

Meeting Summary

Catskill Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Local Planning Committee Meeting #1

May 13, 2025 | 4:00 – 6:00 pm

Attendees:

Local Planning Committee (LPC)

- Natasha Law (Co-Chair), Village of Catskill
- Joe Wildermuth (Co-Chair), Capital Regional Economic Development Council (CREDC)
- Gilbert Bagnell, Catskill Public Library
- Thomas Boomhower, Greene County Economic Development
- Bertram Downes, Mental Health Association (MHA)
- Patti Dushane, Matthew 25 Food Pantry
- 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)
- Junait Shah, Coxsackie-Athens School District
- Liam Singer, Avalon Lounge
- Nicholas Weist, Shandaken Projects
- Stella Yoon, Greene County Council of the Arts

State Agencies

- Lesley Zlatev, New York State Department of State (DOS)
- Crystal Loffler, New York State Home and Community Renewal (HCR)

Municipal Representative

- Joe Kozloski, Village of Catskill

Consultant Team

- Lynn Chong, HR&A Advisors (virtual)
- Bret Collazzi, HR&A Advisors
- Jon Haragold, HR&A Advisors
- Matthew Rivas, HR&A Advisors (virtual)
- Margaret Irwin, River Street Planning and Development
- Chris Snyder, River Street Planning and Development (virtual)
- Shachi Pandey, MUD Workshop (virtual)
- Sophie Henderson, Upstate Consulting

Welcome Remarks and Introductions

- Lesley Zlatev from DOS welcomed the group and introduced the State's role in the DRI process. Zlatev highlighted that LPC was selected to bring diverse perspectives across the community to the DRI process.
- LPC Co-Chair Joe Wildermuth provided an introduction and congratulated the group for DRI selection.

- LPC Co-Chair Natasha Law provided an introduction and thanked everyone for being part of the LPC.
- Attendees each introduced themselves.

Code of Conduct

- Zlatev reviewed the Code of Conduct for the LPC members and notified them to submit a recusal form if they expect to have conflicts with any projects that are being proposed.

DRI Overview

- Jon Haragold from HR&A provided an overview of the DRI process, including roles and responsibilities, program goals and timeline, planning process, project eligibility, decarbonization requirements, match requirements, call for projects, evaluation process, voting process, and final project selection. Haragold highlighted that the open call is generally intended to identify projects that can be implemented within 5 years of receiving DRI funds, which are provided as reimbursements. Haragold also reviewed the role of LPC members in public engagement, reviewing materials, identifying potential projects, and evaluating submitted projects.
- LPC members confirmed that they completed the online training. The group also confirmed that 3rd and 4th Tuesdays of the month from 5-7pm generally work best for future meetings.
- Zlatev walked through examples of the successful projects from prior DRIs and NYFs, including Taylor Apartments public housing complex in Troy (large budget, significant leverage of other funds, successful project), wayfinding and branding in Troy (expanded on an existing initiative), and Glens Falls Market Center (catalyzed development and investment in a disadvantaged area). Zlatev also highlighted that the most successful projects are ones that are ready to be completed within 5 years of receiving DRI funds.
- Zlatev and Haragold facilitated a brief Q&A with LPC members about the DRI planning process and project selection criteria.
- Margaret Irwin from River Street provided an overview of the public engagement process, including roles the LPC can play, methods of engagement, schedule of events, and community vision and goals. LPC members provided suggestions for the engagement process, including:
 - Groups to engage
 - Youth (including through the Club House)
 - Chamber of Commerce and Merchants Association
 - Columbia Greene Community College
 - Residents within the DRI area, including residents of Hop-O-Nose Homes
 - Town residents more broadly
 - Other suggestions
 - Irwin suggested having a table at the Farmers Market
 - Spanish materials should be added to the website

Catskill's DRI Application

- Haragold reviewed the DRI area map, indicating that the version in the application was extended to follow property lines; no other modifications were made. LPC members were asked if any

changes should be made to the boundary. Haragold emphasized that DRI only funds projects that are located within the DRI boundary and, in previous DRIs in other communities, unclear boundaries created tensions/confusion about project eligibility. Law emphasized that one reason for the success of the Village's DRI application this year was the focused study area; in past years, State officials provided the feedback that the Village's proposed boundaries had been too broad and may not yield concentrated, catalytic investment.

- Haragold provided an overview of the DRI application themes and proposed projects. The LPC discussed Catskill's strengths, challenges, and opportunities:
 - Strengths:
 - Sense of community/neighborliness
 - Love of the Village
 - Main Street and Catskill Creek (Creek is a unique and impactful asset)
 - County Seat
 - Historic role as day liner port connecting Greene County valley and mountaintop
 - Historic role in "America the Beautiful" movement
 - Support for longstanding businesses
 - Business growth on Main Street
 - Main Street emerged organically to meet needs and that continues
 - There are great green spaces and pedestrian connections that could be enhanced
 - Challenges:
 - Confusing street layout especially Water Street
 - Slope of the streets leading to the Creek
 - Lack of awareness and/or convenience of public transit
 - Loss of the community center
 - Lack of youth employment
 - Significant growth in the Town of Catskill
 - Maintaining housing affordability is a big and important challenge; many households could not afford to remain if rents/prices continue to rise
 - Overall cost of living
 - Concentrated ownership of private commercial property within study area among small number of owners
 - Food insecurity (increase in food pantry demand)
 - Tax exempt use concentration as the County Seat
 - Population trends should be examined
 - Opportunities:
 - Engaging people who live in the core of the DRI area
 - Need to work with the Workforce Development Board
 - Transportation from Park and Ride, transit improvements in general
 - Deep water port on the Hudson
 - Expanding access to the creek

- Affordable housing (with potential for LPC to consider affordability commitments for DRI-funded projects; HCR can help LPC members understand what programs and funds may be available)
- During discussion, it was noted that potential project sponsors will likely present at LPC and/or public meetings to engage with the public and have the opportunity to hear recommendations for making projects stronger. There will also be opportunities for stakeholder interviews with the LPC and other leaders in the community.

Next Steps

- LPC to review DRI guidebook, Code of Conduct, and the DRI application
- HR&A will schedule remaining 5 LPC meetings; next will be middle or late June
- HR&A will analyze the existing conditions and present them at an upcoming LPC meeting
- Public engagement will kick off with stakeholder interviews and a public workshop in June to hear voices from the community

Public Comment

- Michael Lanuto, a Greene County Legislator for Catskill, mentioned that the County does provide some bus service and that residents should share their ideas for improvements.
- Kurt Hendricks, who participated in the City of Hudson DRI suggested there may be value in talking to members of other communities who have gone through the DRI planning process.