



CARTHAGE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

2021 APPLICATION



2021 DRI Application

BASIC INFORMATION

- REDC Region : North Country
- Municipality Name : Village of Carthage
- Downtown Name : Carthage Downtown
- County Name : Jefferson
- Applicant Contact(s) Name and Title : G. Wayne McIlroy, Village President
- Applicant Contact(s) Email Address and Secondary Email Address : wmcilroy@twcny.rr.com
wilnacd@gmail.com

VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

To build on the tremendous downtown stabilization that has taken place over the last two decades, and leverage the Black River waterfront, railroad, recreation opportunities, walkable downtown and proximity to Fort Drum, to showcase the village as not only a great place to live, but a destination for visitors.

JUSTIFICATION

Dating back to the early 1800's, Carthage has a rich history in industrial production. For over 100 years, it was a stronghold for paper production in Northern New York, utilizing the proximity and flow of the Black River in the industry. With the downturn of the paper industry in the late 1900s, and closure of mills, Carthage has seen significant change. Hundreds of jobs were lost with the closure of mills, families were forced to relocate and housing stock deteriorated. Another significant challenge when Carthage was struck by a large downtown fire, which burned multiple historic buildings along State Street in the early 2000s. Things began to take a positive turn as Fort Drum expanded, and Carthage became home to many new civilian and military personnel families. What was once a thriving industrial community, Carthage was in an identity crisis of sorts. What was the future for the community?

In the early 2000s, after the devastation of the last paper mill in Carthage closing, and the fire that shook the community, Carthage began a resurgence with a focus on being a "Community of Choice" for Northern New York. Enormous investment from the State, as well as private developers and not-for-profit organizations, has resulted in over \$16 million in community development projects in the downtown. Most of these projects have been to stabilize and enhance the mixed-use historic buildings along State Street. Many of the buildings in the immediate downtown, along State Street, have been assisted with Main Street funds; however, there are several buildings that have not yet been rehabilitated.

We have made great progress over the last several years, but there is still work to be done. There are many abandoned and underutilized commercial properties in the DRI area that need repurposing, including several along State Street, Mechanic Street and West End Avenue. The community has been taking it property by property, by performing feasibility studies and rehabilitating properties individually, but there remain a few properties that could benefit from some focused redevelopment. Carthage has improved many homes in the community through CDBG and HOME funds, but we continue to rank high in zombie properties in New York State. Housing rehabilitation continues to be a focus of community officials.

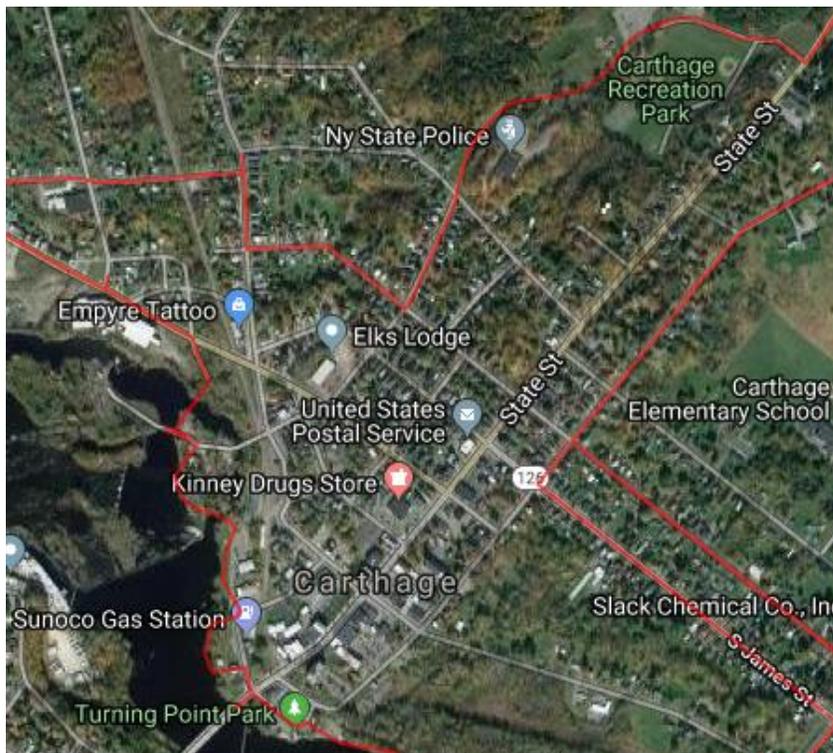
While Carthage has worked tirelessly to stabilize its downtown mixed-use buildings, it had not taken the opportunity to focus on development of its natural resource assets, specifically the Black River and park areas. Following a feasibility study funded by NY Main Street, the Town of Wilna secured funding through Restore NY to assist a private developer in the rehabilitation of a historic building along the Black River. Zero Dock Restaurant opened in 2020, and is serving as a catalyst for riverfront development. Carthage is very interested in building on that level of investment and excitement in the community to find additional ways to connect people with the river.

Now that the downtown is structurally stable, it is time to invest in building new businesses, enhancing recreational opportunities in the community, connecting the community with the river, and repurposing abandoned properties. Carthage is ready for additional investment to enhance its presence in the North Country.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

1) Boundaries of the proposed DRI area.

The Carthage DRI boundary is completely within the Village limits, beginning along the Black River waterfront and running along the water boundary. This waterfront area encompasses two village parks, Turning Point Park and Long Falls Park at Guyots Island. The DRI continues along State Street and Route 3 to encompass Carthage Park and West Street. This boundary does extend outside of the immediate business district, because there are plans for future investment in Carthage Park (a tremendous asset to the community).



2) Past investment, future investment potential.

Since 2001, the Village of Carthage, in partnership with local and regional organizations, has embarked on a comprehensive effort to reinvent the Village of Carthage as a “Community of Choice” within Northern New York. By doing so, they could tap into those moving to the North Country, and specifically civilians and military personnel associated with Fort Drum. To make Carthage a Community of Choice, we have focused on developing quality housing stock in conjunction with a vibrant downtown business center. To date, the Village and its partners have pursued a comprehensive renaissance of the community, which has resulted in over \$16 million of investment in the community. The following represents a portion of the work completed during this time:

- A. 256-264 State Street: \$7 million mixed use building restoration project including the development of 4 commercial spaces and 20 affordable apartments, incorporating two major properties in the downtown historic main street corridor. An extensive variety of historic and affordable housing tax credits, as well as other funding sources, were used to complete the project. Additionally, NYS Main Street grant funds were used to establish an “anchor” business in the complex.*
- B. Downtown Parking Improvements: Developed three downtown parking lots, which provide necessary, and convenient, parking in support of the downtown businesses.*
- C. Buckley Restoration: \$2 million mixed use building restoration project including the development of 3 commercial spaces and 13 apartments, using Restore NY funds, as well as local grants and loans.*
- D. Fire Site Property Acquisition and Redevelopment: After a devastating fire in 2002, which destroyed 9 buildings in the historic downtown, the Economic Development Corporation of Carthage (EDCC), Carthage Industrial Development Corporation (CIDC) and Carthage Area Hospital (CAH) pursued redevelopment of the site. Over a 3-year period, the property was acquired and developed into a \$2 million, 12,400 square foot medical office complex with community green space. This facility serves thousands of patients in the community.*
- E. Housing Rehabilitation: More than \$1.7 million has been secured through the Community Development Block Grant and Home Programs to support renovation of approximately 50 homes in the Carthage community.*
- F. NY Main Street: Two Main Street grants secured by the Village allowed for the renovation of 11 buildings, including 34 residential units and 11 commercial spaces.*
- G. Rural Area Revitalization Program: The Village benefited from two RARP grants from NYS allowing for the renovation of four buildings in the downtown. Ultimately, these funds renovated 4 commercial spaces and 6 residential units, and saved an historic building from demolition.*
- H. Dock Street Rehabilitation: An historic building, having sat vacant for nearly 20 years, was redeveloped into a destination waterfront dining establishment. The \$1.5 million project was funded partially through Restore NY funds. NY Main Street funded a feasibility study on this property prior to the current developer taking the project.*
- I. Carthage Depot Rehabilitation: The Carthage Railroad Depot was purchased by a private developer in 2020, and a small Main Street Technical Assistance grant was awarded to the community to study the reuse of the building.*



The efforts of the past fifteen years have helped to stabilize the downtown, saving historic buildings from demolition, and have given the village an opportunity to reinvent itself. There are still buildings in the downtown that need rehabilitation, and the village has set its sights on developing recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Some of the future potential opportunities include:

- A. Brownfield Redevelopment: While downtown stabilization efforts have been fruitful, there continue to be some brownfields in the downtown area that need to be addressed. An anchor store along the waterfront and gateway to the village, closed and is now sitting vacant. Additionally, a local car dealership with a presence along State Street in the downtown closed and is now vacant. Other brownfields of interest in the village that would be benefited from these funds include:
 - a. Former Ames Plaza along West End Avenue*
 - b. Former Dry Cleaners along North Mechanic Street*
 - c. Former NAPA Auto Parts along North Mechanic Street**

- B. Rail Bikes from Carthage to Castorland (Lewis County): A private developer has purchased the former rail depot on North Mechanic Street, Carthage, as well as leasing the rail lines from Carthage into Lewis County. Improvements will be required to the depot, as it is severely dilapidated. The developer is seeking to enhance the physical relationship between the depot station and the Farmer's Market area along Guyots Island. An architectural/engineering firm has been retained through a NY Main Street grant to begin the study process.*

- C. Black River Boardwalk and trails: Local municipal officials are seeking the development of a boardwalk and trails that will connect the community to the river, and will connect to existing parks along the river: Turning Point and Guyots Island. This is outlined in an existing Black River Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. The Town of Wilna is working with an engineering firm to develop a conceptual design plan for the proposed boardwalk.*



D. Carthage Park Improvements: Carthage Park is an incredible asset to the community. At one time, it was the home of Little League, football and ice skating. It offers numerous sports fields, but over time a significant drainage issue has developed, and the fields are not capable of being used for much of the year because of standing water on the fields. The park is also home to three walking trails that wind for a few miles throughout the wooded

property. These trails are utilized by many in the community, but require upgrades.

E. Pending projects of interest: Carthage Area Hospital has been a staple in our community for over 50 years. The hospital provides services to residents of the community, as well as drawing thousands of patients in from Lewis County and the Fort Drum and Watertown areas. With the designation of Carthage as a Metropolitan Statistical Area, the hospital has decided to relocate outside of Carthage in order to seek designation as a Rural Health Center. Therefore, the campus of Carthage Area Hospital will be a vacant property once the new campus is finalized. There has not been any movement on this project; however, the CEO of the hospital stated recently that all plans continue and they plan to break ground on the new property in the adjacent town.

3) Recent or impending job growth.

- A. The site of the former James River Paper Mill, at 695 West End Avenue, was purchased by Petawatt Holdings LLC. According to Petawatt CEO, the plan is to expand employment at the site from 12 to over 100 highly skilled individuals, and to develop an indoor hydroponics farm.*
- B. Carthage is home to a growing medical evaluation business, Independent Medical Evaluation Company (IMEC), which was one of the commercial businesses that benefited from previous RARP investment. This business continues to grow, and does a great deal to support the downtown and development efforts.*
- C. Fort Drum is a large part of the Carthage community. Hundreds of military families, and even more civilians serving Fort Drum, have made Carthage home. As Fort Drum expands, there continues to be a need for community supports in the Carthage area. It is important to the Village that we are giving these families the amenities that they are seeking in a community, including recreation, retail and dining opportunities.*

Fort Drum was selected as the location for any future missile defense site. Should those plans come to fruition in the Fort Drum community, it will have a significant impact on Carthage. Route 3A, which currently runs through the Town of Wilna and Fort Drum and bypasses Carthage, will close, sending all traffic through the Village. This will require street enhancement in the downtown, as well as other downtown improvements. Additionally, if these plans are actualized, there will be a sharp increase in job development related to the missile defense site construction, as well as long-term jobs for a number of individuals. The total estimated jobs created from this possible expansion are roughly 1450.

4) Quality of Life.

The Village of Carthage DRI includes several attractive properties, a walkable downtown with mixed use buildings and green space. The streetscape in Carthage is very attractive with updated lamp posts and lighting. There is limited parking in front of the historic buildings, but ample parking is located behind, which allows the village to showcase State Street's aesthetics. Here are a few of the many assets in the DRI area:

- A. *Black River Waterfront, including Turning Point Park and Guyots Island Park: a perfect location for festivals, summer gatherings and community activities. The Black River in Carthage is underutilized, but has great potential for numerous activities. Guyots Island and Long Falls Park highlight many of the original features of the historic industrial mills and dams from over 100 years ago. It is a tribute to the industrial history of the community. Zero Dock Restaurant was renovated using NY Main Street and Restore NY funding, and has elevated the Carthage area Black River waterfront significantly. That project is thought of as a catalyst for further waterfront improvements. The first of hopefully many projects to better utilize our best natural asset.*



- B. *Farmers Market: Located adjacent to Guyots Island Park, and across the tracks from the former Depot, the Farmers Market is not only a bustling market on Fridays during the Summer and Fall, but it is a great spot for the village's Summer Concert Series that takes place each Wednesday evening in the summer.*
- C. *State Street Green Space: Located at the "fire site" along State Street, this green space is a great spot to just sit and rest, read a book and enjoy a nice day. During the summer, it hosts some of the Summer Concert Series events, and during the winter, it is decorated for the Twin Village Christmas event. This green space is a nice addition to a downtown filled with historic, brick buildings.*
- D. *Railroad Depot: The former railroad depot on North Mechanic Street is at risk of falling into disrepair. A private developer has purchased the property with plans to run rail bikes along the tracks extending from Carthage to Castorland, in Lewis County. The developer is also looking at other uses for the depot, including a brewery or taproom. This would be a tremendous destination spot for those on Fort Drum who are looking for interesting and fun activities after business hours. Currently, a reuse/feasibility study is being conducted on the property to assist in future planning.*
- E. *Main Street Revitalization: While many rehabilitation projects have taken place in the downtown through various NYS funding sources, and private and not-for-profit investment, there are still some historic buildings in the downtown that will benefit from rehabilitation. The Village of Carthage Main Street program has applied for funding for several projects, but there are still some projects that have sought application through the village's program and have not yet been funded. These are worthwhile projects that are necessary for our downtown, including historic properties along State Street.*
- F. *Walking Trails: Two main areas of interest in Carthage for walking trails have been a topic for a few years. First, the existing trails located at Carthage Park need improvements. The trails are natural, and getting equipment to far parts of the trail is difficult when maintenance is required. Additionally, there are several locations along the trails that are unseasonably wet. Trails could be re-routed, re-designed or altered in some way.*

The second location of interest is along the Black River as defined in the Black River Blueway Plan. The Town of Wilna is working with an engineering firm to develop conceptual designs of a boardwalk/trail along the Black River from Turning Point Park east, stretching through the village. This boardwalk would include landings for fishing access along the Black River. Ultimately, this would be a portion of a larger connector to the paths along Long Falls/Guyots Island.



Each of the projects identified in Section 4 will enhance the livability and aesthetics of the downtown. While we will never be the roaring industrial community our history has shown, we can be an excellent community of choice for our residents and visitors. These projects will each enhance our community.

5) Supportive local policies.

The Village of Carthage last conducted a Comprehensive Plan was in 2009 as a result of the Black River Blueway Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. This comprehensive plan outlined some of the same topics that are being discussed in this application, including development of recreational opportunities along the Black River.

There are clear Public Use Policies regarding the maintenance and use of all public facilities. The village takes pride in its public spaces, and wants the residents in the community to take pride, as well. The village has modern zoning codes for residential districts, business districts, industrial districts, as well as a historic downtown business district.

6) Public support.

The community has sought input through various meetings starting in fall 2020. The elected officials representing both the Village of Carthage, as well as the Town of Wilna, are supportive of this pursuit.

Additionally, the Carthage Industrial Development Corporation (CIDC), a local not-for-profit community development organization comprised of local leaders and stakeholders in the community, have pledged its support of the Carthage DRI. Together, the CIDC, Town of Wilna and Village of Carthage have led efforts to revitalize the downtown Carthage area, and will continue this partnership into the future.

7) Transformative opportunities.

- A. *Black River Boardwalk: The Village of Carthage, in cooperation with the Town of Wilna propose a boardwalk along the Black River starting at Turning Point Park and ending along South Mechanic Street. This boardwalk would be along the river on municipally owned property. Currently, a conceptual design is being prepared to advance this project, and with an infusion of DRI funds, this project is ready to proceed.*
- B. *Carthage Park Improvements: Carthage Park is a great asset to the community, providing multiple sports fields, a community center, playground and walking trails. Upgrades are necessary for this facility to be utilized by the public. Specifically, the playing fields need drainage enhancements, the spectator seating needs improvements, and the walking trails require significant engineering. Currently, this site is underutilized by the public, because of drainage problems throughout the park. The park is municipally owned and any infusion of DRI funds would push this project forward.*
- C. *Rail Bike Recreation: Currently, a private developer is working with the town and architectural firm to study the reuse of the former railroad depot in Carthage. The developer intends to lease the use of the rail lines from Genesee Valley Transportation for a rail bike tourism service from Carthage to Castorland, in Lewis County. This project is ready to move with additional funds to rehabilitate the depot building.*
- D. *Main Street Building Renovations: As stated, Carthage has been very successful with rehabilitating several downtown buildings over the last two decades, but there are still properties in the downtown that need rehabilitation. Three owners of six properties on State Street are motivated to rehabilitate their respective properties, and an infusion of DRI funds in the community would be easily utilized with additional State Street improvements. NY Main Street has been a very successful program for rehabilitation of properties in the downtown, as well as Restore NY.*
- E. *Housing Rehabilitation: Continuing on the success of previous housing rehabilitation projects, the Village is prepared to work with homeowners to continue rehabilitating homes in the downtown. As a MSA with a high home foreclosure rate, Carthage is committed to bringing stabilization to residential neighborhoods in the DRI.*

8) Administrative Capacity.

The Town of Wilna has offered community development support for the administration and management. The Town's Community Developer, Treasurer and Supervisor will work together to oversee contracts associated with this opportunity. The Town has experience with contract oversight, as well as grant administration.

9) Other.

During the course of the last two years, numerous ideas have been identified as areas for improvement in the community. Many of which have never been discussed before, but are nonetheless worthy of discussion should Carthage be selected for the DRI. These include:

A brewery in one of the vacant buildings on State Street

Consignment/Antique mall in a vacant building

Specialty shops – including fishing, boating and outdoor recreation

Kayak/canoe/boat rentals along the Black River

Walking trail connecting Carthage and West Carthage

Zip line across the Black River

Suspension bridge along the river

Amphitheater for concerts and festivals at Carthage Park

Connecting the Farmers Market to the former Railroad Depot

Ice skating/roller skating in former Ames Plaza

Indoor soccer and athletic fields at former Ames Plaza

Sidewalk enhancements throughout village, specifically new sidewalks on West Street

Any type of business that will bring in jobs

SUBMISSION

Applications from interested communities must be submitted electronically to the relevant Regional Economic Development Council at the email address in the table below. Proposals for areas within New York City must be sent to the relevant Office of the Borough President, which will select two applications for submission to the NYC Regional Economic Development Council.

- Capital Region NYS-CapitalDist@esd.ny.gov
Counties: Albany, Columbia, Greene, Saratoga, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Warren, Washington
- Central New York NYS-CentralNY@esd.ny.gov
Counties: Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, Oswego
- Finger Lakes NYS-FingerLakes@esd.ny.gov
Counties: Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates
- Long Island LIREDC@esd.ny.gov
Counties: Nassau, Suffolk
- Mid-Hudson NYS-MidHudson@esd.ny.gov
Counties: Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester
- Mohawk Valley NYS-MohawkVal@esd.ny.gov
Counties: Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, Schoharie
- North Country NYS-NorthCountry@esd.ny.gov
Counties: Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence
- Southern Tier NYS-SouthernTier@esd.ny.gov
Counties: Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins
- Western New York NYS-WNY-REDC@esd.ny.gov
Counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara
- New York City - Submit to the appropriate office below.
 - Bronx: James Rausse at JRausse@bronxbp.nyc.gov
 - Brooklyn: Josh Levin at JoshuaLevin@brooklynbp.nyc.gov
 - Manhattan: Elka Morety at EMorety@manhattanbp.nyc.gov
 - Queens: Shurn Anderson at SAnderson@queensbp.org
 - Staten Island: Lashay S. Young at LYoung@statenilandusa.com