

**Western New York  
Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) & Smart Growth Community Fund**

---

**Application Template**

---

Applications 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 Western NY Regional Economic Development Council by **4:00 PM on June 14, 2017**. Submit your application as a Word Document to [NYS-WNY-REDC@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYS-WNY-REDC@esd.ny.gov).

**BASIC INFORMATION**

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: **Western New York**

Municipality Name: **Village of Gowanda**

Downtown Name: **Gowanda**

County: **Cattaraugus & Erie**

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



**Created in 2016, “GO-wanda! On the Move” is an initiative branded during the New York State Brownfield Opportunity Area Pre-Nomination Study and has evolved into the overarching community revitalization vision for the Village. This initiative intends to maximize the tremendous natural beauty of our unique waterfront community, historic architecture and public spaces to encourage a tourism-based economy and promote an enhanced sense of place for residents and visitors. Redevelopment projects within the downtown core of the Village will work to facilitate economic stabilization while promoting enhanced economic growth to create a high quality of life for residents to live, work and play.**

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.

**The Village of Gowanda is located in the Town of Persia in northern Cattaraugus County and in the Town of Collins in southern Erie County geographically divided by Cattaraugus Creek. The Village is approximately 33 miles from the City of Buffalo to the north and 37 miles from the City of Jamestown to the south. Cattaraugus Creek is a unique characteristic of the Village that runs through the Village of Gowanda downtown area and provides natural beauty and attracts fisherman from many distant areas to enjoy our diverse fishing population. Zoar Valley, located on Cattaraugus Creek just east of the Village, features over 2,000 acres of wilderness, hiking trails, and waterfalls attracting outdoor enthusiasts creating tourist opportunity for village business.**

**The Village of Gowanda, in collaboration with the Gowanda Area Redevelopment Corporation (GARC), the Gowanda Zoar Valley Gateway Park is a leader in transformation of the Peter Cooper Landfill Superfund Site that housed one of the largest glue factories from 1904 to 1985. Zoar Valley Gateway Park now features waterfront access, recreational park activities, and walking trails. The park also provides the only access point to Cattaraugus Creek for canoeing, fishing, and other water recreation which promotes pedestrian travel within the Village. The continued development of the park has the potential to bring many recreational activities, water tourism, sporting events, and tournaments to Gowanda creating enhanced downtown opportunity for economic growth.**

**In addition to our valuable waterfront, we are also located on Route 39, an east –west state highway that connects many communities and villages stretching from the Village of Fredonia in Chautauqua County to the Village of Geneseo in Livingston County. This highly accessible travel route provides a wonderful opportunity for the Village of Gowanda to create a “destination” and capitalize on daily traffic to support new downtown revitalization and potential growth.**

**The Historic 1926 Hollywood Theater highlights the heart of the Gowanda Village Historic District and is the only theater in the historic registries in Cattaraugus County. Restoration of the Hollywood Theater is a key catalyst for economic redevelopment in Gowanda’s main business district. The re-opening of the 12,630 square foot Hollywood Theater as a Center for the Visual and Performing Arts will return a fully occupied building to Main Street and is expected to be a catalyst for downtown revitalization, job creation, increased tourism and pedestrian traffic.**

**The New York & Lake Erie Railroad is another unique characteristic of the Village of Gowanda that was subsequently damaged in the 2009 flood that suspended passenger service until 2012. As of late 2016, the New York & Lake Erie Railroad provides limited excursions throughout the year starting at the Gowanda Depot and making a loop to South Dayton and back to Gowanda. One of the most popular train excursions is during Christmas in Gowanda when the train highlights a visit with Santa and attracts some 900 passengers in December 2016. The development of this tourist attraction and revitalization of the depot and passenger excursions is an asset to downtown growth and community engagement while leveraging success and partnering with the Arcade & Attica Railroad located on Route 39 in Arcade, NY. Engaging enthusiasm for rail excursions across the region could be highly successful to building Gowanda tourism and revitalization. Recent regional rail development is encouraging the enhancement of the rail system to stretch from Jamestown to Buffalo with Gowanda being a central point.**

**The Downtown Revitalization Initiative will assist the Village in implementing the planning initiatives previously conducted and projects in the pipeline within the Village to catalyze downtown revitalization.**

## **DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION**

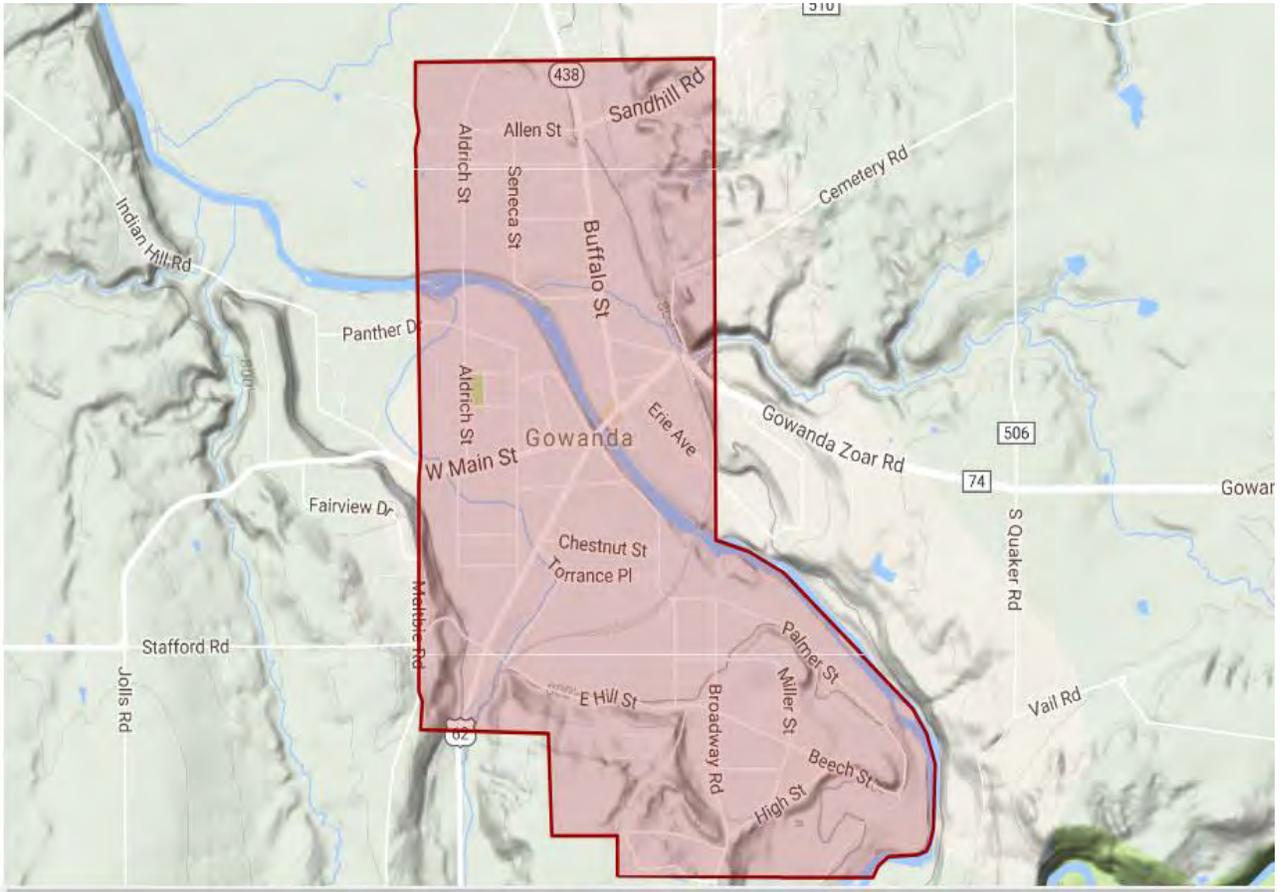
This section should be filled out with reference to the list of desired attributes for participation in the DRI as set forth in the DRI program description.

- 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 Village of Gowanda is located in the Town of Persia in northern Cattaraugus County and in the Town of Collins in southern Erie County. The Village is approximately 33 miles from Buffalo to the north and 37 miles from Jamestown to the south. It is 16 miles east of the terminus of the Cattaraugus County Creek at Lake Erie and to the West is the Cattaraugus Indian Reservation. The Village is 1.61 square miles and sits in the valley, hence the origin of the name Gowanda, which means “the beautiful valley between the hills.” The size of the Village is approximately 665 acres on the Cattaraugus County side of the creek and 361 acres on the Erie County side.**

**The population of the Village reached its peak at 3,352 in 1960. Following this period of growth, the community experienced a period of decline from 3,026 in 1980 and 2,649 in 2000. However, the population was 2,709 at the 2010 census.**

**Due to the small size of the Village, the DRI boundary for Gowanda will encompass the entire Village; however, downtown revitalization projects and initiatives will be focused on the downtown core. This area encompasses the streets of Main, Jamestown, Buffalo and Water.**



- 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.

**On Route 62, from the Town of Hamburg to the City of Jamestown, the Village of Gowanda is the most populous municipality in this approximate 50-mile area. Gowanda's existing catchment area provides a sufficient number of residents and visitors to support a year-round downtown destination for Cattaraugus County. The Village offers immediate access to Route 62, which spans in the north-south directional across Western New York.**

**Also, the Village of Gowanda contains the potential to capture and expand upon the cultural and historical assets in the surrounding community. Existing activities and hubs in the surrounding region that can be captured by Gowanda include the proximity to the cultural asset of the Amish Trail, as well as the high traffic of visitors that travel to Ellicottville for recreational type activities. An overall plan to market the Village to those seeking outdoor and cultural experiences would help foster the redevelopment of problematic brownfield sites, create employment opportunities, increase tax revenues, and contribute to the revitalization of the community.**

**In 2001, The Village of Gowanda completed a Business Development and Downtown Revitalization study as prepared by Camoin Associates, Inc & H. Sichernan & Company Inc. The report summarized that overall the downtown building stock supports the level of commercial activity in the Village with substantial local business ownership likely to maintain the current conditions. In the long term, substantial private interest in new development in the downtown area is likely to be stimulated by an increase in tourism and/or the application of significant financial incentives.**

**The Village of Gowanda offers a wide range of housing options for all levels of household income. The downtown area of the Village has the ability to accommodate additional mixed-use development to support the addition of upper story market rate housing to attract millennials and young professionals.**

**Additionally, Village of Gowanda Historic District located on the National Register of Historic Places, and consists of five brick buildings located on West Main Street which is one-half block west of Cattaraugus Creek. The Gowanda Village Historic District reflects the growth and expansion of Gowanda's central business district during the early twentieth century. The Hollywood Theater is recognized as a key element to the preservation and enhancement of the historic district while continuing to seek restoration funds. The five historic buildings represent the community's most outstanding local landmarks as well as a potential resource for cultural tourism and economic development.**

**Within the downtown core, recent revitalization is underway with the construction of a new mental health services building on S. Water Street. Savarino Companies will redevelop a former brownfield to make way for a multi-million dollar outpatient medical health clinic. This redevelopment will drastically improve a site that has been an eye-sore to the community for many years, while creating 18 additional jobs in the Village. The Village intends to continue this uptick in employment opportunities for residents by revamping downtown streets, restoring historic buildings, and re-introducing commercial services in the downtown core.**

**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.

The Village has seen recent investment with the recent announcement of a new state-of-the-art outpatient medical clinic to be built by Savarino Companies, based out of Buffalo. This redevelopment of the former print shop on South Water Street, directly across from Cattaraugus Creek, is expected to create additional jobs and bring vitality to a notoriously blighted corner.

Future potential of the Village is strong considering the amount of planning that has taken place recently. Through the New York State Brownfield Opportunity Program Pre-Nomination Study, the Village solidified their community vision for future growth.

The primary community revitalization objectives focus on the downtown central business district to create a vibrant walkable community creating destination points of interest along the water, to the theater, to the park, or rail while enjoying the downtown atmosphere. The promotion of services and amenities within the downtown and enhancement of tourism opportunities provided by the Cattaraugus Creek will allow the downtown to capitalize on pedestrian and vehicle traffic investing in our community. The Village has suffered from devastating flooding in both 2009 and 2014 resulting in damage to property and infrastructure impacting downtown business and residential property. The anticipated community benefits resulting from downtown revitalization include the increased accessibility to natural resources and recreational opportunities, increased availability for tourist attractions, increased services and employment opportunities for residents, and strengthening of community partnerships.

The “GO-wanda on the Move” initiative highlights the tourism attraction potential of the Village while increasing job opportunities supported by recreational tourism. During this study, an economic and market analysis was conducted to determine the best suited uses for the downtown area and beyond. Through this analysis, it was uncovered that the Village has immense opportunity for recreational tourism and eco-tourism centered on Cattaraugus Creek (which runs through the downtown core). Connecting to Cattaraugus Creek will work to enhance the quality of life for residents, while providing additional access points for visitors to enjoy Cattaraugus Creek.

Since Cattaraugus Creek and Zoar Valley are strong attractors to this region, this can be strategically capitalized upon. Cattaraugus Creek is home to multiple rare types of fish, such as Steelhead Trout, 25 percent of which are of wild origin. This unique and uncommon fishing is what makes Gowanda a draw within the fishing industry, however only recognizable by a small network of visitors. This activity can be capitalized upon along with other recreational activities such as boating, rafting and kayaking along Cattaraugus Creek.

Also, Zoar Valley is home to many hiking trails, paddling tours, hunting and trapping, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing that gives this area an all year appeal. The recreational tourism economy could be a reputable form of growth due to spin-off forms of development supported by the natural environment. For example, purchasing of equipment and gear in addition to the support of professions such as tour guides, outfitter shops, park managers, lodging operators, concessionaries, and small business owners.

- 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.

**Gowanda's location creates a central destination to attract those within a 30-mile radius including the bustling downtown City of Buffalo, the Seneca Niagara Casino in Salamanca, and the popular ski resort and winter activities located in the Village of Ellicottville. Our small, rural, historic and quaint village provides features you can't get in the city – but only 30-minutes way from the local shopping mall making the development characteristics important to redevelopment. The waterfront access, historic theater opportunities, increased recreational activities, and passenger rail excursions can have long term sustainability impact on the Village of Gowanda and job growth.**

**The Village of Gowanda is within Cattaraugus County, which is one of the largest agriculturally based counties in New York State. The Village is surrounded by thousands of acres of productive agricultural land. While the Village is not within an agricultural district itself, it has the ability to leverage its own assets to take advantage of this large industry. This potential also includes the Seneca Nation of Indians who have begun a food revolution of their own with the anticipation of reconnecting their people to healthier food sourcing and preparation methods.**

**A venture the Village has been pursuing is the establishment of an agribusiness to promote tourism within the Village. This agribusiness will include a site for locally grown food processing, packaging and distribution that will be established and tie into the current retail trade area of Gowanda. This will take form of a cooperative that would require a site that is large enough to support a high volume of activity as well as a building or multiple buildings with open floor plans. The former AVM Gowanda site, located on Industrial Place directly south of central business district, could act as this venue with adaptive reuse of these properties. There is strong potential for an economic development opportunity that supports the community and is sensitive to surrounding residential neighborhood of that site, by creating both full and part time jobs.**

**Based on the input of regional planning/economic development stakeholders and forecast and assessment studies it is clear there is a strong need for the Village of Gowanda and downtown district to reestablish a diverse local economy. The diversity established from performing arts opportunities, recreational waterfront opportunities, and rail excursions can help provide broader employment opportunities and downtown attractiveness creating long term sustainability and economic growth.**

**Regional Development Strategy – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Area Wide Action Plan – 2001, Prepared by Southern Tier West Regional Planning Board**

***The report concludes that the development of the Gowanda Zoar Valley Gateway Park development will be the optimization of access to the area's natural formations and features including Cattaraugus Creek and the scenic Zoar Valley attracting tourism and economic growth to support downtown revitalization. The Village's commercial and historic downtown center is situated one-third mile from Gateway Park.***

**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 bike ability, healthy and affordable food markets, and public parks and gathering spaces.

**The development of the waterfront and Gowanda Zoar Valley Gateway Park, the Hollywood Historic Theater, the New York & Lake Erie Railroad, will improve community overall quality of life, retain existing residents, attract new residents, and strengthen economic growth and job opportunities.**

In collaboration with the Gowanda Area Redevelopment Corporation (GARC) the Gowanda Zoar Valley Gateway Park is a leader in transformation of the Peter Cooper Landfill Superfund Site that housed one of the largest glue factories from 1904-1985. Gateway Park now features waterfront access, recreational park activities, and walking trails. The Park also provides the only Village Creek access for canoeing, fishing, and other water recreation which promotes pedestrian travel within the Village. The continued development of the vast park has the potential to bring many recreational activities, water tourism, sporting events, and tournaments to Gowanda creating downtown opportunity for economic growth.

The Historic 1926 Hollywood Theater highlights the heart of the Gowanda Village Historic District and is the only theater in the historic registries in Cattaraugus County. Restoration of the Hollywood Theater is a key catalyst for economic redevelopment in Gowanda's main business district. The re-opening of the 12,630 square foot Hollywood Theater as a Center for the Visual and Performing Arts will return a fully occupied building to Main Street and is expected to be a catalyst for downtown revitalization, job creation, increased tourism and pedestrian traffic.

The New York & Lake Erie Railroad is another unique characteristic of the Village of Gowanda that was subsequently damaged in the 2009 flood that suspended passenger service until 2012. As of late 2016, the New York & Lake Erie Railroad provides limited excursions throughout the year starting at the Gowanda Depot and making a loop to South Dayton and back to Gowanda. One of the most popular train excursions is during Christmas in Gowanda when the train highlights a visit with Santa and attracts some 900 passengers in December 2016. The development of this tourist attraction and revitalization of the depot and passenger excursions is an asset to downtown growth and community engagement while leveraging success and partnering with the Arcade & Attica Railroad located on Route 39 in Arcade, NY. Engaging enthusiasm for rail excursions across the region could be highly successful to building Gowanda tourism and revitalization. Recent regional rail development is encouraging the enhancement of the rail system to stretch from Jamestown to Buffalo with Gowanda being a central point.

- 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.

**In 1981 the Village received funds from HUD to be used as a revolving loan fund called Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG). When the HUD program ended funds were still available through the UDAG committee who decided to continue to use the funds to spur economic development.**

**Currently, the committee is committed to use the funds to further the goals of the village to preserve, improve and stimulate private investment in commercial and industrial development and the housing stock. Funds are used to provide low income loans to business owners who desire to start or improve their current business. Priority is given to fund the rehabilitation of structures whose repair can help leverage growth and revitalization within the Village.**

**This is a unique opportunity that can help stimulate tourist opportunity and improved quality of life.**

- 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.

**In 2016 a Pre-Nomination Study was completed to help prepare for the Brownfield Opportunity Assessment grant that was submitted through NYS Consolidated Funding Application and prepared in partnership with C&S. The Pre-Nomination Study engaged community residents, business owners, and community site tours to gain insights on specific areas of opportunity for Village revitalization. Tourism sectors such as agriculture tourism, recreational tourism, and eco-tourism were all preliminarily identified as areas the Village could capitalize upon. The Pre-Nomination Study was the basis for the identification of more than 30 Brownfield, underutilized, and vacant sites demonstrating opportunity for specific redevelopment uses. Many of those projects identified require large funding and resources while other “low hanging fruit” projects were identified to leverage simultaneous investments in the community. The study identified the importance of smaller improvements to the building facades as a low-hanging fruit project that will enhance the downtown center of the Village and the utilization of the rail lines for passenger excursions, and complete restoration of the Hollywood Theater as tourism opportunity to spark downtown revitalization.**

**Being in two counties and two townships including the Town of Persia in Cattaraugus County and Town of Collins in Erie County strengthens the Village’s ability and opportunity to leverage the revitalization process. The Village works very closely with many governmental sectors in both Erie and Cattaraugus County and at within New York State offices. In addition, the Village of Gowanda has established relationships with various public, private, and non-profit organizations throughout the community including New York State Department of State, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation,**

**Gowanda Area Redevelopment Corporation, Cattaraugus County Industrial Development Agency, Healthy Community Alliance, Love Inc., the Hollywood Theater, Gowanda Chamber of Commerce, and the New York and Lake Erie Railroad creating a steering committee to support and plan revitalization opportunities.**

**The Village of Gowanda desires economic growth, tourist attraction, and revitalization as exemplified by the collaborative efforts with the Gowanda Area Redevelopment Corporation (GARC) that recently developed a portion of the former Peter Cooper Corporation site into a recreational park along Cattaraugus Creek establishing the green space needed to develop further recreational opportunity for tourism and village recreational activities. Another example is the annual Hollywood Happenings that attracts some 13,000 people annually with more than 250 motorcycles joining the Village bike parade through downtown.**

- 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.

**After the loss of the Village’s large industrial base in recent history, the Village is now ready to rebuild the economy and revitalize the downtown neighborhood. The Village has actively engaged in planning activities and conversations with the community to determine specific projects that will revitalize the downtown core of the Village.**

**Several potential downtown development and placemaking projects have the ability to catalyze additional development and employment opportunities in the Village. These projects include:**

- **Historic Hollywood Theatre Improvements and Redevelopment**

**In 1924, a great fire destroyed the original opera house located in on Main Street in the Village of Gowanda. In 1926, local resident Richard Wilhelm redeveloped this theatre as a community center for Village residents. Unfortunately, the downturn of the economy after the devastating loss of industry left this historic structure abandoned, which left severe structural damage to the buildings. Significant renovations have been accomplished due to the efforts of the Gernatt Family of Companies, Gowanda Area Redevelopment Corporation and the Friends of the Hollywood Theatre.**

- **New York & Lake Erie Railroad Passenger Excursions/Depot Renovations/Parking**
- **Expansion of Recreational Activity offered at Zoar Valley Gateway Park**
- **Village Parking Improvements**
- **Façade Improvement Program**
- **Downtown Streetscape Enhancements including Roundabouts and Walkability Improvements**
- **Creek-Side Park Enhancements to Include Additional Waterfront Access within the Village**

- **China King Redevelopment**

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

The Village of Gowanda is settling in to large staff transformation with the addition of an entire new municipal office staff and a newly elected Mayor. In January of 2017 the Village hired a new full time Treasurer replacing part time staff and a retired account clerk. Her 18+ years of financial administration and grant and contract development and implementation will be beneficial to long term community development strategies. In March of 2017 the Village Clerk of 20 years retired and a replacement was found in May 2017. Our newly elected Mayor, David Smith is very enthusiastic and excited about the potential opportunity within the Village of Gowanda and is eager to provide input and suggestions on strategies to revitalize Gowanda. He continues to move forward with previous Mayor McKeever's "Gowanda on the Move" slogan and is committed to seeing a thriving downtown community he lives, works, and enjoys. His 20 years of school administration experience and vast community involvement can help the village leverage support of community development and downtown revitalization.

The Village of Gowanda Board of Trustees includes (4) diverse members who together have 50+ years of Municipal government experience including Village business owners, property managers, flood mitigation committee chairs, fire commission, and active community members. Their previous knowledge, engagement, and support of Village of Gowanda operations is important to help us move forward with downtown revitalization projects.

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

The Village of Gowanda is starving for economic growth opportunities to revitalize our beautiful waterfront community with many historical features that can impact economic growth to support long term sustainability.



**\*Please see attached maps of the Village of Gowanda**

