

Brockport Public Workshop #1

Brockport NY Forward

Seymour Public Library

May 8, 2025, at 6:00 PM

Meeting Overview

The Village of Brockport held its first Downtown Revitalization Workshop as part of the NY Forward planning process. The village has been awarded \$4.5 million from New York State to plan and implement transformative projects in downtown Brockport over a 7-month planning period.

NY Forward Program Goals

The NY Forward program is designed to invigorate and enliven downtowns in New York's villages and hamlets. The state has established seven key goals:

- Enhance downtown living and quality of life
- Create an active downtown with a mix of uses
- Provide diverse employment opportunities
- Create diverse housing options for all income levels
- Provide public spaces that serve all ages and abilities
- Encourage reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Grow the local property tax base

Project Team Structure

- **Local Planning Committee (LPC):** A diverse group of local community members selected to guide Brockport's planning process and evaluate proposed projects. The committee is co-chaired by Mayor Margaret Blackman and Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Co-chair Steve Mowers, with 11 additional members representing various community stakeholders.
- **State Agencies:** Representatives from multiple New York State (NYS) agencies will be involved in the planning process, including the Department of State, Empire State Development, NYS Homes and Community Renewal, the Governor's Office, and NYSERDA.
- **Consultant Team:** Led by Colliers Engineering & Design with supporting partners including Sustainable Planning & Design, Camoin Associates, Prospect Hill Consulting, and STC Design.

Planning Process Timeline

The planning process began in May 2025 and will conclude in November 2025 with key milestones including:

- June 13-July 17, 2025: Open Call for Projects

- July-October 2025: LPC evaluation of proposed projects
- November 2025: Strategic Investment Plan submission to NYS
- Spring 2026: Grant awards announcement (tentative)
- 2026-2029+: Project implementation

Vision and Strategic Framework

The workshop unveiled Brockport's vision: **"It's all in Brockport!"** The vision emphasizes Brockport as a home, destination, and family-friendly college town that works for all residents, visitors, and students. Key themes include expanding affordable housing, reinvigorating waterfront properties, and establishing universal design standards for accessibility.

Four Downtown Revitalization Strategies:

1. *Support development of diverse housing options* - Focus on affordable, accessible housing on Main Street and near the Erie Canal
2. *Improve walkability and multimodal access* - Invest in universal design principles for downtown infrastructure
3. *Strengthen identity as a waterfront community* - Position Brockport as the premier inclusive waterfront community along the Erie Canal
4. *Enhance Brockport's sense of place* - Reinforce Victorian character through streetscape enhancements and public art

Proposed Public Projects

The workshop reviewed six potential public realm projects:

1. **Main Street Streetscape Enhancements:** New lighting, pavers, bike racks, and accessibility improvements
2. **Clinton Street Streetscape:** Improved sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping connecting Main Street to Smith Street
3. **Merchant Street Plaza:** Convert a portion to pedestrian-only promenade for outdoor dining and events
4. **Canalfront Amphitheater:** Create accessible venue at Brockport Welcome Center
5. **Monika Andrews Children's Park:** Replace woodchip surface with accessible rubberized surface and new accessible playground equipment
6. **Brockport Loop Trail:** Stone dust path connecting SUNY Brockport, Erie Canalway Trail, and downtown and linking to the recently constructed community boathouse and pedestrian bridge

Project Eligibility and Requirements

Eligible project types include public improvement projects, new development/rehabilitation of existing buildings, small project grant fund initiatives, and branding/marketing projects. The LPC will evaluate projects based on six criteria: eligibility, alignment with state and local goals, project readiness, cost effectiveness, catalytic effect, and community co-benefits.

Community Engagement

The meeting included interactive breakout sessions (summarized below) where community members provided input on the vision statement, downtown revitalization strategy, and proposed public projects. Ongoing engagement opportunities will include pop-up events, LPC meetings, public workshops, and project sponsor meetings.

Next Steps

- **June 10:** LPC Meeting 2 and Open Call Info Session (location TBD)
- **June 13:** Open Call application period begins
- **Website:** BrockportForward.com is now live for ongoing feedback and updates

The meeting concluded with a public comment period, and attendees were encouraged to stay engaged throughout the planning process as the community works toward implementing transformative downtown improvements.

Breakout Sessions

Below is a summary of feedback received from the community during the breakout sessions.

Session 1: Vision & Goals

Housing

- Need more opportunities for homeownership
 - Middle class families move out of the Village because they cannot find housing
 - Need more available + affordable family housing
- Missing Middle Housing (medium-density housing, between single-family homes and high-rise apartments)
- Condo-style development is not renter friendly
- Vacant lot / Clinton St. (*old Fry's garage*) opportunity for housing project

Downtown Revitalization & Economic Development

- Need for more viable commercial properties on Main Street.
- Some Main Street Buildings are in poor condition, need enhancement. Storefronts could be rebuilt.
- New opportunities for downtown:
 - Dinner theater
 - Bittersweet store (existing business considering relocating to Brockport)
 - Bakery
 - Downtown Inn / Hotel

- Shops / dining → something that appeals to students/university community to draw them to downtown and make them aware of what is available
- Clinton Street/Canal area in need of redevelopment
- Strand theater could be an opportunity for live performances
- Concern about public funding being awarded to property owners who have not maintained the property they have. They haven't demonstrated their commitment to this community.

Public Space & Placemaking

- Need more placemaking activities to enhance public spaces along the canal, such as State Street area, Merchant Street
 - Enhance the experience of walking from the Visitor Center/Amphitheater to Main Street
- It would be nice to rehabilitate the north side of the canal as a public space with a boardwalk and picnic tables.
- Aesthetic view of Brockport from the canal (backs of buildings) is not a good first impression
- Custom House offers outdoor seating which is great but compresses the space for walking.
- Light Rail opportunities?
- Create spaces that are more kid-focused

Community Services, Youth & Family

- Need for childcare
- Need for more things for families to do. Family-friendly events draw people in
- Kids hang out space / community center / multi-use space / multi-age spaces
 - Indoor Community Space
- Need dining options that:
 - have character
 - are healthy
 - are affordable
 - offer variety
 - have outdoor components / comfortable for kids

Equity, Inclusion & Support

- Invest in those who invest in others
 - Projects should be prioritized if they focus on caring / supporting the most vulnerable
 - Bring up the whole community
 - Support / improve access to non-profits & service organizations
 - Focus on support for residents

- Go beyond the economic benefit

Mobility & Accessibility

- Walkability
- Accessibility (especially for businesses)
- Downtown not accessible – sidewalks are bad
- Waterfront is not accessible (*stairs or cobblestones*)
- Welcome Center is hidden
→ accessibility for seniors is difficult
- Improve the visibility of crosswalks
- Suggestion: extend boundary north to roundabout, south to bed and breakfast

Green Infrastructure

- General green scaping
- There were supposed to be trees on Market Street, addition of trees would be helpful here
- Trees on Main Street are a huge asset to aesthetic appeal and heat management. Strive to keep them.

Public Projects

Merchant Street Promenade

- High priority, complements Clinton Street well. The view of Brockport from the canal/trail is not reflective of what Brockport is or has to offer. This would change that perception. Could be similar to Schoen Place, Pittsford.
- Need to beautify this view to draw people in.
- Concern about feasibility, getting property owners to buy in, potential loss of parking
 - Maintain parking access for existing apartments
 - Could additional parking be utilized north of canal?
 - Determine Canal Corporation property ownership
 - Need to consider parking needs in the future
- Elements:
 - Add plazas, open space, more green, less pavement
 - Lots of opportunity for supportive businesses (tackle shop, equipment rentals, etc.)
 - Consider fishing dock/pier to the west
 - Increase canal access with docks/launches here
 - Informal events (markets)
 - Comfortable seating looking at canal
 - Opportunities for higher end restaurants (48 Merchant), which some feel is needed. Concern with distance to church and liquor license. (200 feet)
 - Like pavilion/covered area idea
 - Plantings

- Want enhanced accessibility at the connection to Main Street
- Lighting
- Ensure four-season access
- Need public bathroom

Enhance Clinton Street Streetscape

- Complements:
 - Potential 85 Clinton Street – Incubator space, four seasons market, pop-ups, bathrooms
 - Replace eyesore apartments on south side between Utica + Alley
 - Smith Street bridge improvements – ped access all the way over. Currently all designated car space
 - This is a very important component to connect the new bridge to Main Street
- Potential elements:
 - Dog park along canal
 - Public market space in lot next to Red Jug Pub
 - Public art
 - Make pretty + useful [empty parcel along canal near Smith Street]
 - Parking opportunity at 85 Clinton Street
 - Seafood restaurant
 - More signage, sidewalks, Clinton Street theme
- Considerations:
 - Surrounding homes in disrepair, will be a barrier to investment

Enhance Main Street Streetscape and Accessibility

- Potential Elements:
 - Bike racks on every block, interesting design, allow for adaptive 3 wheel bikes to lock
 - Public art
 - Ped crossings are scary – need improvement
 - Ramps to go into storefronts
 - Upgrade building facades, but not too much conformity
 - Traffic calming needed, especially near Village Hall
 - Green infrastructure/stormwater management with greenery improvements and curbing/bump outs
 - Public bathrooms
 - Dog watering stations
 - Recycling
 - Places to sit and mingle
- Considerations:
 - Taking away parking is not helpful
 - King Street is dark and scary

- Please keep the trees!!
- Even though sidewalks were shaved, still dangerous
- Who will maintain improvements? Long term costs?
- Existing tree buffers have damage from cars—maintenance concerns
- Beware of “clutter”—too many benches, planters, etc.—that impede access for people with walkers, wheelchairs
- Market Street needs trees back
- Include north side of the bridge and make it cohesive
- Bridge crossings are dangerous for pedestrians

Create Accessible Venue at Brockport Welcome Center

- Great idea!
- See Seneca Falls – Women’s Hall of Fame
- Welcome Center is well used for events in the summer—High Priority
- Potential Elements:
 - Public art / pavement colors to increase sense of place
 - Accessible parking (including vans/lifts)
 - Accessible access to canal level
 - Bike shop, bike racks
 - Pop-up locations for food trucks
 - Add elements of play – hopscotch, game patterns, etc.
 - Leave some grass
 - Do something at old Fazool’s
- Considerations:
 - What about impact on parking? Parking needed to support activities
 - Who is the public space for? Events?
 - Is the ground polluted from old gas station?
 - No gazebo—don’t block the view

Brockport Loop Trail

- Potential Elements:
 - Need picnic tables, signs around town pointing here
 - Emergency lights/call boxes?
 - Park at Smith Street entrance (or maybe it could be smaller parklet/gateway spot?)
 - Signage (wayfinding, distance)
 - Bathrooms
 - Benches along path
 - Beautify facilities building (fence, mural wall)
 - Selfie stations with Brockport identity
 - Accessible access to canal

- Considerations:
 - Concern about ownership of the land and ongoing maintenance requirements
 - Brownfield/polluted at Smith Street entrance? [Village since confirmed this was remediated]
 - Feels like low priority - may be better opportunity for college—need parking + access from Holley Street
 - Wheelchair accessibility – loop would get a lot of use from local agencies supporting individuals with disabilities

Monika Andrews Children's Park

- Not a high priority, lesser return on investment compared to other projects, there are other funding sources for parks
- Potential Elements
 - Trees
 - Bike Rack
 - Re-pave parking lot
 - Privacy screen from neighbors
 - Splash pad
 - Signage
 - Accessible furniture
 - Fencing for safety

Other Notes & Implementation Feedback

- Village has abandoned Victorian Village
- Gather students to direct residents to input / feedback, not just week of / last day
- Extend canal area
- Focus on biggest impact areas
- Consider ferry / train space (re: increased traffic)
- Regarding branding – the Village app is VERY helpful and works well—build on that!
- Indoor skating rink in boathouse during winter
- Winter destination