

## Downtown Revitalization Initiative

### Application Template

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

#### **BASIC INFORMATION**

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: Central New York

Municipality Name: Syracuse

Downtown Name: Downtown Syracuse

County: Onondaga

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

Downtown Syracuse is the heart of our City and its resurgence serves as a model for neighborhood redevelopment initiatives city-wide. While considerable investment in several key projects has helped the city reclaim vibrancy over the past 10 years, Downtown Syracuse still has room to grow. The urban core lacks connectivity between strategic investments in Armory Square and the new Convention District; investing in the space *between* these success stories is necessary to catalyze additional investment and capitalize on previous success. Through the \$10 Million Downtown Revitalization Initiative, Downtown Syracuse will prioritize investments in projects that create a defined sense of place on the southern end of Downtown, strategically filling in market gaps and championing a higher quality of life for all Downtown residents, employees, and visitors, and connecting to important neighborhood gateways to the south and west.

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.

Over the past 10 years, Downtown Syracuse has seen a surge of growth activity – from nearly \$570 Million in completed investment activity, to \$190 Million currently underway, to a 67% growth in its residential population, Downtown continues to drive investment in the City of Syracuse. Drawing on its strength as a central business district since the golden age of commerce along the Erie Canal, Downtown Syracuse is defined by its historic building stock that is rapidly evolving for modern-day use. Mixed-use developments span Clinton, Hanover, Cathedral, and Armory Squares, turning what was once a 9-5 office community into a 24-7 neighborhood complete with residences, offices, shops, services, and restaurants. Despite this exceptional comeback story, parts of Downtown remain disconnected and disinvested, awaiting catalytic change. The Downtown Revitalization Initiative will play a key role in connecting isolated pockets of investment on the southern end of Downtown, joining the Convention District to Armory Square and other

existing hot spots, while also extending Downtown's vibrancy into neighborhood districts on the southern and western gateways.

## **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.

Downtown Syracuse is largely defined as the area bounded by I-81 to the east, I-690 to the North, Onondaga Creek to the West, and Adams Street to the South. The Downtown Revitalization Initiative target neighborhood constitutes the concentrated Downtown corridor stretching from State Street on the East, to Jefferson Street on the North, to the 300 block of West Onondaga Street on the West, to Adams Street on the South. This district encompasses significant institutional and civic assets, including art, culture, entertainment, and transportation resources. Planning is underway to create a more vibrant, visitor-friendly "Convention District," and initial plans have received endorsements by both public and private stakeholders.

- 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.

Despite stagnant population and economic growth for Syracuse and Onondaga County in recent years, Downtown Syracuse's population and investment numbers have seen a steady increase year after year. As developers have converted vacant office space into residential units, Downtown's population has grown 67% over the past 10 years, for a current population of approximately 3,500 people. Meanwhile, the commercial environment sees continuous growth, with approximately 28,000 employees reporting to work in Downtown Syracuse each day. Tourism is also a growing market in this neighborhood. At the core of this district is a newly restored 261 room hotel, and a 120 room extended-stay hotel will soon be under construction. These new visitors will require places to shop, eat, and recreate.

- 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.

Downtown Syracuse's mixed-use investments over the past 10 years have exceeded \$570 million. Within the Convention District, the largest investment in a single project thus far -- \$76 million – entailed the complete historic restoration of the Hotel Syracuse and its subsequent rebranding as the Marriott Syracuse Downtown, a 261 room hotel. Funded in part with \$3,645,000 in REDC funding – the largest CFA grant to date in Central New York – this hallmark project established a neighborhood anchor and provided the Onondaga County Convention Center (OnCenter) with a long-awaited, officially designated “convention center hotel.” The designation as the Convention Center hotel also allowed for more than \$15 million in state grant funds to be used to leverage the project. This region of Downtown Syracuse has also benefitted from the \$18 million construction of a new Centro Bus Hub, located just one block from the Hotel Syracuse, serving 22 routes and bringing 8,500 riders to Downtown each day. Moreover, the Onondaga County Central Library last year completed an \$8.7 million public investment on its Central Library in the Galleries building next to the Hotel, consolidating the library's operations onto three floors and providing an accessible entrance for library patrons directly off Salina Street, Syracuse's main street. The library's renovation includes investments in technology such as a Makerspace, where teens can learn 3-D printing and other high-tech skills.

**Additional projects** currently under construction or announced within the Convention District include:

- The conversion of two Greater Syracuse Land Bank properties into mixed-use developments: The Addis Building at 443 S. Salina is a historic structure that once held the Addis Department Store, and the Goldberg Building across street at 476 Salina was a popular furniture store. Additional resources from the REDC and Restore NY, combined with Syracuse IDA tax abatements and private investment, total approximately \$8.9 Million for these two mixed-use redevelopment projects. (Addis received an ESD grant of \$834,768 through the City's nomination of the property for the Restore NY program in 2016.).
- The \$8.3 Million conversion of the largely vacant Empire office building into 52 units of market-rate housing.
- The \$20 Million conversion of the vacant Sibley's complex into the RedHouse Center for Performing Arts and new commercial and retail uses (total CFA support = \$5 million); transforming this city block.
- The \$5 Million conversion of the Chimes Building at 500 S. Salina into more than 120 moderately-priced apartments, and restoration of its ground-floor storefronts and façade.
- The \$20 Million upgrade and preservation of 305 affordable housing units at 500 Clinton St.
- The \$25 Million redevelopment of the former Hilton tower into an extended-stay Hyatt House Hotel.
- The Tech Garden is one of New York State's largest incubator facilities. It's currently running the \$2.75 million Genius NY program, the area's largest business accelerator program. Six teams have been selected for Round 1, all of which are in the unmanned aerial systems field, leveraging URI programs as well. The Tech Garden participates in several NYS programs to provide tenants with entrepreneurial tax credit as well as virtual tenant credits.

- Onondaga County will invest \$5.5 million into its Civic Center and War Memorial facilities. Plans include a new roof, sound proof theater doors, asbestos abatement, and new improvements, such as updated marquees and signage to welcome visitors.
- To serve a growing demographic, D-Train Doggie Daycare, Downtown's first daycare facility for its four-legged friends is currently under construction.

**The City of Syracuse** has made numerous **public investments** within this district; for example, the City:

- Supports ongoing investment in Downtown Syracuse through the non-profit Downtown Committee of Syracuse, which provides heightened services similar to those of a Business Improvement District and is funded through a City Special Assessment of all properties within the district.
- Through SIDA provides sales tax abatements, mortgage recording tax abatements, and PILOT agreements for redevelopment projects throughout the City, including properties within the targeted investment area.
- Historically provides significant financial support for the ongoing blight-fighting work of the Greater Syracuse Land Bank.
- Plans to build broadband internet infrastructure in the Convention District (Warren Street corridor), facilitating future business development and technological innovation within this sector
- Is currently engaged in a comprehensive ReZone initiative, funded in part by a \$300,000 grant from NYSERDA. The project will update the City's zoning ordinance for the first time in more than 60 years and will eliminate the 5 separate zoning districts within Downtown Syracuse and replace them with one unified zoning district. Having a clear, comprehensive, City-wide zoning code will facilitate continued mixed-use redevelopment and infill development in the urban core.
- Is leading efforts through a \$1.4 million Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grant to reestablish the urban core's connection to Onondaga Creek and distressed neighborhoods south of Downtown. This includes the successful first phase of the Onondaga Creekwalk connecting Armory Square to Onondaga Lake.

**Anchor Institutions:** Investments in this end of Downtown Syracuse have also enabled one of Syracuse's anchor institutions, Upstate Medical University, to expand into Downtown Syracuse by relocating more than 400 staff members to the Galleries building. Upstate previously forayed into the southern Downtown market when it purchased an underutilized residential tower and converted it to 200 beds for medical student housing at 500 Harrison Street.

Upstate Medical University is the anchor institution in a prestigious 5-member team representing Syracuse in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Reinvestment Fund's inaugural **Invest Health** grant, providing training and technical assistance to 50 mid-sized U.S. cities on how to shape the built environment to improve health outcomes. The Syracuse team is focused on improving access to healthy food within the Harrison/Salina St. Convention District Corridor.

In addition, Syracuse University – in conjunction with the City of Syracuse – received grant funding from the US Department of Transportation TIGER program as well as New York State, and has invested more than \$50 Million in infrastructure improvements to create the Connective Corridor, a multi-modal transportation network connecting Syracuse University with Downtown Syracuse through a series of complete streets,

including storm water infrastructure, designated bike lanes, a free bus shuttle connecting Downtown and the SU campus, public art, exterior lighting, and façade improvement projects. Downtown resident surveys reveal that 40% of Downtown's population works or studies on The Hill, and many residents commute to SU from Downtown via the Connective Corridor.

**Arts investments** within the Convention District include the Everson Museum of Art, which after years of declining operations returned to the black this year; the RedHouse Performing Arts Center, which is currently engaged in a \$8 Million rehabilitation of a vacant department store parking garage to construct three live performance studios and move from the outskirts of Downtown onto Downtown's "Main Street"; to the Landmark Theatre, which completed \$18 Million in renovations when its stage house expanded in 2012 and is slated to invest \$850,000 in a new LED marquee. In addition, Onondaga County has committed \$5.5 million to improve its OnCenter facilities, including funds to upgrade the War Memorial, which hosts events ranging from rock concerts to AHL hockey to Disney on Ice.

These investments align with the **regional and local planning efforts** for the area, including the Convention District plan developed in conjunction with the ownership of the Marriott Syracuse Downtown and local WBE-landscape architecture firm Environmental Design and Research; the NYS DOT I-81 Community Grid plan; Syracuse's Invest Health initiative; a NY Main Street Grant application prepared for this year's CFA; OnCenter investments planned by Onondaga County; and CNY Arts' has recently applied for planning funds to develop an Arts & Entertainment District Plan.

Looking ahead, several **underused properties** within the Convention District present additional **opportunities for redevelopment** within a Syracuse DRI Strategic Investment Plan:

- Jefferson Building: ground-floor retail with upper-floor middle-income housing
- Onondaga/Salina Lot: opportunity to construct a new mixed-use facility including large floor plates for office retention/expansion
- Former Central High School redevelopment to mixed use, including possible educational or civic uses, in addition to commercial and residential space
- Syracuse Housing Authority master redevelopment plan: transforming 20 blocks of low-income public housing into a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood with a reinstated street grid
- The abundance of activity and the Tech Garden facility will require its ownership to investigate ways to continue to leverage the entrepreneurial growth currently underway
- Convention District streetscape improvement plan (providing year-round connectivity between Marriott Syracuse Downtown and the OnCenter)
- Main Street (2017 CFA Application pending) Salina-Warren Target Area Investment, including up to 16 buildings on Warren and Salina Streets for historic façade restoration, commercial development, and 80% AMI affordable housing development
- Onondaga County War Memorial and Civic Center facility improvements
- Development of vacant, useable space adjacent to the New York Susquehanna and Western elevated railroad infrastructure
- Extension of the Onondaga Creekwalk from Armory Square through southern Downtown into the City's Southside

- Opportunities to build connections to adjacent neighborhoods. Neighborhoods adjacent to the southern end of Downtown are not experiencing the same level of private investment which is taking place in the Downtown core. Adjacent to Downtown is the eight acre Rescue Mission campus and the burgeoning West Onondaga Street district. Interventions are needed to better integrate the development trends happening in along the adjacent corridors and connect these three neighborhoods
  - Throughout these areas, consistent branding and streetscape enhancements are needed to encourage pedestrian flow
  - Additionally, changes with the elevated portion of Interstate 81 may provide the opportunity to expand these connections east towards University Hill
- 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.

Since 2015, Downtown Syracuse has added approximately 1,000 jobs across numerous sectors: Hospitality (Marriott Syracuse Downtown, 256 jobs); IT and Finance (Upstate Medical University, 400 jobs); Engineering (Arcadis, 250 jobs); and Internet-based Marketing companies like TCG Player, Terakeet and Digital Hyve are experiencing rapid employment growth. These companies have struggled to find appropriate space for their growing operations in the Downtown core. Tech-oriented companies along Warren Street – including Ephesus Lighting in the Barclay Damon Tower, TCG Player in the Galleries, and numerous start-ups at the Tech Garden – have created an unofficial **Innovation Quarter**, or I.Q., along Warren's south end. The Tech Garden, located across from the Hotel Syracuse and one block from the Centro Bus Hub, just announced the winners of its \$2.75 Million Genius NY competition and is currently narrowing down applicants to the second round of its global search for innovative Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) industry start-ups.

The Marriott Syracuse Downtown engaged in local hiring and training practices to fill 50% of its hospitality jobs with City residents from adjacent zip codes – some of the most distressed in the CNY region. Marriott Syracuse Downtown management considers the hotel's location – across from the Centro Bus Hub – to be a major asset for employees commuting to work. Management plans to pursue a similar hiring strategy at the neighboring 120 room Hyatt House.

A third-party survey of Downtown residents in Fall 2016 found that 55% of respondents both lived and worked in Downtown Syracuse. Major employment fields represented among survey respondents included Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (18%) and Healthcare and Social Assistance (17%). Moreover, numerous employers – particularly in the engineering sector – have moved from suburban Syracuse to Downtown as a recruitment strategy to attract young talent. Arcadis engineering moved 250 jobs from the Town of DeWitt to Downtown this year, echoing a move made by O'Brien & Gere 5 years ago when they brought 300 employees from DeWitt to Downtown.

As the number of people living and working Downtown continues to grow, Downtown Syracuse has seen a resurgence of its retail community, both in the number and the diversity of stores and restaurants, as

continuous residential growth fuels demand for food service and food retail. In the Fall 2016 resident survey, 96% of Downtown respondents cited the need for a grocery store to ensure Downtown's upward swing.

- 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.

Downtown Syracuse's revitalization thus far has stemmed from its **rich historic building stock**. The first redeveloped neighborhood – Armory Square – was largely spared from demolition during Urban Renewal, and the remaining historic brick buildings provided the foundation for small-scale redevelopment projects starting in the 1980s. Over the past 30 years, that redevelopment has expanded to larger parcels and higher levels of investment; to date, Armory Square remains the only neighborhood in Downtown Syracuse where developers have chosen to build standalone new construction on large surface parking lots (e.g., Center Armory, combined Residence Inn and Courtyard by Marriott, Washington Station). This infill development has strengthened the existing neighborhood, infused millions of dollars of additional investment, and stabilized adjacent investments by complementing the existing streetscape and matching setbacks, materials, and other hallmarks of the existing architecture.

This kind of mixed-use, infill, and/or historic redevelopment work is supported by new state policies in the Office of Homes and Community Renewal, as well as by Syracuse's **ReZone** initiative to rewrite the city's zoning ordinance. The new ordinance emphasizes form over use – with a renewed focus on design standards as well as mixed-use redevelopment. Form-based code uses design standards as an equalizer for a mix of uses, and it in many ways promotes the **integration of affordable housing** into neighborhoods by emphasizing exterior building appearance over interior use.

Despite Downtown Syracuse's success in redeveloping historic structures, very little funding has been available to address **the spaces in between the buildings**. For example, our Downtown currently has no consistent **wayfinding** signage for vehicles or pedestrians. While a handful of signs direct motorists from the highways to Syracuse's Visitor Center along with select museums and a local brewery, visitors to the Downtown have no clear street directions leading them from the Official Convention Center Hotel to Downtown's major restaurant districts in Armory Square and Hanover Square. Similarly, the City lacks signage directing visitors and residents to arts and cultural amenities or points of historical interest. Branded pedestrian signage identifying Downtown's 8 distinct central neighborhoods and key historic and cultural landmarks would go a long way in connecting existing yet geographically disparate investments in Downtown Syracuse.

In terms of streetscape, the **Convention District also lacks a designated, compelling, and sheltered pathway** to bridge the two blocks between the Marriott Syracuse Downtown and the OnCenter Convention

Center. Separated by parking garages, driveways, and vacant storefronts, the path is uninviting and unclear. Coordinated planning efforts involving local developers, businesses, City and County staff, the Downtown Committee, and a local landscape architecture firm resulted in draft plans for a branded Convention District that would provide awnings for pedestrian protection, illumination for safety and intrigue, heated sidewalks for comfort even on the snowiest of days, and targeted retail recruitment (including the Downtown Committee's Art in the Windows and Pop-Up Retail programs) to fill key properties along the route.

While Downtown Syracuse is very **walkable** and bikeable due to new infrastructure in place from the Centro Bus Hub and Syracuse University's Connective Corridor project, there remains more to do to encourage pedestrian and cyclist flow throughout the area. Many Downtown residents who can afford a car choose to keep one because there is currently no full-service Downtown grocery store. Opportunity exists to encourage this type of development at Downtown Syracuse's southern end given the street-level availability of several centrally located buildings with sufficient square footage to support a Downtown grocer or other provider of household staples. These locations are within easy walking distance of both the Centro Bus Hub and nearby public housing developments owned by Syracuse Housing Authority. A survey of low-income Downtown residents found that many residents shop at the seasonal Downtown Farmers Market but turn to Rite Aid and convenience/corner stores for processed, packaged foods from October through June, when the Farmers Market is not in season. Lead by the Downtown Committee, a team of five local organizations – including the Onondaga County Health Department, City of Syracuse Dept. of Neighborhood and Business Development, Cooperative Federal Credit Union (a CDFI), and Upstate Medical University won an Invest Health grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to focus on **attracting investment for improving healthy food access and walkability in the southern end of Downtown**.

**Existing amenities** that contribute to an attractive and livable Downtown include the availability of outdoor space along the ped/bike Creekwalk, which extends from Armory Square to Onondaga Lake; outdoor artwork including interactive instruments from Symphoria in M. Lemp Park and Columbus Circle; public art funded by the Connective Corridor, including large-scale sculptures and murals; outdoor fitness equipment behind The MOST, contributed for public use by Excellus; national Broadway tours at the Landmark Theatre; planned Broadband connectivity; innovative live/work housing models such as CoLiving and CoWorks at the Common Space building; and environmental maintenance and security provided year-round by Downtown's nonprofit management organization, the Downtown Committee.

- 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 Downtown Committee of Syracuse** is a professional, nonprofit Downtown management organization incorporated 42 years ago to improve the quality of life of the Downtown district by providing Environmental Maintenance, Security, Marketing, Communications, and Economic Development services to

all Downtown property owners. Staff clean the sidewalks, beautify the streetscape through street furniture and a popular annual hanging flower basket program, and clear snow to ensure safe passage for pedestrians through Downtown's streets. The security team, comprised of retired Syracuse police officers, works with all Downtown stakeholders to ensure employees, residents, and visitors feel safe; to connect homeless individuals with health and human services, and to keep the peace during popular Downtown events. Marketing and communications staff promote local businesses and celebrate their success, in addition to running eight annual events that bring people to Downtown and expand the region's enjoyment of our urban setting. The economic development team helps to retain existing businesses and recruit new investment to Downtown through grant funding and management of NY Main Street grants, maintenance of a comprehensive Downtown property database, relationships with property owners and real estate professionals, and targeted recruitment of amenities and services.

The **Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA)** promotes enhanced livability and quality of life in Downtown through its current effort to **overhaul the existing zoning ordinance**. ReZone Syracuse will be complete later this year, phasing out use-based, Euclidean zoning in favor of more flexible form-based code that will pave the way for more mixed-use development focused on higher-density, better-integrated design. Moreover, the **City and County dually supported the development of the Greater Syracuse Land Bank**, which has the power to acquire and sell property for redevelopment and reinvestment.

The City of Syracuse's **Comprehensive Plan 2040**, adopted in 2014, includes long range planning for Land Use & Development, Bicycle Infrastructure, Capital Improvements, and in conjunction with the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council – Transportation. For example, the **Onondaga Citizens League** recently completed a year-long study entitled, "How CNY Moves," to explore opportunities for expanded complete-streets and multi-modal infrastructure. Moreover, the **redevelopment of I-81** (on Downtown Syracuse's eastern border) will pave the way for more integrated street infrastructure to better serve all users (vehicular, shared transportation, and pedestrian). Syracuse University's completion of the \$50 million **Connective Corridor** provided a great testing ground for many complete streets ideas that may be adjusted as necessary and adopted more broadly in other neighborhood gateways to Downtown Syracuse.

The **Syracuse IDA** provides sales tax, mortgage recording tax, and PILOT agreement abatements for redevelopment projects within the Convention District, including incentivizing mixed-income housing in private developments. The City of Syracuse has a Department of Innovation (i-team) that is funded from a grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies. Each year, the i-team focuses on one city-wide challenge that the mayor identifies, and acts as internal consultants to develop new, creative solutions that are implemented by City operating departments and external partners. Currently, the i-team is evaluating opportunities to expand economic opportunity and inclusion across incomes and neighborhoods.

The **Greater Syracuse Landbank**, established in 2012 is a forward thinking, joint City-County initiative to address urban blight and strategically redevelop key neighborhood properties. The Landbank has been instrumental in improving the quality of life in the City of Syracuse. Plus, it works closely with area neighbors to remove, repurpose and redirect investments.

**F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse**, a nonprofit dedicated to fostering community dialogue around important civic issues released a 2014 series of recommendations on how to shape and Age-Friendly Central New York. The goal is to retain the aging baby-boomer population.

In May 2016, Syracuse was selected as an **Invest Health City** and awarded grant funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Reinvestment Fund to study best practices for developing a pipeline of redevelopment projects that promote walkability and increased access to healthy food to reduce chronic disease factors in low-income populations.

- 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 initial local leads for the Syracuse Downtown Revitalization Initiative is the City of Syracuse partnered with the Downtown Committee of Syracuse, which represents Downtown's property owners, businesses and residents. The City's Department of Neighborhood and Business Development maintains a strong working relationship with the Downtown Committee, which has a 42-year track record of convening local leaders and stakeholders to support Downtown revitalization efforts. The City of Syracuse and Downtown Committee also have a long-standing and high success rate for partnering to secure grant funding that helps to leverage private investment for targeted, high-priority projects. The Downtown Committee frequently works with outside consultants to perform market studies of demand for housing, retail, and other services, as well as to perform master-planning for neighborhoods and transportation systems.

Most recently, the Downtown Committee has convened regular meetings of 15 stakeholders to collaborate on a **Convention District Plan** for a two-block stretch of Harrison Street. When the Hotel Syracuse reopened in July 2016 as the official Onondaga County Convention Center Hotel (Marriott Syracuse Downtown), this corridor became the main pedestrian route for hotel guests to access the OnCenter. The Downtown Committee has organized a planning group consisting of City and County staff, adjacent property owners and managers, and design professionals to brainstorm the future of this corridor and raise funding for streetscape enhancements to activate and enhance the Convention District as a destination for visitors and residents alike. Through its legacy of promoting Downtown property owners' interests, the Downtown Committee has assembled a strong network of developers, municipal staff, elected local and state officials, and business and nonprofit partners who have a shared interest in promoting Downtown Syracuse's continued revitalization.

Citywide, through its Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT) structure, the City of Syracuse provides the framework for neighbors to convene. Topics include opportunities to improve quality of life, combat blight, and better improve city services.

In Spring 2017, the Downtown Committee has also taken on the role of convener for two additional issues: healthy food access and the public safety. Through the competitive Invest Health grant from the national Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Philadelphia-area Reinvestment Fund, the Syracuse team is focused on improving access to healthy food within the Harrison/Salina St. Convention District. And, by coordinating with the Syracuse Police Department, Rescue Mission, County Mental Health services, City of Syracuse Dept. of Neighborhood and Business Development, and 20+ property owners within the 400 and 500 blocks of South Salina Street and South Clinton Street, the Downtown Committee is helping to address safety concerns on the southern end of Downtown. Working with the police department, the Downtown Committee and City of Syracuse have ensured that all proper paperwork has been completed to allow the officers to best address the public safety that have been raised. Additionally, this active group of 20+ property owners has discussed early opportunities for “wins” within the neighborhood and how underutilized spaces can be better utilized and developed.

The Downtown Committee is also submitting a CFA request for NY Main Street Target Area grants this spring; the target area for NY Main Street includes 16 interested property owners and corresponds to the DRI target area to maximize strategic investment over the next two years.

- 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.

Looking ahead, several **underused properties** within the Convention District present additional **opportunities for redevelopment** within a Syracuse DRI Strategic Investment Plan:

- Jefferson Building: ground-floor retail with upper-floor middle-income housing
- Onondaga/Salina Lot: opportunity to construct a new mixed-use facility including large floor plates for office retention/expansion
- Former Central High School redevelopment to mixed use, including possible educational or civic uses, in addition to commercial and residential space
- Syracuse Housing Authority master redevelopment plan: transforming 20 blocks of low-income public housing into a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood with a reinstated street grid
- The abundance of activity and the Tech Garden facility will require its ownership to investigate ways to continue to leverage the entrepreneurial growth currently underway
- Convention District streetscape improvement plan (providing year-round connectivity between Marriott Syracuse Downtown and the OnCenter)

- Main Street (2017 CFA Application pending) Salina-Warren Target Area Investment, including up to 16 buildings on Warren and Salina Streets for historic façade restoration, commercial development, and 80% AMI affordable housing development
- Onondaga County War Memorial and Civic Center facility improvements
- Development of vacant, useable space adjacent to the New York Susquehanna and Western elevated railroad infrastructure
- Extension of the Onondaga Creekwalk from Armory Square through southern Downtown into the City's Southside
- Opportunities to build connections to adjacent neighborhoods. Neighborhoods adjacent to the southern end of Downtown are not experiencing the same level of private investment which is taking place in the Downtown core. Adjacent to Downtown is the eight acre Rescue Mission campus and the burgeoning West Onondaga Street district. Interventions are needed to better integrate the development trends happening in along the adjacent corridors and connect these three neighborhoods
- Throughout these areas, consistent branding and streetscape enhancements are needed to encourage pedestrian flow
- Additionally, changes with the elevated portion of Interstate 81 may provide the opportunity to expand these connections east towards University Hill

**Current projects underway** within the DRI district include the following:

- The conversion of two Greater Syracuse Land Bank properties into mixed-use developments: The Addis Building at 443 S. Salina is a historic structure that once held the Addis Department Store, and the Goldberg Building across street at 476 Salina was a popular furniture store. Additional resources from the REDC and Restore NY, combined with Syracuse IDA tax abatements and private investment, total approximately \$8.9 Million for these two mixed-use redevelopment projects. (Addis received an ESD grant of \$834,768 through the City's nomination of the property for the Restore NY program in 2016.).
- The \$8.3 Million conversion of the largely vacant Empire office building into 52 units of market-rate housing.
- The \$20 Million conversion of the vacant Sibley's complex into the RedHouse Center for Performing Arts and new commercial and retail uses (total CFA support = \$5 million); transforming this city block.
- The \$5 Million conversion of the Chimes Building at 500 S. Salina into more than 120 moderately-priced apartments, and restoration of its ground-floor storefronts and façade.
- The \$20 Million upgrade and preservation of 305 affordable housing units at 500 Clinton St.
- The \$25 Million redevelopment of the former Hilton tower into an extended-stay Hyatt House Hotel.
- The Tech Garden is one of New York State's largest incubator facilities. It's currently running the \$2.75 million Genius NY program, the area's largest business accelerator program. Six teams have been selected for Round 1, all of which are in the unmanned aerial systems field, leveraging URI

programs as well. The Tech Garden participates in several NYS programs to provide tenants with entrepreneurial tax credit as well as virtual tenant credits.

- Onondaga County will invest \$5.5 million into its Civic Center and War Memorial facilities. Plans include a new roof, sound proof theater doors, asbestos abatement, and new improvements, such as updated marquees and signage to welcome visitors.
- To serve a growing demographic, D-Train Doggie Daycare, Downtown's first daycare facility for its four-legged friends is currently under construction.

**New York Main Street Grant-eligible properties** include the following:

- 321 S. Salina
- 323 S. Salina
- 325 S. Salina
- 335-339 S. Salina
- 300 S. Warren
- 344 S. Warren
- 351 S. Warren
- Warren Street Garage
- 360 S. Warren
- 400 S. Salina
- 449-453 S. Salina
- 450 S. Salina
- 413 S. Warren
- 451 S. Warren
- 499 S. Warren
- 500 S. Salina

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

The Downtown Committee is an experienced grant administrator, having served as the Local Program Administrator for 5 separate rounds of New York Main Street funding, including coordination with property owners, environmental remediation companies, design professionals, construction companies, and state employees in both DEC and HCR. Downtown Committee staff have also managed grants from Senator DeFrancisco, CNY Arts, the CNY Community Foundation, the Gifford Foundation, National Grid, Syracuse Parks Conservancy, and other grant-making entities.

The City of Syracuse Department of Neighborhood and Business Development currently manages over \$3.5 million of HUD CDBG allocations annually; various NYS DHCR and ESD grant programs and four public authority entities. Project management responsibilities and fiscal management are divided among Neighborhood, Business, and Fiscal divisions.

The Downtown Committee works closely with the City of Syracuse, given its role as the representative of Downtown's constituency. It regularly communicates with the Departments of Parks and Recreation, Codes/Permits, Engineering, Law, and Neighborhood and Business Development, as well as the City-County planning agency (SOCPA), the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board, the Syracuse Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Small Business Administration.

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

The CNY REDC prioritizes three key goals in its annual Strategic Plan updates: Strengthening Targeted Industry Concentrations; Improving Connections to Regional, National, and Global Markets; Revitalizing Urban Cores, Main Streets, and Neighborhoods. Additionally, the *CNY Rising* Upstate Revitalization Plan prioritizes investment in key areas, including agriculture, economic inclusion, tourism, and unmanned systems, among other initiatives.

Downtown Syracuse is home to companies and institutions representing a spectrum of the region's strongest industry clusters and key transportation assets to connect workers to employment opportunities and goods to markets. The pipeline of projects presented within the Syracuse Convention District and its gateway neighborhoods align with these strategic priorities by promoting the development of a purveyor of fresh, healthy, locally grown foods; increasing the availability and diversity of housing in terms of unit mix and rent price; filling in gaps in the retail market; redeveloping commercial space for private business growth and expansion; providing better pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connectivity between recent Convention District investments and established commercial districts within Downtown Syracuse; and represents an opportunity to creatively and strategically connect previous disparate areas.

Specifically, this proposal seeks to address **Actions to Advance Regional Strategies and/or Revitalization Plan** (as presented in the CNY REDC Progress Report) by:

- Developing environments to make arts and cultural institutions more competitive and sustainable.
- Catalyzing adaptive reuse of historic, vacant and underutilized properties.
- Connecting entrepreneurship support mechanisms to efforts to revitalize and reinvest in distressed neighborhoods.
- Supporting anchor institution investment in urban communities.

# Syracuse DRI Neighborhood Boundary Map

Show in red, the DRI boundary encompasses the southern end of Downtown Syracuse and the West Onondaga Street gateway to the City's Westside.

