformative potential of the DRI process through seeing another grant process first-hand. The community came together and made a big impact; LPC members in Ticonderoga should put their differences and personal interests aside to do what is best for Ticonderoga.

Following public comment, the meeting was adjourned.