

Date	May 28, 2024 (6-8pm)
Project	Waterloo Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI)
Location	Waterloo Middle School - LGI Room, 65 Center Street, Waterloo, NY
Attendees	Urban Strategies Inc., Department of State, Village of Waterloo Staff, members of the LPC and ~10 Members of the Public
Purpose	Public Workshop #1

Overview

Two public workshops are planned as part of Waterloo’s DRI process. Public engagement through the DRI process will ensure that the Strategic Investment Plan and the projects recommended for DRI funding are related to the community’s needs and aspirations. Input from these events will factor into the DRI vision and goals, aspects of the Downtown Profile and Assessment, and the projects that are recommended by the Local Planning Committee (LPC).

Purpose

Public Workshop #1 was the official public launch of the Waterloo DRI, providing an opportunity for the public to learn about the program, including the process and various opportunities to get involved, and provide early input. Specifically, the event aimed to get people thinking about the opportunities and issues that downtown Waterloo is facing today, and to solicit initial feedback on the vision that was put forward in the Village’s initial application to the DRI program.

Meeting Agenda

- Team Introductions
- Brief Overview of the DRI – Goals, Process, and Public Engagement
- Draft Vision for Downtown Waterloo
- Open Call for Projects
- Providing Your Input Tonight
- Questions & Answers

Meeting Summary

The following is a high-level summary of the presentation materials from Public Workshop #1. The presentation slides that were used at this meeting, as well as the informational and interactive display panels, are available on the project website: WaterlooDRI.com.

- Urban Strategies provided opening remarks introduced members of the DRI team, including the DOS representative, the broader consultant team, and the members of the LPC who were present.
- Urban Strategies delivered a presentation, which included:
 - An overview of the DRI, touching on:
 - The goals of the program, with examples of DRI projects that have been implemented in other communities in the region.
 - An overview of the overall DRI program (from the Village’s application to project implementation), and an overall of the phasing of the ongoing planning process (from early visioning to the LPC’s project recommendations and the Strategic Investment Plan).
 - The purpose of public engagement and the various opportunities for getting involved in the process, including public comment periods at LPC meetings, future workshops, and online engagement.
 - To set the stage for the visioning exercise, Urban Strategies shared the initial vision from the Village’s application to the DRI program and highlighted some of the ideas that emerged through the visioning exercise that was held at LPC Meeting #1 on May 8.
- Urban Strategies also provided an overview of the Open Call for Projects, covering:
 - The purpose of the Open Call, being to make a broad call for project submissions.
 - The eligible and ineligible project types.
 - Project requirements (e.g., within the DRI boundary, match requirements, alignment with State goals, transformative potential, decarbonization).
 - that should be submitted (e.g., well-defined projects that are ready for implementation in the short term), and the specific project requirements (e.g., within the DRI boundary, aligned with State goals, large enough to be transformative, meeting the match requirement, etc.).
 - How to learn more about the Open Call for Projects, including the Information Session that was going to be held on May 29, the Waterloo DRI website, and one-on-one “office hours” with Urban Strategies where project sponsors could discuss their ideas.
- Urban Strategies also provided a brief overview of the potential Small Project Fund, which the Village intends to pursue as a DRI project, for those who might be

considering smaller scale building improvements that might have a larger cumulative impact.

- Last, Urban Strategies provided an overview of the how participants could provide their input at the event. Specifically, participants were asked to use dots and post-it notes to respond to the following questions on the display panels:
 - Do you support the preliminary vision for downtown Waterloo?
 - What are the key challenges that downtown Waterloo is facing today?
 - What are downtown's greatest strengths and assets? What makes it a great place to live, work, and visit?
 - Are there specific areas downtown that you like? Are there areas that need improvement?
 - Are there streets, parks and open spaces, buildings, and facilities elsewhere in New York or beyond that we should look to for inspiration?
 - What projects do you think would make downtown an even better place to live, work and visit?
 - Is there anything else we should know?
- A summary of the public input is provided at the end of this document.

Questions and Discussion

- A member of the public asked whether the decarbonization requirements for rehabilitation projects would apply if the building as a whole was greater than 5,000 square feet, but the rehabilitation area was left. The decarbonization requirement would only apply if the area being rehabilitated met the threshold of 5,000 square feet.
- Several members of the public who were prospective project sponsors were interested in understanding more about the overall process once the DRI awards were announced in Spring of 2025. The following details were discussed / confirmed.
 - Projects funded through the DRI would be subject to certain State requirements, including Minority / Women Owned Business Enterprise goals and competitive procurement. However, the exact details of these requirements would vary depending on the specific contracting agency (e.g., DOS, ESD, HCR).
 - Competitive procurement does not mean that the project sponsor must accept the lowest bid. Project sponsors may select the preferred contractor. The purpose of a competitive procurement process is to demonstrate that the selected bid is in line with the general market.

- Project sponsors cannot undertake construction work themselves / pay themselves with DRI funding.
- Projects are generally expected to break ground within two years of receiving the DRI award (Spring 2025). Contracts with the State are generally five years, which is why “project implementation” was indicated as taking place between 2025 and 2030.
- The DRI grant is a reimbursable grant, and the work must be complete prior to the funds being release. Many project sponsors will require bridge financing to cover the cost of work in the interim. Oftentimes, project sponsors are able to access commitments to financing through a bank that are contingent on being awarding a particular amount of DRI funding.
- Work undertaken before the Strategic Investment Plan and before the DRI award is not eligible for reimbursement.
- A member of the public and prospective project sponsor asked whether they should consider applying if their property is located beyond the DRI boundary. The DRI boundary was carefully crafted to concentrate investment in the compact, walkable core of downtown Waterloo. However, the LPC may consider minor adjustments to the DRI boundary. For this reason, project sponsors should still consider applying and provide a justification.
- A member of the public asked for insight from past DRI communities on how input from the public has informed the identification and selection of projects. In Perry, for example, the LPC and the broader community had identified a segment of their Main Street that had derelict buildings and chronic retail vacancy, in part due non-local building owners. In this case, the Village connected the building owner with a prospective project sponsor, who submitted a rehabilitation project that in the end received funding.
- There was general discussion around what it takes to fuel revitalization by becoming more of a destination. Many communities have focused revitalization efforts around arts and culture and/or destination restaurants and retail that draw people from a wide area. However, revitalization efforts tend to be more successful when building on existing assets rather than plowing a new path. It is also important to consider that revitalization takes into account local needs and aspirations, rather than just targeting visitors.

Input from the Public

- *What do you love about downtown Waterloo? What are its strengths and assets? What makes it a great place to live, work, and visit?*
 - We have waterfront close to downtown
 - The cost of living is reasonable

- Small-town USA feel, patriotic community
- Strong history related to Memorial Day / historical significance
- Established restaurants
- Lots of places to go, things to do
- Geography – in the middle of the regions best assets
- Main Street is charming – lots of potential.
- *What are the key challenges and issues facing downtown Waterloo today?*
 - Visually unappealing
 - Housing issues (general)
 - Lack of foot traffic, not enough visitors
 - Limited access to the water
 - The downtown population, the exodus of young people / lack of growth
 - Old buildings
 - Limited sewer capacity to support more businesses
 - Lack of basic day-to-day amenities (e.g., hardware store, butcher)
 - Parking is a major issue
- *Are there specific areas downtown that you like? Are there areas that need improvement?*
 - Formal sidewalk to Oak Island
 - More trash cans on Main Street / North Virginia Street
 - Cross walk from LaFayette Park to Oak Street
 - A better entrance to the canal/trail
 - The sidewalk along Washing Street / F-n-A's
- *What projects do you think would make downtown an even better place to live, work and visit?*
 - Facades are in a dire need of a face lift
 - More bikes, bike racks, bike rentals
 - More friendly corner stores/activities
 - Residential beautification in addition to commercial/mixed use buildings
 - More events / live music
 - More handicap accessibility
 - Sidewalk upkeep, including trash cans, accessible ramps to building entrances, parking beds
 - A public space with a shelter for the farmers market.
 - Greater connections to Memorial Day.
 - Self-guided historical tours

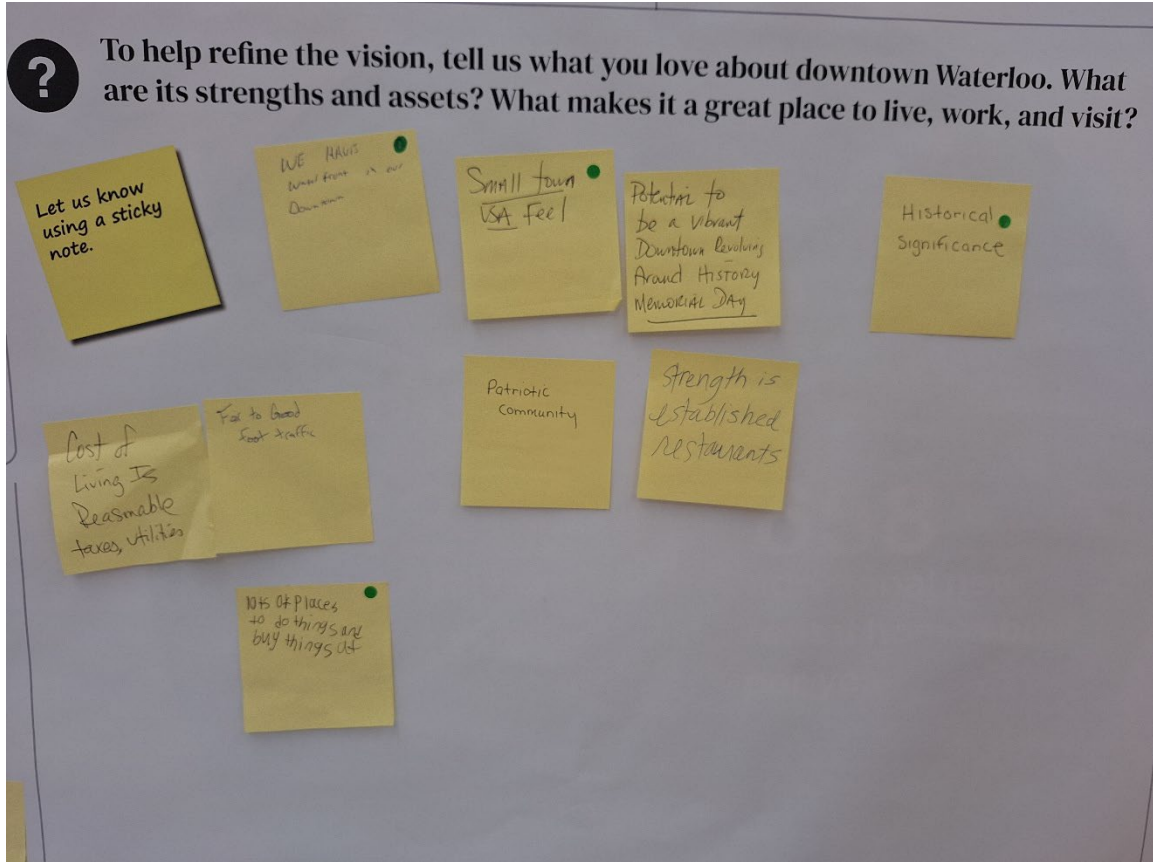


Figure 1: Photograph of Input from Public Workshop #1

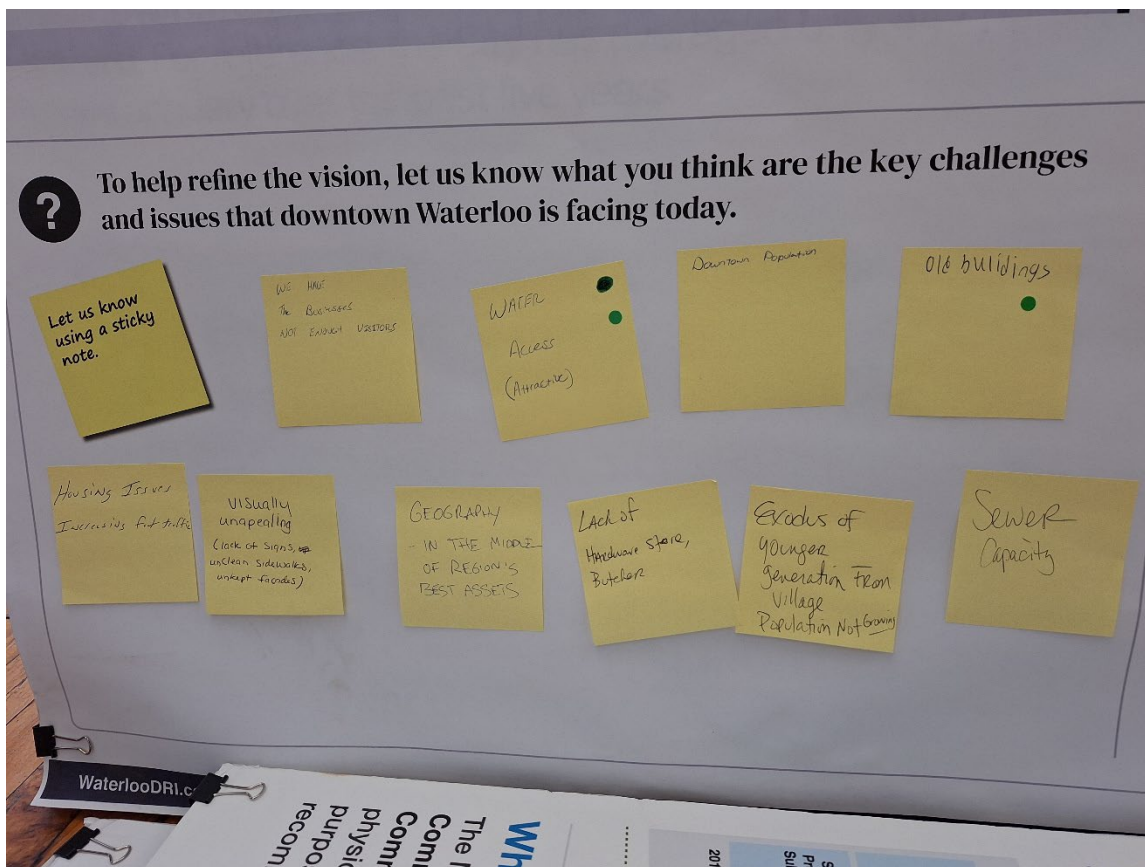


Figure 2: Photograph of Input from Public Workshop #1

What types of projects do you think would make downtown an even better place to live, work, and visit?

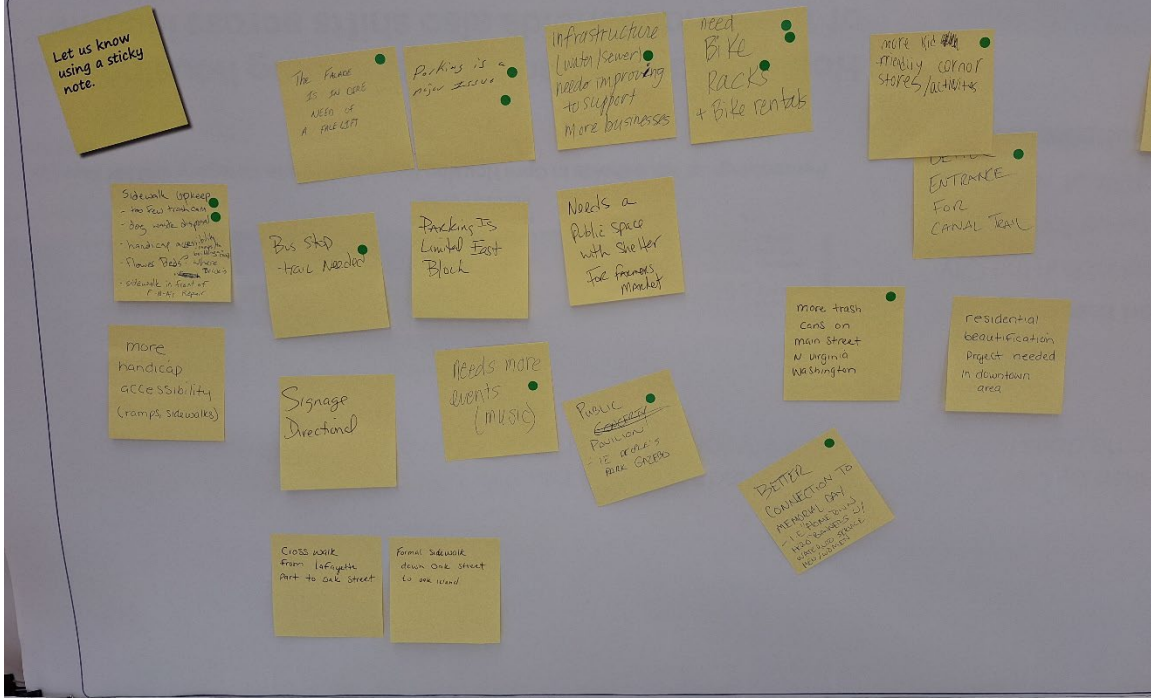


Figure 3: Photograph of Input from Public Workshop #1

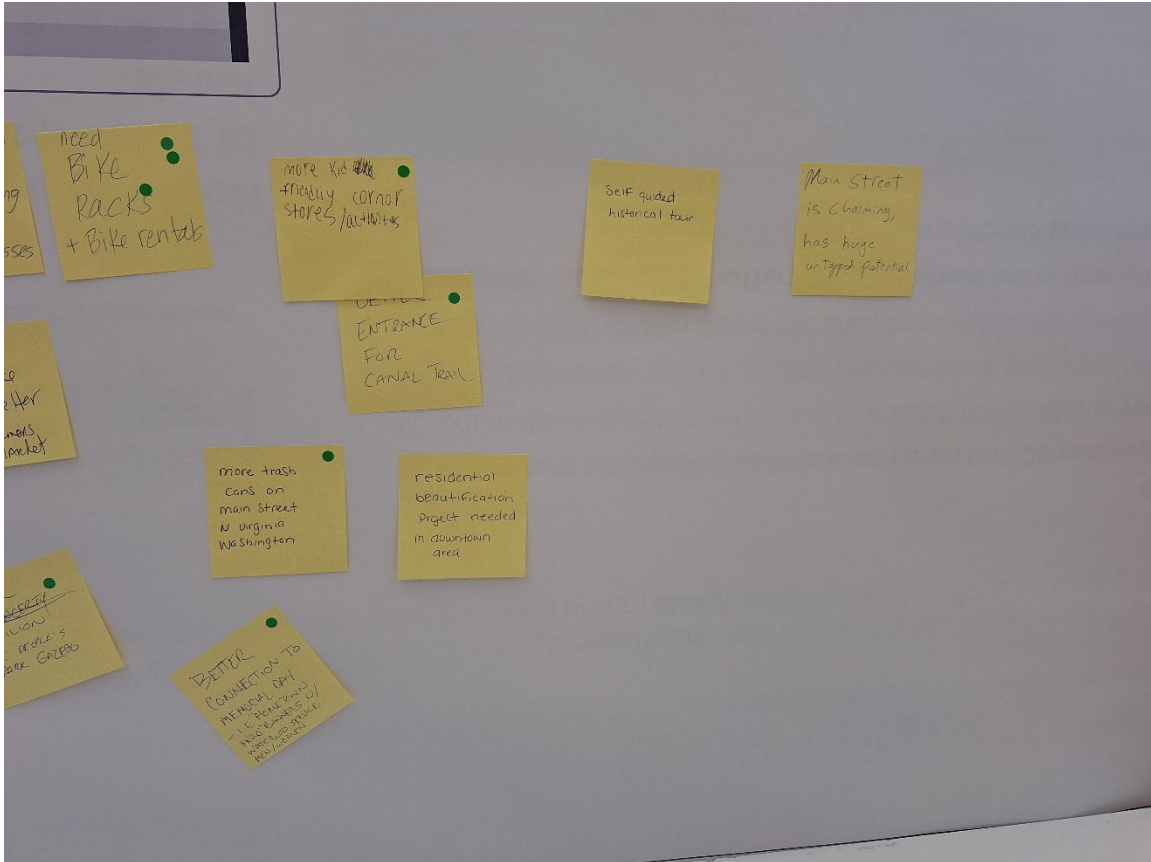


Figure 4: Photograph of Input from Public Workshop #1