2021 DOWNTOWN REVITALIATION INITIATIVE

Opportunities for Transformation
Ringing in the future of Watervliet

REDC Region: Capital Region
Municipality Name: City of Watervliet
Downtown Name: 19th Street Corridor
County Name: Albany County
Applicant Contact: Mayor Charles Patricelli
Applicant Contact Email: cpatricelli@watervliet.com
In 2020, I was honored to be elected Mayor of the City of Watervliet. My responsibility is to captain a ship that is already travelling in the right direction and is crewed by a dedicated group of residents, elected officials, and City staff.

Our City has a historical fabric of being a working-class community with deep pride and an unwavering sense of community. We all like to think and reminisce about what Watervliet was like when we were kids and what a great place it was to grow up in. Such a place can still exist, but we must acknowledge that we cannot accomplish this by going backward; we must move forward. We want Watervliet to be a destination; a destination where people choose to live and raise their children and where development dollars will continue to be invested.

As a City we have taken a disciplined approach to community development - plan, implement, repeat - with each new plan building off the success of the last. This discipline has resulted in a list of publicly vetted, shovel-ready projects ripe for DRI investment. By infusing these projects with funding, we will be able to attract additional interest from the business community and potential new homeowners and residents.

This is an exciting time for the City of Watervliet. Watervliet's 19th Street and adjacent areas are prime for revitalization, with strong community support, an influx of transformative public sector investments, a growing regional market, and a renewed interest from the private sector.

Thanks to the input and involvement of the DRI public engagement process, we know where we’re going and we know how to get there. The strategic vision and transformative opportunities laid out in this plan will catalyze the investments necessary to elevate Watervliet out of the shadows of our larger Capital Region cities.

Sincerely,
Mayor Charles Patricelli
2021 DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the following individuals whose time, input, expertise, and vision helped inform this application.

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Todd Drake, Developer
Paul Huban, Property Owner
Spiros & Mike Kirtaglou, Property Owners
Tom & Dan Mancino, Business Owner
Paul Murphy, Watervliet Housing Authority
Jim Toomajian, Business Owner
VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

The City of Watervliet is a gateway community to the greater Capital District, with direct, easy access from I-787, cross-Hudson connections via the Congress Street Bridge, and east-west connections to the Albany International Airport, Latham, Colonie, and Troy via Route 2, which runs along 19th Street within the City. The City of Watervliet’s historic growth has consistently been influenced by its locational advantage, serving as a hub for activity, trade, transportation, and commerce, due to its location along the Hudson River and, subsequently, the Erie Canal and the Troy and Schenectady Turnpike. Today, the City is expanding its alternate transportation choices, with CDTA constructing a new bus rapid transit (BRT) station at 19th Street and Second Avenue and extending to the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail (MHBHT) north along Broadway.

While in an ideal location, much of the City’s original Central Business District was lost when construction of I-787 encroached upon Broadway, negatively impacting the vitality of the adjacent streets and neighborhoods. The City seeks to re-establish its downtown by creating a defined commercial core along 19th Street, enhancing walkability, building on the recent alternate transportation initiatives, improving waterfront recreation and open space opportunities, encouraging a greater variety of housing options, and showcasing all that the City has to offer.

WATERVLIET IS PRIMED FOR DRI INVESTMENT

JUSTIFICATION

The proposed DRI area encompasses the City’s commercial and municipal core, its primary entrance from I-787, and its waterfront. Since the construction of I-787 and associated loss of the City’s historic commercial core, 19th Street and portions of Second Avenue have served as the activity hub. The surrounding residential areas influence the development of the commercial core and are, in turn, influenced by the main streets.

The proposed DRI area is the gateway to the City, residents and visitors arrive via I-787, Route 2 (19th Street), and the Congress Street Bridge. While the physical entry to Watervliet, the entry points lack a clearly recognized identity to welcome and draw additional visitors and investors.

The proposed DRI area offers the opportunity to build off the momentum of a series of planning and financial investments that the City has made in recent years, as well as recent renewed private sector investment. Notably, a new Price Chopper supermarket was developed in the center of the 19th Street corridor, which draws residents from not only Watervliet, but neighboring communities, such as Troy via the Congress Street Bridge. The DRI Plan would leverage these efforts by better defining the City’s current commercial core along 19th Street, improving the City’s image, enhancing connections to the waterfront, and creating improved business opportunities.

As a City of just over 10,000 and with a DRI area focused on a small, central portion of the City, the $10 million of DRI funding has the potential to make a significant impact on the community. Watervliet’s 19th Street and adjacent areas are prime for revitalization, with community support through recent planning processes, growth in the surrounding area, and a renewed interest from the private sector. The transformative opportunities identified below would entice further outside investment, spurring continued revitalization that can affect real change.
DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

BOUNDARIES OF THE PROPOSED DRI AREA

19th Street comprises the main commercial area of the City of Watervliet. The proposed DRI area extends from the railroad tracks that intersect 19th Street, to the west, to the Hudson River, to the east, to the City's municipal center on 15th Street, to the south, and the gateway to the City from I-787 at 23rd Street, to the north.
The City has a growing momentum for downtown revitalization, building on the City’s continued planning and fiscal investments, renewed private sector investment, and planned and anticipated public and private outlays.

**19TH STREET CORRIDOR STRATEGIC PLAN (2003)**

The 19th Street Corridor Strategic Plan was initiated to identify improvements needed for the City to more effectively compete in a regional market and meet the needs of its businesses and residents. Recommendations included fostering economic development along 19th Street and 2nd Avenue and developing the two roadways as an attractive, vital mixed-use district. Notable action identified in the plan that have been completed by the City include improvements to the 19th Street streetscape, establishment of a Business Assistance Program, and adoption of new zoning to encourage commercial development.

**LWRP (2006)**

The City’s Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan focused on identifying both a vision for its waterfront and the implementation strategies necessary to achieve that vision. Since its adoption, the City has proactively worked to advance the vision of the LWRP and was recently awarded additional funding from the New York State Department of State (NYSDOS) to prepare an update to this 2006 document.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2010)**

The City of Watervliet released its first Comprehensive Plan in 2010, which identified nine goals to meet the City’s vision of remaining a good place to live, work, and visit today and in the future, in addition to specific action items and associated costs. Many of the action items identified in the plan have been implemented.

**CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (2011)**

The Watervliet Climate Action Plan established the City’s goal to reduce emission levels 10% below its 2008 baseline by 2014, and a stretch goal of a 20% reduction in that same period. To meet this goal, the City identified a series of strategies for near-term implementation and long-term planning, including energy efficiency, renewables, waste recycling, and vehicle fleet measures. The City has subsequently reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by over 23% since 2008.

**WATERVLIET BICYCLE MASTER PLAN (2013)**

The Watervliet Bicycle Master Plan identifies a series of bicycle routes/improvements that cover the entire City and provide access to each residential neighborhood and key destinations. The plan also evaluates alternative trail segments to connect to the MHBHT. The extension of the MHBHT 100+ mile north along Broadway to 23rd Street is under construction and was a key improvement identified in the plan.

**I-787/HUDSON WATERFRONT CORRIDOR STUDY (2018)**

This CDTA study of the greater I-787 corridor identified strategies to revamp transportation infrastructure, enhance waterfront access, manage travel demand, and facilitate smart growth and economic development, in addition to noting those initiatives that have been advanced to enhance multimodal access to the waterfront within the corridor. In Watervliet, this includes the planned BRT line and the MHBHT connection.

**HOUSING STUDY (2019)**

The Housing Study established priorities related to improving the City’s housing stock; increasing the availability of safe, quality, affordable housing; supporting future housing-related programs; and general community planning purposes. Key recommendations included continue home rehabilitation; deploy homeowner programs; coordinate revitalization efforts and spending programs; and explore complementary housing-focused funding programs.
The City of Watervliet has invested over $15 million in municipal buildings, infrastructure, housing, parks and recreation, and economic development projects in the last five years.

PUBLIC FACILITIES
The City has invested over $2.6 million in municipal building upgrades, construction, and rehabilitation including additions and general building upgrades to the Robert A. Fahr Watervliet Public Library and Watervliet Senior Center and repairs to the former North Reformed Dutch Church, which now houses the Watervliet Historical Society and Museum.

INFRASTRUCTURE
Watervliet has been proactive in its housing rehabilitation programs; over $1.9 million of CDBG housing rehabilitation grants and HUD’s HOME program funding has been invested in residential buildings throughout the City. Along and adjacent to 19th Street, five homeowners have received housing rehabilitation funding in the past six years, totaling over $81,000.

HOUSING
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PARKS & RECREATION
The City’s investments of approximately $2 million in parks and recreation improvements have ranged from planting trees to $1.3 million in investments to facilitate the planned Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail connection and approximately $650,000 in improvements to several City parks. These park improvements include, notably, $575,000 in stabilization and improvements to Hudson Shores Park.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Watervliet has invested over $1 million through Main Street and microenterprise funding to enhance and grow existing businesses and through economic development initiatives to start up new businesses in the City. Along 19th Street, the City has invested over $82,000 in small businesses through its microenterprise program, including two local salons and a funeral home.

“Concrete, steel and fiber-optic cable are the essential building blocks of the economy. Infrastructure enables trade, powers businesses, connects workers to their jobs, creates opportunities for struggling communities and protects the nation from an increasingly unpredictable natural environment... infrastructure is the backbone of a healthy economy.”
ROBERT PUENTES,
Brookings Institute
Our goal is to continue to develop and implement plans that make Watervliet one of the Capital Region's most desirable communities to live, work, and invest in.

INFLUX OF COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION

Several commercial plazas have been developed proximate to the 19th Street & Second Avenue intersection. These include a Stewart’s gas station/convenience store and Pioneer Bank at the northeast corner, a Rite Aid Pharmacy at the northwest corner, and a plaza containing multiple retailers, a fast food restaurant, and a medical office facility at the southeast corner. The planned BRT station will complement these recent investments.

HOUSING REHABILITATION

Local investors and developers have taken note of the availability of affordable residential housing in Watervliet, and house “flipping” activities are on the rise. In just the past five years, over 240 building permits have been issued for housing rehabilitation/alteration projects in the DRI area. Several two-family residences have been converted to one-family homes, encouraging increased homeownership rates.

NEW BUSINESSES

There is renewed interest from commercial tenants to open businesses along the 19th Street corridor. Thirty-seven (37) commercial properties in the proposed DRI area have been rehabilitated in the past five years, and several new businesses have opened along the corridor, including several facilitated by the City’s microenterprise program.

PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

Spurred, in part, by the City’s many recent physical investments and programmatic and regulatory changes, private investment in Watervliet has been increasing in recent years, particularly along 19th Street. Zoning changes have facilitated an influx of new commercial development on both 19th Street and Second Avenue; new businesses have been attracted as a result of the improved streetscape along 19th Street and availability of public funds for small businesses. As the greater Capital District sees a continued uptick in investment, Watervliet’s relatively affordable housing market has attracted new owners, as well as owner/investor interest in rehabilitation/construction.

NEW DOWNTOWN SUPERMARKET

In 2013, Price Chopper began redevelopment of the former St. Patrick’s Church site in the center of the 19th Street corridor. The supermarket, which opened in 2015, serves Watervliet and adjacent communities, including Troy residents who traverse the Congress Street Bridge to access the supermarket. Additional commercial pad sites are currently being marketed along 19th Street.

OVER 1,200 BUILDING PERMITS HAVE BEEN ISSUED IN THE DRI AREA SINCE 2015

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<th>Residential Rehab Projects</th>
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<th>Commercial New Construction/Addition Projects</th>
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FUTURE INVESTMENTS

The City of Watervliet is actively planning for and prioritizing future investments. In the past three years, the City has conducted studies of the City’s water system, sewer system, combined sewer overflow (CSO) separation potential, housing improvement needs, and tree inventory and management plan.

As a result of these planning efforts, the City was recently awarded more than $6 million in grants, including $3 million for water treatment plant improvements to improve water quality, approximately $1.3 million for a CSO separation grant; $540,000 for a sewer lateral replacement program for homeowners; a waterline replacement on 9th Avenue between 16th and 19th Street; $500,000 for shoreline stabilization and improvements to Hudson Shores Park; and a road repaving project.

Several physical changes are also anticipated. These include completion of the BRT station at 19th Street and Second Avenue and the Mohawk-Hudson Hike-Bike Trail connection along Broadway, in addition to constructing a dog park at Clinton Park. Continued private investment in housing rehabilitation and additional commercial development at the Price Chopper site on 19th Street is also expected to continue.

A GROWING ECONOMY

RECENT OR IMPENDING JOB GROWTH

There are currently 1,749 jobs in the City of Watervliet. While the number of jobs in the City have decreased slightly in the last decade, approximately half of the existing jobs earn more than $3,333 per month. The job sectors most prevalent in the City are manufacturing (21%), educational services (15%) and retail (13%). One significant manufacturing employer in the City is the Watervliet Arsenal, which, in September 2019, announced it would be installing new machines in its quarter-mile long “Big Gun Shop” manufacturing facility to increase cannon production capacity.

Given Watervliet’s easy accessibility to the greater Capital Region, employment growth in the greater region presents the potential to incur local benefits in Watervliet. Notably, the NYS Department of Labor (NYSDOL) projects that long-term occupational employment in the Capital Region is expected to increase to 668,930 by 2026, with an average of 74,230 annual job openings. With 90% of Watervliet residents commuting out of the City for work, these new job opportunities pose incredible potential for Watervliet with its abundant, varied housing options, safe, compact, and accessible downtown, and improved transit connections via the planned BRT Hub at the intersection of 19th Street and Second Avenue.
QUALITY OF LIFE POLICIES

The City of Watervliet has a number of policies in place that increase the livability and quality of life of the downtown, including comprehensive plans, modern zoning codes, the use of local land banks, climate smart policies, complete streets plans, and transit-oriented development (TOD).

As described above, the City's first ever Comprehensive Plan was developed in 2010, which presents goals, objectives, guidelines, and policies for the immediate and long range protection, enhancement, growth, and community development. In 2013, the City developed a new zoning ordinance that brought Watervliet into alignment with the Comprehensive Plan. The updated zoning ordinance allows the City to move forward with a comprehensive, sustainable, and smart approach to economic development and allows for the building of a strong community for our residents. The City is now in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan to reflect its changing dynamics and needs.

The City of Watervliet and the Watervliet Housing Authority each have recently initiated self-sufficiency programs to transition residents into homeownership. The vision for the City program is to link homebuyers to vacant and/or “Zombie Properties,” and the Housing Authority program is designed to teach basic home budgeting skills to lift residents from poverty. The City envisions coordinating its homeownership program with the Watervliet Housing Authority and the Albany County Rural Housing Alliance.

ATTRACTIVENESS OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The proposed DRI area offers many of the features that make for a successful, inclusive downtown.

The Hudson River forms the eastern border of the DRI area. Within the DRI area, much of the Watervliet waterfront is occupied by the Mayor James Cavanaugh Hudson Shores Park, a 6.5-acre open space that includes a river walk, pavilion, boathouse, and portable dock. The Rusty Anchor, a popular barge restaurant that was docked at Hudson Shores Park beginning in 2006, broke away from its mooring and was significantly damaged during a 2019 storm; the restaurant, which was a major draw to the park for over a decade, has since closed. The park’s full potential is also impeded by its limited existing access; I-787 cut off the river from points west and, while potential improved connections to Hudson Shores Park have been explored, none have come to fruition. Safe pedestrian and bicycle access from 19th Street, in addition to improvements to the park itself to address flood damage and noise pollution, each of which are identified as transformative opportunities, below, would highlight and enhance this vital City asset.

The proposed DRI area offers many of the features that make for a successful, inclusive downtown.

Notably, the CDTA is constructing a new BRT station at the intersection of 19th Street and Second Avenue. The station will be a part of the CDTA’s River Corridor line, which is expected to begin operating in 2020 and will travel from downtown Albany to downtown Troy via Watervliet. In addition to providing connections to Cohoes, Menands, and Watervliet Waterfront, the CDTA is planning to construct a key missing link of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail along Broadway. The planned on-road inter-connect trail will travel north from Albany along the Hudson River to the south end of Watervliet where it will go under elevated I-787 via the Fourth Street Tunnel before continuing north along Broadway into the Village of Green Island. In addition, the City of Watervliet, with the City of Troy, is also in the process of studying the Congress Street Bridge. This Hudson River crossing is a vital direct connection between Watervliet’s 19th Street and the high-density housing found directly across the river. While already used by Troy residents to walk to the recently opened Price Chopper on 19th Street, potential improvements that come out of the Congress Street Bridge Plan will further enhance this asset.

As described in the “Private Investment” section, above, a Price Chopper supermarket was recently opened on the 19th Street corridor, which provides easy access to affordable, healthy food for residents and visitors of Watervliet and the greater Capital Region. Additional convenience stores, including Dollar General and Stewart’s, offer additional, easily accessible food access.

While known for its easy vehicular accessibility from I-787, Watervliet is becoming increasingly more accessible by alternate transportation modes.

The proposed DRI area and the greater City of Watervliet offers a safe, accessible, and diverse downtown with waterfront access, open space, affordable housing options, healthy and affordable food markets, and continually improving public transit and bike connections.

The city is building off the focus on sustainability, with the City developed the Watervliet Bicycle Master Plan and Intracity Connections Plan, which are guiding documents for the development of a network of bicycle routes and activity centers within the City, as well as links to the larger regional network. The City is now seeking to, through the DRI, encourage transit-oriented development around the planned BRT station that is being installed at the intersection of 19th Street and Second Avenue.

The proposed DRI area offers many of the features that make for a successful, inclusive downtown.
The City of Watervliet’s DRI application is a continuation of the ongoing planning processes that the City has been actively engaged in throughout the past more than a decade. These planning efforts, which are described in greater detail in the “Recent Planning Efforts” section, included extensive public engagement. In developing this application, the City led a robust public input process that included committee meetings, stakeholder interviews, site visits/walking tours, and public meetings. The residents and business owners of Hudson are deeply committed to the City’s advancement.

THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.”

- International Association for Public Participation

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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

DRI PLANNING COMMITTEE

The City appointed a Planning Committee to guide the DRI process. Members represented a broad spectrum of the community, including local residents, business owners, property owners, City officials, and representatives from the CDTA. Engagement with the DRI Planning Committee included a kick-off meeting to introduce the project, review market analysis data, present a summary of prior planning efforts, and identify issues and opportunities present in the City of Watervliet. The Planning Committee also participated in a walking tour of the proposed DRI area to identify key redevelopment sites and develop preliminary recommendations. The DRI Planning Committee subsequently refined the initial recommendations based on stakeholder input.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Early in the planning process, key stakeholders and investors were identified by the City. As part of the DRI planning process, in-person and phone interviews were held with the stakeholders to identify market interest and projects in the pipeline that may require or benefit from DRI investment, in addition to discussing and gauging interest on some of the preliminary DRI recommendations developed by the DRI Planning Committee. The stakeholder interviews were useful for gathering insights from a cross-section of stakeholders and guided the Planning Committee in refining the DRI recommendations.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

To gauge public interest in some of the projects being considered for DRI funding, the City, with assistance from The Chazen Companies presented the draft plan to the City Council and the public on several occasions between 2020 and 2021. The preliminary DRI “transformative opportunities” were presented to the public, with the majority of the meeting devoted to gathering public input on the recommendations.

PROJECT SUPPORT

As demonstrated in the letters of support provided in the Appendix to this application, the City of Watervliet’s DRI application has received broad support from a number of elected officials, local business owners, not-for-profit groups, and local residents.

The City of Watervliet has many of the qualities that make it a great place to live, work, and play. The City is well-positioned in a growing region, with easy access to major job centers and continually improving public transit and bike connections. The City has a safe, accessible, and diverse downtown that has seen an influx of both public and private investment. Watervliet also offers a variety of recreation amenities, waterfront access, and affordable housing.

Watervliet knows what is needed to take the City to the next level and recognizes that placemaking and capacity building are key to its future growth. The City has been investing in both of these necessary components to downtown revitalization and seeks DRI funding for transformative opportunities that will serve as catalysts for change.

Twenty potential catalyst projects were identified during the DRI planning process, which are described on the following pages. The opportunities are organized by the following goals that they seek to further:

- Complete 19th Street and downtown through placemaking
- Showcase Watervliet and expand downtown business support capacity
- Connect Watervliet and expand multimodal features
- Reconnect to the waterfront and expand recreation and open space opportunities
- Encourage homeownership and a greater variety of housing options

What makes a great downtown, and how do we get there?
CONGRESS STREET BRIDGE (CSB) INITIATIVES

CSB 1: Congress Street Bridge Share Use Path
CSB 2: 19th Street/2 Avenue Intersection Reconfiguration
CSB 3: Southern Connection (Tunnel) to Hudson Shores Park
CSB 4: 23rd Street Traffic Calming Improvements

TRANSFORMATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

1. Complete the 19th Street Streetscape Improvements
2. Establish a New Construction Fund to Encourage TOD at the BRT Site
3. Create a True Community Square by Connecting Clinton Park to 19th Street
4a. Potential Public Parking Behind New Infill Retail on 19th Street to Support Local Businesses and the TOD
4b. Potential Public Parking Garage Site with Ground Floor Retail Fronting Right-of-Ways to Support Local Businesses and the TOD
10a. Improve Pedestrian Connections between 19th Street, the I-787 Entrance to the City, and Hudson Shores Park
10b. Complete the Link Between the Planned Broadway Bike Path and Hudson Shores Park
11. Install New Bike Share Stations to Connect to Troy and Russel Sage
12. Connect Downtown to City Hall & Municipal Services by Improving Pedestrian Connections
13. Establish Watervliet’s Gateways with Lighting, Landscaping, and Wayfinding Features
14. Improve Hudson Shores Park and Expand Public Programming
15. Reopen a Destination Barge Restaurant at Hudson Shores Park
16. Enhance the Watervliet Pool for Year-Round Community Use
Since the loss of the City’s historic commercial core with I-787’s construction, 19th Street has served this role. However, the corridor is not well-defined and lacks some of the elements that make for a great downtown, including higher-density mixed-use development, community gathering spaces, and parking. In addition, while the City has implemented some improvements along 19th Street, including new lighting and bump outs, there is a continued need to make the heavily-trafficked roadway more inviting to pedestrians and bicyclists alike.

With significant investment in the new BRT station at 19th Street and Second Avenue, now is the time to build off this investment and encourage the type of development that the City would like to see. DRI funding (in addition to zoning changes, which are currently being explored as part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan update) can help incentivize transit-oriented development near this future transit hub. With several sites for sale or anticipated to be listed for sale in the future, providing DRI funding incentives to encourage higher-density, multi-family, mixed-use development will ensure that future development is consistent with the City’s vision for its future, including creating an easily accessible, diverse community with a variety of housing options.

Many business owners and developers cited the absence of parking downtown as a barrier to developing within the City of Watervliet. The existing small lots along the corridor make providing parking as part of any new development nearly impossible. To address this need, the City seeks to construct one or more parking lots and/or a garage in proximity to the 19th Street corridor. Any new parking must be consistent with the City’s Complete Streets goals, with ground floor retail and/or facade treatments to separate vehicle parking from the public right-of-way.

The City has been encouraging and supporting local business retention and expansion through a variety of programs. However, additional resources are needed to meet the financial and functional needs of small businesses. The City must also highlight its downtown and unique history to draw new consumers to the community, further adding local businesses, while also facilitating future private investment.

The establishment of a Facade Improvement Program would assist property owners with the DRI area with exterior improvements. Eligible projects could include facade improvements, ADA compliance, construction of new awnings, exterior building painting, walkway improvements, sign replacements, and projects designed to enhance the building’s aesthetic quality.

Showcase Watervliet and Expand Downtown Business Support Capacity

The City of Watervliet was in need of a marketing and branding campaign to promote its successes and differentiate itself as a unique, desirable Capital District community. DRI funding would generate tangible products (e.g., videos, print material, website, banners, etc.) that highlight Watervliet’s assets and announce that it is a community that is open to new investment, new residents, new businesses, and new development.

In 2019, the City of Watervliet was awarded $200,000 in CDBG funding to establish a Microenterprise Program. Additional funding through the DRI would allow these efforts to continue and expand. The funds will be available to small businesses and microenterprises in the DRI area for gap financing for expansions or new startups. Eligible participants would be required to complete an Entrepreneurial Training program before being eligible to apply for microenterprise grant funding.

DEVELOP & IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE MARKETING & BRANDING STRATEGY

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CREATE A MICROENTERPRISE/SMALL BUSINESS LOAN FUND

A market analysis prepared for the City of Watervliet identified that the City experiences sales leakage in all industry groups except for food and beverage stores. The City seeks to use these data to recruit those businesses that are needed locally. Business recruitment incentives would be available to those businesses that open within the DRI area. Eligible business categories would be identified based on the findings of the market analysis.
Connect Watervliet & Expand Multimodal Features

Several transformative improvements to better connect the City of Watervliet to the greater Capital Region are under development, including a new BRT station at 19th Street and Second Avenue and a new segment of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Trail along Broadway. The City is seeking DRI funding to facilitate projects that would encourage residents, visitors, and businesses to use these alternate transportation options and better connect Watervliet to the greater Capital District region.

Complete Pedestrian & Bike Connections to the Waterfront

To complement the MHBHT’s planned Broadway bike path, the City seeks to connect the improve connections between the bike path, 19th Street, and the waterfront/Hudson Shores Park. Streetscape improvements along this corridor would also encompass aesthetic improvements at the key intersection of 23rd Street and Broadway/the I-787 exit ramp, a primary City entry.

Install New Public Bike Share Stations to Better Connect the City to Troy & Russell Sage College

The CDPHP Cycle bicycle share program currently has stations in the neighboring communities of Cohoes, Troy, and Menands (in addition to Albany, Schenectady, and Saratoga Springs). The City will use DRI funding to extend the program into Watervliet, with stations proposed at key locations near public transit, open space, and bike paths.

Connect Downtown to City Hall and Municipal Services by Improving Pedestrian Connections

Several municipal services, including City Hall, the Watervliet Library, the Senior Center, and the Historical Museum are clustered on 15th Street, at the southeastern border of the proposed DRI area. DRI funding is being sought to improve the streetscape along Second Avenue and 15th Street, connecting these core municipal services to the 19th Street corridor.

Establish Gateways with Lighting, Landscaping, and Wayfinding Features

Nestled between the communities of Green Island, Colonie, and Menands, the City of Watervliet, the City’s boundaries flow into those of the neighboring Villages and Towns. The City desires to distinguish its gateways by highlighting what makes the City unique. Watervliet was once home to the Meneely Bell Foundry, which was established in 1826 and produced tens of thousands of bells before they closed in 1952. Some of the bells produced by Meneely are owned by the City and on display to the public.

Establish Gateways with Lighting, Landscaping, and Wayfinding Features

Several transformative improvements to better connect the City of Watervliet to the greater Capital Region are under development, including a new BRT station at 19th Street and Second Avenue and a new segment of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Trail along Broadway. The City is seeking DRI funding to facilitate projects that would encourage residents, visitors, and businesses to use these alternate transportation options and better connect Watervliet to the greater Capital District region.

Reconnect to the Waterfront and Expand Recreation and Open Space Opportunities

Several transformative improvements to better connect the City of Watervliet to the greater Capital Region are under development, including a new BRT station at 19th Street and Second Avenue and a new segment of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Trail along Broadway. The City is seeking DRI funding to facilitate projects that would encourage residents, visitors, and businesses to use these alternate transportation options and better connect Watervliet to the greater Capital District region.

Improve Hudson Shores Park & Expand Public Programming

Hudson Shores Park is an underutilized asset. The City was recently awarded $500,000 in funding for shoreline stabilization and improved waterfront access at the park, with plans underway. Additional DRI funding is being sought to highlight the park with new entry signage and improved landscaping, in addition to expanded public programming to draw the greater community to the Park.

Construct a Sound Barrier with Public Art Along I-787 in Hudson Shores Park

I-787 forms the western border of Hudson Shores Park. In addition to physically separating the park from the upland areas of the City, the highway creates significant noise pollution. DRI funding is being sought to create a sound barrier along the park side of I-787 that incorporates public art.

Enhance the Watervliet Pool for Year-Round Community Use

Enhancements to the existing Watervliet Pool and outdoor space are needed and would provide additional recreational amenities to the DRI area. The pool is located at a key location near the future BRT station. Funding will be used to make the pool a year-round community asset.

Open a Destination Barge Restaurant at Hudson Shores Park

The loss of the barge restaurant at Hudson Shores Park has been a loss for the greater community. The City will use DRI funding to purchase a new barge, which the City will lease to a private operator.
Encourage Homeownership and a Greater Variety of Housing Options

Watervliet’s housing market is notable for its high prevalence of rental housing (representing approximately two-thirds of housing) and low housing costs. While affordable, rental housing is an important asset to attract new residents and young families, Watervliet needs to increase the diversity of its housing offerings to ensure that all residents’ needs are met. Notably, modern, ADA-accessible multi-family housing is needed to meet the needs of the City’s growing elderly population, and additional owner-occupied units are needed to decrease residential turnover.

Provide Funding to Improve Housing Stock and Convert Rentals to Owner Occupied

To complement Strategy 18, Watervliet seeks to use DRI funding to provide financial incentives to improve the existing housing stock and to convert rentals to owner-occupied units. A larger and more diverse resident population in downtown Oneonta will result in increased spending and support for jobs in downtown stores, and increased activity on downtown streets, and will support the revitalization of downtown.

Develop a Mixed-Use Zone and Encourage Higher-Density Housing on 19th Street

The current zoning along 19th Street, while allowing a mix of uses, is not reflective of the density or types of development that the City desires to see along the corridor. Zoning changes are currently being explored to address this issue as part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. To complement future zoning changes, the City seeks to use DRI funding to further incentivize higher-density mixed-use development along 19th Street.

19TH STREET/SECOND AVENUE INTERSECTION RECONFIGURATION

In late 2020, the City engaged in the development of the Congress Street Bridge (CSB) Study. The study identified a series of priority projects focused on improving mobility and connection between the City of Troy and Watervliet.

The priority projects focus on placemaking, improving non-motorized travel, and connectivity to the waterfront and align with the goals of the Watervliet Revitalization Initiative Plan. Four projects are identified within the DRI study area, which are included in the Transformative Opportunities map and described below.

Congress Street Bridge Study

As a gateway to Watervliet, a connection between two cities and various uses, and part of the new Bus Plus BRT Blue Line, this intersection experiences heavy pedestrian traffic. As an important vehicular connection between Watervliet and Troy and I-787, this intersection also experiences high volumes and significant truck traffic. Balancing these competing needs is challenging and the current intersection configuration gives vehicles the priority. The goal of the proposed project is to provide safer pedestrian accommodations that will allow for pedestrians to feel more comfortable navigating the intersection. To achieve this goal, crosswalks will be shortened and curb returns will be reconfigured to reduce the speed of turning vehicles while not significantly impacting vehicle operations.

Congress Street Bridge Shared Use Path

The Congress Street Bridge is a gateway between the City of Troy and the City of Watervliet. It currently functions as a high speed vehicular corridor, accommodating, but discouraging, pedestrian traffic. The proposed shared use path would provide a comfortable and inviting pedestrian and bicycle path, reduce excessive speeding across the bridge, and create a gateway connecting the two communities.

Southern Connection (Tunnel) to Hudson Shores Park

This proposed project will develop a southern connection to Hudson Shores Park through the construction of a bicycle and pedestrian underpass connecting 16th Street to Hudson Shores Park under I-787. From the intersection of the proposed tunnel with Broadway, protected bike lanes would connect west along 16th Street to 2nd Avenue. Within the park itself, an overlook area is proposed, creating a destination at the southern end of the park.
The City of Watervliet has identified an effective organizational structure to advance and implement the DRI. Specifically, the project will be administered by the Mayor, Charles Patricelli, and the General Manager, Joseph LaGivuta, who have considerable planning, construction, capital project management, and grant administration experience. The City Clerk, David Wheatley, will assist in DRI implementation.

As outlined in this document, the City has successfully implemented numerous public planning and implementation projects, many of which were funded by NYS and federal grants. The City of Watervliet has demonstrated their effective organization structure in through their high quality performance under these previous State and Federal grant contracts, including the timely submission of contract status reports, recording payments in a timely manner, submitting payment requests on a regular basis, and completing work efficiently. The City will use their years of experience gained managing numerous grants concurrently to successfully implement the DRI, if awarded.
THANK YOU

CHARLES PATRICELLI, Mayor

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TRANSFORMATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

1. Complete the 19th Street Streetscape Improvements
2. Establish a New Construction Fund to Encourage TOD at the BRT Site
3. Create a True Community Square by Connecting Clinton Park 4th Avenue Bridge (CSB)
4. Potential Public Parking on the CSB
5. Complete Streetscape Improvements
6. Install New Bike Share Stations to Connect to Troy and Russell Sage
7. Connect Downtown to City Hall & Municipal Services by Improving Pedestrian Connections
8. Establish Watervliet’s Gateways with Lighting, Landscaping, and Wayfinding
9. Improve Hudson Shores Park and Expand Public Programming
10a. Improve Pedestrian Connections between 19th Street, the CSB, and Hudson Shores Park
10b. Complete the Link Between the Planned Broadway Bike Path and Hudson Shores Park
11a. Improve Pedestrian Connections between the WaterVliet Armory and Hudson Shores Park
11b. Connect Downtown to City Hall & Municipal Services by Improving Pedestrian Connections
12. Establish Watervliet’s Gateways with Lighting, Landscaping, and Wayfinding
13. Improve Hudson Shores Park and Expand Public Programming
14. Screen Wall / Urban Art
15. Complete the Link Between the Planned Broadway Bike Path and Hudson Shores Park
16. Enhance the Watervliet Pool for Year-Round Community Use
17. Enhance the WaterVliet Pool for Year-Round Community Use
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WATERVLIET DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

CONGRESS STREET BRIDGE (CSB) INITIATIVES

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CONGRESS STREET BRIDGE (CSB) INITIATIVES

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2. Establish a New Construction Fund to Encourage TOD at the BRT Site
3. Create a True Community Square by Connecting Clinton Park 4th Avenue Bridge (CSB)