Meeting Summary

Catskill Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Local Planning Committee Meeting #5

October 21, 2025 | 5:00 – 7:00 pm

Attendees:

Local Planning Committee (LPC)

- Natasha Law (Co-Chair), Village of Catskill
- Joseph Wildermuth (Co-Chair), Capital Region REDC
- Gilbert Bagnell, Catskill Public Library
- Thomas Boomhower, Upstate Capital Association of New York (joined via phone)
- Bertram Downes, Mental Health Association of Greene County (MHA)
- Rachel Puckett Fisher, Mid-Hudson Fiber
- Jared Giordano, RC Lacy
- Jennifer Griem, Thomas Cole House
- Henry Haye, Resident
- Kai Hillman, MHA
- Elliott Matos, Hudson/Catskill Housing Coalition (HCHC)
- Liam Singer, Business Owner
- Nicholas Weist, Shandaken Projects
- Stella Yoon, Greene County Council of the Arts

State Agencies

- Lesley Zlatev, New York State Department of State (DOS)
- Mary Elise Rees, Empire State Development (ESD)
- Crystal Loffler (HCR)

Consultant Team

- Bret Collazzi, HR&A Advisors
- Jon Haragold, HR&A Advisors
- Matthew Rivas, HR&A Advisors
- Lynn Chong, HR&A Advisors (joined virtually)
- Margaret Irwin, River Street Planning and Development
- Sophie Henderson, Upstate Consulting
- Bimo Wicaksana, MUD Workshop (joined virtually)

Introduction / Welcome Remarks

- Joe Wildermuth provided welcoming remarks and began the meeting.
- Bret Collazzi read the LPC Conflict of Interest Statement. No new conflicts of interest were listed beyond those previously logged.
    - Gilbert Bagnell: Catskill Public Library project
    - Bertram Downes: Mental Health Association of Greene County project
    - Kai Hillman: Mental Health Association of Greene County project

Engagement Updates

- Matthew Rivas recapped the events of the last LPC meeting on September 4th, where the LPC heard from project sponsors about their proposals.

- Rivas recapped the LPC's virtual Project Evaluation Workshop on September 18th, where the LPC discussed initial project feasibility and impact and chose to remove three projects from consideration.
- Rivas shared findings from the Public Open House on September 29th, where nearly 200 attendees shared their written comments and indicated through a stickering exercise the projects they found most impactful. Support was highest for public realm projects and projects that delivered housing, activated the Creek, and supported cultural assets. Rivas noted that the stickering exercise should not be considered a representative indicator of public support for projects, rather as an additional data point for LPC members to consider.
    - Elliott Matos voiced concern that many of the people who attended the Open House were not residents of the Village or Town of Catskill and came to support specific projects.
- Jon Haragold shared a reminder of the project timeline, noting that the next and final LPC meeting will be on November 18th.
- Haragold recapped the process through which the original 29 submitted projects were narrowed to 21 through LPC elimination or by voluntary removal by project sponsors. Haragold then recapped the reasons for which the LPC eliminated three projects and the reasons for which two projects have chosen to remove themselves from consideration since the last LPC meeting. Haragold shared that the projects still under consideration now total $19.1 million in DRI requests and carry total project costs of $56.3 million.
- Haragold shared updates for the project proposed by the Village of Catskill, the proposal to redevelop the Lumberyard, and the Small Project Fund (sponsored by the Greene County Economic Development Corporation).
- Discussion
    - Liam Singer asked for clarification if the owner of the Lumberyard project was willing to sell the property to the project sponsor. Haragold clarified that the sponsor is working in collaboration with the current owners and intent to acquire the property if the project proceeds as proposed.
    - Natasha Law asked whether the Lumberyard project could proceed without DRI funding. Haragold clarified that the sponsor indicated they would need to rethink the design and scale of the project if they did not receive their DRI funding request.
- Rivas shared updates on the five projects under consideration that contain a housing component. Since the last LPC meeting, sponsors of housing projects were asked to provide detailed development and operating year pro formas, as well as their proposal to meet the LPC's housing affordability preferences of units affordable to households earning 50-80% of the Area Median Income (AMI).
- Discussion
    - The LPC discussed their previous request for more local representation on the Small Project Fund project review committee, for which GCEDC intends to use their existing Loan Review Committee. Crystal Loffler from HCR encouraged the LPC to focus their energy on creating criteria through which the committee would be required to evaluate projects, rather than specify individuals to be on the Committee. She also stressed the importance of an experienced, professional committee, with the ability to assess project readiness and feasibility. The LPC agreed to create a working group, composed of the following members, to propose Small Project Fund criteria:
        - Thomas Boomhower
        - Natasha Law
        - Elliott Matos
        - Liam Singer
        - Nicholas Weist
    - Gilbert Bagnell asked for clarification on how the LPC should ultimately evaluate projects against each other when some are more developed than others. Collazzi clarified that as long as the LPC feels there is a path to a project being carried out, and the LPC feels it is a priority, they should consider including it in the final slate.

- Law asked for clarification that the LPC should not consider outstanding approvals, variances, or permits for projects in their decision making. Collazzi confirmed that the LPC should not eliminate a project because it does not yet have all approvals. He indicated that the LPC's support for a project can serve as a signal to regulatory bodies that there is community support for a project, though project details can change through approval processes.
- Jennifer Greim asked for clarification on the affordability breakdown of the 506 Main Street project. Collazzi and Rivas clarified that the majority of units would be affordable to those making 60% of the AMI and that the overall level of affordability averages to 60% AMI.
- Bagnell asked if the 506 Main Street proposal would be locally taxable and if the developer had factored this in. Greim asked if the developer had prepared renderings. The Consultant Team agreed to follow up on these items and notify the LPC.

Project Discussion

- Collazzi recapped the project evaluation criteria the LPC should keep in mind when discussing and voting on projects, as well as the Catskill DRI Vision and Goals.
- Collazzi shared updates on all projects based on recent discussions with project sponsors. All projects were ranked through a combination of the LPC's assessment of their impact (based on the September LPC Pulse Check Survey), the Consultant Team's assessment of project feasibility, and public sentiment from the Public Open House. Projects were shown in the following categories:
    - A: High impact and feasibility, moderate to high public support
    - B: Moderate to high impact, feasibility, and public support
    - C: Low impact, feasibility, or public support
- Discussion
    - A: High impact and feasibility, moderate to high public support
        - Rachel Puckett Fischer requested clarification on how public support is shown. Rivas clarified that public support is only a reflection of the number of dots that projects received at the Public Open House and should not be considered a definitive measure of all public support for projects.
        - Jared Giordano shared that he felt the project "Connect Ferry Service to Catskill by Installing a Gateway Boat Dock on Water Street" was not impactful, only would operate seasonally, and would reward a private ferry company.
            - Law shared that she felt the project was among the most impactful, as it would bring visitors from Hudson and Athens without their needing to drive. Law clarified for the LPC that the company operating the ferry is Hudson Ferry Company and that the dock could be open to other ferries but there are no plans for this for the time being.
    - B: Moderate to high impact, feasibility, and public support
        - Thomas Boomhower shared that he highly supports the 506 Main Street project and does not feel that the LPC should pass up the opportunity to create a significant amount of housing.
        - Matos expressed concern over the projects at the Community Theater and 104 Main Street, stating that the developer should have enough money to carry out this work without public subsidy.
        - Haragold noted to the LPC that the projects in categories A and B already total about $12 million in DRI requests, close to the LPC's recommended total slate of between $12 - $15 million of projects to recommend to the State on November 18th.
        - Jennifer Greim asked for clarification on the difference between the Community Theater and Bridge Street Theatre projects. Collazzi shared that the Community Theater project would allow the space to hold larger live music performances, while the Bridge Street

Theatre project focuses more on accommodating audiences for live acting and other stage performances.
    - Bagnell expressed concern that the sponsors of the 95 W Bridge Street project lack the capacity to carry it out. Rivas shared that the sponsors have previous development experience and have a path to securing all funding once the local Planning Board decides to consider the necessary permits for project.
- C: Low impact, feasibility, or public support
    - The LPC discussed that public support for several projects from the Public Open House was skewed by heavy attendance for some projects over others. Law and Giordano encouraged the LPC to lightly consider the ranking of public support from the Open House in comparison to a project's overall feasibility and alignment with the Catskill DRI Vision and Goals.
    - Giordano proposed removing the Lumberyard project from consideration, citing its high DRI funding request, extensive scope which would include de-mapping part of Water Street, and skepticism over the ability of the sponsor to carry out the project.
    - Stella Yoon expressed support for the Subversive Malting and Brewing project.
    - Boomhower expressed support for the 199 Main Street housing project.
    - Law expressed support for the dock improvements at 70 West Main Street (Forlini's).
    - Law asked the sponsor of the 472 Main Street mixed use development proposal to clarify the affordability of his four proposed units. The sponsor clarified that he proposes three alternative scenarios with affordability between 50-60% of the AMI.
    - Weist asked if there had been any formal affordability agreements made with any housing project sponsors. The Consultant Team clarified that there had not been, and that the Village would be responsible for monitoring ongoing affordability commitments. Law confirmed that the Village has the capacity to do this.
    - Puckett Fischer asked if the State was able to claw back money allocated to project sponsors if they sold their property after making improvements with DRI funds. Mary Elise Rees from ESD confirmed that the State is able to do this if sponsors sell their property within five years of completion of their projects.
    - The LPC formally voted to remove the Lumberyard project from consideration by a unanimous show of hands.
    - Haragold noted that this brings the total DRI project funding requests to just above $15 million, but that projects costs and DRI requests may rise in the coming weeks as the Consultant Team checks costs with their independent cost estimator.
    - Haragold asked if there are any specific questions the Consultant Team should ask sponsors over the coming weeks.
        - The LPC requested that the sponsor of the 104 Water Street and Community Theater projects provide a commitment in writing to keep the proposed tenants in each space after the conclusion of construction and renovation work. Yoon also questioned whether the Community Theater improvements would have additional benefits beyond what the existing, recently opened Community Theater already provides.
        - The LPC would like to see an engineering feasibility study and detailed cost estimates for the 95 West Bridge Street housing project, which the project sponsor stated they would provide.

Public Comment

- A member of the public encouraged the LPC to consider how projects sponsored by private businesses or individuals benefit those private entities and weigh the best use of public funds.

- A member of the public encouraged the LPC to discuss with project sponsors how they can increase the DRI funding requests of some projects they highly support. The LPC asked the Consultant Team to consider this in conversations with sponsors they felt could increase the scope of their projects and had the capacity to finance and manage a larger project.
- A member of the public supported the 70-unit housing project at 506 Main Street, but asked for clarity on how the lost open space would be replaced.
    - Law clarified that New York State alienation legislation requires the Village to replace lost parkland with twice the amount of new parkland. The Village has identified 3 potential locations for required new parkland.
- Sponsors from the Bridge Street Theatre asked to clarify how far into the contractor bidding process they should proceed before knowing if they will receive DRI funding. Lesley Zlatev with the Department of State clarified that project sponsors should secure accurate bids but not proceed with any bids until they are notified that they have received DRI funding. Rees and Zlatev also clarified that all project sponsors are subject to the State's MWBE requirements, which stipulate that 30% of project costs should be awarded to MWBE firms or suppliers.
- A member of the public agreed with the earlier point that public funds should be used for public good but encouraged the LPC to continue considering small businesses and young entrepreneurs that make Catskill thrive.