

Brockport NY Forward Local Planning Committee Meeting #1

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Brockport Village Court

May 8, 2025, at 5:30 PM

Meeting Attendees:

Local Planning Committee (LPC)

Margaret Blackman, Co-Chair

Steve Mowers, Co-Chair

Christina Daniels

Michael Doyle

Randy Dumas

Erik Duncan

Amy Guptill

Stacey Kirby

Buck Noble

Garret Roe

Brenda Tremblay

LPC Members Not in Attendance:

Lori Maher

Katrina Arndt

Project Team:

Melissa Keller, NYS Department of State (DOS) Project Manager

Tirzah Peters, NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR)

Greg Parker, Empire State Development (ESD)

Leigh Ann Kimber, Colliers Engineering & Design Project Manager

Kiernan Playford, Colliers Engineering & Design

Allison Harrington, Sustainable Planning Design

Welcome and Introductions

Melissa Keller welcomed attendees and began the meeting by presenting an introduction to the NY Forward Process. Key topics included the Code of Conduct, the Project Team, the Role of the Local Planning Committee (LPC) and an overview of the NY Forward Program and Strategic Investment Plan process, including detailing eligible and ineligible project types, open call for projects, project requirements, and match requirements for public, private and non-profit project sponsors. The end goal of the project is to have a final slate of non-prioritized recommended projects in the range of \$6 to \$8 million for the \$4.5 million award. Regarding project implementation, all project awards are reimbursement grants and may require project sponsors to secure bridge financing.

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LPC Meetings and Timeline

The consultant team presented the meeting schedule:

- First meeting today
- Public Workshop 1: May 28, 6:00 PM
- **LPC Meeting 2:** June 10, 5:00 PM (Open Call at 7:00 PM). This meeting will focus on downtown profile findings, public engagement efforts, finalizing vision and goals for the NY Forward Boundary Area, and finalizing match requirements for the open call submission form.
- **LPC Meeting 3:** August 5, 5:30 PM*. This meeting will include reviewing open call submissions and evaluation survey results, and understanding what additional project information is needed. Members will have homework to review submissions and complete a project evaluation survey beforehand.
- **LPC Meeting 4:** September 16, 5:30 PM*. This meeting will review project development progress and responses from project sponsors on LPC questions. Project sponsors may be invited to attend to answer questions directly.
- Public Workshop 2: September 23, 6:00 PM*
- **LPC Meeting 5:** October 7, 5:30 PM. This meeting will review public input from the second workshop, discuss any new project developments, and aim to reach consensus on a final slate of recommended projects. If consensus cannot be reached, the sixth meeting will be held to finalize the list.
- **LPC Meeting 6** (if needed): October 28, 5:30 PM*

*The start times of the LPC meetings are subject to change. The most up-to-date meeting information can be found on the project website: www.BrockportForward.com.

Public Engagement

To further outline the planning process, Leigh Ann Kimber thanked attendees for the large turnout to the first LPC meeting and provided an overview of the public engagement planned throughout the process including LPC Meetings, public workshops as well as informal events like pop-ups, and stakeholder interviews. During the presentation the LPC considered the meeting times and were agreeable to the schedule.

As part of the presentation Leigh Ann asked the LPC to identify any key stakeholders or representatives of community groups that the project team may want to talk to during the project as well as other opportunities for public engagement. The LPC responses were as follows:

- The Brockport Community Museum: A museum without walls
- There is a potential new business that's going to be organic and would be a boost to the waterfront community

Are there key community events where the project team could attend and obtain feedback from a broad cross-section of people in the village?

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- Process is currently outside of the window when students are going to be here
 - Projects are together early fall and in other communities the project team has coordinated with school districts and colleges during that time to gain feedback.
- The Art Festival on August 9 and 10: attendees include visitors and residents
- Low Bridge High Water on June 14th
- Farmers Market on Sundays, there are young families and seniors that attend

What about the Welcome Center?

- Not a large group, but on Wednesdays and Tuesdays it would be a way to engage recreational users. Could leave information here for visitors such as a postcard to send them to the website. Could also meet with representatives such as ambassadors to understand what visitors/tourists are looking for.

There will be a Public Workshop that will take place at the Seymour Library. LPC members are not required, but are strongly encouraged to attend.

There is a project website – www.brockportforward.com where there information will be posted, including meeting dates, and the Open Call form (which can also be submitted via the website). The website also has a contact form to send feedback directly to the project team.

Kari Pardun, the Village Treasurer, will also be sending out announcements through the Village's Facebook page, website, and app.

Awarded NY Forward Application

Mayor Blackman provided an overview of the application that was submitted for the NY Forward program award. The application put forward a vision with the concept "It's all in Brockport" as part of the winning submission. The NY Forward boundary is south of the canal. The application included both public and private potential projects within this area. It was emphasized that projects included in the application were purely to demonstrate sufficient interest and potential for funding. Any project included in the application will still need to be submitted as a project proposal through the Open Call process.

Visioning Session

Leigh Ann conducted a visioning session with the LPC to gain a better understanding of Brockport's opportunities and challenges.

In a word: Downtown Brockport's greatest asset is...

- **Canal:** history involved with it, it brings people to us, water brings the people
- **Visuals:** the canal is part of that, everything looks great (well not everything)
- **Community:** a lot of expertise, a lot of great people, programs, volunteers, opportunities
 - So much is going on here, music, art, businesses, trees
 - A lot of energy into building the community and you can really feel that when you visit
 - People are invested and engaged
- **Human scale and walking:** lovely to walk around, feels safe, canal is beautiful

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- **Climate change / shade:** half of the street is shaded when the sun rises, and half of the street is shaded when the sun goes down
 - Downtown is still going to be a place that we can gather as things change
 - The breeze corridor does a lot for microclimate as well

I would go downtown more if it had (blank)...

- **Dining:**
 - What kind of dining is lacking?
 - More higher end choices
 - Nicer restaurants, now there aren't any
 - Enough pizza! Need more variety
 - If you think about Fairport, and what it was like 30 years ago, there is a much greater diversity of dining options
 - Ethnic restaurants – more diversity
 - Ice cream or dessert option, used to be a few options but no ice cream available now
 - More restaurants that extend beyond the student population
- **Night life for families:** have a place to hang out with kids and visit shops that are open later
 - Public space or restaurant that is kid-friendly on Main Street
 - Brockport has one of the oldest theaters in the country, but theaters aren't as viable as they once were. Strand could be more creative, promote interaction with performance arts in the schools and have events housed outside of university.
 - Things for families to do between 7 and 9 pm and after going to an event have a place to hang out past 9 and feel safe.
 - Want to entice people to stay out instead of going home and watching TV.
 - An example of a state park showing black and white movies in a natural amphitheater was mentioned – do we have an open space big enough for that?
- **Recreation:** People can rent kayaks and borrow bikes from the welcome center, but recreation in terms of a multipurpose space to show movies or have a dance or things even cooler than that is lacking. Would be nice to be able to tie these two things together.
- **Designations:** Tree City USA, Monroe County has the most tall trees in the state with state winners nearby, but not in the village. Don't know if it's in the boundary.
- **Curb appeal:** Lack of cohesiveness in the downtown, look up and down don't have a brand or feel of what is here, which detracts from people wanting to stay and wander around/explore. Seems people come for a single purpose or business then leave. Robs people of the opportunity to walk and window shop, taking away opportunities for businesses.
 - May through November, encourage people to stay here longer (canal season)
 - Cohesion would be a benefit, enhancing all the facades
 - Standards, a motif that everyone bought into, balance between unique brand and cohesion
 - Feeling that you're in one community, something that makes you slow down and looks great (Example of Greenville, NC where all the trees had lights on)

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The greatest challenge facing downtown Brockport is...

- **Dining (similar comments to above)**
- **Consensus:** some people say one thing, others say something else, Brockport doesn't know what it wants yet
- **Unique wow factor**
- **The why:** cohesive narrative that says why to be here. There are individual aspects (canal, SUNY Brockport, etc.), but what is the elevator pitch, the narrative?
 - What do you think other communities (such as Ithaca, which has similar aspects) have that Brockport doesn't: Buttermilk Falls, scale
- **Colleges:** Brockport is more than the colleges, people come here thinking it's just a college town
 - **Reputation:** piggybacking on that people don't know what is here. People that want a livable downtown, don't know Brockport has that. They think of this place as only the university, which is great, but it also has so much more to offer. With the bridge opening, greater potential.
 - Negative perception of Brockport is a lack of awareness (best kept secret)
- **Negativity:** There are a lot of people that tear everything down. Example of different perceptions from different communities. Hope that in Brockport, as LPC members, all feel like ambassadors and help to change that narrative.
- **Balance:** needs of the community and residents with the population of students. Students don't come downtown (used to be an entrance via Main Street). How do we incorporate students, balancing the needs of the community, giving students a reason to visit?
- **Longevity:** charged with a short- and long-term responsibility, we need projects that make an immediate difference but also need to think 20 years from now. The 30-year-olds of today, what are we building that they are going to appreciate?
 - **Community roadmap:** Leigh Ann mentioned that one of the outcomes of the NY Forward process is to develop a community roadmap with the LPC that identifies policies, priorities, future projects, and initiatives that will help maintain the momentum built from the NY Forward investment.
- **Struggling businesses:** almost all of these things tie into the fact that there not a lot of businesses that are doing well. People don't know they are here, particularly with bridge closed. Need buildings more aligned to encourage people to window shop.
- **Connecting:** making sure everyone feels represented and heard.

What's Next

The next steps for the LPC were outlined, including reviewing the DRI/NYF Guidance Document, reviewing the community's NY Forward application, and reviewing, signing, and returning the Code of Conduct forms. Members were encouraged to attend the first Public Workshop scheduled for May 28th at the Seymour Library.

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The team noted that program resources could be found on the NY Forward website (www.ny.gov/programs/ny-forward) and that the project-specific website (www.BrockportForward.com) would be regularly updated with relevant information.

Questions and Discussion:

Can you give an example of what a privately sponsored project might look like?

- As part of the Rochester DRI Program: A project at the corner of Main and Clinton addressed an eyesore of a building and planned for it to be redeveloped as residential with a commercial component. DRI funding was a portion of the total project funding as well as other funding sources.

As projects are considered, can you request a different amount?

- The project team can include language in the open call that allows for flexibility. Also, if a project comes in and the LPC really likes it, but not at a particular funding level, it can request the project sponsor consider paring down the project scope or increasing their match.

What does consensus mean in practice?

- Everyone on the LPC is happy with the list moving forward and has decided as a group these projects should be recommended to the state. There are a couple different ways that the project team gauges LPC opinions, including some anonymous (survey) and some not anonymous (2-3 rounds of discussion at LPC meetings).

Once the funds are awarded, are there any metrics that will be available to learn about what worked and what didn't work? If the community was happy or disappointed with the project? Or how these projects performed against the metrics that we have identified?

- NYS is working on a DRI / NYF dashboard, but it is not currently available.

Oswego was one of the first municipalities to complete a DRI and they determined that from the \$10 million grant they had \$100M in development. Is this something that NYS is trying to track?

- Through a partnership with the municipality and DOS, dollars of state funding are tracked. The State also knows all the private dollars that go into the project.

Regarding the State requirements, what kind of strings are attached?

- Each agency has its own specific requirements, but generally MWBE goals and competitive procurement are consistent requirements.
- HCR requires 5-year maintenance of project

What is MWBE?

- Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE)

Once the LPC comes up with a list of \$6 to \$8 million, how does the award of \$4.5 award happen?

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- The State uses the same criteria to select the \$4.5 million, not all the projects are awarded. The State generally selects projects in the following spring.
- For remaining projects on the list, if a project falls out for whatever reason, the State has those remaining projects on the list to select from during the 5-year implementation period. This sometimes happens if a business closes, or they decide they can't wait until funding award to move forward with the project. In this case, there will be other projects available to allocate the funding.

Is there an email list?

- The project team has the LPC emails addresses and will email the group.

This is a very limited timeframe for non-profits to put an application together, where should we be sending people to see the whole form and get started?

- The Open Call for Projects Form will be ready next month; potential applicants can come to the Open Call for Projects Informational Session on June 10th and the form will be made available a few days after that.
- Additionally, there is a lot of back and forth between the project team and the project sponsors throughout the process. The initial application is just the first step. If the LPC feels something is missing, there will be an opportunity to provide more information.

Is there an example of what is typically required?

- Strategic Investment Plans (SIP) are available on the DOS website; the project team can send a link out to everyone where the information is available. Project profiles included in the SIP give a good sense of the type of information sponsors would need to provide.
- Generally, the most important things are the scope of work, what actual improvements will be made, and how that contributes to economic development and community revitalization.

Could you post the link to the DOS website where there are examples of other Strategic Investment Plans on the project website?

- The project website does link to the DOS site but can include a link to Strategic Investment Plan examples.

Will this information be accessible to the public?

- Yes, both the website and the Open Call form are available to the public. The Open Call form will be posted on the website a couple of days after the June 10th Open Call Information Session. Part of the LPC's job, as the committee, is to get this information out.

The application that the Village put forward to apply for the NY Forward, will that be on the website?

- Not currently, but it can be added to the project website.

Can projects north of the canal be considered?

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- The LPC has the ability to adjust the boundary if there is a need and flexible language can be included in the Open Call form, but the program tries to keep NYF dollars condensed to a tight geographic area to maximize the impact and co-benefits.

How were these boundaries decided?

- During the development of the application most of the potential projects that the Village was aware of were within this area. The Village has received calls from people with projects that are quite close to the boundary and is maintaining a list of those interested parties to follow up with as part of the Open Call process. At this point, all potential projects are at a clean slate.

Have there been any proposals for geocaching or a digital trail with exercise equipment?

- No, but projects need to be a minimum of \$75,000

Public Comments

- *Concerns that it needs to be opened up more, we need to open it up to all of the community, not half of our money goes to one particular developer. College is great but doesn't pay taxes. Should go back to taxpayers, not two to four years transient population.*
- *Involved with the main street grants 15 years ago and have been a real estate agent. It can be difficult to put money together; bridge loans are not easy.*
- *Hoping LPC will consider whether a sponsor can afford to make the investment without public funding. Concern based on the application that a large amount of the funds will go to one developer, want to ensure the money is spread around.*
- *Placemaking: greatest asset is Lift Bridge Book Shop.*
- *Idea of triangulation: things close up at 5 pm in the afternoon, why can't we have a good restaurant, then go to the bookstore, go get ice cream.*
- *Owner of the Lift Bridge Book Shop: heaviness of businesses, bridge closure has been extremely difficult, understand LPC's concern that we want more dining, but we have seen that restaurants haven't survived. Have a great marketable future as Brockport. When you're picking projects, consider the community and their spending power. People who live here don't have the expendable money, would love to be open later, but can't do that, can't afford that because not enough traffic. Having a vibrant Main Street for businesses to continue to be here, how can we support that? Love it here, so much to work with, and being able to be here and have a voice.*
- *Fine balance between residents and students, but also the homeowners that support and sustain us. Consider their needs.*
- *Local real estate agent: large chunk of money in the current proposal going to one investor that has not had a high success rate of follow up and completion. It's the everyday people that represent the community. Existing apartments that are currently rented and make them into new nicer apartments seem like frivolous spending.*
- *Concern was raised about whether the projects in the application would receive priority or were already accepted.*

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- *It was emphasized that all projects, including those within the NY Forward application, will need to resubmit a proposal. All projects, whether in the application or not, are on an equal playing field. The LPC will evaluate all of them equally.*
 - *Project team detailed that longevity is very important to these projects, that they are implemented and intend to stay. Criteria includes feasibility and implementability.*
- *Park Ave Bed & Breakfast Owner: Concerned with a boundary area, it seems to be all at one spot, why you're not looking north of the canal and down Main Street, doesn't need to be all in the areas that is designated. Tough situation overall, community that is middle class or going to lower middle class, a lot of transient and substandard housing right on Main Street; streets and sidewalks are busted up; community is seasonal (dies in the wintertime).*
- *So happy to know who is on this committee, very confident that you're going to work hard and maintain the character of the Village. Urged committee to consider whether projects are going to bring in money and increase our tax base, there are a lot of things that would be nice, growing businesses is important, but tax base is really important.*
- *The Committee was asked to consider the implications larger projects could have on the local tax base.*
- *Does the committee have any authority to override the tax authority? Would the assessed value of a \$4 million project be \$4 million?*