



Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Instructions

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council (NCREDC) is accepting Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) applications through May 27, 2016 at 4:00 p.m.

Completed applications can be e-mailed to NYS-NORTHCOUNTRY@esd.ny.gov

Answers to each question on the DRI application are limited to 5,000 characters.

If an answer to a DRI application question references an attached document or addendum, please reference the page number in the answer to the question to allow reviewers to consult the material.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE – DOWNTOWN TEMPLATE

BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: North Country

Municipality Name: Village of Massena

Downtown Name: Massena

County: St. Lawrence County

Downtown Description - Provide an overview of the downtown and summarize the rationale behind nominating this downtown for a Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) award):

Massena is the second largest community in St. Lawrence County with a population of 11,000 and situated at the heart of the North Country's geographic and economic base. Massena's historic downtown core is historically intact, contiguous and dense district. It's downtown is integral to the community, twenty-four of its buildings contain owner-occupied businesses. The core has long been the nucleus of commerce and civic pride, containing a number of early twentieth-century commercial-style buildings, owner-occupied by small service, retail and restaurant businesses as well as the Town and Village Hall and Massena's beloved bicentennial clock tower. The restoration of the downtown sector will restore commerce to the area and

create a more inviting atmosphere for the enticement of industry to the North Country.

Massena was established in the mid-18th century as a health spa located along the Racquette River, where there were Sulphur springs. It was flourishing tourist area until the late 19th century. Massena is also home to the first aluminum reduction plant, built in the late 19th century along the Grasse River, which was used as a source of inexpensive hydro-electric power. In the 1950's both Reynolds Aluminum and General Motors built plants along the St Lawrence River; the St. Lawrence Seaway Project was constructed during the same time period which included the international Robert Moses Power Dam. There are several other industries that have taken advantage of Massena's location close to the Canadian border, large work force and inexpensive electric power. All of this increased the economic development and prosperity of Massena.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

This section should be filled out with reference to the criteria set forth in the DRI Guidelines. Answers to each question on the DRI application are limited to 5,000 characters.

- 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 compact 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.

Massena's Main Street begins at the Racquette River on the south and ends at Maple Street/Grasse River on the north side; the west border is at the corner of Route 56/Andrews Street and West Orvis Street and the east border at corner of Route 37 and East Orvis Street. The main business sector is on the Main Street, but there is a substantial business corridor on East Orvis Street that has seen a resurgence of importance and business in the community.

- 2) **Size.** 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.

Massena's downtown is quite extensive, with ample parking. Historically Massena has been the go-to place for many surrounding smaller communities and the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation that is located just eleven miles east of Massena for the basic necessities of life. Massena

grocery, hardware, retail and gift stores have all been the main source of supplies for these hamlets. Additionally, the local eateries have provided the main outlet for dining out, and the downtown theater had been primary source of entertainment. Massena's population increases during the summer months with visitors and campers who utilize the numerous camping areas surrounding the Village.

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

In the past fifteen years we have participated in two Main Street Grants that awarded Massena \$400,000 in funding for façade work. Several downtown retailers took advantage of these grants to restore their facades with a total of approximately \$150,00 being invested. The Massena Theatre (Massena's historic Schine/Strand Theatre) will continue to be restored. Much of the restoration done to date has been in-kind services; it will take approximately \$400,000 to fully renovate the theater. After reaching the limits of private investment, the LLC has partnered with local volunteers and SUNY Potsdam's Community Performance Series Executive Directors. A not-for-profit has been formed and area theaters, whose calendars are too full to support all requests, are helping to identify prospective performances. Additionally, we are endeavoring to refurbish the historic Slavin's building, one of the first all-aluminum buildings in the world (circa 1950) which will be converted from a single retail space into two commercial/professional spaces and three residential units. The cost of this endeavor is estimated at approximately \$600,000. These two ventures should increase traffic within our downtown core and help spur more positive movement in our community.

- 4) **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.

Improvement of the visual aspects of the buildings and storefronts will make the prospect of re-locating to Massena more attractive to all possible investors. Massena is situated close to the RACER site, with several companies expressing interest in the site that would bring in numerous jobs to the area. Bringing those employees downtown will play a vital role in

further enlivening Massena's downtown. There are 20 mega-watts of hydro-electric power still available at the Massena Electric Department, a unique local not-for-profit electric utility owned and operated by the Town of Massena since 1981. The availability of this inexpensive electricity is being used to attract major employers whose site selection criteria include downtown as an important component in a vibrant and livable community which will help them recruit new staff. Increasing public and private investment in the corridor will create much-needed jobs as well as an opportunity to increase sales tax revenue that will be of benefit to all of Massena and St. Lawrence County.

We anticipate an increase in available jobs with the completion of these three projects.

- 5) **Attractiveness of the Downtown.** Identify the properties or characteristics the downtown possesses that contribute or could contribute, if enhanced, to the attractiveness and livability of the downtown. Consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, housing at different levels of affordability and type, healthy and affordable food markets, walkability and bikeability, and public parks and gathering spaces.

We have several buildings that have upgraded their facades through previous grants, several of our downtown core buildings are multi-purpose with retail on the lower level and residential units on the upper, some of these buildings could take advantage of the grant to upgrade their facades and enhance the residential sector. At the Racquette River edge of the corridor there is a public park with boat launch, picnic facilities and baseball field. At the Grasse River edge we are in the process of developing a park and bike path along with interest from a private kayak/canoe rental enterprise. There are also several areas that could be turned into greenspace, which would enhance the downtown corridor.

Massena is surrounded by several highly productive family-owned farms raising organic, locally grown produce, dairy products, grass-fed beef and free-range poultry. Our local Chamber of Commerce has introduced a Farmers' Market to the center of Massena. The establishment of this twice weekly Farmers' Market will increase traffic and shopping in the

downtown area as the agricultural community comes into the village to sell their goods. This new venture will open the door and enhance opportunities for the start-up of small markets specializing in the sale of healthy, affordable and locally raised products. The availability of such products will create a new customer base for downtown Massena and enliven its business atmosphere.

The Village of Massena has participated in Streetscape module of the Main Street Grant, enhancing the walkability of the downtown corridor. With two rivers running directly through the Village and Town of Massena and with the St. Lawrence River located just outside the Village we offer many opportunities for water sport recreation and fishing, and many camping facilities.

- 6) **Policies to Enhance Quality of Life.** 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, complete streets plans, or transit-oriented development. If policies achieving this goal are not currently in place, describe the ability of the municipality to create and implement such policies.

As a part of the Main Street Grant in 2012 the Village adopted a set of Design Guidelines in 2013 for façade improvement in the downtown corridor. We have also upgraded the building codes to address blighted properties throughout the community. The Village is looking at creating a fund in the neighborhood of \$150,000 that would be used for people interested in developing/expanding a business in Massena; this will be partially lending and partially grant based. Additionally, we have started the process of instituting a 485a program which would give tax reductions to people investing in their buildings.

- 7) **Local Support.** Set forth the local and community support that exists for the revitalization of this downtown and the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to building 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.

Please find attached a letter of support from our Town Supervisor, Village Mayor, our Electric company and another regional Economic Development agency. There are several committees, such as Moving Massena Forward, Massena Downtown Coalition and several LLC's that have been formed to

procure funding for the revitalization of the Historic Schines Theatre and the Slavin's Building.

Massena was recently named the beneficiary of a well-kept, well designed and architecturally sound building in the center of its downtown for the purpose of moving its museum and developing a cultural center for the community. This valuable gift demonstrates the level of local support our citizens have for their community. Not only will the exhibits and events held here depict the strong appreciation for Massena's heritage; this effort will provide diverse educational opportunities for our children and young, developing citizens. The artifacts and stories presented will inform all those who enter about the valuable contributions made to our community by our Native American neighbors, our courageous founders and our settling immigrant families. We intend to develop a strong collaboration with educators at all of our elementary and secondary schools; thereby providing Massena students with a solid understanding of its history, traditions, and distinct ethnicities. This new center will also assist in featuring local artisans whose work represents our rich cultural diversity and legacy. Handmade baskets, quilts, wood-carvings, rugs, tapestries, jewelry and etc. will become precious commodities for shoppers looking for the perfect and original gift. Again this creates another customer base for downtown shops or boutiques and strengthens the opportunity for entrepreneurship.

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

Over the past ten years Massena has suffered with numerous economic downturns; the latest being the closure of the Alcoa East Plant. This has affected the financial future and stability of the entire community. Despite these significant challenges, our leaders and citizens are striving to move forward in a positive direction. Our local governing officials, business owners, school superintendent and school board members, representatives

from NYPA and Massena Electric, BDC director and BDC board members and other stakeholders have met regularly on a Coalition Team to revitalize Massena. We recognize that a critical endeavor we must undertake is the remaking of a vibrant and vital downtown district. This will brighten Massena's outlook, encourage entrepreneurs to invest in our community and advance a larger tourist trade, particularly with our Canadian neighbors.

Massena citizens have a long history and legacy for hard work, creativity and resourcefulness. Massena is a village who prides itself with its cooperative spirit and willingness to accept the responsibilities necessary to overcome any challenges or adversities that keep it from thriving. It has a strong workforce and a strong volunteer force. Massena, NY is an American small town that will not disappoint anyone who invests in it.



VILLAGE OF MASSENA

Town Hall Building • 60 Main Street
Massena, New York 13662

May 2, 2016

North Country Regional Economic Development Council
Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Re: Business Development Corporation for a Greater Massena

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the application submitted by the Business Development Corporation for a Greater Massena (BBC) for a grant through the Economic Development Council.

Our downtown core is a critical asset in our community, but has fallen into an unfortunate state of disrepair. However, there is a broad commitment from throughout the community to reinvest in Main Street and our community as a whole. There are a number of ongoing initiatives that signify the interest of the community in improving the current circumstances. The BDC is regularly pursuing the possibility of new business and industry in the area. In order to further support existing downtown businesses and engage new businesses, unused downtown space needs to be rehabilitated into productive property. An attractive downtown will also serve as a focal point in marketing the Village to potential businesses and tourists. This program will not only serve to preserve the Village's core but will also present employment opportunities for business owners and workers that utilize funds.

I enthusiastically offer my full support for this grant without reservation. I urge that you give the Village of Massena's application full consideration during the Downtown Revitalization Initiative funding process.

Sincerely,



Adirondack Economic Development Corporation

67 Main Street, Suite 300 - Saranac Lake, NY 12983
Phone: 518-891-5523 888-243-2332 Fax: 518-891-9820

May 27, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

The Adirondack Economic Development Corporation enthusiastically supports the Village of Massena and the Massena Business Development Corporation's application for New York State's Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

The Village of Massena has a long and proud history as the industrial center of the North Country region and had always benefitted from the generations of job opportunities that were provided by General Motors, ALCOA and Reynolds Metals plants. But those jobs have dried up as two of the three facilities are now closed and the third's future is, at best, uncertain. The community – and the entire region – has lost thousands of jobs in Massena and the result has been devastating.

The community must now come to grips with the fact that it can no longer be what it has always been. Massena now stands on the crossroads of change and the resources provided through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative will be critical in helping the community rebound in these uncertain times and to successfully rebrand itself to take advantage of other community assets, like municipal power and the St. Lawrence River.

Massena has fallen on hard times over the past several years and this is reflected in its downtown corridor, which, sadly, has seen much better days. Several downtown buildings in the center of the corridor are in deplorable condition and only significant investment – well beyond the capacity of the town, village and county – will enable the community to improve conditions that would allow opportunities for other private and public investment to have meaningful impact.

If ever there was a community that needed a significant economic boost right now, it is Massena. The community is working hard to improve its economy and has a process in place to achieve significant economic development, but conditions downtown make it difficult for many of these efforts to take root and grow. That is why we support Massena's efforts to receive funding through this initiative.

Sincerely,

Jim Murphy
Executive Director

"AEDC is an equal opportunity provider, and employer."

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to: USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410. Or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay)."

www.aedconline.com

Telecommunication Services for the Deaf: 1-800-662-1220



MASSENA ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT
71 E. Hatfield Street • PO Box 209 • Massena, New York 13662
Office: (315) 764-0253 • Fax: (315) 764-1498
www.massenaelectric.com

May 2, 2016

North Country Regional Economic Development Council
Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Re: Business Development Corporation for a Greater Massena

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the application submitted by the Business Development Corporation for a Greater Massena (BDC) for a grant through the Regional Economic Development Council.

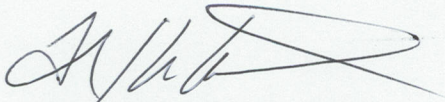
Massena's downtown is vital to our community. Presently it is in an unfortunate and sad state of disrepair. I believe that there is willingness within the community to support improvements if leadership is provided. The will to reinvest in Main Street and our community as a whole will require a key player or event to change our local momentum. With the closure of General Motors and a large portion of Alcoa's operations there is a pall over our community. If we can attract a leadership project to help stem the tide we can not only change the appearance of downtown, but our entire sense of confidence in our community. There are a number of ongoing initiatives that can blossom, all of which demonstrate the interest of our community in improving our current circumstances, but it will take a dramatic demonstration of confidence in our community.

I know that the BDC is regularly pursuing the possibility of new business and industry in the area. In order to further support existing downtown businesses and engage new businesses, unused downtown space needs to be rehabilitated into productive property. An attractive downtown will also serve as a focal point in marketing the Village to potential businesses and tourists. This program will not only serve to preserve the Village's core but will also present employment opportunities for business owners and workers that utilize funds.



I enthusiastically offer my full support for this grant. I urge that the NCREDC become the leaders in turning our Village around and changing our momentum by securing for Massena this Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. McMahon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew J. McMahon P.E.
Superintendent

Town of Massena

**Town Hall
60 Main Street
Massena, New York 13662
supervisor@town.massena.ny.us**

Office of the Supervisor

**315-769-3588
(Fax) 315-769-0578**

May 2, 2016

North Country Regional Economic Development Council
Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Re: Business Development Corporation for a Greater Massena

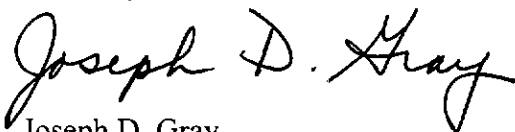
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I enthusiastically offer my full support for this grant without reservation. I urge that you give the Village of Massena's application full consideration during the Downtown Revitalization Initiative funding process.

Sincerely,



Joseph D. Gray
Town Supervisor