

# Dunkirk Downtown Revitalization Initiative

## Local Planning Committee Meeting #6 Summary

---

October 24, 2023, 5:30-7:00 PM | Fredonia Technology Incubator | 214 Central Ave, Dunkirk, NY 14048

---

### Attendees

---

#### Local Planning Committee

- Honorable Wilfred Rosas, Mayor
- Mike Metzger, WNY Regional Economic Development Council
- Liz Cardona, Dunkirk Housing Authority
- Rebecca Ruiz, Chautauqua Center (virtually)
- Nathan Aldrich, Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth
- Gina Paradis, Chautauqua County Land Bank
- Dan Beckley, Advanced Production Group, LLC
- Rebecca Wurster, Chautauqua County Dept. of Planning & Development
- Miriam Lugo-Alfaro, Dunkirk High School
- Virginia Harper, Resident
- Ellen Luczkowiak, Dunkirk Community Chamber of Commerce
- Beth Starks, Jamestown Community College (virtually)

#### City of Dunkirk

- Vince DeJoy, Planning and Development
- EJ Hayes, Planning and Development

#### State Partners

- Ben Bidell, NYS Department of State (DOS)
- Lenny Skrill, NYS Homes & Community Renewal (HCR)
- Erin Corrado, Empire State Development (ESD)
- Mo Sumbundu, Governor's Office

#### Consultant Team

- Katie, O'Sullivan, WSP
- Stephanie Camay, WSP

---

### Meeting Summary

---

#### 1. Welcome & Introductions

- Mayor Rosas (LPC Co-chair) called the meeting to order and noted that this is a very exciting stage of the DRI planning process. Mike Metzger, LPC Co-chair, read the code of conduct and reminded LPC members to recuse themselves from any votes or discussions on projects that they may have a real or perceived interest in to prevent any potential conflicts of interest. The following recusals are on record:
  - Liz Cardona (Dunkirk Housing Authority) recused herself from the Dunkirk Housing Authority (DHA)-sponsored project.
  - Beth Starks (Jamestown Community College) recused herself from the Jamestown Community College (JCC)-sponsored project.
  - Miriam Lugo-Alfaro (Dunkirk High School) recused herself from the JCC-sponsored project.

- Gina Paradis (Chautauqua County Land Bank) recused herself from the Ehlers Building project and the Coburn Block project.
- Mike Metzger (WNY Regional Economic Development Council) recused himself from the Fredonia Technology Incubator Wet Labs project.
- In addition to the previous recusals on record, the following recusals were made at the meeting:
  - Mike Metzger recused himself from the East and West Side Marina projects.
  - Nate Aldrich (Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth) recused himself from the East and West Side Marina projects.
  - Rebecca Wurster (Chautauqua County Dept. of Planning & Development) recused herself from the East and West Side Marina projects.
- LPC members, representatives of the City of Dunkirk, representatives of the State, and members of the consultant team introduced themselves.

## **2. LPC Meetings and Planning Process**

- Stephanie Camay (WSP/DRI Consultant) reminded attendees that the meeting is a working committee meeting and that members of the public will be able to make comments at the end of the meeting.
- Stephanie provided an update on the status of the six-month DRI planning process culminating in the development of a Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) that will be submitted to the State. She then recapped the agenda and decision points from the previous meeting (LPC Meeting #5) and summarized the agenda for the current meeting (LPC Meeting #6). The focus of the meeting is to develop and vote on a final slate of projects to be recommended for DRI funding in the SIP.

## **3. Engagement Updates**

- Katie O'Sullivan (WSP/DRI Consultant) noted that the summary of public feedback on proposed projects is posted to the DunkirkDRI.com website. The summary includes input received through Public Workshop #2 on September 14, as well as through an online feedback form that was promoted from August 22 through September 19.
- The third and final public workshop is planned for Thursday, November 2 from 5pm to 7pm at the Dunkirk High School Cafeteria. This workshop will review the DRI planning process, present recommended projects, discuss implementation, and celebrate the end of the planning stage of the Dunkirk DRI.

## **4. Review Other Potential Funding Sources**

- Katie presented other potential funding sources beyond the DRI program that can be used to advance downtown revitalization and complementary activities, including projects identified in the SIP. Katie noted that the 15+ funding opportunities presented are not an exhaustive list of resources. Potential funding sources were presented for project types including:
  - Parks, trails, and streetscapes
  - Building and economic development
  - Affordable housing
  - Tourism
  - Arts and Culture
- Rebecca Wurster asked whether the City of Dunkirk is precluded from applying for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) as an entitlement community.
  - DOS reported back later that entitlement communities are not eligible for competitive Community Development Block Grants.

## 5. Recap of Project Evaluation and Selection

- Katie reviewed the project evaluation and selection process for the preliminary slate of projects that the LPC developed at the last meeting (LPC Meeting #5). This included the LPC evaluation criteria, the available decisions for project review, and an overview of the preliminary slate of 11 projects selected at LPC Meeting #5, which represent \$12,247,000 in DRI funding requests. LPC members were reminded that their objective is to finalize a slate of recommended projects totaling between \$12 million and \$15 million in DRI funding requests.

## 6. Review Project Updates

- Katie presented updates on projects that have undergone a change in scope, cost, sponsorship, and/or partnerships since LPC Meeting #5. Many of these changes occurred in response to questions from the LPC at the previous meeting. The update for each project included the committee's preliminary decision from LPC Meeting #5 (table, include in the preliminary slate, or recommend for other funding); the project's prior scope; the updated scope (with updates highlighted in yellow in the presentation); and an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the project. Katie presented updates for the following projects:
  - Construct 20 Market-Rate Apartments and Commercial Space at 323-325 Central Ave (Sponsored by Nostra Development) – the sponsor proposed a reduced project scope and funding request involving a smaller building with less apartments but expressed concerns about securing financing.
  - Reinvigorate the Dunkirk Marina's West Side with Boating Facilities and Public Access (sponsored by the County of Chautauqua IDA) – the project sponsor is now the IDA, which has a purchase agreement for the property.
  - Redevelop the Ehlers Building to House a Restaurant, Retail and Event Space, and Two Market-Rate Apartments (Sponsored by Chadwick Bay Property Management) – the sponsor reduced the scope of the project and the amount of funding requested with the revised project including fewer apartments and less commercial space.
  - Renovate Historic Church into a Youth Center, Multi-Use Event Space, and Two Luxury Apartments (Sponsored by Access to the Arts, Inc.) – the sponsor will provide space for Kids at Promise, effectively combining two proposed projects.
  - Renovate Demetri's on the Lake with Event Space and Improvements to Façade and Interior (Sponsored by Demetri's on the Lake) – the sponsor proposed a reduced project scope and funding request with the apartments and outdoor patio removed from the project.
  - Stabilize the Vacant Building at 21 East Third Street to House a Life Skills Youth Center (Sponsored by Kids at Promise) – the sponsor proposed a reduced project scope and funding request for building stabilization only.
  - Improve Memorial Park with an Amphitheater, Welcome Center, and Pedestrian Walkways (Sponsored by the City of Dunkirk) – the funding request was increased to include the cost of design work and construction contingencies.
  - Redevelop Lake Shore National Bank Building to Include Retail and up to Four Market-Rate Apartments (Sponsored by Peak Development Partners) – the sponsor revised the project to include four apartments and retail space and reduced the funding request.
  - Renovate the Macaroni Building to House 13 Affordable Apartments and Medical Offices (Sponsored by Lakeside Werks LLC) – the sponsor has partnered with a developer to undertake the project.
  - Restore and Activate Vacant Storefront to House a Cafe and Improve Facade at 200-202 Central Ave (Buttered Biscuit Café LLC) – the sponsor increased the total project cost and funding request based on quotes from contractors.

- There was discussion about the Marina West Side project sponsored by the County of Chautauqua IDA, which was previously recommended for other funding due to concerns regarding sponsor capacity.
  - The LPC agreed that the project is synergistic with the Marina East Side project and comments were received that lack of facilities at the marina impedes its use and holds back the waterfront from continued growth and redevelopment.
  - Mayor Rosas noted that the property has been an issue for the City and would ultimately like to have one owner and operator for both the east and west sides of the marina. This project would help to generate a wave of revitalization that would start at the waterfront and move inland down Central Avenue to the downtown area as outlined in the DRI vision.
  - EJ Hayes (City of Dunkirk) noted that this property has been identified as a key development site in past planning efforts.
  - Gina Paradis made a motion to move the Marina West Side project to the recommended slate for DRI funding. Liz Cardona seconded the motion. The motion was carried. Rebecca Wurster, Nate Aldrich, and Mike Metzger abstained.
- There was discussion about the proposal to renovate the former ADAMS building sponsored by Access to the Arts, Inc. This project was previously tabled.
  - The LPC agreed that there is a need for kids' activities and that the partnership between Access to the Arts and Kids at Promise would serve the community. There was concern about the capacity of both Access to the Arts and Kids at Promise as volunteer-based organizations.
  - Miriam Lugo-Alfaro made a motion to move the project to the recommended slate for DRI funding. Virginia Harper seconded the motion. The motion was carried. Liz Cardona abstained.
- There was discussion about the Memorial Park project sponsored by the City of Dunkirk. This project was previously included in the preliminary slate of DRI projects and since then has increased the DRI request due to updated cost estimates.
  - The LPC agreed that the project is synergistic with other waterfront projects and was noted as a priority in recent planning efforts including the City's Comprehensive Plan, Brownfield Opportunity Area Plan, and Local Waterfront Revitalization Program. There is significant need for public restrooms in the area.
  - Rebecca Wurster made a motion to increase the recommended DRI funding from \$950,000 to \$1,310,000 to reflect the updated cost estimates. Nate Aldrich seconded. The motion was carried.
- There was discussion about the renovation to the Lake Shore National Bank Building sponsored by Peak Development Partners. This project was previously tabled.
  - The LPC was in favor of the addition of retail to the project scope and the reduced funding request. This project, along with the Ehlers Building and the ADAMS Building, serve as book ends along Central Avenue for downtown revitalization.
  - Ellen Luczkowiak (Dunkirk Community Chamber of Commerce) made a motion to move the project to the recommended slate for DRI funding. Nate Aldrich seconded. The motion was carried.
- There was discussion about the proposed renovation to the building that housed the former restaurant Aida's Café, sponsored by Buttered Biscuit LLC.
  - The sponsor would not be able to implement the full scope of the project if recommended as an example project under the Small Projects Fund. The sponsor is a minority-owned business that owns several properties and operates a successful car detailing business in the back of the property.
- There was discussion about the Small Project Fund

- Projects identified as examples in the Small Project Fund will need to apply for funding once the fund is established. The City sets any restrictions (such as project types and project-level funding limits) in coordination with HCR. The Small Project Fund was funded at \$600,000 in the preliminary slate of projects, but that amount can be reduced if needed to fund other higher priority projects.
- There was discussion about the Demetri's on the Lake and Clarion Hotel projects. The Demetri's on the Lake project was tabled at LPC Meeting #5, and the Clarion Hotel project was included in the preliminary slate.
  - The LPC Co-chairs spoke with a representative of the Clarion Hotel project and confirmed that the project would be able to move forward with \$1,700,000 in DRI funding instead of the requested \$2,200,000 (\$500,000 less). This reduction would make \$500,000 in DRI funding available for the Demetri's on the Lake project, which the LPC identified as an important waterfront project.
  - Mike Metzger made a motion to reduce the Clarion Hotel project's funding by \$500,000 and to award the Demetri's on the Lake project with \$500,000 in DRI funding. The Mayor seconded the motion. The motion carried.

## 7. Final Project Recommendations

- Stephanie facilitated discussion on final project recommendations based on the preliminary slate of projects recommended at LPC Meeting #5, the project updates reviewed at this meeting, and strengths and weaknesses of the projects.
- The City of Dunkirk has \$9,700,000 available in DRI funds; however, the Department of State advises that the slate of projects range from \$12,000,000 to \$15,000,000. The final slate of recommended projects cannot exceed \$15,000,000 in DRI funding.
- In addition to the changes noted above, the LPC also agreed to include the 323-325 Central Avenue and Youth Center projects in the SIP but recommend for other funding; to reduce the funding request for the Ehlers Building on the final slate; to add the Dunkirk Macaroni Building and Aida's Café projects to the final slate; and to reduce the amount recommended for the Small Project Fund to meet the \$15 million threshold for the final slate.
- Miriam Lugo-Alfaro made a motion to approve the final slate of projects recommended for DRI funding. Rebecca Wurster seconded the motion. All LPC members were in favor and the motion carried unanimously. Tables summarizing the LPC's final project recommendations are provided at the end of this meeting summary. The final slate of recommended projects is summarized in Table 1 The projects recommended for other funded are summarized in Table 2, and projects recommended for the Small Project Fund are summarized in Table 3.

## 8. Next Steps

- Stephanie reviewed final steps in the DRI planning process now that the LPC has approved the final slate of projects.
- The LPC will complete a DRI ballot to document the vote on the final slate of projects and funding amounts for the SIP.
- The SIP will be submitted to the State and will be considered a final draft until the State selects projects and announces awards.
- Stephanie reminded attendees about the third and final public workshop to be held on Thursday, November 2 from 5pm to 7pm at the Dunkirk High School Cafeteria.
- The consultant team will complete the draft Strategic Investment Plan including the project profiles for the final slate of projects.

- Once the Strategic Investment Plan is complete, New York State will select \$9.7 million in projects to award DRI funding from the final slate of \$15 million. Awards will be announced in late 2023 or early 2024. Projects can begin incurring costs the first day of the month following the award announcement, however, the project sponsors would incur costs at their own risk until grant agreements are finalized. Throughout the implementation phase of DRI projects, state agencies will coordinate with sponsors regularly to provide support.

## 9. Public Comment

- Stephanie opened the floor to public comment. The following comments were made:
  - Chris Rodriguez of Kids at Promise thanked the LPC for recognition of the organization's work with youth in the community and for the opportunity for DRI funding to support their programming.
  - A written comment stated that the DRI process seems to be cutting the heart out of the city as was done during the urban renewal programs 60 years ago when businesses that could pay their own way received government funding and petitioned to have investments concentrated south of the CSX tracks and mostly east of Central Ave, while needs to improve pedestrian facilities south from the lake were largely ignored.

Table 1: Dunkirk DRI Final Slate of Projects Recommended for Funding

Project Title	Sponsor	Total Project Cost	DRI Funding Requested	DRI Funding Recommended
Refurbish the Graf Building to House a Workforce Development Training Center	Jamestown Community College	\$3,500,000	\$2,200,000	\$2,200,000
Reinvigorate the Dunkirk Marina's East Side with Expanded Boating Facilities and a Security System	City of Dunkirk	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Modernize the Clarion Hotel Building and Exterior Grounds	Clarion Hotel and Conference Center	\$4,500,000	\$2,200,000	\$1,700,000
Redevelop the Ehlers Building to House a Restaurant, Retail and Event Space, and Two Market-Rate Apartments	Chadwick Bay Property Management	\$1,750,000	\$1,400,000	\$1,400,000
Improve Memorial Park with an Amphitheater, Welcome Center, and Pedestrian Walkways	City of Dunkirk	\$1,310,000	\$1,310,000	\$1,310,000
Renovate Historic Church into a Youth Center, Multi-Use Event Space, and Two Luxury Apartments	Access to the Arts, Inc	\$1,250,000	\$1,127,000	\$1,127,000
Reinvigorate the Dunkirk Marina's West Side with Boating Facilities and Public Access	County of Chautauqua IDA	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Redevelop Lake Shore National Bank Building to Include Retail and Up to Four Market-Rate Apartments	Peak Development	\$1,900,000	\$900,000	\$900,000
Renovate Demetri's on the Lake with Event Space and Improvements to Façade and Interior	Demetri's on the Lake	\$1,250,000	\$1,000,000	\$500,000
Construct 78 Affordable Apartments and Daycare Facility Across Two Sites on East 4th Street and Washington Ave	Regan Development	\$34,469,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Redevelop 31 Affordable Housing Units Across 7 Sites through a Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Conversion	Dunkirk Housing Authority	\$34,570,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Renovate the Macaroni Building to House 13 Market-Rate Apartments and Medical Offices	Lakeside Werks LLC	\$3,200,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Rehabilitate Stearns Court Public Space with Outdoor Dining and Decorative Features	City of Dunkirk	\$423,000	\$423,000	\$423,000
Small Projects Fund	City of Dunkirk	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$359,000
Restore and Activate Vacant Storefront to House a Café and Improve Façade at 200-202 Central Avenue	Buttered Biscuit LLC	\$407,000	\$307,000	\$307,000
Renovate Central Station Building to Expand Restaurant and Add One Apartment	Handsome Rob Holdings LLC	\$376,000	\$274,000	\$274,000
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$92,505,000</b>	<b>\$16,241,000</b>	<b>\$15,000,000</b>

Table 2: Dunkirk DRI Projects Recommended for Other Funding

Project Title	Sponsor	Total Project Cost	DRI Funding Requested	DRI Funding Recommended
Construct 20 Market-Rate Apartments and Commercial Space at 323-325 Central Ave	Nostra Development	\$3,849,000	\$2,458,000	\$0
Create an Indoor Waterpark Attached to the Existing Clarion Hotel with a Wave Pool, Kids' Waterplay Structure, and a Surf Facility	Clarion Hotel and Conference Center	\$25,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$0
Renovate 310 Central Avenue to House Golf Simulator Sports Bar and Four Short-Term Rentals	East Coast Investments Unlimited	\$1,112,000	\$871,000	\$0
Fit Out New Wet Laboratory Facilities at the Fredonia Technology Incubator	SUNY Fredonia Center for Innovation & Economic Development	\$769,000	\$769,000	\$0
Renovate 314 Central Avenue to House a Homeownership Center and 5+ Affordable Apartments	Chautauqua Home Rehabilitation and Improvement Corporation (CHRIC)	\$940,000	\$720,000	\$0
Stabilize the Vacant Building at 21 East Third Street to House a Life Skills Youth Center	Kids at Promise	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$32,170,000</b>	<b>\$7,318,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>

Table 3: Potential Projects for the Dunkirk DRI Small Project Fund

Project Title	Sponsor	Total Project Cost	DRI Funding Requested	DRI Funding Recommended
Restore the Historic Public Library with Improvements to Interior and Exterior Features	Dunkirk Public Library	\$343,000	\$294,000	\$0
Invest in Kitchen Equipment and Building at Alma Latina Mex	Alma Latina Mex	\$102,000	\$82,000	\$0
Revitalize the Coburn Block through Façade Improvements and New Outdoor Patio Space	Coburn Block LLC	\$218,000	\$76,000	\$0
Expand the Dining Room at Taqueria Mexicana	Taqueria Mexicana	\$70,000	\$50,000	\$0
Improve the Façade at Matt's New Convenience Store	Matt's News Convenience Store	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$754,000</b>	<b>\$523,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>