Contents:

Downtown Revitalization Initiative .............................................1
  Overview ...................................................................................1
  DRI Process ..............................................................................4
  Goals of DRI Program ..............................................................5
  Roles & Responsibilities ............................................................5
    Local Planning Committee ......................................................6
    Consultant Team .....................................................................7
    State Team ............................................................................8
    Municipal Staff ......................................................................8
  Public Engagement .....................................................................8
    Public Engagement Strategy ................................................10

Strategic Investment Plan Components .....................................12
  DRI Area Boundaries ..............................................................12
  Downtown Profile and Assessment ..........................................12
  Vision, Goals & Strategies .........................................................13
  Downtown Management and Implementation Strategy .............14

Projects ....................................................................................14
  Project Types ...........................................................................16
  Project Sponsors ......................................................................17
  Project Requirements ..............................................................19
  Ineligible Activities ..................................................................19
  Project Profiles ........................................................................20

Implementation ..........................................................................21
  Project Selection .......................................................................21
  Contracting ...............................................................................22
  Local Downtown Management ................................................22
Downtown Revitalization Initiative

The Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) is a comprehensive approach to boosting local economies by transforming communities into vibrant neighborhoods where the next generation of New Yorkers will want to live, work and raise a family. In light of the impact COVID-19 has had on communities, it is more important than ever to support the revitalization of downtowns and its businesses, infrastructure, and other critical community assets. The 2021 program will invest $200 million in up to 20 downtown neighborhoods across the State. Each of the State’s ten Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) will solicit applications and chose one or two downtowns that are ripe for revitalization and have the potential to become a magnet for redevelopment, business, job creation, greater economic and housing diversity, and opportunity.

Overview

Healthy, vibrant, walkable downtowns accrue numerous economic, social and environmental benefits to the locality, the region, and the state as a whole.

Business and development leaders recognize that downtown communities which offer a high quality-of-life and a critical mass of diverse public amenities and activities can serve as catalysts for increased and sustainable local economic development. Investments that re-energize urban cores attract a diverse population of new residents and visitors of varying ages, incomes, and interests, which strengthens the customer base for local businesses and provides the reliable workforce needed to attract and retain employers and grow the regional economy. Government leaders recognize that focusing investment in urban centers is also fiscally responsible. Compact development lowers the cost of delivering essential government services (police, fire, emergency medical) and reduces demand for costly new infrastructure, making local government budgets more efficient and reducing the burden on taxpayers.

In addition, compact, mixed-use development is energy efficient and reduces the impacts of climate change. By focusing development in its downtown, a community can reduce its carbon footprint by promoting the use of public transit and reduce dependence on private vehicles.

Recognizing the myriad benefits that downtown investment represent to New York State, the state introduced a major new initiative – the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI), in spring of
2016. In the past four rounds of the DRI, forty communities were selected to receive $10 million each to undertake a bottom-up community planning process and to implement key projects recommended by the community. Each community developed the key ingredients needed for successful downtown revitalization: a clear vision for the downtown; goals and strategies to accomplish the vision; and a strategic plan to implement catalytic projects identified in the plan.

In the fifth round of the DRI, the Regional Economic Development Councils may nominate two downtowns to receive $10 million awards, or one downtown to receive an award of $20 million. Criteria utilized for selection of DRI communities include: physical environment, past investment, future potential, recent or impending job growth, support for the local vision, and readiness. Communities requesting $20 million will be expected to demonstrate sufficient demand for DRI funds and the ability to quickly carry out significant, transformational downtown projects, as well as the capacity to successfully oversee a large-scale downtown revitalization program.

In each community selected to participate in DRI, a Local Planning Committee (LPC) comprised of local stakeholders will be convened to oversee the development of a strategic plan for revitalization of their downtown. The LPCs receive support and technical assistance from a team of planners from the State, and the consulting team hired by the State.

The LPC will review the vision statement included in the DRI application with the consulting team and community to confirm that it reflects the unique characteristics of the downtown. A clear and concise downtown profile and assessment will be developed to articulate the story of the region and the downtown, and to describe its future.

Goals will be established that can help achieve the community’s vision for downtown revitalization. Based on the downtown vision and goals, consultants will guide the LPC in development of creative and ambitious strategies and identification of projects to direct future...
development and investment in the downtown. Strategies will address how the community hopes to accomplish the goals to realize its vision.

The planning process will link the community’s vision, goals and strategies to the projects that will implement those goals. The DRI strategic investment plan for each community will identify a variety of projects. Communities are encouraged to identify projects that will have substantial financial commitment from the municipal, nonprofit, or private sponsors. DRI seeks to leverage DRI funds with other funding initiatives from public or private sources. Project profiles and the LPC’s recommended funding amounts will be included in the plan.

Broad public engagement will help shape and enhance the plan and will include activities that inform and educate, solicit input, and build support for plan implementation.

Projects will be evaluated by a state agency team and a set of projects will be selected for funding. Project contracts will be administered by a variety of agencies and authorities, with the majority held by the Department of State, Empire State Development, and the Housing Trust Fund.

To streamline communication and project management, and to ensure timely start-up and delivery of DRI projects, each DRI community will identify a local DRI project manager who will serve as the primary point of contact for the community with private project sponsors and state agency representatives.

Previous DRI Strategic Investment Plans and other program information are online at www.ny.gov/DRI.

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<th>Region</th>
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<th>DRI Two Community</th>
<th>DRI Three Community</th>
<th>DRI Four Community</th>
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<td>City of Glens Falls</td>
<td>City of Hudson</td>
<td>City of Albany</td>
<td>City of Schenectady</td>
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<td>City of Oswego</td>
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<td>City of Auburn</td>
<td>City of Fulton</td>
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<td>City of Geneva</td>
<td>City of Batavia</td>
<td>Village of Penn Yan</td>
<td>Town of Seneca Falls</td>
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<td>Long Island</td>
<td>Village of Westbury</td>
<td>Hicksville (T. Oyster Bay)</td>
<td>Central Islip (T. Islip)</td>
<td>Baldwin (T. Hempstead)</td>
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<td>City of Middletown</td>
<td>City of Kingston</td>
<td>City of New Rochelle</td>
<td>City of Peekskill</td>
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<td>City of Oneonta</td>
<td>City of Rome</td>
<td>City of Amsterdam</td>
<td>City of Utica</td>
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<td>New York City</td>
<td>Jamaica, Queens</td>
<td>Bronx Civic Center</td>
<td>Downtown Brooklyn</td>
<td>Staten Island</td>
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<td>City of Plattsburgh</td>
<td>City of Watertown</td>
<td>Village of Saranac Lake</td>
<td>Village of Potsdam</td>
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**DRI Process**

1. Community applications submitted to REDCs
2. REDCs review & nominate one community in each region
3. Governor announces DRI Areas to receive $10 million in assistance for planning and projects
4. DRI Team established with State Planners, Local Committee, & Consultants
5. DRI Area vision confirmed, goals & strategies identified
6. Public & other stakeholders engaged throughout DRI process
7. Projects identified & vetted by the local committee & public
8. DRI Strategic Investment Plan written by consultants with DRI Team & public input and submitted to the State
9. Projects from each community evaluated by the State & selected for funding
10. Governor announces selected projects
11. DOS/HCR/ESD or other agency/authority works with project sponsors to execute grant agreements
Goals of DRI Program

The Downtown Revitalization Initiative provides a comprehensive approach to improving the physical, social, environmental, and economic climate of participating communities.

The fundamental goals of the DRI include:

• Creating an active, desirable downtown with a strong sense of place;

• Attracting new businesses (including “Main Street” businesses), that create a robust mix of shopping, dining, entertainment and service options for residents and visitors, and that provide job opportunities for a variety of skills and salaries;

• Enhancing public spaces for arts and cultural events that serve the existing members of the community but also draw in attendees from around the region;

• Building a diverse population, with residents and workers supported by complementary diverse housing and employment opportunities;

• Growing the local property tax base;

• Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality of life; and

• Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by creating compact, walkable development patterns that increase public transit ridership and allow for adoption of district-wide decarbonized heating and cooling; and by supporting efficiency and electrification of buildings, installation of onsite renewable energy generation, and electric vehicle charging.

These goals are reflected in the individual Downtown Strategic Investment Plans developed for each community, and the projects identified in each plan. To fully leverage the impact of the DRI, each plan identifies projects whose recommended funding would in total exceed the available DRI funds to ensure a continued pipeline of projects that may be implemented with other public and private sources.

Roles & Responsibilities

The DRI accomplishes its goals through a unique state-local partnership that includes the Local Planning Committee (LPC), state agency staff, and a consultant team. The LPC is responsible for representing the interests and priorities of the community, while the state agency...
staff ensures that the process and deliverables are consistent with the goals, priorities, and requirements of the Initiative. In addition, the state agency staff, together with the consultants, provides expertise, guidance, and technical assistance to develop a strategic investment plan that will achieve the vision and goals for revitalization of the downtown as approved by the LPC.

**Local Planning Committee**

The Local Planning Committee (LPC) is made up of local and regional leaders, stakeholders, and community representatives. Each LPC is led by two co-chairs consisting of the local elected official (or his or her designee) and a member of the Regional Economic Development Council. Other members will be invited to participate by the Secretary of State after consultation with the LPC co-chairs and other state partners.

General membership in the LPC will include representatives from interest groups and organizations, as appropriate to the community. These groups may include:

- Local and regional government officials;
- Neighborhood associations, homeowners, and renters;
- Property owners, local developers, and real estate agents;
- Chambers of commerce, local business associations, and business owners;
- Community foundations and community loan funds;
- Local development corporations, housing corporations, industrial development agencies, and business improvement districts;
- Cultural institutions, such as museums, historic sites, and theaters;
- Educational institutions, including administrative and student leadership of area schools and universities;
- Local non-profit and advocacy organizations, such as environmental organizations and park conservancies; and
- Social and public service organizations, such as local police and health care providers, and faith-based organizations.

LPC members meet at least monthly to brainstorm ideas, provide direction to consultants, review planning products, and prioritize actions. The LPC members, working with the consultants and state planners, determine the most appropriate meeting schedule to accomplish their goals and to deliver an on-time DRI Strategic Investment Plan.

The LPC will work with the consultant team and state planners to prepare a Strategic Investment
Plan that will include:

- A profile of the downtown.
- Refined vision that was included in the community’s DRI application.
- Strategies and methods to achieve the downtown vision.
- Projects key to overall downtown revitalization.

As representatives of a variety of interests within the community, the LPC members will be asked to play a central role in identifying the most appropriate range of approaches to community engagement for their DRI area and to take an active role in public outreach. Outreach should be both to inform the public and to receive suggestions from the public.

The LPC may form work groups to provide an opportunity for some LPC members to dig deeper into an issue, sometimes with the help of non-committee members, such as local businesspersons, labor specialists, academic experts, and neighborhood advocates. Work groups provide an opportunity for brainstorming, for building a sense of community spirit and buy-in of the plan, and allow for better time management at LPC meetings. Work groups may be developed around any topic, such as developing a public engagement strategy, business development, identification of projects and actions, and implementation of the plan.

LPC members will be required to sign a Code of Conduct as a reminder that they must always act in the public interest in their role as Local Planning Committee members. Any member of the committee with a real or perceived conflict related to a specific project will be asked to recuse from voting on or opining on the project that presents a conflict while still participating in decision-making for other projects.

**Consultant Team**

A consultant team contracted by the State is assigned to each community. The team will work with the co-chairs and state agency staff to prepare for and staff LPC meetings and public outreach events. Consultants will prepare and implement a public engagement strategy with input and participation from the LPC, whose members are best positioned to recommend strategies appropriate for their community. Consultants will handle meeting logistics and meeting presentations. At the LPC meetings, the consultant will ask LPC members for their ideas and guidance at each step of the planning process.

With direction from state agency staff and guidance from the LPC, consultants will prepare program documents, such as the downtown profile and assessment; the downtown vision and goals; revitalization strategies to achieve the vision and goals; the DRI Strategic Investment Plan; and other tasks within their scope of work, such as research and market studies.

Consultants will assist the LPC in identifying key projects for implementation using DRI funding,
and will prepare detailed project profiles and analyses that demonstrate the feasibility and potential impact of projects.

**State Team**

Each LPC will receive support from a team of state agency staff. The state team, which will be led by the Department of State (DOS), will also include staff from Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) Empire State Development (ESD), and NYSERDA. This team will manage the consultant team assigned to the LPC, assist the consultants and LPC in meeting preparation, and participate in preparation and review of DRI documents. The HCR representative will bring to the planning process their knowledge of the community and expertise in housing development, CDBG, and HCR grants and programs. The ESD Regional Director provides a wealth of knowledge of past, present, and proposed development in and around the downtown. NYERDA staff will support the planning process to suggest decarbonization strategies and opportunities for the community and individual building upgrades, as well as helping to identify additional state and federal funding that can be used to achieve decarbonization in DRI zones. When needed, state agency staff will facilitate assistance from other state agencies.

The state team will also work with the consultants to ensure project profiles include the appropriate level of information needed for state evaluation of projects. Once projects are selected for funding by the State, the state team will prepare contract work plans or incentive proposals for projects assigned to their agencies, or work with others within their agency to supply needed information for work plans or incentive proposals.

**Municipal Staff**

Municipal staff from the DRI community may provide local assistance to the consultants and state planners when local resources or expertise are needed. Municipal staff may assist with meeting logistics, such as identifying accessible space; provide necessary background data and information; help identify municipal programs and resources that can be leveraged to advance the DRI planning process; and act as local point of contact for public engagement. As appropriate, municipalities are encouraged to partner with county or other local or regional entities that may provide technical assistance or other resources.

**Public Engagement**

Broad public outreach is important throughout the DRI planning process, as public input will help shape and enhance the plan. Outreach is a great way to educate residents and other community members about the DRI planning process and other related community goals and policies - such as comprehensive plans, local waterfront development programs, and other economic development initiatives – and how they can be involved.

Public engagement should be undertaken to inform and educate, to solicit and receive input, and to build support for plan implementation. LPC members will play a pivotal role by helping to identify
key individuals, organizations, and entities that should be involved in the planning and implementation process and by determining the best way to involve them. If some of the key individuals are not people who typically would attend public meetings and workshops, other techniques will need to be identified that will engage them.

Informing and educating the public can be done through formal public meetings and workshops, open houses, websites, social media, presentations at meetings of community organizations, and other means of communication.

Full meetings of the LPC, whether in person or virtual, should be open to the public. The extent that the public will be able to actively participate in a meeting will depend on the purpose and structure of the meeting. In general, meetings will fall into three categories:

- **LPC Meeting** – These sessions are working meetings conducted by the LPC co-chairs to provide for discussion among the LPC members and presentations on scheduled topics. At the discretion of the LPC, meeting agendas may include time for public comment or other engagement exercises.

- **Open House** – These sessions will be largely conducted by consultants to educate the public and get the public’s reactions to information and ideas. LPC members may also be present.

- **Workshop** – These sessions will be held to solicit ideas from the public, and comments on various planning topics. These public engagement workshops, charrettes, and focus groups are intended to be very interactive, with participation by both the public and LPC members.
The LPC may form work groups to provide an opportunity for some members to dig deeper into an issue, and to provide an opportunity for non-committee members – such as local business persons, labor specialists, academic experts, and neighborhood advocates – to work interactively with LPC members. Work groups provide an opportunity for brainstorming, building a sense of community spirit and buy-in of the plan, and better time management at LPC meetings.

One-on-one conversations may also take place. Some of these conversations may be scheduled interviews, but others may be more casual, such as encounters with interested citizens outside of a meeting, at a school or community event, or even when shopping. While LPC members are free to engage in conversations with people, members should also encourage community members to share their ideas in writing or during a public comment session so other committee members can benefit from their input.

**Public Engagement Strategy**

The consultant, with input from the LPC, will develop a public engagement strategy to enable residents, public and private agencies, community organizations, local businesses, and institutions of learning to work towards a shared vision for a more vibrant downtown. Public engagement should occur early and consistently throughout the process and should encourage participation from a broad and diverse population. Consultants should design events that encourage openness and innovation.

DRI communities are asked to plan a minimum of three public events, whether in person or virtual. Events will be held at important milestones for the project, as described in the public engagement plan, including one event where proposed projects are presented to the public for comment.

A variety of public engagement techniques should also be used to engage a wider range of participants, such as use of social media, traditional media, email blasts, online forums, surveys, and making speakers available for meetings of local organizations.
In addition to the public meetings or workshops, outreach should include an interactive web presence. The State DRI website provides meeting notices and other program information. DRI municipalities may also use their own websites for posting DRI information, providing links to the State DRI website. Additional activities may include but are not limited to charrettes, surveys, information booths, and storefront information centers.

**Examples of some public engagement methods used by consultant teams:**

- An “idea wall” for public comment at a Westbury Street Fair
- Spanish language flyer for a public event in Kingston
- Potsdam Popup Storefront Gallery
- Supporting proposed projects with “Rome” dollars at a public session in Rome
- Screenshot from a virtual meeting in Schenectady
- Seneca Falls Central School District Workshop
Strategic Investment Plan Components

Building on the community’s vision for downtown revitalization and the projects identified in the DRI application, strategic investment plans will examine local assets and opportunities, and include creative and ambitious strategies to achieve the downtown vision and direct future development and investment in the downtown. The DRI Strategic Investment Plan will also include detailed project profiles for key economic development, transportation, housing, environmental and community projects that will advance the community’s vision and leverage additional investment. Plans may also include brief descriptions of additional projects and initiatives the LPC wishes to include in the plan without a recommendation for DRI funding.

Consultants will work with the LPC to identify and prepare the information, analyses, etc. that will be needed to complete robust profiles that best position projects for implementation.

DRI Area Boundaries

Each community that applies to the DRI will clearly identify the boundary of the downtown area which it proposes as the focus of planning efforts in its application for the program. As a selected community proceeds through the planning process, it may choose to modify the initial boundary of its downtown to address newly identified issues or to capitalize on opportunities outside of the original boundary. The resulting DRI area, however, should be generally consistent with the area proposed in the DRI application and continue to follow the guidelines of a compact, walkable, and well-defined area.

Downtown Profile and Assessment

Working with the LPC and key municipal representatives, and drawing on any existing plans and strategies, the consultant will prepare the DRI downtown profile and assessment that provides a clear, concise, and compelling narrative that articulates the story of the region and the DRI area. It should allow a reader to understand how this downtown will benefit from the DRI and provide a logical basis for the projects recommended for funding.
The profile and assessment will give the reader a sense of the downtown – its unique characteristics, its strengths, and its challenges. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive technical description of the downtown akin to what would be included in a comprehensive plan. While the consultant will collect, analyze and evaluate the demographics, economics, and other characteristics of the downtown to ensure that the proposals included in the DRI plan are realistic and appropriate, the downtown profile and assessment will contain only a summary of this information.

**Vision, Goals & Strategies**

As part of the DRI application, communities must provide a brief statement of their vision for downtown revitalization. At the start of the planning process, the Local Planning Committee (LPC) will review the initial vision and make modifications if desired to best reflect the unique characteristics of the downtown.

Goals and strategies will be established to help achieve the community’s vision for downtown revitalization. Goals should be detailed, attainable, and action-oriented with measurable strategies that will guide the implementation of the DRI vision. They should incorporate, as appropriate, the following fundamental objectives:

- Creating an active, desirable downtown with a strong sense of place;
- Attracting new businesses (including “Main Street” businesses), that create a robust mix of shopping, dining, entertainment and service options for residents and visitors, and that provide job opportunities for a variety of skills and salaries;
- Enhancing public spaces for arts and cultural events that serve the existing members of the community but also draw in attendees from around the region;
- Building a diverse population, with residents and workers supported by complementary diverse housing and employment opportunities;
- Growing the local property tax base;
- Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality of life; and
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by creating compact, walkable development patterns that increase public transit ridership and allow for adoption of district-wide decarbonized heating and cooling; and by supporting efficiency and electrification of buildings, installation of onsite renewable energy generation, and electric vehicle charging.

Based on the downtown vision and goals, consultants will guide the LPC in development of creative and ambitious strategies and projects to direct future development and investment in the downtown to realize its vision and goals. Projects that are recommended for implementation
using DRI funds, whether included in the community’s DRI application or identified by the LPC during the planning process, should align with the goals and strategies.

**Downtown Management and Implementation Strategy**

The DRI Strategic Investment Plan will address local capacity, describing how the implementation of the proposed projects will be managed and sustained. The Plan will identify an existing or propose a new management structure to guide downtown revitalization in a fiscally sustainable manner and will identify where there is a need to create or enhance local capacity to support ongoing implementation of the DRI Strategic Investment Plan. For example, downtown development could be spearheaded by an existing or proposed downtown business improvement district, a local development corporation, or a special unit in the mayor or town supervisor’s office.

The Plan will also present a realistic timeframe for implementation of the recommended projects that recognizes the need to initiate all projects receiving DRI funding within two years of award.

**Projects**

During the DRI application process, communities are asked to describe a range of transformative projects that could become part of the community’s DRI Strategic Investment Plan to demonstrate that the community is ready to move forward with thoughtful and catalytic projects that will benefit a growing downtown. However, the application form notes that all projects submitted in the DRI applications will be further vetted by the Local Planning Committee and the State during the plan development process. The open, community-based planning process is designed to encourage creative and innovative approaches to downtown revitalization, and will result in a list of potential projects, including some that were contemplated in the initial application and others that arose during the process.
### City of Middletown DRI Plan

**Goal:** Make downtown a more attractive, walkable and functional place for residents, employees and visitors.

**Strategies:**
- Enhance the appearance of Downtown’s buildings, sidewalks, signage, streets, and open spaces.
- Improve streetscapes to make the Downtown pleasant, accessible, and safe for people of all ages and abilities.
- Make the Downtown pleasant, accessible, and safe for people of all ages and abilities.
- Support and build on the Paramount Theatre as a cultural destination by increasing activity in its vicinity and by enhancing its connection to the downtown core.
- Make parking options in the Downtown more efficient, attractive, and accessible.
- Support venues and events for the City’s arts, cultural, and educational activities and institutions.
- Create a more vibrant street life by encouraging outdoor dining and use of open spaces.

**Projects:**
- Redevelop the Woolworth Building into Rail Trail Commons
- Bring the Orange County Accelerator Program to Middletown
- Install Public Wi-Fi Mesh Network

### City of Oswego DRI Plan

**Goal:** Increase downtown residential living

**Strategies:**
- Develop new residential infill on vacant and underutilized lots
- Redevelop vacant building upper stories, including residential units
- Revitalize adjacent residential neighborhoods
- Increase evening and weekend programming to create vibrant 18-hour setting
- Build new and improved parks, gardens, and street trees

**Projects:**
- Implement a transformative redevelopment of the underused Flexo Wire site to provide 75 units of new mixed-income housing and 8,000 sf of ground floor commercial space.
- Transform the Global Buffet site at the core of downtown Oswego by renovating the restaurant space, creating 12 new housing units, and providing a rooftop deck.
- Provide riverfront dining and six housing units in a historic building while also building six new townhomes on the same site to create additional housing choices.
The LPCs will evaluate the full list of potential projects to select a slate of projects for inclusion in their DRI Strategic Investment Plan that will most effectively advance the community’s DRI strategies; that will have the greatest public benefit; that are primed for implementation; and that enjoy broad stakeholder support. In total, the projects selected for inclusion in the Strategic Investment Plans will exceed the DRI funding available for implementation to allow flexibility in funding awards, to account for the potential for other funding to come forward, and for complications that might arise that impact viability of a recommended project after the plan is complete.

The LPCs are encouraged to choose projects that will be catalytic and that present the strongest likelihood of jump-starting or continuing downtown revitalization and investment in the community. Each LPC will develop tailored criteria for project selection that are appropriate for their DRI’s vision, goal and strategies, as well as the goals of the DRI program.

Recommended projects may range in cost and scale from small improvements to large-scale construction projects, from zoning updates to major infrastructure projects. For private for-profit projects that receive DRI funds are expected to also include substantial private investment. While DRI funding may be used to cover the entire cost of a public or not-for-profit project, leveraging of investment dollars from other sources (i.e., private, local, federal, or other state sources) is strongly encouraged. LPCs may establish more restrictive match requirements.

The recommended projects must clearly implement the vision, goals, and strategies for revitalization of the downtown, and taken together, should represent a holistic approach to downtown revitalization. What is being sought is SYNERGY, which essentially means that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. To convey context and the interconnectivity of projects, the consultants will prepare a graphic representation that presents recommended projects on a map in relationship to each other and to the downtown area.

If desired, the LPC may also include brief descriptions of additional complementary projects in the Strategic Investment Plan that that could advance the vision and goals for the downtown with other funding sources.

**Project Types**

It is expected that the majority of DRI funds will be used for capital projects that will transform the physical environment of the downtown in ways that will benefit current residents and future generations. However, certain non-capital projects will also be considered to the extent that they will contribute to the revitalization of the downtown and are consistent with the community’s vision and goals. Projects will generally fall into the following categories:
New Development and/or Rehabilitation of Existing Downtown Buildings – Projects in this category may include development or redevelopment of real property for mixed-use, commercial, or public uses. They should have a visible and functional impact on the downtown, serving as anchor, catalytic or transformative projects that will provide employment opportunities, housing choices, and/or services for the community. Projects should employ decarbonization strategies consistent with the State’s goals under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. Construction or rehab of stand-alone parking garages not connected with other uses will not be considered for funding.

Public Improvement Projects – These may include infrastructure projects such as broadband and other communications connectivity, green infrastructure, streetscape improvements, transportation, recreational trails, signage, new and upgraded parks and plazas, public art, and other public realm projects that will contribute to revitalization of the downtown.

Grant Fund or Revolving Loan Fund – A locally managed fund may be proposed to undertake a range of smaller downtown projects such as façade improvements, public art and public realm improvements, and physical improvements to existing and/or vacant commercial or mixed-use space. Projects that are significant, such as new construction, should not be proposed for a fund and instead should be proposed as their own individual project. Funds are typically capped at $600,000.

Branding and Marketing – Examples include downtown branding and marketing projects that may target residents, investors, developers, tourists, and/or visitors. The costs eligible under this category must be one-time expenses, such as those to develop materials and signage. Ongoing operational costs, such as to fund a downtown manager or maintain a website, are not eligible for DRI funding.

Project Sponsors

DRI funding may be awarded to public, not-for-profit, and private entities to implement projects included in the final DRI plan. Each project profile will identify a project sponsor that has both the capacity and the legal authority to undertake the project and to whom the DRI funds may
Cortland Project Selection Criteria

All projects were first categorized as either City (typically, public infrastructure related), Private (typically, residential and commercial development) or Arts (typically, relating to the development or preservation of a cultural or entertainment venue). The categorization of projects in this way allowed projects of like type to be compared by one of three subcommittees: (1) arts and entertainment, (2) private development, and (3) municipal projects.

Market objectives were then identified, based on the overarching goals of Cortland’s DRI application.

A simple scoring/weighting system was developed, whereby a higher market objective score/weight was allocated to a project, based on the project’s likelihood to contribute towards achieving the market objective. A score of 3 suggests the project’s strong likelihood of achieving the objective; a score of 2 suggests the project will likely achieve the objective but have a lesser effect than projects scoring a 3; a score of 1 suggests the project will have little chance of achieving the objective. A score of 0 suggests the project is not expected to contribute anything material towards the achievement of the market objective.

Consultants for the Cortland DRI Local Planning Committee developed a spreadsheet that listed the project proposals, included their market designation, and listed standard criteria to evaluate projects in all goal categories. Criteria included the following:

• **Transformative Potential** – Does the project fundamentally change the downtown and how it is perceived?

• **Catalytic Potential** – Will the project be able to make other things happen? Will it create momentum?

• **Sustainability** – What is the long-term impact of the project? Will it be successfully managed and maintained over time?

• **Return on Investment** – What will be the economic benefits to the community in return for the state/private investment (e.g., job growth, tax revenue)?

• **Feasibility** – Can the project sponsor reasonably participate in the project financially? Is it ready to go based on DRI timelines? Is there other support for the project? Are there any regulatory hurdles? Is the project out-of-scope with respect to the vision for the downtown?
be awarded. A final determination will be made by the State following award announcement as to the entity that will hold the DRI contract.

**Project Requirements**

DRI implementation projects will be required to comply with the following requirements:

**Timing**

- Projects must be able to break ground within two years or sooner. Grants to projects that do not meet this goal may be rescinded.

**Project size and scale**

- No DRI awards of less than $100k will be considered to ensure projects are of a significant size and scale to be truly transformative in nature.

- To be considered for DRI funding, a fully-residential project must include at least 8 units and must include an affordable component.

**Decarbonization**

- New and substantial rehabilitation construction projects should be developed to the efficiency levels of the NY Stretch Energy Code, whether or not the locality has adopted that code.

- Privately-sponsored projects that commit to meeting higher standards, including efficiency combined with full electrification or the integration of climate resiliency measures, onsite renewables, energy storage or electric vehicle charging equipment, may be eligible for a larger DRI subsidy than a less efficient project. In addition, projects achieving these higher levels of performance should also seek incentives from NYSERDA to co-fund their development.

**Ineligible Activities**

There are very few restrictions on the use of DRI funds other than the requirement that the projects can be implemented quickly and, as a whole, will have a transformational impact on the downtown. However, a few specific activities have been identified as ineligible for DRI funds and should not be included in projects proposed for DRI funding. These include:

- Planning activities. Following the preparation of the DRI Strategic Investment Plan, all DRI funds must be used for projects that directly implement the plan. Utilizing DRI funds for additional planning is not the goal of the program.

- Operation and maintenance. DRI funds cannot be used for on-going or routine expenses, such as staff salaries and wages, rent, utilities, and property upkeep.
Pre-award costs. Reimbursement for costs incurred before the DRI plan is complete and before funding awards are announced is not permitted.

Property acquisition. A DRI project profile may include the cost of acquisition in the budget of a larger redevelopment, but it must also show that the acquisition itself will be, or has already been, covered by another funding source.

Training and other program expenses. DRI is a one-time infusion of funds, and cannot be used to cover continuous costs, such as training programs, that would cease to exist once the DRI funds have been expended.

Expenses related to existing programs. DRI is not intended to supplement existing programs or replace existing resources.

Project Profiles

Each project that will be included in the Strategic Investment Plan and recommended for DRI funding must have a project profile. Each profile should be able to stand on its own, i.e. contain the information needed to evaluate it in the context of downtown revitalization effort. The content of the project profiles is expected to evolve throughout the planning process, with the final project profiles providing a level of detail needed to move quickly to implementation.

Each project profile will include a full project description, its location, ownership and partners. Among the other details to be provided will be a description of the capacity of the project sponsor to implement and sustain the project; the budget and source(s) of project funding; a construction and project cost estimation; regulatory requirements; conceptual design; and project readiness and a timeframe for implementation.

Additional information beyond the minimum requirements in the profile may also be provided as appropriate to better position the project for implementation. Supplemental information can assist project evaluations and increase project competitiveness if it supports project readiness, transformative properties, and impact on the DRI area. For example, project sponsors or
consultants may develop economic assessments, market studies, feasibility studies, pro-forma, or other analyses as appropriate to demonstrate the feasibility and potential impact of a project on the overall economic health of the downtown area and surrounding region.

**Implementation**

After Local Planning Committees complete the DRI Strategic Investment Plans, the State will select projects to be funded through the DRI from those proposed in plans.

**Project Selection**

Projects will be selected following a careful review by the State. Every project recommended for funding in a community’s DRI Strategic Investment Plan will be evaluated based on how well it meets the following criteria:

- **State and Local Goals** – The project is aligned with State and local goals and demonstrates strong community support.

- **Project Readiness** – The project is well developed and poised to proceed in the near term in a way that will jumpstart the redevelopment of the neighborhood.

- **Catalytic Effect** – The project is likely to have a significant positive impact on the revitalization of the downtown by attracting other public and private investment.

- **Co-Benefits** – The project will result in secondary benefits to both the community and
project developer, beyond the primary goal of the project itself, which will generate additional economic activity, grow the local property tax base, improve quality of life in the neighborhood, and/or result in improved buildings likely to create healthier, more comfortable and productive environments in which to live and work.

- Cost Effectiveness – Investment of public DRI funds in the project would represent an effective and efficient use of public resources.

**Contracting**

Projects selected for a DRI award will be assigned to an appropriate state agency to manage the contract for implementation of the project. The state agency selected and method of contracting and funding disbursement will be dependent on the specific project. While there may be some variation between agency administration and the project type, in general awarded project funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis.

It should be noted that DRI funds may be used as match for other grant funding if permitted by the granting agency. However, the priority is to fund projects that are ready for implementation. Therefore, DRI funds will not be held as matching funds for other grants whose award or implementation cycles are in the out-years.

DRI awards will be subject to all requirements typically attached to state funding, including but not limited to minority- and woman-owned business enterprise (MWBE) goals, competitive procurement, and prevailing wages, as appropriate. For example, prevailing wages will be required where required by State law. Prevailing wage provisions would need to be met for public works projects (such as those projects subject to the Wicks Law, etc.) or if it is a requirement of another funding source (as it is for HUD CPD programs-Davis-Bacon).

**Local Downtown Management**

Local oversight and coordination of downtown projects is vital to the overall success of the DRI investments. While state agencies will work with individual project sponsors to implement each project, it is expected that each community will designate a DRI project manager to provide consistent oversight, serve as a single point of contact, and ensure that DRI projects move forward in an efficient and coordinated fashion.