

## Downtown Revitalization Initiative

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### Application

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Applications for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative will be received by the Regional Councils. Applicant responses for each section should be as complete and succinct as possible. Applications must be received by the North Country Regional Economic Development Council by **4:00 PM on June 14, 2017**. Submit your application as a Word Document to [NYS-NorthCountry@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-NorthCountry@esd.ny.gov).

#### **BASIC INFORMATION**

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: North Country

Municipality Name: Village of Canton

Downtown Name: Downtown Canton Grasse River Corridor

County: St. Lawrence

**Vision for Downtown.** *Provide a brief statement of the municipality's vision for downtown revitalization.*

Canton is a vibrant college community that boasts a robust, historic downtown commercial district. Revitalization of the Downtown Canton Grasse River Corridor will attract and meet the needs of residents and visitors alike. Businesses will thrive and be well supported, jobs will be plentiful, and housing will be available at all income levels in historic, well-maintained buildings. Downtown Canton will be attractive, walkable and culturally rich, benefitting from its position on the Grasse River. The downtown will be well connected by roads, walkways, and trails to surrounding neighborhoods, parks, and recreation opportunities.

**Justification.** *Provide an overview of the downtown, highlighting the area's defining characteristics and the reasons for its selection. Explain why the downtown is ready for Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) investment, and how that investment would serve as a catalyst to bring about revitalization.*

Canton is a small, rural, economically challenged North Country community comprising a town, two villages, several hamlets, and beautiful open spaces. Canton is the seat of New York's largest county, St. Lawrence, and the home of two outstanding universities – St. Lawrence University and the State University of New York at Canton – and an expanding St. Lawrence Healthcare System. The people who choose to live in Canton feel a genuine sense of community and are committed to working together to make it a great place to live, work, and raise their families.

Canton has a charming, Victorian-era downtown Main Street district, which is listed on both the national and state historic registries. The mixed-use buildings on historic Main Street house businesses, residences, a community arts center, an old-time movie theater, restaurants, a spa, and a health food store. Main Street is bookended by a picturesque downtown park at one end and the Grasse River with several island parks at the other.

Two New York Main Street grant awards have previously, and are currently, leveraging private investment in revitalization of historic structures on Main, Park, and Court Streets. Once work has been completed through the 2015 award we will be well on our way with redevelopment in this area, but current funding does not allow for

all projects to be accomplished. A continued focus on preservation of historic Main Street and downtown structures for mixed use remains a priority. Projects not funded through this most recent award are ready to implemented, and a DRI award could catalyze and support these investments.

The Grasse River flows perpendicular to Main Street, adjacent to the central business district and alongside commercial areas, thus is critical to the vibrancy of downtown. Due to its industrial heritage and the residual effects thereof, the Grasse River Corridor has been the focus of substantial rehabilitation to date, and planning for further remediation and redevelopment in the future. It is one of Canton's greatest assets, and is currently being underutilized, representing the greatest opportunities for revitalization. For purposes of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative we have opted to define downtown to include the traditional central business district along with portions of the Grasse River Corridor and adjacent commercial areas in what we are calling the Downtown Canton Grasse River Corridor (DCGRC).

The Grasse River Waterfront Revitalization Plan, and Town and Village of Canton Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Pre-Nomination Study have provided a strategy and roadmap for redevelopment of brownfield, vacant, underutilized sites in the community. Two of the five subareas identified in the BOA are included in the DCGRC. They are: Subarea A - downtown/Riverside Drive with longstanding vacancy, underutilization, and remnants of former industrial use; and Subarea B - former Jubilee plaza, a large portion of which has been vacant since 2000 and has not seen much or any investment.

The Village of Canton must position itself for growth. If the Village is to decrease the burden of the 33% who pay 100% of the taxes, we need to encourage new development and private investment. New development increases the tax base for the Village and reduces the burden on property owners, thus increasing their standard of living. To ensure the Village has capacity to support growth and sustain existing businesses, municipal water and sewer resources must be enhanced and extended. This is a priority for the Village.

Local food is also a priority for our community. Agriculture remains one of our largest industries, and we have a community of growers working to provide healthy, local food to our residents. Distribution is through the Canton Farmers Market, Community Supported Agriculture, and North Country Grown Cooperative. In GardenShare we have an organization working toward food justice, and addressing issues of hunger in collaboration with local producers. They issue an annual local food guide, and administer programs to promote and enhance SNAP benefits redeemed at farmers markets. In 2014, the Village was fortunate to receive a Local Food, Local Places technical assistance grant from the EPA, USDA, and other federal agencies to explore how local food can spur economic development and assist in place-making. As a result we have an implementation plan for advancing this initiative, and have established a Local Food Advisory Committee through our local Cornell Cooperative Extension Office that meets monthly. The plan can be viewed at: <http://www.cantonnewyork.us/local-foods-local-places/>.

Canton has a unique approach to economic development. An Economic Development Consortium of community stakeholders contribute financially and help guide the direction of community and economic development. The Economic Development Steering Committee (EDSC) is made up of representatives of the Consortium, Chamber of Commerce, and residents-at -large. The EDSC meets monthly and is responsible for planning and implementation of the Canton Community Action Plan. See plan at: <http://www.cantonnewyork.us/canton-community-action-plan/>.

Canton has a very engaged citizenship who actively participate on various committees that advise municipal leaders. In addition, the Village and Town share a full-time Director of Economic Development and half-time

assistant, demonstrating municipal commitment and investment in these critical initiatives. Because of this, Canton is able to work together as a community to communicate what it is that we want and how to best get it done. Please see question 3 for detail about past investment, and how the DRI could catalyze future investment.

Canton stands poised, ready, and eager for revitalization. Responses to the following questions tell our story.

## **DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION**

This section should be filled out with reference to the list of desired attributes for participation in the DRI as set forth in the DRI program description.

- 1) Boundaries of the Downtown Neighborhood.** Detail the boundaries of the targeted neighborhood, keeping in mind that there is no minimum or maximum size, but that the neighborhood should be concentrated and well-defined. Core neighborhoods beyond a traditional downtown or central business district are eligible, if they can meet other criteria making them ripe for investment. Attach a map that clearly delineates the downtown neighborhood.

The Downtown Canton Grasse River Corridor (DCGRC) encompasses Subareas A & B as outlined in the Town and Village of Canton Brownfield Opportunity Area Pre-Nomination Study, with additions along Chapel and Court Streets, east Main Street, and the Village Park. A map is attached hereto for reference.

Beginning at the intersection of Riverside Dr. and Fairlane Dr., the boundary runs: south along Riverside Dr.; then east along Chapel St.; then south along Court St.; then east along the northerly property line of Lawles, LLC; continue to follow the Lawles, LLC property line south, then west; then south along the easterly property lines of Canton Federal Savings & Loan and North Country Savings Bank; then west along the northerly property line of St. Lawrence County Historical Association; then south to Main Street; then east along Main St. (U.S. Highway Route 11) to the intersection of Park Place; then following the border of the Village Park owned by First Presbyterian Church south, then west to the intersection of Park Street; then following Park Street southeast to the intersection of Pine Street; then following Pine Street southwest to the intersection of Miner St.; then jog north on Miner Street to the southerly property line of Michael Snow (35 Miner St.); then west following property line of Michael Snow to the Grasse River; then downriver around the west bank of Willow Island to the southeasterly property line of Grasse River Heritage Area Development Corporation (GRH) property (corner of Main and Gouverneur Sts.); then following the southerly property line of GRH property to Gouverneur St.; then north on Gouverneur St. to Main St.; then west on Main St. to southeastern corner of property owned by Cascade Inn, Inc.; then following the property line of the Cascade parcel north and east to the west bank of the Grasse River; and then downriver along that west bank until just below the middle islands where it travels east to the point of beginning.

- 2) Catchment area.** Outline why the downtown, or its catchment area, is of a size sufficient to support a vibrant, year-round downtown, with consideration of whether there is a sizeable existing or increasing population within easy reach for whom this would be the primary downtown destination.

St. Lawrence County does not have one major metropolitan area, but five smaller population centers of Canton, Potsdam, Massena, Ogdensburg, and Gouverneur. The catchment area for the DCGRC includes residents of the Town of Canton, which encompasses the Villages of Canton and Rensselaer Falls and the Hamlets of Morley and Pyrites, as well as other populations that do not call Canton home but for whom, because of the geographic dispersion, this is their primary downtown destination. According to the U.S. Census, in 2014, the population of the Village of Canton was 6,601, a 4.5% increase from 6,314 in 2010. The Village of Rensselaer Falls had a population of 329 as of 2014 down from 332 in 2010, and the Town of Canton was at 11,233, up from 10,995 in 2010. *Canton is one of the only communities in the North Country region to see population gain during this time period.*

As home to the State University of New York at Canton and St. Lawrence University, Canton also has a student population of approximately 5,800 for ten months of the year that utilizes downtown. These institutions of higher learning are two of the largest employers in our community, with many faculty and staff who come from out of town to work at those campuses five days a week, and who rely on Canton as their primary downtown. These populations are steadily growing as enrollments at both schools are increasing, new programming is being added, and additional faculty and staff are being brought onboard.

As the seat of St. Lawrence County, many government offices are located in Canton. St. Lawrence County (roughly 800 employees), as well as various state agencies, employ people who are not residents. These individuals work in Canton, shop and dine in Canton, utilize recreational amenities, and choose Canton as their primary downtown destination.

Neighboring communities such as DeKalb (population 2,434), Hermon (population 1,108), Lisbon (population 4,102), Madrid (population 1,735), Pierrepont (population 2,589), Russell (population 1,856), Colton (population 1,451), Clare (population 105), Parishville (population 2,153), Hopkinton (population 1,077), and even further away communities such as Fine (population 1,512) and Clifton (population 750) do not have central business districts of any significance in their own communities. Because Canton is the seat of St. Lawrence County, folks in these towns often come into Canton to conduct government business and therefore opt to utilize our downtown for their primary needs. This represents an additional population of 20,872 who reasonably can be included in Canton's catchment area.

**3) Past Investment, future investment potential.** Describe how this downtown will be able to capitalize on prior or catalyze future private and public investment in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas.

Consistent with state, regional, and local strategic planning and priority setting, Canton has made significant investment in the DCGRC in the past decade or so, and has several more projects both underway and in planning. Remediation and redevelopment of several sites has taken place, including Willow Island, Coakley and Falls Islands (West Main Street), former Gray Lanes (now Rushton Place, 1 Main Street), and Bell's Garage (30 Riverside Drive). Partnership among the Town, Village, County, and a local non-profit, Grasse River Heritage Area Development Corporation, and private local developers has been instrumental in the success of these efforts. Private funds were combined with public funds from sources such as Restore-NY, Office of Parks and Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

Funds, primarily from the Department of State, have been utilized for extensive planning. Completed products include a Grasse River Waterfront Revitalization Plan, a Canton Village Brownfield Opportunity Area Study, and feasibility studies for two pedestrian connector bridges/pathways and a whitewater play

park. These planning documents along with the Canton Community Action Plan have provided a roadmap for development in our community. Current grants from DOS are enabling the development of a Grasse River Blueway Trail Plan, a marketing plan for the Grasse River Blueway Trail, a Comprehensive Plan , and a Master Trail Plan to identify options and plan for expansion and interconnection of existing trails.

Most recently Canton has been awarded funds for construction of a pedestrian walkway to connect Coakley and Willow Islands under Route 11 (implementation of one of the aforementioned feasibility studies), for design of a whitewater play park, and for demolition of a dilapidated structure on a key site at 25, 27, 29 Riverside Drive. Initiation of these projects await the execution of a contract with DOS.

Canton received New York Main Street (NYMS) grants in 2006 and 2015, the latter of which is currently being implemented. The results have and will create additional second-story housing units in several historic structures along Main Street, as well as the improvement of façades and interiors of buildings on Main and Park Streets. NYMS grants have also offered beautification funding to improve the overall aesthetics of the downtown through streetscape enhancements. These awards require both public and private partnerships for successful implementation.

A 2015 Community Development Block Grant Microenterprise program award will inject \$200,000 into the small business economy. Its focus will be on startup and expansion of microenterprise businesses in the Village with priority given to those that occupy vacant storefronts in the downtown area.

Going forward the community is focused on implementation of and building on current plans. An application for Step 2: Nomination for the Brownfield Opportunity Area is pending. If awarded, this would allow for environmental testing at five locations, conceptual design and feasibility studies for redevelopment options at key sites in the DCGRC, market analysis, housing analysis, and will produce a revitalization plan (among other things). Award announcement are anticipated in the near future. Funds for rehabilitation of the Village Park are being pursued in partnership with a volunteer committee for work to include restoration of an historic fountain, reconstruction of paved walkways, tree maintenance, and new plantings. The municipalities are partnering with Grasse River Heritage Area Development Corporation to develop a master plan for a sculpture garden and arts park on Willow Island.

As articulated in the REDC's strategic plan, a critical infrastructure issue is "the need for improvement of water and wastewater systems throughout the region, both to protect the region's clean water resources and to support community development." Infrastructure is key to economic growth, and the Village is committed to expanding needed services. With several development projects recently completed, currently underway, and soon to begin (including expansion of St. Lawrence Health Systems, construction of a new Pizza Hut restaurant, construction of a 24-unit housing development, construction of a new Rite-Aid, construction of a 82-room hotel) additional demand will be placed on the system. Existing water resources can accommodate the current development projects under normal circumstances, though we are creeping close to capacity. It is anticipated that a new groundwater source will be online within a year, which will ensure ample supply for future development. Sewer capacity is more than adequate but aging infrastructure needs to be addressed. Several grants have been secured for expansion of municipal water and sewer to the nearby Maple Hill Subdivision. This will provide needed services to support Community Bank's back office operation and its approximate 100 employees. In addition to Community Bank, there are 34 commercial and residential building lots in Maple Hill. It is believed that the lack of utility services to this area has deterred construction and is impeding economic growth in that part of the Village. Expansion of Village water infrastructure supports job creation at our institutions, and enables the development of professional

housing suitable for incoming faculty and staff, and multi-unit housing to accommodate growing student populations. In a municipality where only 33% of the properties are taxable, it is critical that any obstacles to expanding the tax base be addressed. The Village is nearing completion of an Asset Management Plan, and has begun preliminary engineering for new sewer infrastructure.

The Village also intends to pursue funding to implement a National Main Street America program, which would develop strategy and implementation procedures for revitalization of downtown.

The community invests in and supports arts and cultural institutions and activities in many ways: GRH's Heritage Park, which includes an interpretive trail showcasing the industrial heritage of the Grasse River corridor and their proposed arts-focused park; annual Frederic Remington Arts Festival and Dairy Princess Festival, which honors our agricultural heritage; annual Rushton Canoe Races to commemorate world renowned wooden canoe builder Henry J. Rushton; Dwight Church park, named for a renowned local photographer; St. Lawrence International Film Festival, headquartered in Canton; Traditional Arts in Upstate New York (TAUNY).

Canton has undertaken extensive planning, which has prepared our community to receive and utilize a Downtown Revitalization Initiative award effectively and efficiently. A DRI award would enhance past and pending investment of the municipalities, leverage significant public investment, and could be the catalyst for additional private investment needed for progress to be made on some key sites that have been vacant for many years. The DCGRC has a host of developable mixed-use properties within its boundaries. **Riverside Area (Subarea A):** Gateway to the historic downtown; a key opportunity for waterfront and downtown revitalization; directly connects to the SUNY footbridge, which carries foot traffic from campus into downtown. **Jubilee Area (Subarea B):** Former grocery plaza and surrounding vacant lots; plaza and adjacent properties are prime vacant and underutilized land in the heart of downtown, with large parking lot and easy access to Main Street; vacant, now blighted grocery store has impacted downtown for years, a symbol of economic struggle; a plan for a local food market in this space has been researched. These properties are outlined in detail in the BOA (see attached excerpts).

Canton is committed to investing in the downtown. The Town and Village share a full time Director of Economic Development, and a part-time assistance was hired in 2017. These positions enhance the economic development structure already in place, as detailed in question 7.

- 4) Recent or impending job growth.** Describe how recent or impending job growth within, or in close proximity to, the downtown will attract professionals to an active life in the downtown, support redevelopment, and make growth sustainable in the long-term.

Growth is happening in Canton. St. Lawrence Health System (SLHS), the parent corporation of Canton-Potsdam Hospital (CPH), Potsdam, NY, and Gouverneur Hospital (GH), Gouverneur, NY, recently completed construction of a 54,000-square-foot medical office building on 293 acres that were annexed into the Village of Canton. SLHS purchased the property to accommodate expansion of services; since 2008, CPH has doubled its medical staff. The hospital's main campus in Potsdam is land-locked in a residential area. Canton is geographically central to the majority of the population in St. Lawrence County and therefore represents the

future of health services, particularly specialist health services for which residents currently must travel long distances. This 293-acre parcel is anticipated to be the site of further growth. A total of 137 jobs will service this 54,000 square-foot facility. More job creation is anticipated in the future as services are added. Planning for Phase II is underway.

Community Bank, N.A., has been in business in Canton for 150 years. In 2010, they showed their continued commitment to Canton by constructing an Operations Center that currently houses roughly 100 employees, and an additional 20 to 25 during times of acquisition. The intent of Community Bank is to expand the Canton location to accommodate growth projected by their strategic acquisition plan. Community Bank is on target for needing to expand in Canton in approximately two years, which would bring an additional 35 to 40 jobs. Back office operations have been identified by the region as a strategic industry to target that is suitable to the North Country.

The St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) has developed the Canton Industrial Park within the Village of Canton. The first building was constructed in 2012. In 2014, municipal water and sewer infrastructure were laid making five shovel-ready sites available for development. The DCGRC will support future ventures at the Park, which is heavily marketed by the IDA, particularly to companies in the northeastern US and Canada.

Higher education brings well-paying jobs and benefits to Canton. Canton is a small, rural college town, and the St. Lawrence County seat. The institutions of higher learning in the rural North Country region of New York State (which also include Clarkson University, the State University of New York in Potsdam, and SUNY ESF in Wanakena) are some of our greatest assets and economic drivers. As identified in the St. Lawrence County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2009 (CEDS), the "... five colleges and universities in St. Lawrence County constitute an important competitive attribute that may be effectively leveraged to advance economic development objectives. In addition to being economic engines themselves through their employee and student base, these institutions possess a diverse mix of assets that support the efforts of the County's developers." As home to St. Lawrence University and SUNY Canton, the Village of Canton must consider how we can support these economic engines and ensure their continued success. Both campuses are experiencing record enrollments and are growing, investing in infrastructure, and diversifying their program offerings.

Discussions are underway for the potential construction of a North Country Food Hub and meat processing facility in Canton. The food hub is expected to create 12 jobs in the first year with potential for more. The true goal of the food hub is to provide a resource that can stimulate the economy by creating opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs. The project will be handled through United Helpers' for-profit management company Sparx, which is based in Canton. Agribusiness is a strategic industry that is being targeted for growth in St. Lawrence County and the North Country region.

In the University Plaza on the east side of the Village two projects are in the works. A Verizon Wireless store will be located in a currently vacant building in the plaza. An 82-room Marriott Fairfield hotel has been approved for construction, which will be located adjacent to the plaza. These projects will bring numerous new job opportunities to Canton. Anecdotal information from the colleges tells us that the addition of hotel rooms could prompt them to seek opportunities to host larger, national level sporting events that couldn't otherwise be accommodated. These events would bring economic activity to the community.

All of the aforementioned jobs are easily accessible from, or included within, the downtown and can be reached by foot, bike, or public transit. A diversity in job opportunities is demonstrated by the variety of jobs

that are pending in Canton, as well as the existing industry. Between the institutions of higher learning, health care system, banking, government agencies, not-for-profits, and hospitality industry, varying levels of employment opportunities exist within the community with different salary levels and potential for mobility between jobs.

An injection of new young professionals into the community will drive demand for active living in the downtown. More and more people want to be able to walk or bike within the community where they live to meet their needs for entertainment, goods, and services. Redevelopment of key sites should support a walkable, livable community rich with recreation, food, amenities, art, culture, entertainment, and necessities. Canton's core industries of education, government, and health care provide a stable stream of professionals into the community. To sustain growth in the long term we must be sure our downtown provides the amenities needed to support this demographic.

- 5) **Attractiveness of physical environment.** Identify the properties or characteristics that the downtown possesses that contribute, or could contribute if enhanced, to the attractiveness and livability of the downtown for a diverse population of varying ages, income, gender identity, ability, mobility, and cultural background. Consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, varied housing types at different levels of affordability, walkability and bikeability, healthy and affordable food markets, and public parks and gathering spaces.

Canton has a picturesque, Victorian-era Main Street commercial district. The Canton Park Historic District is the core of the downtown and includes mixed-use, commercial and residential units in the architectural styles primarily of the 19th century. The area is characterized by dense mixed land uses including civic, retail, entertainment, service/commercial, residential, and recreational. There is also open space as Main Street is bookended by parks, including three on the banks of the Grasse River immediately to the west of the central business district. The downtown is part of a Brownfield Opportunity Area and a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program Area.

The DCGRC has a host of developable mixed-use properties within its boundaries. As stated in the BOA: **Riverside Area (Subarea A)** Gateway to the historic downtown; a key opportunity for waterfront and downtown revitalization; directly connects to the SUNY footbridge which carries foot traffic from campus into downtown. **Jubilee Area (Subarea B)** Former grocery plaza and surrounding vacant lots; plaza and adjacent properties are prime vacant and underutilized land in the heart of downtown, with large parking lot and easy access to Main St.; vacant, now blighted grocery store has impacted downtown for years, a symbol of economic struggle. A plan for a local food market in this space has been researched.

Real estate agents report the need for rental units in the downtown area. The investment from a current New York Main Street (NYMS) grant award will have a significant impact on increasing accessible, affordable housing opportunities with several new residential units due to come online by the end of 2017. Because all projects could not be funded this round, the potential for the development of more residential units remains.

Canton is a walkable community with amenities and work opportunities easily reachable by foot or bike. A network of trails provides connectivity and recreational opportunities to residents and visitors for walking, running, biking and skiing. Several parks offer opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation such as swimming, kayaking, canoeing, and fishing. Heritage and Dwight Church parks commemorate Canton's history through interpretive signage. The many parks serve as outdoor gathering spaces for festivals and events throughout the year. Other spaces such as The TAUNY Center (Traditional Arts in Upstate New York), church community rooms, the Recreationall Pavilion, fire hall, public library, and fraternal organization halls such as the VFW and Knights of Columbus are available for events and gatherings.

Several health care facilities are in, or in close proximity to, the DCGRC. St. Lawrence Health Systems recently expanded a facility on East Main Street, and has completed construction of a new medical office building at the far eastern end of the Village. Claxton Hepburn hospital has a medical office building on West Main Street. After-hours clinics operate from each of the two existing facilities. Community Health Center of the North Country operates a facility on Gouverneur Street that provides affordable, high-quality health care to people of any age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, marital status, or national origin, regardless of their health insurance status or ability to pay, and pride themselves in acting as a safety net for those with insufficient or no health insurance. Several private medical offices are located in or near the DCGRC.

Cultural and entertainment venues are located in the DCGRC. TAUNY is a non-profit organization that showcases the folk culture and living traditions of New York's North Country, The American Theater is an historic movie theater that anchors Main Street and welcomes the community with its classic marquee. Downtown establishments host musical performances by local musicians adding to the entertainment options. The colleges offer a multitude of entertainment opportunities for the community to enjoy.

Broadband is widely accessible throughout the DCGRC.

- 6) Quality of Life policies.** Articulate the policies in place that increase the livability and quality of life of the downtown. Examples include the use of local land banks, modern zoning codes, comprehensive plans, complete streets plans, transit-oriented development, non-discrimination laws, age-friendly policies, and a downtown management structure. If policies achieving this goal are not currently in place, describe the ability of the municipality to create and implement such policies.

The Town and Village of Canton embrace a special and unique multi-stakeholder approach to economic and community development. This approach enables the community to participate in a decision-making process and affords everyone the opportunity to participate and engage in effective dialog for creating the vision for a quality of life that is desired for Canton and its residents. Details of this structure are outlined in question 7.

Canton adopts a Community Action Plan to guide community and economic development efforts over a five-year period, the most recent of which was approved in 2015. Included in this plan is direction for downtown development. Details of the plan are outlined in question 7. A 2015 CFA award through the New York Main Street Program, which is currently being implemented, will further goals outlined as part of the CCAP.

A 2015 CFA award from the Department of State will enable the Town and Village of Canton and Village of Rensselaer Falls to update our comprehensive land use plan. Specific components of the plan will include the development of parking and zoning standards to address problematic areas within the downtown business district. Other segments of the proposed plan will address housing, transportation infrastructure, waterfront revitalization, energy usage, and the creation of an inclusive environment for all residents. The plan is expected to be completed in 2018.

In 2014, a grassroots effort of downtown business owners formed the Canton Merchants Association. The intent was to create improved dialog regarding economic development strategies for the growth and enhancement of the downtown business district. This group, working in collaboration with the Village Economic Development Office, has considered the establishment of a Business Improvement District in Canton that would direct funds to improvements downtown. Nothing has been formalized to date.

The Village and Town of Canton each adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2016. A joint committee has been established to advise the municipalities and review projects to ensure that Complete Streets principles are incorporated into development plans. The committee reviewed plans prior to construction of the St. Lawrence Health System's facility, ensuring the inclusion of pedestrian/bicycle paths connecting the medical campus into the adjacent commercial district. Currently they are working alongside Canton's Waterfront Advisory Committee to negotiate with the NYS DOT for the incorporation of bike lanes and improved safety features into a bridge resurfacing project within the DCGRC that is to take place in 2018. They secured a grant to locate a bike repair station in the Village Park, which is within the DCGRC, and are participating on the Master Trails Planning Committee.

Canton has demonstrated a consistent pattern of community development coupled with sustainable practices through Complete Street innovations with proposed pedestrian bridges, bicycle paths, and a network of walking trails. Safe access for all users of the community's transportation network has been the key focus for creation of improved pedestrian crosswalks, expansion of the green space trail network, and improved access to recreation areas along the Grasse River waterfront.

The key to a vibrant downtown corridor is multi-modal transportation options that provide for all travelers. Canton has demonstrated a consistent interest in providing for increased transportation modes throughout the downtown business district and to the Grasse River waterfront, through grant applications for the creation of pedestrian bridges to remove both walkers and cyclists from the commercial traffic flow and allow increased access to green space and waterfront areas to promote recreation and tourism. The downtown district provides for multiple options for housing, as well as multi-modal transportation options. In 2008, the Village of Canton was awarded a transportation education and implementation grant through NYS Department of Transportation and their Safe Routes to Schools initiative which was finalized in 2016. The project provided for educational outreach to middle school students, encouraging walking and cycling to schools as an alternative to riding school buses. Additionally, the project provided for development of safer crosswalks and traffic calming efforts to make pedestrians safer within school zones.

In 2014, the Village of Canton established a Sustainability Committee to advise the municipality on policies, practices, and projects that could improve the sustainability of our community. The group has three areas of focus: energy, transportation, and food and agriculture. In 2015 the committee assisted the Village in moving forward on a project to install a solar array to offset power costs. The project is currently underway

and should be online in 2017. The Village also partnered with Adirondack North Country Association on a grant through NYSERDA to launch a Solarize Canton campaign. Our campaign received praise from NYSERDA, and saw the most residential solar connections go online in all of the State. The Sustainability Committee is now completing the final requirement to achieve the Clean Energy Community designation, which will make the Village eligible for Clean Energy Community Grants to implement other energy-related projects.

In Canton, the community has provided for Smart Cities innovative technologies that include the promotion of the reduction of conventional energy sources and the use of solar power for both residential and commercial energy use. In 2015, Canton embarked on a micro-grid energy project with other key energy consumers, including the county, the two universities, Canton Potsdam Hospital, and Canton Central School. This application was awarded a NY-Prize grant from NYSERDA to explore the feasibility of a micro-grid energy system that would provide for long-term energy availability using alternate energy sources during extended power outages, like the 1998 Ice Storm.

The Town has partnered with the Village to increase waterfront access through the development of grant applications for pedestrian bridges that would increase access to the Heritage and Willow Island Parks in downtown Canton, as well as the connecting of the Bend in the River Park with the Maple Hill Subdivision. The subdivision located along Route 11 South contains both commercial and residential development, and the inclusion of a pedestrian connector that would cross the Grasse River would greatly improve movement of people from one neighborhood to another that is currently only accomplished by crossing the Route 11 bridge, which is heavily trafficked. With the increased economic development provided by the growth of the St. Lawrence Health Systems project, this subdivision plays a major role in the long-term development potential of Canton.

- 7) Support for the local vision.** Describe the public participation and engagement process conducted to support the DRI application, and the support of local leaders and stakeholders for pursuing a vision of downtown revitalization. Describe the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to preparing and implementing a strategic investment plan. Identify an initial local lead for the program that will work with outside experts to convene a local DRI Planning Committee to oversee the plan.

The Town and Village of Canton have a unique multi-stakeholder approach to economic development that includes an Economic Development Consortium and Economic Development Steering Committee in addition to two paid staff members. The Consortium is an advisory group that meets at least twice a year, while the Steering Committee is a working group that meets monthly. The Consortium's current members are the Town Supervisor, Village Mayor, President of St. Lawrence University, President of SUNY Canton, Executive Director of United Helpers, Superintendent of Canton Central School, and CEO of St. Lawrence Health System and the Director of Economic Development ex-officio; they provide oversight and contribute financially to economic and community development in Canton.

The Consortium members' commitment to economic and community development efforts in Canton is substantial and unwavering. St. Lawrence University VP for Community and Employee Relations, Lisa Cania, describes recent growth and community improvements that are "the result of the relentless collaborative work of many dedicated stakeholders and prior investments by New York State." She adds, "Yet the potential for additional growth and the transformation of our downtown as a Downtown Revitalization Initiative community is enormous. With the resources available through the initiative, Canton's recent and current strategic planning endeavors – including the Canton Community Action Plan, the Brownfields Opportunity Area, a new Comprehensive Plan, and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan – can be realized. The redevelopment of vacant and under-utilized properties and investment in infrastructure will lead to desirable new space for businesses and housing. The enhancement of recreational amenities will grow the quality of life and attractiveness in the heart of the community, fueling further population growth. As a result, Canton will achieve its vision as a community that tomorrow's workforce, business starters, and community leaders are drawn to because of a thriving downtown and vibrant community core."

St. Lawrence Health System CEO David Acker says, "The St. Lawrence Health System is committed to Canton for the long haul: our two medical office complexes are well positioned to serve a wide catchment area. We hope you will assist us in completing a number of projects that draw people and businesses, boost employment, and promote the livability of our community, as well as continued access to high-quality medical providers and services."

The Steering Committee is made up of designees from each of the Consortium members including two each from the Town and Village Board, the Director of Economic Development, a representative of the Canton Chamber of Commerce, and two at-large community members. This structure allows for regular communication and collaboration on all community and economic development efforts in Canton.

Community and economic development activities in Canton are guided by several planning documents that either have been completed, or are underway. They include the Canton Community Action Plan, Canton Grasse River Waterfront Revitalization Plan, and the Canton Town and Village Brownfield Opportunity Area Pre-Nomination Study, which have all been vetted by the community through a public participation process, and formally adopted. In progress are a Comprehensive Plan, Master Trail Plan, and Grasse River Blueway Trail Plan, all of which will undergo a similar public participation component before being adopted by the community.

The Steering Committee is responsible for updating the Canton Community Action Plan every five years, and monitoring progress. The CCAP was updated in 2015. Public meetings created a forum for substantial input from the greater community. Feedback was incorporated into the final product that will guide economic and community development for the next five years.

The current plan is the legacy of a process started 16 years ago. Five Pillars focus the energies of every entity in the Village and Town—municipal government, schools and colleges, businesses, healthcare providers, service organizations, as well as individual residents and visitors. The purpose of the plan is to provide guidelines and priorities for the community. The Pillars of the plan are:

- Pillar 1. Ensure Canton is an Attractive, Safe, Convenient, Healthy Place to Live, Learn, Work, and Play
- Pillar 2. Support and Expand Local Business and Increase Available Jobs

- Pillar 3. Enhance Local Government Efficiency and Encourage Civic Engagement
- Pillar 4. Support and Promote Community Resiliency and Smart Growth Practices
- Pillar 5. Support and Promote Tourism

The current plan can be viewed at: <http://www.cantonnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/CCAP-2015-Final.pdf>

The proposed DCGRC is within the boundaries of Grasse River Waterfront Revitalization Plan (WRP), which was a collaborative effort of Canton's Waterfront Advisory Committee. This committee is made up of two appointed representatives of the Village, the Town, and the Grasse River Heritage Area Development Corporation, and includes the economic development staff of the Village and Town. The committee advises on projects and priorities that affect Canton's waterfront areas including the Grasse River, a focal point of the DCGRC. The WRP can be viewed at: [http://www.cantonnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Water\\_Project.pdf](http://www.cantonnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Water_Project.pdf)

The DCGRC encompasses portions of a brownfield opportunity area according to the Canton Village Brownfield Opportunity Area, Step One: Pre-Nomination Study July 2011, which is also a collaborative product of the Waterfront Advisory Committee. This study outlines the potential for redevelopment of several potentially contaminated sites in the DCGRC and beyond. Any revitalization efforts in downtown will encourage redevelopment of these sites that cast a negative light on the community.

Members of the Consortium have provided letters of support for this application; those letters have been attached hereto, along with several others from interested and committed community stakeholders.

The Director of Economic Development, Leigh Rodriguez, will be the initial local lead for the program that will work with outside experts to convene a local DRI Planning Committee to oversee the plan.

- 8) Readiness:** Describe opportunities to build on the strengths described above, including a range of transformative projects that will be ready for implementation with an infusion of DRI funds within the first one to two years (depending on the scope and complexity of the project) and which may leverage DRI funding with private investment or other funds. Such projects could address economic development, transportation, housing, and community development needs. While such projects should have demonstrated public support, it is recognized that projects will ultimately be vetted by the Local Planning Committee and the State. Explain how the majority of projects proposed for DRI funding demonstrate their readiness for implementation.

Canton has completed extensive planning and continues to plan for community and economic growth. Major opportunities for transformative projects exist along Riverside Drive and in the former Jubilee Plaza. The Waterfront Revitalization Plan envisions a Riverside Renaissance, which is further detailed in the BOA as follows:

**Riverside Area (Subarea A)** - This subarea is a gateway to the historic Village downtown that has been identified as the area with the most potential for waterfront revitalization and “renaissance” in the Waterfront Revitalization Plan. The Waterfront Revitalization Plan in which this entire subarea is represented encourages a high-value mix of waterfront-enhanced, if not water-related, uses developed in a manner that is in keeping with the historic character and pedestrian scale of downtown Canton. Public access in the form of a riverfront trail is also recommended in the Plan. It is recommended in the Plan that this access be implemented, in part, through updated zoning that requires provision of or for public access with all new waterfront development, if possible.

In addition to its waterfront development opportunities, Riverside Drive directly connects to the SUNY-Canton footbridge, which carries foot traffic from campus into downtown. The current character of Riverside Drive, however, is not pedestrian friendly. Many past and present land uses along Riverside Drive have been related to auto repair and service stations, including one key brownfield site that may have contaminated adjacent sites. Other properties house businesses that are neither water-dependent nor water-enhanced. It is envisioned that this corridor could be a vibrant mix of retail, office, and residential uses benefiting from their location on the river and providing public access to the river in the form of a public riverfront walkway, patios, and decks used by waterfront businesses. The best opportunity for revitalizing this corridor may be to assemble these small sites into one or two larger redevelopment sites. This will not only create more end-use opportunities but will maximize the efficient use of this high-value waterfront land. Two of the highest priority sites for improvement or redevelopment are 25, 27, 29 Riverside Drive (Map Site # A-2) and 30 Riverside Drive (Map Site # A-4).

The Town has had preliminary discussions with the property owner at 25, 27, 29 Riverside (the property is for sale), and has secured funding to demolish the existing structure. It is possible that a Restore-NY grant would be pursued to further this project with the engagement of a private developer. The property at 30 Riverside is delinquent on taxes, and could be foreclosed upon by the County in the near future.

The Town conducted a feasibility study, and has secured funding for construction of a pedestrian walkway connecting Coakley and Willow Islands under Route 11 along the Grasse River. This project is ready for implementation upon execution of a contract with DOS.

A feasibility study was conducted for the development of a whitewater play park on the Grasse River adjacent to Riverside Drive. Funds to design the park have been awarded to the Town through DOS. The DRI could fund the construction of the whitewater play park, which would be the second of a proposed three parks in St. Lawrence County that would partner to be a regional attraction for recreational tourism. The proposed Canton park has the potential to host larger, professional events and bring significant economic activity to the community.

The municipalities are partnering with Grasse River Heritage Area Development Corporation to create a master plan for an art-focused park on Willow Island. Technical assistance is being pursued through Cornell University to provide landscape and architectural design. The vision is to create performance space, and possibly an interactive children’s play park for them to create with natural materials. GRH has also engaged

in discussion with world-renowned artist Matthew Mazzotta, a Canton native, to create something for this space. DRI funds could help to bring this vision to life.

Also from the BOA: **Downtown (Subarea A)** - *Main Street represents the Town and Village's busiest corridor – U.S. Route 11. The present mix of land uses on the south side of Main Street on the river and just east are neither water-related nor water-enhanced, and have likely been contaminated by the former gas station on the corner of Main and Miner Streets. Some environmental remediation has taken place, and a new gas station/convenience store erected. Two of the highest priority sites for improvement or redevelopment are sites located on Main Street at its intersection with Riverside Drive including 2 and 4 Main Street. The high-profile gateway and waterfront locations of these sites make them extremely important to the future of the Village's downtown.*

The property located at 2 Main Street is for sale. A transition in ownership presents a redevelopment opportunity on a key riverfront site. A local developer has investigated preliminary plans for redevelopment of this site, but has not moved forward at this time. Support from DRI would very likely catalyze this developer to move forward.

Also in the downtown area, the American Theater is an historic anchor structure that is in need of significant rehabilitation. DRI funds could be paired with a NYMS anchor project to secure funds. Also, several other projects on in and around Main Street were not able to be funded through the most recent NYMS award. DRI funds could be utilized to support rehabilitation of many structures on the state and national register of historic places.

The Village Park is at the eastern end of downtown and is the central gathering place for community events. A volunteer committee has begun raising funds for rehabilitation projects including the restoration of an historic fountain, reconstruction of deteriorating walkways, and for new tree plantings and maintenance of old tree stock (cutting, cabling, etc.) DRI funds could bolster donations already received from the community and funds being sought through grant awards to complete these projects in the centerpiece of our community.

**Jubilee Area (Subarea B)** – *This subarea focuses on the vacant storefronts within the Jubilee Plaza and the vacant lots surrounding it on Miner Street. With the large parking lot and quick access to Main Street, this plaza and adjacent properties represent prime vacant and underutilized land in the heart of downtown. Along with four operating businesses within the plaza is an empty grocery store which has been vacant for years. The plaza is located in an area of transition between downtown Main Street and the residential neighborhoods of Miner Street and Pine Street. The vacancies in this plaza, particularly the former Jubilee Foods, have impacted downtown as a source of blight and symbol of economic struggle.*

The anchor tenant in this plaza, Rite-Aid, has begun construction on a new facility in the eastern commercial corridor of the Village, so will be vacating the property within months. This property has long been an eyesore for the community with an absentee owner who is hesitant to make a significant investment, which would be needed for much of this space to be up to current code and available for occupancy. Some local investors have expressed interest in negotiating to purchase this property, which would create an enormous opportunity for redevelopment. This would be a huge accomplishment, and a success for the community.

**9) Administrative Capacity.** Describe the extent of the existing local administrative capacity to manage this initiative, including potential oversight of concurrent contracts.

Canton's Office of Economic Development stands ready to administer the DRI initiative, if awarded. The office currently staffs a full-time Director of Economic Development and a part-time assistant; they are supported by other administrative staff in the Clerk's offices.

The Director of Economic Development, Leigh Rodriguez, will be the primary staff member responsible for the administration of the DRI. Ms. Rodriguez has a BS in Business Administration with a concentration in accounting, and a Certificate of Paralegal Studies. She has 9 years of experience in the administration and delivery of community/economic/business development programs gained through previous employment with the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency (CDBG Microenterprise, USDA RBEG, Empire State Development, SLCIDA Workforce Development Programs) and in the past two years in Canton (USDA RBEG, New York Main Street, Northern Border Regional Commission, Empire State Development, Department of State, DASNY, CDBG Microenterprise, DEC, etc). Ms. Rodriguez also has 10 years of experience as a real estate paralegal and VP of a Certified Development Corporation doing documentation, closing and funding of U.S. Small Business Administration 504 loans.

Hiring additional staff would be considered if workload from oversight of existing and concurrent projects in addition to the DRI creates the need.

**10) Other.** Provide any other information that informed the nomination of this downtown for a DRI award.

As demonstrated in the responses above, Canton is a community ripe for development. We are organized, committed, engaged and have support from our leadership and community to carry out a Downtown Revitalization Initiative Award. We have a history of investing in our community and stand beside our commitment to continue to do so. We have done extensive planning to prepare us for revitalization and have many projects that are shovel ready. A DRI award would transform our community and the region as a whole. This is the moment we have been waiting for. We are ready.

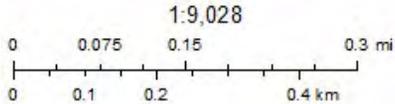
\*Don't forget to attach a map that clearly delineates the downtown neighborhood. (See item 1.)

# Downtown Canton Grasse River Corridor



June 13, 2017

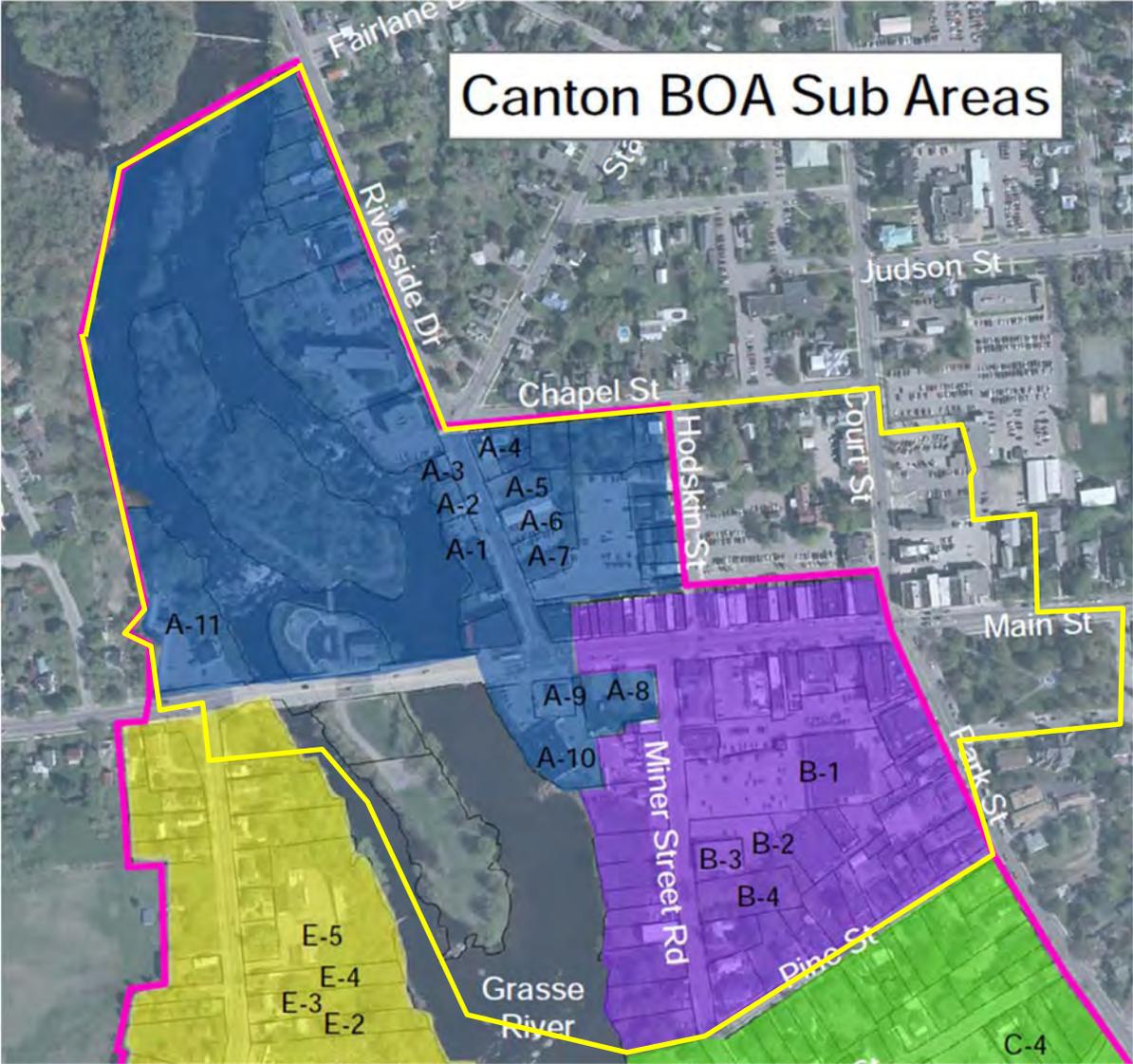
 Override 1  
County Boundary



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



# Downtown Canton Grasse River Corridor Boundary Map With Brownfield Opportunity Area Subareas



-  Downtown Canton Grasse River Corridor Boundary
-  BOA Subarea A
-  BOA Subarea B