Village of Oriskany

APPLICATION FOR DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE
Basic Information

- REDC Region: Mohawk Valley
- Municipality Name: Village of Oriskany
- Downtown Name: Central Village
- County Name: Oneida County
- Primary Contact: Alexis W. Albright, Village Clerk
- Primary Email: clerk@oriskany.org
- Secondary Email: mayor@oriskany.org

Vision for Downtown

Our vision for downtown revitalization is a prosperous, well-maintained mixed use neighborhood that encourages walkability, sustainability, and growth.
Justification

Originally founded as the Oneida village of Oriska during the eighteenth century, Oriskany is nestled between the cities of Utica and Rome in the heart of the Mohawk Valley.

Located at the confluence of Mohawk River and the Oriskany Creek, the village has seen centuries of transportation initiatives that connected it to communities across New York State. From overland trade routes, to the Erie Canal, and then to the Barge Canal and State Routes 69 and 49, Oriskany is a crossroads of the Mohawk Valley Region.

Modern day residents of Oriskany enjoy a tight-knit small town atmosphere with economic opportunity right outside their door. The investment of state infrastructure near Oriskany means that our residents can enjoy a short commute to major employers in diverse industries, such as:

- MetLife Insurance
- Bonide Chemical
- FedEx
- Cornell Cooperative Extension
Oriskany has a strong reputation for providing a safe, friendly community with a sought-after public school district. Residents of Oriskany know their neighbors and support our community organizations, businesses, and institutions. The Downtown Revitalization Initiative would allow us to give back to a community that has held tight through thick and thin while providing opportunities for growth and improvement.

Through the Great Recession and now the COVID-19 Pandemic, Oriskany residents have joined together to keep our community strong by shopping local and fundraising for our community groups. We would like to provide our residents with the tools to return more businesses to our downtown, improve walkability, live greener lives, and make our public services stronger for a new generation.
Boundaries of the Proposed DRI Area

The DRI would be focused on the “crossroads” of Oriskany, these being the intersection of River Street with Utica Street, our main street, and State Route 69, which crosses through the village parallel to Utica Street along the route of the Old Erie Canal.

This focus corridor would be extended from Green Street on the West to Elm Street on the East to encompass the majority of our businesses, parks, and community organizations. It would be extended at two points: south on Valley Road to encompass the village highway garage and then south on Ridge Road to encompass the Little League Park.
Past Investment, Future Investment Potential

The proposed DRI area is the hub of public life in Oriskany. The Village Green, at the corner of River and Utica Streets, is bordered by the Oriskany Public Library, Oriskany Post Office, a corner store selling a variety of household goods, a hair salon, a print shop, and a pub. The area also includes many multi-family properties and several of the buildings are mixed use with dwellings above. Just around the corner is another mixed use building that houses a physical therapy office, hair salon, and apartments. Across the street are two more mixed use buildings devoted to an auto garage and a film studio. Just up the road there is also a pizzeria and newly reopened diner.

This area would benefit from increased parking, improved curb appeal, and bicycle infrastructure to make these businesses and services more accessible to residents and passerby alike. The village government has recently been working to maintain the trees on the green. In recent years, the sidewalks have also been improved. Two electric car charging stations will soon be installed at the Oriskany Public Library, but more funding could expand parking throughout the Central Village and increase electric charging availability. The public library is currently undergoing renovations for new windows, new flooring, and new lighting through a mixture of grant awards, village contributions, private donations, and fundraising.

Adjacent to this area is the Oriskany Municipal Building and Fire House. Built in 1968, the building is lacking many of the modern conveniences and accessibility standards that would help it better serve the community. The modest three stall garage and 2.5 story building houses the village offices, fire department, police department, and court. Ideally, a larger facility would be built for the fire department, allowing the other departments to spread out in the existing facility. The current building would benefit from energy saving updates, like new HVAC, as well as renovations to bring the building up to ADA standards. Installing infrastructure for higher speed internet would also help village services reach residents faster and through newer communications channels, like teleconferencing.
Recent or Impending Job Growth

Several large employers have come into the area or are expanding locally within a 30 minute commute radius. Some recent additions in nearby communities have been the Runnings Distribution Center in Rome and the Amazon Fulfillment Center in Frankfort.

Mohawk Valley Health System is also completing the construction of their Downtown Utica Hospital project, which will expand and modernize medical services in the Mohawk Valley. Cree’s Wolfspeed Mohawk Valley FAB chip plant in Marcy is also nearing completion.

With the recent shift to work-from-home arrangements, Oriskany also offers an attractive location for telework in the Northeast. Housing is affordable for the conveniences at hand. With close access to the NYS Thruway, commuting by car is an easy, straightforward trip for occasional trips to the office, wherever that may be. Rail stations in Rome and Utica make Albany, Syracuse, Buffalo, New York City, and even Boston just a train ride away. The newly remodelled Hancock International Airport in Syracuse offers access to locales further afield.

Quality of Life

The Central Village area of Oriskany has enjoyed mixed-use development throughout its history. Though businesses and residences have suffered from a lack of parking, strong walkability has helped keep them viable. Parking lots with electric car charging stations would help open these residential areas to commuters who want amenities close to home, but may need to travel into the office on occasion. The new rise of digital commuting makes living in a walkable community like Oriskany a desirable choice. It would also offer visitors a place to explore while charging their vehicles. Since the
pandemic, the nearby Oriskany Museum has already seen an uptick in visitors who choose to picnic in Trinkaus Park rather than stop at a Thruway rest stop.

Above: Mixed use buildings have been a community staple for over a century on River Street in Oriskany, New York (Oriskany Museum Collection, c. 1920).

A more walkable community would benefit both renters and homeowners. Improving zoning categories to include a specific mixed-use designation (instead of the patchwork currently in use) would streamline investment in historic structures for property owners who wish to reincorporate retail or dining space. By encouraging mixed-use of available building stock, we can maintain a historic charm while embracing the original intended uses of many of our buildings: businesses at ground level and residential space above.

Oriskany currently has a variety of housing options available, ranging from studio apartments to multi-bedroom homes. The Central Village area has single family homes, apartments, and multiplexes. Less than one mile from the Central area, there is senior living available through the newly renovated Eastern Star Campus, a skilled nursing facility that also provides independent senior apartments. The campus also operates a child care facility. Parents can also send their children to the Universal Pre-Kindergarten program at Oriskany Central Schools.

Quality of life in Oriskany could be greatly improved through wider access to fresh foods. Encouraging the development of a small grocery store or agricultural cooperative
would fulfill this need. A storefront that previously housed a small grocery store is currently vacant in the Central Village area of Oriskany. A combination of public and private investment could be instrumental in returning this resource to Oriskany.

Providing infrastructure to host farmer’s markets during the growing season could also improve access to our local agricultural resources while opening a new market for nearby farmers, bakers, and artisans.

Left: Though now vacant, this mixed use building at the corner of Utica and Marino Streets was operated as a grocery store by two different owners from the 1920s until its closure in 2018. (Google Street View Oct. 2018.) Right: The Fiore family, pictured, operated the store as an IGA grocery store throughout much of the twentieth century. (Oriskany Museum Collection, c. 1930)

**Supportive Local Policies**

The Village of Oriskany has made it a priority to invest in its public spaces. The Oriskany Public Library, the Oriskany Museum and the Oriskany Fire & Hose Company are housed in municipal-sponsored buildings with taxpayer support. The community also maintains Trinkaus Park, which includes a playground, tennis courts, and public memorials.

Though not formalized, local policies are geared toward supporting walkability, especially for our local students, many of whom walk to school. This includes painting
crosswalks before school starts every September and ensuring sidewalks are kept in good condition year round.

In March 2020, the Village of Oriskany completed and submitted its NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, during which it reaffirmed that the “Oriskany Police Department does not discriminate or profile on the basis of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, caste, or creed.” Oriskany strives to be a welcoming community for all people.

Public Support

An open house was held at the Oriskany Museum on September 11, 2021 inviting residents to submit ideas for projects and improvements. We received input by phone, text message, in person, and email. We also talked to leaders in our non-profit partners, such as the Oriskany Fire & Hose Company, the Oriskany Public Library, and the Oriskany Museum. Local leaders and residents alike are committed to improving our community and investing in our future.

Transformative Opportunities & Readiness

Some transformative opportunities in our community include:

Public:

- Village of Oriskany Municipal Building $1.5 million
  - Rehabilitate the existing municipal building for village offices, village court, police department, and community meeting space, adding ADA compliance/accessibility, energy efficient lighting, modern internet networking, and updated HVAC.
Village of Oriskany, New York

Downtown Revitalization Initiative

- Oriskany Fire Department $1 million
  - Partner with the Oriskany Fire & Hose Company to acquire land and construct a new building suitable for the size and demands of modern fire fighting equipment with room for community events and fundraisers.
    - Previously planned and drafted

- Oriskany Public Library $1 million
  - Structural and systems improvements (roof, HVAC)
  - Increase accessibility with automatic doors
  - Expand the building for a new children’s wing
    - Blueprints drawn and planned
Expand parking with additional outdoor lighting

- Oriskany Highway Garage $750,000
  - Energy and HVAC updates
  - Improve drainage and flood mitigation

- Oriskany Museum $1 million
  - Increase accessibility/ADA compliance with a new access ramp, automatic doors and improved signage.
  - Update to energy efficient HVAC and lighting.
  - Replace roof and windows with additional UV filters.
  - Construct a new wing which would increase exhibit and presentation space to allow for community gatherings, art exhibits, and educational presentations.
  - Outdoor-accessible bathrooms for community events in Trinkaus Park.

- Trinkaus Park $1 million
- Add additional sidewalks, lighting, parking, and EV charging stations.
- Update playground equipment to be safer and more inclusive.
  - Add fencing for playground barrier near highway
- Add additional sidewalks to make the park more accessible to senior citizens and those with mobility aids.
- Increase use of energy efficient lighting for memorials and tennis courts
- Weather-proof outdoor sound system for park events
- Outdoor stations for hand sanitizing and pet waste disposal

**Little League Park**

- Increase parking and accessibility
- Fishing dock and flood mitigation

**Throughout the Central Village**

- Improve and repair sidewalks and curbing
  - Places for improvement: Lansing St, Route 69
- Crosswalk at the intersection of River Street and Route 69
- Increase bicycle parking and establish bicycle lanes
- Add additional trees and landscaping, especially green infrastructure to help with stormwater and run-off.
- Signage for village entrances and streets
- Sidewalks for Valley Road
- Updated electrical hook ups
Opportunities to Be Explored During Planning $1 million

- Economic Development
  - Partner for possible investment in currently vacant storefronts.
  - Partnerships with local businesses to increase accessibility, curb appeal, and parking.
  - Introduce and expand solar panel usage for municipal sites

- Community Development Needs
  - Purchase vacant lot adjacent to municipal building for increased public parking
    - Install electric charging stations, street lights, curbing, landscaping, sidewalk repair and water/electric connections for outdoor community events.
  - Demolition of collapsed mill building in the center of the village.
  - Acquisition and rehabilitation or demolition of residential “zombie properties.”

Administrative Capacity
The Village of Oriskany currently operates seven village departments across four municipal buildings with the help of salaried staff and dedicated public servants. The village office and the Board of Trustees regularly oversee contracts for road paving, sidewalk maintenance, building improvements, and village services, such as lighting and trash hauling.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
The municipally run and operated Trinkaus Park near the Oriskany Museum is an ideal location to install electric vehicle charging stations and would provide a complementary location to the two ports already scheduled to be installed at the Oriskany Public Library. If parking was expanded, three spaces could be used for electric vehicle charging stations.

If parking can be expanded near the Oriskany Municipal Building, this would also be a central location well suited to electric charging stations.