

Date	September 11, 2024
Project	Waterloo Downtown Revitalization Initiative
Location	Waterloo Middle School - LGI Room, 65 Center Street, Waterloo, NY
Attendees	Local Planning Committee, Urban Strategies Inc., Department of State, and ~12 attendees (primarily project sponsors)
Purpose	Local Planning Committee Meeting #4

Overview

As the steering body of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) process, the role of the LPC is to brainstorm ideas, provide direction to the consultant team, review planning products, discuss, evaluate, and recommend projects, and act as ambassadors to the program.

At this work session, the consultant team provided an update on work undertaken since LPC Meeting #3, shared brief updates on each of the projects, and then invited project sponsors to deliver a three-minute pitch of their project. LPC members then had the opportunity to ask questions directly to the project sponsors.

Meeting Agenda

- Code of Conduct / Recusals
- Engagement / Work Update
- Project Updates + Sponsor Pitches
- Next Steps
- Public Comment Period

Meeting Summary

The following is a high-level summary of the information that was presented at LPC Meeting #4. The presentation slides that were used at this meeting are available on the project website: WaterlooDRI.com. Key questions / points of discussion by the LPC are also summarized. A summary of key decisions is included at the end.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct was read by LPC Co-Chair and Mayor Walt Bennett and the following recusals were noted:

- Mayor Walt Bennett: All Village projects
- Katherine Chase: Relocate and Expand the National Memorial Day Museum
- Salvatore Franzone: Establish a Small Project Fund to Continue Downtown Waterloo's Revitalization

Engagement / Work Update

Urban Strategies provided an overview of work undertaken since LPC Meeting #2, which included:

- Ongoing meetings with project sponsors and project development,
- An all-consultants call to review the projects and identify project development needs, market demand issues, and missing information.
- Finalization of the revitalization strategies.
- Preparation of the written Downtown Profile.
- Preparation of the LPC Project Evaluation Survey.

Project Updates & Sponsor Pitches

The majority of the meeting was dedicated to brief project updates and project sponsor pitches. Urban Strategies began with a brief update on project overall, including:

- The project Renovate 3, 5 and 7 West Main Street for Commercial and Residential Uses was withdrawal, but the project sponsor is confident that they can proceed without DRI funding.

- CDM Inc. submitted their project Redevelop Village Hall for Housing and a New Municipal Building, and the LPC would need to vote whether to include this late submission.
- Overall, 18 projects were up for consideration (including CDM's project), with total project costs of \$34.7M and a DRI funding request of \$18.5M.

Renovate the American Legion and Enhance the Entrance to the Historic District

- *Updates:* Project sponsor is continuing to provide additional cost estimates for various components of the proposed work (roof, deck, landscaping). The project sponsor cannot commit funds from their reserve towards this project.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The project sponsor described the proposed project and vision to be the gateway to the historic district. They spoke to their ability to break ground upon entering a contract, and once review by SHPO for the proposed work had been complete.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - How many people does the banquet hall seat? About 125.
 - Will the public be able to use this space? Yes, the Legion is altering its status to be open to the public.
 - Is the upstairs used for anything? The Legion used to have parties up there, but it is not heated and needs a lot of work.
 - Would the banquet hall need to be sprinklered as a congregation facility? The sponsor confirmed that the kitchen has a fire suppressant system. The consultant team will look into the need for a sprinkler system.
 - As a non-profit, will the Legion have to pay taxes? This will be confirmed by the consultant team.

Renovate 39 West Main Street into a Multi-Functional Building

- *Updates:* The project sponsor has provided architectural drawings which have been forwarded along to the cost estimator. The project will provide a letter of interest from a prospective tenant to demonstrate demand.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The current space is much too large for one commercial unit, which gave them the idea to subdivide it into two units, with the second being used by artisans at a lower cost, or potentially an artisan coop (e.g., small

business owners taking turns to operate the store). The project would help drive tourism and commercial shopping in Waterloo.

- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - Did the sponsor undertake any work when they purchased the building 15 years ago? The sponsor renovated the building, a former firehouse, into the storefront that is there today, which included new doors and windows, a new furnace and electrical system.
 - A member of the LPC noted that the head of Windmill Farm and Craft Market mentioned that they were looking for this type of space in Waterloo.
 - Are there any challenges to project implementation? The sponsor mentioned that there could potentially be issues in finding/hiring contractors, but isn't too concerned.

Unlock the Third Floor of 10 West Main Street and Improves its Façade

- *Updates:* Sponsor has provided full architectural drawings and a cost estimate, which have been forwarded to the cost consultant. The childcare facility cannot be on the third floor, but is separate and secure from the office space.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* Sponsor noted that as more people live downtown, there will be more demand for office space (they are working with the Chamber of Commerce to gauge interest). They imagine the proposed spaces as small offices for start-ups, which has been successful at two similar locations. They are ready to go immediately.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - Can you speak to your experience on other similar projects? The sponsor spoke about another combined daycare/office, a larger project at \$850K, was undertaken within one year.
 - Speaking to the demand for these spaces, the sponsor noted that Healthy Kids has \$350K in rental income across their locations.
 - What will the façade improvements look like? The sponsor noted that this would include painting the frontage and creating a sign that was more consistent with others along Main Street.
 - What did the renovations for the childcare facility entail? The ceiling was taken down, asbestos was remediated, sprinkler was added.

- Could this project take place without the DRI? It's something that Healthy Kids would probably do, but it would take a few more years.
- How will parking be provided? Healthy Kids currently has an informal relationship with the bank and pharmacy. They are discussing a longer-term solution with the bank.
- Is there a second egress at the back? No, there will be single egress to the third floor, so it will be sprinklered.
- Who would manage the office spaces? Healthy Kids already leases and manages spaces at other facilities, so they would take this on.

Restore Kendig House Servant Quarters as a Short-Term Rental

- *Updates:* Project sponsor is actively looking for other funding opportunities and lenders, including historic tax credits.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* Project sponsor spoke to their vision of creating an upscale short-term rental with historic charm to enhance Waterloo as a tourism destination. They are getting second and third opinions on the cost of the proposed work and have been having trouble securing lending for the project given their limited equity and the cost of the proposed improvements relative to the property value. Otherwise, they would scale back their project.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - How is the second floor accessed? There would be two points of access, one at the front and a second at the rear via a porch).
 - How long would it take you to implement? About 12 months.

Renovate the Street of Shops and Achieve Full Building Occupancy

- *Updates:* Consultants are waiting on the project sponsor to provide additional information, including floor plans and more detailed cost estimates.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* Project sponsor spoke to their experience as the “go-to” people in the area to redevelop buildings as market rate apartments and storefronts, including 30 buildings in Geneva. They spoke to their vision to create a fully occupied building (retail with residential above) that is full of energy, a central hub to live, shop, and connect.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - What work is proposed for the Mexican restaurant? A facelift, updated furniture, painting.

- What work is proposed to the exterior? Trim work, including removal of rotted wood, awnings.
- Are there any tenants lined up for the retail units? Sponsor has spoken to a potential café tenant, but they want to see the activity first.
- How many retail units in total on the ground floor? 11
- Will you be taking out the mosaic on the ground floor? No.
- The project sponsor confirmed that the residential units being developed above are not part of the proposed DRI project. Work on these units is already underway.
- They also confirmed that they intent to meet the minimum match requirement of 35%.

Build the Grange Hall Food and Entertainment Hub

- *Updates:* Consultants are waiting on the project sponsor to provide additional information, including floor plans and more detailed cost estimates.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The project sponsor spoke to their vision for the complete restoration of this historic building as a hub for food an entertainment, which would include a full-service kitchen and a back deck for a new restaurant, soundproofing, a sound system, and a catering kitchen for the event venue upstairs.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - What is the capacity of the venue? 120 people.
 - Is it fireproofed? It is sprinklered.

Rehabilitate 1 East Main Street for Four New Apartments

- *Updates:* Sponsor has provided drawings to the consultant team, which have been forwarded to the cost estimator. The sponsor has provided a proof of available funding.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* Sponsor spoke to the history and state of the building. The upstairs apartments have been vacant for a long time and are in a state of disrepair, no flooring, electrical, plumbing, requiring a full renovation.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - Is the building sprinkled? No, but the architect is aware of this and it has been accounted for.

- Is the project ready to go? There are blue-prints and financing in place, so the project is ready to go.
- Any other fire code upgrades? Just smoke detectors.
- Does your budget include contingencies? The budget has been prepared to account for any unforeseen issues, and there is funding in place.

Renovate 30 Virginia Street for Three Apartments

- *Updates:* The project sponsor has provided drawings. The property has a potential contamination issue, which was flagged through a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment. The application does not identify potential contamination as a project challenge or address this in the scope of work or budget.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The project sponsor spoke to his vision of opening a florist on the ground floor after an unsuccessful attempt to open a liquor store. The sponsor noted that it would be good if the property to the south could be capped for parking as there's a lack of parking downtown.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - Would you open the flower shop yourself? No, but the only florist in town is closing in the next 6-12 months, so there is a need for weddings, funerals, and walk-in-customers.
 - What is your timeline for determining the contamination issue. The sponsor mentioned that the DEC has been out to test the property numerous times and has confirmed that there is no issue. This is different from the information that is publicly available to the consultant team, which references drums of PCE in the building, which was a former dry-cleaner. A Phase 2 ESA for an adjoining property documented PCE near the shared property line. It was determined that further discussion with the DEC and property owner would be required, after which the consultant team would report back to the LPC on findings.

Expand and Enhance the Waterloo Recreational Center

- *Updates:* The project sponsor is seeking quotes for various components of the project (building, kitchen, fixed sporting equipment, etc.).

- *Sponsor Pitch:* The sponsor described the vision for the project, which was inspired by a facility recently built by another community. The sponsor noted there's unmet demand for sports facilities in town, and the barn would be heavily used. The sponsor also discussed some of the issues, such as determining the best location within the existing building for the kitchen considering the sewer/water hookups.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - Is the cost of the building expected to go up? Yes, an initial estimate for the building was more expensive than anticipated, so the Village is looking to right-size the facility.
 - How will parking be managed? There is room to better configure parking, especially on Oak Island.

Continue the Main Street Public Realm Improvements

- *Updates:* The concept plan and cost estimates have been forwarded along to the cost estimator for further review.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The project sponsor gave an overview of the project scope.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - How does this affect street parking? A few on-street parking spaces will be lost to rain gardens, but overall, these are intact.
 - Is lighting eligible for DRI funding, since it's below ground? Lighting is eligible. The Village confirmed that a lighting audit was recently undertaken, which concluded that there was not enough light fixtures and no light cast onto the sidewalks.
 - Who would maintain the painted bike lanes? They would need permission from the DOT, but the Village maintains Main Street.
 - Have you looked at other grants? The Village hasn't identified any grants that would cover the extent of improvements being proposed.

Enhance Washington Street as a Gateway to Downtown

- *Updates:* A concept plan and cost estimates are being prepared by Fisher Associates.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The project sponsor gave an overview of the project scope, highlighting the benefits of improving the appearance of Washington Street as a gateway to downtown and creating a connection to the trailhead. The

sponsor noted how this could tie into a larger project with potential private investment along Washington Street, including in the old Moore's building.

- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - *N/a*

Establish a Multi-Modal Hub and Gathering Place on the Southwest Block

- *Updates:* The concept plan and cost estimates have been forwarded along to the cost estimator for further review. Savannah Bank will review the concept, as it relies on their cooperation in part.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The project sponsor described their vision for this project, noting that it was top priority to the Village. The Multi-Modal Hub is hoped to be the start and finish point for tours of the region (e.g., wine tours, history tours), helping to support local tourism activity.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - Is the property owner committed to improving the rear of their buildings, which is important to this project? The sponsor noted that they have a commitment from Howard, he is very much on board with making these rear façade improvements.
 - Has this been designed for loading access? Loading and other technical considerations would be taken into account further in the design process.
 - Can you confirm the impact on overall parking? There is a net gain to 22 parking spots.

Improve the Connection between Oak Island and Main Street

- *Updates:* The concept plan and cost estimates have been forwarded along to the cost estimator for further review. Concept was reviewed by NYS Canals who indicated that further coordination with NYPA and the Hydro provider would be required, but no issues foreseen.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The sponsor described their vision for Vern's Way, which is to make this point of entry into the downtown as nice as possible, and also to make it more accessible. In particular, the sponsor highlighted the 'bump outs' along the trail and the look-out as unique opportunities to enhance the trail.
- *Questions/Discussion:*

- Could garbage bins with dog bins be included? Yes, this could be worked into the detailed design.

Transform Huff Street into a Pedestrian-Bike Zone along the Canal

- *Updates:* The concept plan and cost estimates have been forwarded along to the cost estimator for further review. Concept was reviewed by NYS Canals, and their feedback was integrated (e.g., providing a 20 ft buffer from the canal to protect the canal wall and allow for maintenance”).
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The projects sponsor described the vision for the project, being to create a trailhead and improved connection to downtown Waterloo.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - What is the impact on parking? There is still the 8-acre site to the west that is used for parking.

Develop Marketing Materials to Promote Downtown Waterloo as a Place to Visit and Invest

- *Updates:* The sponsor has retained a quote from a marketing agency to create a new brand and develop a marketing strategy to attract new residents and businesses. Fisher/USI are assisting with identifying the location and cost of wayfinding signage.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The sponsor gave an overview of the scope of the project, including how the marketing strategy, based on research and input from the public, would focus on what specific types of people and businesses to target.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - Does the municipality have the capacity to manage this following initial roll out (time & finances). Yes, since some jobs around the office have been automated, they anticipate having more time for this type of work.

Establish a Small Project Grant Fund to Continue Downtown Waterloo's Revitalization

- *Updates:* No updates.

- *Sponsor Pitch:* The project sponsor gave an overview of the project, noting that it would be helpful to include a guideline to illustrate to the business community how project should look to qualify for the fund.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - It was noted that the guidelines would be helpful to illustrate what the fund is for.

Relocate and Expand the National Memorial Day Museum

- *Updates:* The project sponsor is actively exploring opportunities to reduce the total cost of their project and the DRI funding request, which includes potential phasing of the project and applying for additional grant funding. They have hired consultants to assist with this.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The project sponsor described the historical importance of the building as well as the extent of efforts made to preserve and expand the facility (replacing historic roof and windows, HVAC, ceilings, bathrooms, Fatzinger Hall). They also described the extent of programming that is offered and how this has increased significantly over the years. The timing of the project would depend a lot on the sequencing of funding sources, as they have different grant cycles, and some you can apply for continuously.
- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - There was general discussion about how the project might be phased. The sponsor's architect is exploring this, which could include doing the ground level work first, and the NMDM as a second floor / phase. Building portions of the facility up or could help to reduce costs.
 - There was general discussion around the various funding sources open to the sponsor, such as a bond loan with a local lender.

Redevelop Village Hall as Housing and New Municipal Building

- *Updates:* Sponsor submitted an application after the LPC granted an extension at the July 31 LPC Meeting. Some details of the proposal (e.g., height, number of units, type of units, etc.) are still being determined.
- *Sponsor Pitch:* The sponsor spoke to their experience developing large, mixed-use developments across the region, including in Fulton and Newark. The sponsor noted that the project would be transformational as it would minimize the Village's financial burden while delivering a top-tier facility. They

noted that after a contract, it would take about 18 months from demolition to construction.

- *Questions/Discussion:*
 - Where would the Village Office be located? At grade next to the police station, which is also in the basement.
 - Would you advance this project without DRI funding? The sponsor would consider other avenues of funding.
 - How do you accommodate parking needs? This still needs to be refined, but there is some parking in the below grade.
 - Are municipal buildings eligible for DRI funding? The DOS representative noted that this project would not be eligible as a stand-alone municipal building, but the larger scope, which includes residential, makes it eligible.
 - Is there any concern with the proposed height of the building with adjacent buildings being two stories tall? The height shown in the rendering (three stories) would likely be considered “as-of-right” in the Village’s zoning code.

Summary of Key Decisions

- The LPC decided to allow the project Redevelop Village Hall as Housing and a New Municipal Building to proceed for DRI funding consideration despite being submitted late.

Next Steps

Urban Strategies gave an overview of next steps, including:

- Public Workshop #2 (the next evening), with the objective of gauging public interest in the projects.
- LPC Evaluation Survey to be launched by September 13, the results of which would be the basis of discussion at LPC Meeting #5.
- Public Survey to be launched by September 13, with results being reported back to the LPC for consideration.
- The Downtown Profile and Assessment would be circulated to the LPC for review.
- Ongoing discussion with project sponsors and project development (e.g., cost estimation).

Public Comments

- A member of the public noted that everything that is being proposed is not filling empty storefronts. They questioned how many of the projects would include new apartments, how many were already occupied, and where all the demand for housing would be coming from. They noted that what is needed is jobs and something that is unique that isn't done everywhere else. Some people are not happy about putting more trees along Main Street.