

# Notes

## Catskill Downtown Revitalization Initiative

### Local Planning Committee Meeting #3

7/29/2025 | 5:00pm – 7:00 pm

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#### 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, Upstate Capital Association of New York
- 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, Cossackie-Athens School District
- 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)
- MaryElise Rees, Empire State Development (ESD)

##### Consultant Team

- Bret Collazzi, HR&A Advisors
- Jon Haragold, HR&A Advisors
- Matthew Rivas, HR&A Advisors
- Margaret Irwin, River Street Planning and Development
- Shachi Pandey, MUD Workshop
- Sophie Henderson, Upstate Consulting

#### Welcome Remarks and Timeline

- Jon Haragold welcomed all attendees and started the meeting.
- LPC Co-chair Joe Wildermuth read the LPC Disclosure of Conflict of Interest statement and asked LPC Members to disclose if they or a family member have a financial interest in any project in development or are on the board of or employed by an organization proposing a project in development.
  - Gilbert Bagnell disclosed that he is on the board of the Catskill Public Library and therefore has a conflict of interest with any projects associated with the Library.
  - Kai Hillman disclosed a conflict of interest with any projects submitted by the Mental Health Association.



- Liam Singer disclosed a conflict of interest with any projects submitted by the Avalon Lounge to the Small Project Fund.
  - Lesley Zlatev confirmed that Liam is still able to discuss the Small Project Fund in general.
- Stella Yoon disclosed a conflict of interest with any projects submitted by CREATE Council for the Arts.
- Haragold provided a recap on what was discussed at the last LPC meeting and provided an overview of the DRI timeline, including where the project is today.

### **Engagement Updates**

- Matthew Rivas provided a recap of the stakeholder interviews completed to date along with an update on the recent interview with representatives of the Catskill Central School District. These representatives shared the desires of Catskill's young people to see streetscape and mobility improvements and a greater array of after-school recreational opportunities. The officials also shared that overall school enrollment has been declining for several years.
- Margaret Irwin provided an overview of all engagement efforts to date, including publicity and outreach, Farmers Market tabling, the Public Workshop on June 26<sup>th</sup>, the ongoing community survey, and upcoming engagement with youth from the Clubhouse.

### **Final Vision, Goals, and Strategies**

- Rivas summarized the recent LPC and public feedback that have gone into refining and finalizing the Catskill DRI Vision, Goals, and Strategies. These include feedback from the last LPC meeting and Public Workshop on June 26<sup>th</sup>, the LPC Vision and Goals Workshop on July 21<sup>st</sup>, and public feedback via the ongoing online survey.
- Rivas reminded the LPC that, while the Vision and Goals are finalized, there will be opportunities to add strategies throughout the DRI process.

### **Open Call for Projects Update**

- Haragold provided an overview of the Open Call for Projects timeline, including that the deadline for submitting "Intent to Submit" forms passed on July 25<sup>th</sup>. Haragold reminded the LPC that it is up to their discretion whether to accept project proposals that come in after the August 18<sup>th</sup> Open Call deadline.
- Haragold provided an overview of what the LPC should expect from the DRI process after the end of the Open Call period on August 18<sup>th</sup>, including LPC opportunities to evaluate and ask for clarification on projects following project sponsor presentations on September 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Haragold recapped the DRI project eligibility rules and evaluation criteria.
- Q&A
  - Gilbert Bagnell pointed out that what is allowed by zoning will play a role in each project. As a member of the Planning Board, he encouraged the use of the Planning Board's procedure for concept review as part of the evaluation of projects.
    - Haragold shared that the Consultant Team will do a first pass on each project's feasibility and that the outcomes of the Planning Board's concept review would be very useful when available.
  - Elliot Matos, who is on the Zoning Board of Appeals, shared that the board uses a 4-part evaluation framework when considering zoning variances and that he wishes to share that criteria with the LPC when the time comes to evaluate projects.
- Bret Collazzi shared an overview of the additional information expected on each project proposal by the August 18<sup>th</sup> deadline.



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- Collazzi provided an overview of the 25 standalone projects, 23 small project fund projects, and 2 project ideas received to-date and reminded the LPC that they have the discretion to expand the DRI boundaries to consider projects that are outside the current boundaries.
- Q&A
  - Natasha Law shared concerns about the proposed project at the Lumberyard, citing that the property is for sale and expressing caution about using DRI funds to help make the sale more enticing. Law flagged for the LPC to remain cognizant of who, if anyone, ends up submitting a formal project proposal for the site.
    - Rivas clarified that the project was submitted by a party interested in purchasing the property, rather than the current owners.
    - Sophie Henderson added that the Lumberyard received Empire State Development funding in the past and that funding could be used on the site by a future owner if they renovate the site according to ESD's intentions.
  - Matos shared similar concerns as Law about the Lumberyard and asked for clarification about how the LPC will be able to evaluate these proposed projects.
    - Collazzi clarified that after project sponsors present to the LPC on September 4<sup>th</sup>, the Consultant Team will develop a system for LPC members to evaluate each project and see how other LPC members have evaluated them as well.
    - Matos asked for clarification on the process for expanding the DRI boundaries.
      - Collazzi clarified that the LPC has until the end of the DRI process in November to decide via consensus.
      - Zlatev added that this decision would likely be supported by the State as long as it maintained the DRI area's walkability.
  - Jennifer Greim asked for clarification on whether the tree planting projects came from Cultivate Catskill, and whether interest on a loan is an eligible expense for organizations who seek bridge loans in order to finance projects before the State reimburses them.
    - Collazzi answered that Cultivate Catskill had submitted the tree planting projects and is in contact with the Village as to how their proposals could be folded into the Village's streetscape improvement project. Collazzi clarified that interest on a loan is not an eligible DRI expense.
    - Greim asked the group if anybody had been in touch with the Bank of Greene County regarding providing bridge loans to project sponsors.
      - Singer answered that he had been in touch with the Bank on behalf of several small businesses and was told that they would have to go through the same process as other bridge loan applicants, but that the process would likely not be difficult given the use of the loans to bridge State funds.
  - Nicholas Weist asked how it was decided how each project satisfies the four DRI goals, as indicated on the meeting slides.
    - Rivas clarified that the Consultant Team conducted this initial evaluation of each project against the goals but that the LPC will be encouraged to do so as part of project evaluation after full proposals are received.
    - Weist asked if LPC members would be able to ask for more information from project sponsors on their own.
      - Collazzi clarified that, after the September 4<sup>th</sup> project sponsor presentations to the LPC, there will be opportunities for LPC members to raise questions and concerns as projects are refined.



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- Jared Giordiano noted that the project submitted by Forlini was incorrectly marked as being outside of the DRI boundaries.
  - Rivas noted that the Consultant Team will correct this.
  - Giordiano asked if there were any stipulations limiting recipients of DRI funds from selling their properties after the completion of their projects.
    - Zlatev clarified that the State likes to see a commitment from project sponsors to not sell their property for 5 years, but that the State does not track or enforce this.
  - Law asked if the LPC would be able to add this stipulation to DRI recipients.
    - Zlatev answered that the LPC is welcome to do so, but that the enforcement and tracking infrastructure would fall to the municipality after the end of the DRI process.
- Matos asked for clarification on whether each project sponsor would be required to submit a full budget for their project.
  - Collazzi answered that each sponsor will be required to share a full budget, along with a justification for each type of expense, and that the Consultant Team would validate each cost independently as accurate.
- Wildermuth asked for a roll call of LPC members to vote on extending the DRI boundaries to include the commercial area extending along West Bridge Street on the western side of Catskill Creek.
  - All LPC members present agreed to extend the boundaries.
- Collazzi confirmed that the Consultant Team would share an updated DRI boundary map and a zoning map with the LPC after the meeting and would also notify project sponsors in the West Bridge Street commercial area that their projects were now eligible for DRI funding.
- Weist asked if the LPC could require project sponsors to disclose their other property holdings in Catskill as well as their history of receiving public grant funding.
  - Collazzi shared that this could be asked by the LPC during project sponsor presentations on September 4<sup>th</sup>.
  - Zlatev added that this would need to be asked of all project sponsors out of fairness.
- Collazzi provided an overview of the geographic location of small project interest forms submitted to date, noting a high concentration along Main Street storefronts.
- Collazzi reminded the LPC that these projects would be eligible for funding after the DRI process concluded through an established Small Project Fund, administered by a local sponsor, if such a fund were included among awarded DRI projects.
- Collazzi also noted that some of these projects will likely fall above the desired maximum of \$75,000 and could be considered as standalone projects.

### **Next Steps in the Project Evaluation Process**

- Haragold discussed the timeline for the rest of the DRI process and reminded the LPC of upcoming LPC and public meetings.

### **Public Comment**

- Joanne, calling on behalf of Forlinis, clarified that their project proposal is within the existing DRI boundaries and asked for clarification on how much information is required of project sponsors by the August 18<sup>th</sup> deadline, citing the cost of hiring estimators and contractors without the guarantee of a DRI funding award.



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- Haragold clarified that sponsors should share as much information as possible by August 18<sup>th</sup> in order to provide the LPC with clarity on the project scope, but that there will be opportunities to add more information after that time.
- Collazzi added that the most important thing the LPC will want to know is the total project cost and that the amount of DRI funds requested will be sufficient for the project to be implemented, as well as that the sponsor has the capacity to implement their project.
- Tim Graham shared that he agreed with the decision to extend the DRI boundaries further down West Bridge Street and asked the LPC to consider extending the boundaries to Subversive Malting & Brewing. Graham also asked for clarification on how much detail project sponsors for Small Projects need to have in place by the August 18<sup>th</sup> deadline.
  - Haragold clarified that Small Project sponsors do not need to have as much detail in place as sponsors for larger projects, and that the Small Project fund would begin disbursing funds after the end of the DRI process on a longer time frame than the DRI awards for larger projects.