FALLING INTO PLACE

NIAGARA FALLS DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE
South End Downtown Neighborhood
BASIC INFORMATION
**BASIC INFORMATION**

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

**Municipality Name:** City of Niagara Falls

**Downtown Name:** South End Downtown Neighborhood

**County:** Niagara

**Point of Contact:** Thomas DeSantis

**Title:** Acting Director Dept. of Planning Environmental & Economic Development

**Phone:** 716-286-4477

**Email:** desantis@nfez.org
DOWNTOWN DESCRIPTION
Downtown Description

The proposed Target Neighborhood for Niagara Falls’ DRI, encompassing an area between Niagara Street and Walnut Avenue, historically was a stable, densely-developed, very pedestrian oriented, mixed-use community that was an integral part of City’s “South End”. A combination of geography, land use, and development characteristics, coupled with a series of already- and soon-to-be-completed initiatives make this Target Neighborhood uniquely positioned to facilitate a strategic funding/planning effort.

As did the City as a whole, downtown Niagara Falls began to decline in the mid-to-late 1960s as a result of regional economic shifts of jobs and capital out of WNY coupled with increasing suburbanization of housing and retail development locally. Like so many communities in this period, Niagara Falls took on a massive Urban Renewal effort in the mid-1970s, largely focused on widespread razing/clearance of what was considered blighted properties south of Niagara Street. This clearance was intended to assemble land parcels to facilitate new development of a massive state-developed convention center along with hotels, office buildings, and parking structures to create a “new” downtown for the City. Countless numbers of traditional “Main Street style” mixed-use buildings were demolished to make way for larger, more single-purpose, and largely more automobile-centric uses. While the proposed DRI Target Neighborhood was largely spared demolition activities of this period, it experienced a longer-lasting secondary effect of gradual de-population/decline during the extensive aftermath to redevelop the downtown Urban Renewal Areas, which actually never lived up to their promise, in terms of density and new uses.

By early 2000s, together with the establishment of the State’s USA Niagara Development Corporation (USAN), the City of Niagara set a clear policy change with regard to downtown redevelopment, ultimately effectuated through a new Comprehensive Plan and associated development regulations. This new direction—which expressly embodies the best principles of Smart Growth, Traditional/New Urbanism, and Context-Sensitive Development—looks to progressively reverse the scars of the Urban Renewal period by restoring a walk-able/bike-able downtown setting, realizing new connections between downtown neighborhoods and the City’s waterfront, and facilitating actions to restore a vibrant mixed-use land use pattern and active streetscapes. It also marked the beginning of a successful development period of downtown reuse and properly-scaled mixed-use infill development. Fueled by a number of New York State and local investments in infrastructure, parks, waterfront access, and tourism development, this period is now poised to begin to yield a truly sustainable downtown neighborhood that will contribute to a year-round activity, new investments, and new residents to the City.

Additional information on why this target area was selected is addressed in the Boundary Description.
TARGET AREA BOUNDARY
1) Downtown Revitalization Initiative Target Area Boundary

The Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) target area was selected because it is a mixed use, affordable and historic neighborhood with access to jobs, important community anchors and recreational opportunities. Local necessities such as healthcare, grocery (Tops Supermarket), fresh markets, professional offices and services, retail, social service providers, and restaurants are in the target area or within very close proximity. More importantly the area was selected because it is the heart of the Core City and touches the majority of the historic core including the Niagara Falls Central Tourist district, the Gorge Waterfront and the Memorial Park neighborhoods, as well as the North Main Street and Pine Avenue (Little Italy) Business Corridors. The revitalization of the South End Downtown area will directly complement and support redevelopment efforts ongoing in Core City neighborhoods and business districts. Its strategic location positions it as the most logical place for sparking a more comprehensive City-wide revitalization.

The attached map provides the physical boundaries of the target area which is bounded generally by Main and Third Streets on the west, Walnut Avenue on the North, the 10th Street alley on the east and Niagara Street in the south. The approximate 103 acre target area includes more than 35 City blocks and is immediately north of the City’s Central Tourist area.

Multiple Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) bus lines provide convenient local and regional transit service including the 55 Pine Avenue line and 50 Main/Niagara Line which provide service along all the commercial corridors including Niagara Street, Third Street, Main Street and Pine Avenue.

Additionally, area is very walkable with the maximum walking distance of 1/3 mile. The area has a Walk Score of 70, which according to the Walk Score website is “very walkable” and “the most walkable zip code in the City of Niagara Falls.”

An aerial view of the Target Neighborhood.
TARGET AREA SIZE
2) Downtown Revitalization Initiative Target Area Size

Downtown Niagara Falls is the primary downtown area for western Niagara County and the largest urban downtown in Niagara County. The City of Niagara Falls, which is the Downtown’s primary market or catchment area, is also the largest City in Niagara County with a population of 49,679.

However, in addition to being the largest urban Center in the County, Downtown Niagara Falls is also an international tourist destination that enables it to draw from a much larger base of population including:

- 8,000,000 annual tourists;
- 215,000 Niagara County Residents (Niagara Falls “market area”);
- 431,000 residents of the Regional Municipality of Niagara, Canada; and
- 1.1 million regional WNY residents within a half an hour drive.

In addition some other specific demographic characteristics based on the 2014 ACS Census estimates of the target area include:

- Estimated Population: 3,500
- Population Density: 12,500 persons/sq. mi. or 19.5/acre (Niagara County’s is 420 persons/sq. mile)
- Median Household Incomes: $24,885 (Census Tract 211) to $27,106 (Census Tract 212)

The population is complemented by a workforce population within and near the target area including:

- Seneca Niagara Casino and Hotel: 3,000 employees
- Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center: 1,100 employees
- Niagara Falls City Hall: 400 employees

Attachment Requirement: Please see the “Falling Into Place” section 10 which provides information on recent and planned development projects as well as community anchors that provide or will provide additional workforce employment in and around the target area.
PAST INVESTMENTS, FUTURE INVESTMENTS AND JOB GROWTH
3 & 4) Past Investments, Future Investment Potential and Job Growth

Beginning as early as 2005 with a concerted effort with USA Niagara Development Corporation (USAN) to formulate the Downtown Niagara Falls Multi-Modal Access Program, the City of Niagara Falls and USAN have made a number of strategic public investments that uniquely set the stage for the proposed Target Neighborhood for the DRI (See Falling into Place attachment). These have included a number of street infrastructure projects to improve access, improve multi-modal opportunities (pedestrian/bike) and to support new mixed-use infill development including:

- Third Street Reconstruction/Streetscape;
- Rainbow Boulevard/First Street Reconstruction; and
- Restoration of Old Falls Street.

A $5 million extension of John B. Daly Boulevard is also planned to begin later this year along an abandoned rail corridor through the Target Neighborhood that will connect Niagara Street and the Tourist district with the vibrant Pine Avenue neighborhood. The John B. Daly Boulevard Extension will be more integrated with the neighborhood district and allowing for the feasibility of practical parcel redevelopment adjacent to the roadway, as well as comfortable and safe pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, and appropriate intersection design at cross streets. The objectives for the new Extension are to:

- Create a neighborhood center and public space that can be connective and multi-functional
- Create a gathering place for residents that visitors will also find interesting and safe
- Provide for new residential opportunities, such as townhouses and condominiums
- Allow greater accessibility that can support mixed uses

In addition, the City has actively teamed with its State partners at USAN, State Parks, and the Department of Transportation to help realize waterfront access improvements associated with reconfigurations of the Robert Moses Parkway (RMP). The recent announcement of $42 million to remove the RMP from Main Street to Findlay Drive will provide the Target Neighborhood with direct access to the Niagara Gorge by 2019.
To complement the infrastructure investments, public investments at major educational, medical, and tourism institutions have been made that position the Target Neighborhood for revitalization. The 2012 opening of the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute by Niagara County Community College (NCCC) now places a concentration of students and faculty in the center of downtown – driving demand for student housing and support services in the area. This is expected to grow, but is constrained at this time due to the lack of student housing units available for occupancy. Similarly, major investments of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center are redefining that institution as a driver of an emerging “Memorial Park” neighborhood and within the Target Neighborhood.

In September 2012, the Niagara Falls Community Development Department received a competitive Western New York Regional Economic Development Council grant of $450,000 for a "Downtown Stabilization Project" (DSP) from Empire State Development. Grant funds are dedicated to blight clearance, property acquisition and small business building improvements.

The DSP was and is a strategic approach to revitalizing the downtown mixed-use commercial district and adjacent residential neighborhood. The project focused on the intersection of Third Street and Main Street as its epicenter. It is the capital component of a plan to reverse decades of population loss and help our City compete in the modern economy.

Key Accomplishments of the DSP Project include:

- **2012:** The City of Niagara Falls created a market rate apartment renovation program, offering $10,000 per unit renovated in mixed use buildings. Within the Third Street Commercial District, 16 apartments have been renovated with assistance from this program. In total, over 25 apartments have been renovated in the same target area between 2012 and 2016. To date, total apartment occupancy is over 95% from Rainbow Blvd to Main Street (including the Jefferson Building).

- **2013:** The Niagara Falls Community Development Department executed an 11 building demolition contract surrounding the Third Street Commercial District. Blighted buildings were hurting sense of security in the area, especially in the 4th Street Alley.

- **2012-2016:** Eight buildings were purchased on Third Street, from Niagara Street to Main Street, All of the new owners--private sector investors--live in Western New York. This is in marked contrast to the past, when out-of-town speculators with no apparent redevelopment plans owned much of the street. Approximate purchase price (total): Over $900,000.

- **June 2014:** The Niagara Falls Community Development Department received a $148,000 grant from National Grid’s Urban Center/Commercial District Revitalization Program and Cooperative Business Recruitment Programs for the "Downtown Stabilization Project." The funds are dedicated to lighting, gateway and small business improvements in the Third Street Commercial District.

- **2013-2015:** The Downtown Niagara Falls Business Association, LiveNF and Niagara Falls Community Development worked together to host site tours of available building spaces, Third Street marketing campaigns (2015), a 3rd Street Block Party (2015) and Sunday in a Park(ing Lot) - 2014 - to help encourage more people to consider Third Street as a place to invest and live.

- **2014-2016:** New businesses (Corner of Main and Park Place to the Corner of Third Street and Rainbow Blvd.)
The Park Place Market (2014)
The Third Street Retreat (2016)
Power City Eatery (2016)
The Craft (2016)
Marino's Sub's (2016) (Main & 4th St.)
Zaika- Dining Room Expansion (2016)

In addition to NFC small business financing, the Niagara Falls Community Development Department has executed six matching commercial façade renovation grants within the Third Street Commercial District.

• 2016: The Niagara Falls Police Ranger Station relocated to 435 Third Street.

• 2016: The Art Alley Way (425 Third Street) will connect the middle of the block to free public parking, in the former Niagara Gazette employee parking lot, created via an agreement with the building owner. The walkway will include works by local artists, creating a unique public space that is also functional as a walkway.

The Art Alley on Third Street will celebrate local art

Given the many new development projects, which have fallen into place in the adjacent downtown areas — ranging from new/upgraded hotels, new restaurants/entertainment venues, and the beginnings of some strategic housing investments—the neighborhood precincts north of Niagara Street are truly ready and set to accept much higher levels of new investment. The DRI will focus attention and new investment on the Niagara Street corridor and into the adjacent target neighborhood that will transform the neighborhood into a viable extension of the
Falls tourism district and a vital place for residents. Programmatically the City will be able to initiate projects including, but not limited to:

- Restoration/reuse of historic properties in the neighborhood, and revitalization of the traditional mixed-use storefront/apartment buildings on Niagara Street
- Infill residential and mixed-use development to support the expansion of student- or workforce-oriented housing and populations.
- A program in conjunction with the area’s major employers to incentivize employees to live in the DRI target area and provide incentives to existing owner occupied homes to invest in improvements to their properties.
- Business incubator uses and additional vocational training efforts, capitalizing on the Orleans-Niagara BOCES NCCC, Niagara Global Tourism Institute, Niagara University, and NFMMC. A pillar of the Global Tourism Institute is the creation of a business incubator. The DRI would expedite and expand its creation to include a multi-industry institution that would support entrepreneurship in key economic sectors.
- Professional Service Uses, capitalizing on proximity of NFMMC campus and underutilized commercial space.

Proposed Project may include the following as referenced in the Niagara Falls Urban Renewal Gateway Project Study.

To address the limitations that currently prevent Niagara Street from being an inviting gateway to downtown, the City is considering two redevelopment concepts (shown below). Both concepts will provide a mix of uses along Niagara Street, and would provide a safe and inviting pedestrian environment. Each of the alternatives has a different design scheme. The goals of both concepts is to:

- Create an interesting and unique (street-level) experience
- Create an inviting and safe pedestrian environment with a “cozy” feel
- Ensure high design standards and a prominent design theme
- Provide some degree of developer control given uncertainty over the ultimate nature or pace of development at the Seneca Niagara Casino
- Include a mix of uses for both visitors and residents
- Link to the Niagara Waterfront
- Create a chain of public green spaces/parks from the waterfront district inland

The Park Concept provides a mix of retail, office, and residential uses centered on a public plaza. The plaza is intended to host events year-round, such as farmers markets and concerts in the spring and summer, and an ice rink in the winter. The mix of development enveloping the plaza would make it feel secure by providing a reason for people to be there at all times of the day and keeping “eyes on the street.”

The Promenade Concept provides a mix of retail, office, and residential uses along a linear pedestrian street or promenade. The narrow pedestrian street creates an intimate, cozy feeling to encourage people to shop and linger. The buildings bordering Niagara Street would have double frontages in order not to present blank walls on either side. Promenade Concept may give a higher degree of confidence to the private development community because they could control the design of both sides of the pedestrian corridor.
Both concepts assume enhanced streetscaping along Niagara Street to create a safer and more inviting pedestrian realm. Calming traffic will encourage people to stroll along Niagara Street and more importantly to visit both the north and south side of the street. Making the streetscape on Niagara Street a safe inviting walking environment, likewise helps to encourage retail and mixed uses to locate there. Providing safe and distinctive street crossings is a key part of the streetscaping solution.

Knowing that there is a City-favored development typology for the Niagara Street corridor should frame expectations and provide a level of predictability to developers regarding community receptivity of a potential redevelopment proposal. This should increase investor willingness to spend additional time and effort to develop this or similar proposals.
The Former St. Mary’s Hospital is a historic resource awaiting restoration and reuse in the neighborhood.

The former St. Mary’s Nursing Residence is now ‘Carolyn’s House’ a supportive housing program for homeless women and children operated by the YWCA of the Niagara Frontier and is an example of leveraging historic preservation incentives.
City of Niagara Falls Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Table 1 below provides an impressive list of projects underway in and near the target area that represents both significant financial investments of more than $437 million in the area as well as the creation of 1,337 jobs in recent years.

Table 1 (Required Attachment for 3 & 4). Investments and jobs within and near the target area in last five years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Project</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Project Costs</th>
<th>Funding/Incentives</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Falls Street Restoration (East/West Malls &amp; Wintergarden razing)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$10,000,000</td>
<td>USAN: $7,000,000; Casino Rev: $3,000,000</td>
<td>50*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Falls Culinary Institute &amp; City Parking Ramp</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$35,000,000</td>
<td>USAN: $14,353,500</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca Niagara Casino &amp; Hotel Gaming Floor Upgrades &amp; Site Improvements</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$26,000,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Fall Memorial Medical Center Expansions 2006-15</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$85,000,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Global Tourism Institute</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$415,000</td>
<td>Power Proceeds: $250,000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Moses Parkway South/Riverway Project</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>20,000,000</td>
<td>ESD: $12,500,000; NYSDOT: $7,500,000</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Moses Parkway North Removal Main Street to Findlay Drive Prel. Engineering &amp; Funded for Final Design/Construction</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$44,200,000</td>
<td>ESD: $140,000; FHWA: $560,000; OPNHP: $2,000,000; NYP: $41,500,000</td>
<td>200*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John B. Daly Boulevard Extension Niagara Street to Pine Avenue Prel. Engineering &amp; Funded for Final Design/Construction</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
<td>FHWA: $4,000,000; City: $1,000,000</td>
<td>30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development Projects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDCO</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$867,000</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvonne’s Bakery</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$73,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheraton At The Falls- Retail</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$800,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunoco</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$691,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaika Restaurant</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$95,529</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mario’s Pizza</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$89,000</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wingate by Wyndham</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$10,160,000</td>
<td>$980,000</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheraton At The Falls- Rainforest Café</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$3,500,000</td>
<td>$425,000</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flip Burger</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$66,000</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Street Retreat</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$48,600</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z4 Below</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$32,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonderfalls- Rainbow Mall Adaptive Reuse Development Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td>$150,000,000</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>300**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubletree Inn Under Construction</td>
<td>$27,000,000</td>
<td>$2,750,000</td>
<td>55**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield Inn Under Construction</td>
<td>$7,000,000</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>14**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtyard by Marriott Under Construction</td>
<td>$11,500,000</td>
<td>$1,250,000</td>
<td>15**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyatt Place Under Construction</td>
<td>$34,000,000</td>
<td>$3,850,000</td>
<td>128**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Craft Under Construction</td>
<td>$660,406</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>5**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power City Eatery Under Construction</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>7**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subway By The Falls Under Construction</td>
<td>$348,000</td>
<td>$189,000</td>
<td>5**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara City Lofts Under Construction</td>
<td>$24,100,000</td>
<td>NYSHCR: $6,400,000; RestoreNY: $5,000,000</td>
<td>60*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 617 Under Construction</td>
<td>$43,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>1.5**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$437,500,447</td>
<td>$115,882,500</td>
<td>1,337</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Construction Jobs **Total Project Projections
ATTRACTIVENESS OF DOWNTOWN
5. Attractiveness of the Downtown

The proposed target area includes many of the key characteristics needed to attract both jobs and residents including:

A. Mixed Use Neighborhood: The neighborhood includes a mix of residential and commercial uses including three Traditional commercial corridors (Main Street, Third Street and Niagara Street), single family and multi-family homes, community anchors (Post Office, Medical Center, Niagara Arts and Cultural Center) and waterfront and parkland areas.

B. Affordable Housing: the Median Housing Value of homes in the area is between $52,800 and $55,000 which is less than half of the Median Housing Value in Niagara County according to 2014 ACS Census estimates. Similarly, the rents range from $430 to $440 in the area which is less than the $515 median rent in the County.

C. Commercial and Main Street Businesses: The neighborhood includes a mix of residential and commercial uses including general retail, restaurants, professional services and banking. Two pharmacies and Tops grocery store area two blocks north of the target area providing food and other essentials for area residents.

D. Multi-modal transit: The Target area is three blocks south of NFTA’s Portage Road Transit Center, which serves all primary NFTA bus routes in the City including the 55 Pine Avenue and 50 Main/Niagara routes which have stops that are less than a 1/3 mile for all residents in the Target Area. Ferry and Walnut Avenue are NY Bicycle Route 5 and are considered bike friendly according to Google Maps. Downtown
Niagara Falls offers multi-modal access to schools (Abate Elementary), community-based social service providers) and infrastructure (public and private utilities/services). And as stated previously the neighborhood is rated as the most walkable in the City.

E. Accessible Recreation and Cultural Amenities: The neighborhood has access to parks (Schoellkopf, Niagara Falls State Parks), gathering places (Old Falls Street), farmers markets (Main Street Market and City Market), and arts and cultural opportunities (Niagara Falls Library and the Niagara Arts and Cultural Center, aka NACC) and access to the Niagara River. The neighborhood also contains a large cache of historic ‘Register Eligible’ buildings and includes the NR Park Place Historic District, set between Main Street and the Gorge Waterfront and a number of National Register buildings such as the former St. Mary’s Hospital and Residence (restored —now Carolyn’s House), the NR Main Post Office, the former NF School Board Administration Office Building (restored —now housing).

F. Access to Health Care: The neighborhood hosts the City’s medical campus which includes the Niagara Falls Medical Memorial Medical Center, Emergency Care, Heart Center and other related or specialized health care providers. In addition there are also a number of medical doctor offices in and near the South End neighborhood.

G. Broadband Accessibility: The entire City has access to Time Warner Cable high-speed broadband services and multiple cellular providers.

The South End/Downtown Niagara Falls area has been challenged for decades to hold on to viability is experiencing a reversal of fortunes. It is a neighborhood that has seen fewer buildings being demolished in recent years and it is a place where home-ownership auctions are replacing the once more common home-abandonments. There is also new infill housing being built. There are historic properties being listed on the National Register restored, and reused. Likewise, there are a significant number of renovated mixed-use storefronts in the Third Street Precinct, most of which have newly renovated apartments for rent above.

Attachment Requirement: See “Falling Into Place” in Section 10 for additional photos, images and renderings.

The former NF School Board Administration Building is being renovated for housing in the target area.
POLICIES TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE
6. Policies to Enhance the Quality of Life

Often advanced in strong partnerships/coordination with its State agency partners, the City of Niagara Falls has taken significant, pro-active measures to institutionalize its development policies, and more importantly, its associated regulations and economic development programs, to both articulate and facilitate its goals to improve the quality of life downtown and in the City as a whole. Examples of these efforts include, but are not limited to the following:

- **2005 Strategic Plan, 2009 Comprehensive Plan, and Zoning Ordinance Update.** Initiated through a focused Strategic Plan involving a series of “Big Moves” to evolve the perception and potential for revitalization of key areas of the City, a full update of the City’s Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Niagara Falls City Council in 2009. This document sets forth the City’s key policies to improve the quality of life here, including advancing regional efforts for waterfront access, neighborhood/downtown revitalization, improvements to housing stock, and the restoration of the City’s dense, compact, mixed-use development pattern. These policies are being facilitated through a new zoning ordinance that sets forth standards/requirements for mixed-use development, higher-density downtown uses, and design standards for infill development and street-level uses to encourage active urban settings.

- **Memorial Park Plan.** First included as an element of the City’s Strategic Plan, the revitalization plan comprises a large portion of the Target Neighborhood by leveraging its strategic location near NFMMC, the NACC, Niagara City lofts restoration and residential reuse and the planned extension of John B. Daly Boulevard. The scheme involves a combination of rehabilitation and infill development to support a new community anchored by the medical center workforce/professionals.

- **2015 USAN “City in a Park” Illustrative Downtown Master Plan.** Developed in coordination with the City’s Planning Department, this USAN vision document serves to simplify that major tenets of the City/State’s revitalization policies, including connecting the downtown to its waterfront, to create seamless transitions between the parkland along the water to adjoining downtown areas, and facilitating dense, compact downtown development with active, street-level uses.

- **Old Falls Street Programmable Space.** Evolving out of the restoration of Old Falls Street, the City of Niagara Falls continues to partner with USAN to maintain a program of downtown activities on Old Falls Street, managed as an extension of USAN operations of its Conference Center Niagara Falls. Originally focused on major large concert events to grow recognition/visitation by local residents, this program has subsequently evolved to include a number of community and tourist-oriented family activities including summer outdoor movies, games, and various cultural events/activities that has become a stable of downtown living-visits.

- **Robert Moses Parkway Reconfiguration/Removal.** In 2006, the City entered into a landmark memorandum of understanding (MOU) with State Parks, NYSDOT, USAN, and the New York Power Authority to jointly solicit funding and plan for reconfiguring access along the Upper and Lower Niagara River removing obsolete roadways and to reconnecting the City’s neighborhoods to its waterfront. A decade later, after extensive planning work, the City is nearing the completion of the initial effort under this initiative, the “Riverway”, an at-grade 20 MPH park road and trail network that is replacing a one-mile segment of former elevated expressway in the State Park along the Upper Niagara River. In turn, this MOU partnership achieved a major victory when Governor Cuomo recently announced $42 million to remove a two-mile segment of the RMP from downtown to Findlay Drive, which would not only open access to 400 acres of open space along and in the Niagara Gorge, it would also provide direct access to waterfront recreational opportunities from the Target Neighborhood in the DRI application.
The City of Niagara Falls has actively inventoried and identified historic resources in and around the City and actively promoting the use of federal/state historic preservation tax credits amongst the programs in its toolbox to advance revitalization efforts. In fact, within the Target Neighborhood, the City has already sponsored a 2005 Cultural Resource Inventory of all properties in the City’s South End to identify those eligible for the State/National Registers of Historic Places (S/NRHP) as well as potential historic districts. The City recently advanced a federal/state tax credit-based reuse of the former South Junior High School on Portage Road (along the eastern edge of the Target Neighborhood), which will be adapted as a mixed-use project to be known as “Niagara City Lofts”.

The Comprehensive and City in the Park Plans have provided guidance for future City development.
LOCAL SUPPORT AND CAPACITY TO EXECUTE
7. Local Support and Capacity to Execute

Letters of Support are attachments hereto.

Leadership and Implementation Plan for DRI Resources
The City of Niagara Falls is committed to implementing the DRI funds with an organized, inclusive and strategic approach based on results. Implementation will be based on the following framework:

1. Strategic Management Structure: Thomas DeSantis will be the overall DRI Program Manager responsible for leadership, allocation of resources, project performance and communications with the NY State DRI staff, steering committee and other involved agencies. Tom will oversee three project managers that will be responsible for implementing specific elements of the DRI as shown in the chart below. The City will also engage consultants if needed to advance projects in a timely manner.

2. Inclusivity: The DRI Steering Committee will include key individuals from the City, State and County as well as representatives from target area businesses and neighborhoods. The Steering Committee will provide guidance for evaluating and prioritizing projects while ensuring that projects are meeting the objectives and goals of the DRI Plan.

3. Implementation Teams: The Program Manager and Project Managers will work with specific “Implementation Teams” that will help to deliver projects the Steering Committee prioritizes. Members will be made up of key City staff, business leaders, community members and other stakeholders that can facilitate implementation of projects.

4. Metrics and Reporting: The Planning and Development Department will prepare regular project tracking reports that include:
   - Project Name
   - Project Summary
   - Total Investment – Total Project Costs and Funding
   - Schedule, Milestones Reached
   - Job Creation/Retention and/or Individuals Assisted
   - Other Economic or Community Development Impacts
During the Dyster administration, the City has compiled a robust record of ‘economic development’ and city-building accomplishments. This past performance proves the city’s ability to balance planning, funding, administration, and execution of multiple large development projects concurrently and in sequence. Additionally, the City of Niagara Falls has its Urban Renewal Agency (URA) available to implement larger scale development and developments that may require eminent domain and site-assembly. The URA adopted the ‘Core City Urban Renewal Plan,’ which includes the South End and adjacent areas within the Core City. The Plan is intended to build and capitalize on existing core assets while promoting private development and intensification of uses generally.
The URA Plan and the city’s aforementioned 2009 Comprehensive Plan have already established the policy framework for integrating new projects and, most importantly, in executing DRI projects quickly.

Key Team Member Expertise and Experience:

**Mr. Thomas J. DeSantis, AICP**, is currently Acting Director of Planning, Environmental Services, and Economic Development for the City of Niagara Falls, New York. In that position he is responsible for overseeing municipal land use and transportation planning, Planning Board, Historic Preservation Commission, NF Urban Renewal Agency, N.F.C. Development Corporation, municipal GIS services, and multiple economic and community development projects. In addition to serving as the City’s Policy and Coordinating Committee representative on the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council.

Since coming to the City, the Planning Office has delivered six award-winning planning projects including completion of the comprehensive plan and full rewrite of the City’s zoning-ordinance. In addition, Mr. DeSantis manages grants that represent millions in funding for numerous projects, including an International Railway and Intermodal Station ($43M), the Niagara River Trail, as well as, various planning, park improvement, transportation enhancement, historic preservation, brownfield assessment and brownfield cleanup grants.

**Mr. Anthony J. Vilardo** is currently the Director of Business Development for the City of Niagara Falls. He is responsible for attraction and retention of businesses in the city. He serves as Executive Director of the N.F.C. Development Corp., which is a not-for-profit corporation. Its mission is to provide programs relieving and reducing unemployment, bettering and maintaining job opportunities, providing aid to attract new business or retain business and industry within the City of Niagara Falls.

Additionally he serves as Executive Director of the Niagara Falls Urban Renewal Agency. Its original and continued mission is to revitalize, redevelop and eliminate slums and blighted areas of the established Urban Renewal District. The NFURA is currently undertaking the rehabilitation of a brownfield and creating the Highland Avenue Business Park in its place, which will soon be filled with a research and development company with a potential employment of over 100.

**Mr. Seth Piccirillo** is Director of Niagara Falls Community Development, a department that oversees sustainable neighborhood development strategies for the City of Niagara Falls with a $2.5M annual budget. The department’s primary goal is block-by-block revitalization, focusing on access to equitable housing opportunities and driven by public participation. Since taking over as Director of the department Mr. Piccirillo has overseen the market rate apartment renovation program, commercial facade program and the National Grid Urban Center/Commercial District Revitalization Program.

**Mr. Alan Nusbaum** is the Environmental /GIS Coordinator with the City of Niagara Falls, NY. Alan provides a multitude of services to the City including Environmental Review, GIS Mapping, Brownfield Project Management ($19M), Grant Application and Administration, SEQRA review, and Flood Zone Administration.
I hereby certify that the following Resolution was adopted at a Meeting of the City Council held on May 31, 2016:

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-66

RELATIVE TO DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE APPLICATION

By: Council Chairman Andrew Touma
    Council Member Kristin Grandinetti
    Council Member Ezra Scott, Jr.
    Council Member Ken Tompkins
    Council Member Charles Walker

WHEREAS, the City of Niagara Falls is submitting an Application for New York State’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative with a total award of $10,000,000, and

WHEREAS, since 2010 the N.F.C. Development Corp. has authorized assistance for fifteen businesses in or adjacent to the targeted area with over $1,200,000 of financial incentives to leverage over $28,500,000 in private investment resulting in the creation or soon to be creation of over 175 jobs, and

WHEREAS, the New York Power Authority has spent and pledged $60,000,000 to remove the sections of the Robert Moses Parkway cutting off downtown Niagara Falls from the Niagara River, and

WHEREAS, investments by Empire State Development and the City of Niagara Falls have resulted in the growth of the tourist industry in the tourist sector of downtown Niagara Falls, and

WHEREAS, Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center and the Seneca Niagara Casino are the two largest private sector employers in Niagara County, and

WHEREAS, the City’s application for downtown Niagara Falls, if selected, will drive implementation of multiple smart growth projects in the downtown and in the surrounding core neighborhoods, which were called out in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan for “big moves,” and

WHEREAS, the City’s application will also promote new job creation, raise property values, create community amenities, bring in local tax revenues, attract new residents and businesses to downtown, building upon the city and region’s strengths, and

WHEREAS, the area to be defined in the Downtown Revitalization Initiative City of Niagara Falls application represents the community with the greatest potential and most immediate opportunity for positive impact for all Western New York,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Niagara Falls, New York that it hereby supports the Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application and authorizes the Mayor to act on behalf of the City in all matters related to the application process, and further authorizes the Mayor to execute any and all documentation necessary related to the Downtown Revitalization Initiative or award.

Witness my Hand and Seal this 2nd day of June 2016

[Signature]

Carol A. Antonucci
City Clerk
RESOLUTION ENDORSING NIAGARA COUNTY COMMUNITIES’ APPLICATIONS FOR WESTERN NEW YORK REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE GRANT APPLICATIONS

WHEREAS, New York State’s Regional Economic Development Councils are each holding a competitive application process for a $10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant to be awarded to a single community in each region deemed “ripe for development” into “vibrant communities where tomorrow’s workforce will want to live, work and raise families,” and

WHEREAS, the Western New York Regional Economic Development, of which the Honorable Wm. Keith McNall, chairman of this Legislature, is a member, has issued a Downtown Revitalization Grant application, and

WHEREAS, four Niagara County communities have indicated an intent to move forward with applications for the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative, and

WHEREAS, the applications submitted by Niagara County communities are synopsized by those respective communities’ economic development agencies as follows:

City of Lockport: The City of Lockport’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative builds upon the recent economic development successes in downtown Lockport, such as progress at Harrison Place, the continued restoration of the Flight of Five locks, and the construction of Cornerstone CFCU Arena. The nomination request highlights the potential for an even greater impact on Lockport, Niagara County, and throughout the Western New York region by enhancing existing assets in the City’s downtown, like The Historic Palace Theatre and vacant and under-utilized mixed-use properties;

City of Niagara Falls: The City of Niagara Falls is targeting the area north of Niagara Street to create a vibrant, year-round downtown district. Major projects like the Seneca Niagara Casino, expansion of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, NCCC’s Culinary Institute, construction/renovation/expansion of new hotels have been completed in recent years resulting in creation of new jobs. This trend will only continue as there are other projects in the pipeline to continue the diversification of the Niagara Falls economy. Projects like Housing Visions and the Market Rate Rental Rehabilitation program have begun to create an attractive livable community for diverse populations. The city’s 2009 Master Plan has laid a framework of policies that will allow Niagara Falls to integrate continued growth through the DRI;

City of North Tonawanda: The City of North Tonawanda’s nomination for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, known as the NT Momentum project, is the culmination of ten years of comprehensive planning focused on North Tonawanda’s historic downtown. This initiative will catalyze development in North Tonawanda along the Niagara River and Erie Canal waterfronts.
anchored by a historic downtown filled with culture, arts, recreation, tourism, and a great atmosphere in which to live and work. Focused on leveraging strong local assets, this project will bring new investment to North Tonawanda and spark resurgence in downtown. The Downtown Revitalization Initiative is the opportunity to implement the NT Momentum project and bring the communities downtown redevelopment vision to reality;

Transit North: The Transit North – Historic Canalway Corridor Downtown Revitalization Project brings together three Niagara County communities, the Towns of Lockport and Pendleton and the City Lockport, who are seeking to revitalize the six-mile Transit North corridor which commences at Tonawanda Creek Road and terminates at the intersection of Main and Washburn Streets in the City of Lockport, and has average daily traffic counts of 29,250. The historic-themed retail shopping district will not only lead to the development of a gateway that creates a sense of arrival and a place worth remembering, but will also help drive business back onto Main Street in the City of Lockport, and

WHEREAS, it is the judgment of the Niagara County Center for Economic Development that these applications are of similar weight and value, and are in line with the vision for development set forth in the Niagara County Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS, this Legislature is prepared to support implementation efforts by any Niagara County community awarded the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Legislature of the County of Niagara does hereby endorse the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant applications of the City of Lockport, the City of Niagara Falls, the City of North Tonawanda, and the Transit North consortium, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Legislature of the County of Niagara does hereby direct Commissioner Sam Ferraro and the Center for Economic Development to provide any assistance or information sought by the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council in its efforts to evaluate the strengths of the applications from the four Niagara County communities, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Legislature of the County of Niagara does hereby direct Commissioner Sam Ferraro and the Center for Economic Development to provide full assistance to any Niagara County community that should be awarded the DRI funding as it implements the project outlined in its application, and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Legislature directs that individual copies of this Resolution be sent to all representatives seated on the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council, namely Satish K. Tripathi, Jeff Belt, Crystal Abers, Aaron Bartley, Robert T. Brady, Deanna Alterio Brennen, Byron W. Brown, Paul Brown, Curtis Crandall, Michael Cropp, Colleen C. DiPirro, Paul A. Dyster, Dr. Charles Edmondson, Vince Horrigan, Virginia Horvath, Dottie Gallagher-Cohen, Dr. Rosa Gonzalez, Pamela R. Henderson, John R. Koelmel, Thomas A. Kucharski, Brenda W. McDuffie, Wm. Keith McNall, Michael Metzger, Jennifer J. Parker, Mark Poloncarz, Senator Michael H. Ranzenhofer, Member of the Assembly Robin Schimminger, Samuel Teresi, and Melinda Vizzarri, and Empire State Development Corp. Western New York Regional Director Christopher Schoepflin, as well as representatives of the four Niagara County municipal economic development agencies submitting applications.
June 1, 2016

Mr. Christopher Schoepflin, Regional Director  
Empire State Development Corporation  
95 Perry Street #500  
Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Mr. Schoepflin,

I would like to lend my support of the City of Niagara Falls’ application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. This project is important to the City of Niagara Falls as they continue to work towards a better business community.

Over the last few years the downtown area has seen a remarkable amount of both public and private investment to transform the area into a world class destination. Despite the success that has been achieved much work remains to be done. The Downtown Revitalization Initiative will help to improve the streetscape, enticing even more investment and development into the area.

By securing the State of New York’s assistance through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, downtown Niagara Falls will become a desirable, unique place that will continue to attract jobs and residents improving the quality of life for all.

I strongly support the City of Niagara Falls in their endeavor to secure this funding.

Sincerely,

John D. Ceretto  
Member of Assembly  
145th District
June 3, 2016

Mr. Christopher Schoepflin, Regional Director
Empire State Development Corporation
95 Perry Street #500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Mr. Schoepflin,

On behalf of the Downtown Niagara Falls Business Association (DNFBA), I would like to lend our support of the City of Niagara Falls’ application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

Over the last few years the downtown area has seen a remarkable amount of both public and private investment to transform the area into a world-class destination. Despite the success that has been achieved, much work remains to be done.

The DNFBA’s membership has grown to more than 40 members, representing new and well-established businesses, which collaborate to help strengthen our unified downtown district while enticing guests to extend their stay in our area. In the past year, we have strengthened our relationship with Niagara Falls State Park to present several marketing initiatives to entice guests to extend their stay in our area.

One goal of our association is to better connect Old Falls Street and Third Street as a more welcoming district for those traveling by foot or vehicle. An area that could help further this goal is Niagara Street, which is the gateway to the City of Niagara Falls for those utilizing the Rainbow Bridge, as well as the mid-point for hotel patrons walking from the Old Falls Street area. Niagara Street is truly in dire need to receive new commercial storefronts, etc., to help attract new businesses and be more welcoming for our guests.

By securing the State of New York’s assistance through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, downtown Niagara Falls will become a desirable, unique place that will continue to attract jobs and residents improving the quality of life for all.

The DNFBA looks forward to partnering with our city on this initiative.

Sincerely,

Susan Swiatkowski, DNFBA Chairperson

DNFBA Mission: To stimulate, enhance & nurture an inviting atmosphere for civic, cultural, social & economic activities in Downtown Niagara Falls, NY.
Mr. Christopher Schoepflin, Regional Director  
Empire State Development Corporation  
95 Perry Street #500  
Buffalo, New York 14203

Dear Mr. Schoepflin,

The purpose of this letter is to express Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center’s support for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative application being submitted by the City of Niagara Falls.

The proposed project area includes and surrounds our medical center’s campus and the city’s objectives – promoting market rate residential housing, energizing commercial space from the Rainbow Bridge along Niagara Street, and encouraging entrepreneurship and workforce development – both complement and enhance our vision for the continued growth of a bustling medical corridor in a vibrant neighborhood of downtown Niagara Falls.

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center is a leading economic engine for Niagara Falls and Niagara County. With more 1,100 employees and a payroll of $52 million, our regional economic impact is upwards of quarter-billion dollars annually.

The work we are doing aligns with a number of key industries as identified by the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council. As a health and life science industry leader, teaching hospital and one of the area’s largest private sector employers, we are preparing the workforce of tomorrow through collaborations with several universities and colleges including an enhanced partnership with Niagara University to expand its nursing program.

Over the past 12 years Niagara Falls Memorial has invested more than $85 million in capital projects on our downtown medical campus – and we would like to do more. We are deeply invested in Governor Andrew Cuomo’s vision to “transform selected downtown neighborhoods into vibrant places for people to live, work and raise a family – which will also help attract new investments and businesses for years to come.”

During the past several years, Memorial Medical Center has undergone a remarkable transformation from a community hospital to a regional center for health, wellness and job development. It is our hope that a Downtown Revitalization Initiative will allow our neighborhood and our city to leverage additional private sector investment to attract new residents and businesses.

We look forward to partnering with the city of Niagara Falls on this initiative.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Ruffolo  
President & CEO

621 Tenth Street • Niagara Falls, New York 14302 • (716) 278-4000  
www.nfmmc.org
Mr. Christopher Schoepflin, Regional Director
Empire State Development Corporation
95 Perry Street #500
Buffalo, NY 14203

June 2, 2016

Dear Mr. Schoepflin:

On behalf of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, I would like to lend our support of the City of Niagara Falls’ application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

Over the last few years the downtown area has seen a remarkable amount of both public and private investment to transform the area into a world-class destination. Despite the success that has been achieved much work remains to be done.

Last week, the Discover Niagara Shuttle began operations to fourteen popular destinations between the “falls and the fort” including several locations within the City of Niagara Falls. Regional partnerships made this impactful transportation initiative possible and will serve to further build the tourism economy within our region.

By securing the State of New York’s assistance through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, downtown Niagara Falls will become a desirable, unique place that will continue to attract jobs and residents improving the quality of life for all.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is proud to serve as a unifying bridge for so many Niagara County cultural organizations, municipalities, and agencies that can collectively work alongside each other for the betterment of our region.

We look forward to partnering with the City of Niagara Falls on this initiative.

Sincerely,

Sara Capen

Sara Capen
June 1, 2016

Mr. Christopher Schoepflin, Regional Director
Empire State Development Corporation
95 Perry Street #500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Mr. Schoepflin,

The purpose of this letter is to express the Niagara Global Tourism Institute’s support for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative application being submitted by the City of Niagara Falls.

The proposed project footprint includes an area frequently seen by tourists visiting Niagara Falls, and the city’s objectives – promoting market rate residential housing, energizing commercial space from the Rainbow Bridge along Niagara Street, and encouraging entrepreneurship and workforce development – both complement and enhance our vision for the continued growth of a vibrant neighborhood of downtown Niagara Falls.

Tourism is the leading economic engine for Niagara Falls and Niagara County. Employing over 14,000 employees and generating traveler spending of over $580 million towards the local economy in 2014, the industry sustains the area and is the main driver for its future development. (Tourism Economics, 2014)

Tourism is one of the key industries identified by the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council as a main driver for the economy, but growing this industry requires adjoining areas to be vibrant. The downtown neighborhoods play a critical role in establishing the tourism sector’s image in the eyes of visitors, both current and potential, as well as domestic and international. Revitalized downtown neighborhoods provide a welcoming backdrop to our international consumers, but also serve as a pivotal selling point when converting “drive-through” visitors into overnight guests. The success of the industry and the general area depend on maximizing hotel occupancy. Establishing a clean, welcoming, and developed downtown neighborhood is vital to the area’s overall success.

We are fully supportive of Governor Andrew Cuomo’s vision to “transform selected downtown neighborhoods into vibrant places for people to live, work and raise a family – which will also help attract new investments and businesses for years to come.”

We look forward to partnering with the city of Niagara Falls on this initiative.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Whalen
Interim Director
Office of the President
June 2, 2016

Mr. Christopher Schoepflin, Regional Director
Empire State Development Corporation
95 Perry Street #500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Mr. Schoepflin:

Kindly accept this letter of support for the City of Niagara Falls’ application for the Downtown Redevelopment Initiative.

Niagara University, founded in 1856, is Niagara County’s only institution offering bachelors’ and graduate degrees. We are a major employer in the area and we recruit students, staff, and faculty from around the country and across the globe. As both a recruitment and retention strategy, NU has been investigating ways to create graduate student and faculty housing in Niagara Falls for some time. The opportunity to combine a housing incentive with our institutional desire to uplift and benefit the community is very exciting.

Niagara University is delighted to work with the City of Niagara Falls on plans to improve and revitalize the designated DRI area which—although centrally located and proximate to major employers, transportation, tourism and cultural destinations—has been blighted by poverty and urban decay. Indeed, our Niagara Global Tourism Institute (with its workforce training programs, business incubator planning, and tourism research) is only two blocks outside the DRI area; and key employers, Niagara Memorial Medical Center and Seneca Niagara Casino are similarly nearby.

Niagara University has a long history of working with local government on initiatives to address the needs of the Niagara Falls community, and welcomes the prospect of multifaceted redevelopment planning. As a Vincentian University, NU draws inspiration from St. Vincent de Paul who organized his contemporaries to respond compassionately to people’s basic needs. Continuing this tradition, NU seeks to inspire its students to serve all members of society, especially the poor and oppressed in local community and in the larger world.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Rev. James J. Maher, C.M.
President
ALIGNMENT WITH REGIONAL STRATEGIES
8. Alignment with Regional Strategies

Core Strategies:

Prepare Our Workforce. Niagara Falls has already taken important steps to advance this Core Strategy in Tourism, one of the target industries in the WNYEDC’s Strategic Plan. The City was a key partner in the development of Niagara Community College’s (NCCC) Niagara Falls Culinary Institute, which is literally helping develop the next generation of tourist workers and entrepreneurs in the City, and has the ability to grow to 1,000 students and faculty over the next five years. In turn, a major aspect of the Niagara University sponsored Niagara Global Tourism Institute (NGTI) is to promote workforce development in the hospitality fields. The Target Neighborhood in this DRI application can prove to be a supporting feature to these institutions by providing a neighborhood setting for student-based residential development, as well as creating the testbed of private restaurants and hotels that serve for summer jobs and internships for this student body. Additional opportunities include partnerships with the NGTI to further establish training programs in hospitality.

In turn, various social service entities such as Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, which is a teaching hospital, has an enhanced partnership with Niagara University’s expanded nursing program, the New Golisano Center for Community Health and the Niagara-Orleans BOCES nursing programs locating to 6th Street and Walnut Avenue also complement job training in the South End in the field of health & life science.

Foster a Culture of Entrepreneurship. While the City’s partnerships and sponsorship of the Culinary Institute and the NGTI is intended to foster our future entrepreneurs, the City’s toolbox of assistance programs (loans and grants) for commercial and residential uses offer financial support to both existing and startup businesses in Niagara Falls. The City currently coordinates with Niagara County’s Small Business Development Center to provide guidance and stewardship for new small business start-ups. In turn, the City’s NFC Corporation and Community Development Programs aggressively use various programs to assist business start-ups, particularly in the downtown area. Since 2010 the NFC Development Corp has provided $1,209,000 in assistance to 14 businesses leveraging $27,393,717 in private investment in the South End and in immediately adjacent areas. These programs are often coordinated with USA Niagara, a subsidiary of Empire State Development assistance programs.

Implement Smart Growth. With more than a decade of policies focusing on eliminating the impacts of Urban Renewal; fostering dense, compact urban development; actively planning for increase waterfront access; and fostering restoration/reuse of our community’s historic resources, the City of Niagara Falls is clearly an “early adopter” of Smart Growth principles. These overall polices are standardized in the City’s new zoning and development ordinances—which would be used as the guidebook for revitalization of the Target Neighborhood—and specifically regulate features such as limiting/eliminating off-street parking requirements and provide density bonuses for including features such as street-level retail, transit-oriented features, and streetscape/pedestrian improvements.

Tourism and Arts: In addition to the aforementioned tourism projects, the Niagara Arts and Cultural Center is adjacent to the targeted area. The “NACC” as it is better know is the largest Multi-Arts center in New York The NACC is Home in the 180,000 square foot former Niagara Falls High School building centrally located in Niagara
Falls, NY. The NACC is home to more than 75 artists and art groups and serve over 600 artists and 1,700 children through its programming.

Revitalization of the South End Downtown neighborhood will advance the WNYREDC Plan and Opportunity Agenda
ALIGNMENT WITH OPPORTUNITY AGENDA
9. Opportunity Agenda

Continuing the City’s policies of including local residents and businesses in the DRI planning process weather as committee members or through public meetings will address Opportunity Agenda expectations. The target area also includes some of the key Opportunity Area characteristics as stated previously and repeated here:

Access to Transportation: Multi-modal transit: The Target area is three blocks south of NFTA’s Portage Road Transit Center, which serves all primary NFTA bus routes in the City including the 210-Metrolink, 40-Grand Island, 55-Pine Avenue and 50 Main/Niagara routes which all have stops that are less than a 1/3 mile for all residents in the Target Area. Ferry and Walnut Avenue are NY Bicycle Route 5 and are considered bike friendly according to Google Maps. Downtown Niagara Falls offers multi-modal access to schools (Abate Elementary), community-based social service providers) and infrastructure (public and private utilities/broadband internet/telecommunication services).

And as stated previously the neighborhood is rated as the most walkable in the City, and with access to the Niagara River Greenway it has access to off-road bikeways that connect south to LaSalle and further upstream, as well as, north along the Gorge Waterfront to DeVeaux, Lewiston and beyond.

Education and Training: NCCC’s Culinary Institute, and the Niagara Global Tourism Institute (NGTI) both promote workforce development in the hospitality fields. The City will look to support the mission of both institutions by creating a neighborhood setting conducive for student-based residential development. Business expansion in the DRI and adjacent downtown areas will create further opportunities for partnerships internships and/or entry-level positions.

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center and the Niagara-Orleans BOCES are two education programs expanding in the DRI.

Foundational Support: Affordable Housing: the Median Housing Value of homes in the area is between $52,800 and $55,000 which is less than half of the Median Housing Value in Niagara County according to 2014 ACS Census estimates. Similarly, the rents range from $430 to $440 in the area which is less than the $515 median rent in the County.

Walnut Avenue Homes is an innovative, in-fill based neighborhood revitalization development. This project, which currently has leased units and a 100 percent completion date of August 2016, is revitalizing blighted and deteriorated properties along Walnut Ave., 5th Street, 6th Street and 7th Street, including a vacant school administrative building, and an underutilized warehouse building. There are seven newly constructed buildings and one substantially rehabilitated building. The substantially rehabilitated building is considered historic by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. We will be preserving a piece of history and neighborhood fabric that will help to maintain the street scape. Additionally, Housing Visions has partnered with the YWCA of Niagara to provide 13 units of supportive housing for low income homeless women and their children. Walnut Avenue Homes will fundamentally transform the distressed neighborhood on a large and comprehensive scale by eliminating blight and improving residents’ quality of life. Housing Visions will support this comprehensive redevelopment with 41 units of quality affordable rental housing through the new construction and rehabilitation of 8 buildings. The bedroom unit configuration within the 8 buildings will be (12) 1 Bedroom Units; (18) 2 Bedroom Units; and (11) 3 Bedroom Units. The project was assisted by both New York State low income housing tax credit and historic preservation tax credit awards.
Within the Niagara Falls DRI target area, the Community Development Department, via United States Department of Housing and Urban Development funding, has also executed 40 housing renovation grants and 38 first time home buyer closing cost grants.

Niagara University working through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of University Partnerships (OUP), NU established ReNU Niagara, a community outreach partnership center (COPC) on South End of Main Street in the Target Area. As a cornerstone of NU’s active engagement in the community and through its work with faculty, staff and collaborative partners (including the City’s Community Development Dept.), ReNU Niagara COPC works collaboratively with community partners to address urgent community needs and challenges. Examples include the establishment of community vegetable gardens, tax preparation assistance, resident and organizational training (entrepreneurial, business development, fundraising, nonprofit management), and asset mapping.

*Jobs: See section 3 & 4- Past Investments, Future Investment Potential and Job Growth*
OTHER INFORMATION
10. Other Information

Please find our Falling Into Place “infographic” which provides information required for many of the previous sections as well as additional information.
FALLING INTO PLACE

NEIGHBORHOOD INFILL AND REHABILITATION

Projects Underway
1. Walnut Homes
2. 7th Street Housing Renovations
3. Former St. Mary’s Hospital Preservation and Rehab
4. Daly Boulevard Extension and Neighborhood Infill
5. Niagara Street Mixed Use Development
6. Former School Board Building Apartments

In the Pipeline
7. Commercial District Revitalization

LEGEND

DRI Target Area
Anchors
Projects Underway
In the Pipeline
Commercial District Revitalization

NIAGARA FALLS DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE
FALLING INTO PLACE

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center

Infill Housing

Carolyn’s House Revitalization Project

Third Street Mixed Use Redevelopment

Third Street Art Alley Project

NIAGARA FALLS DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE
NIAGARA FALLS DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

FALLING INTO PLACE

Old School House Restoration for Housing

Infill Housing

BOCES Job Training Center in the Target Area

New Fairfield Hotel in the adjacent Central Tourist Area

New Doubletree Hotel Construction in the adjacent Central Tourist Area
FALLING INTO PLACE

NIAGARA STREET AND JOHN DALY BOULEVARD PROJECTS

Potential Niagara Street Development
Potential John Daly Boulevard Development

NIAGARA FALLS DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE
FALLING INTO PLACE

Tourist Area Projects Complement Target Area Improvements . . .

NIAGARA FALLS DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

BY THE NUMBERS

8,000,000 tourists annually
$437 Million 5 year investment
1,337 jobs in 5 years
1.5 Million residents within a 30 minute drive
32 projects in 5 years
12,500 persons per square mile

LEGEND

1. Wonder Falls Project
2. NCC Culinary Institute
3. Hyatt Place Mixed Use Development
4. Rainforest Cafe
5. Seneca Niagara Casino Gaming Floor Upgrades
6. Wingate Inn Hotel Development
7. DoubleTree Inn Hotel Development
8. Fairfield Inn Hotel Development
9. Courtyard Inn Hotel Development
10. Old Falls Street Restoration
11. Robert Moses Parkway Riverway Project

NIAGARA FALLS DRI TARGET AREA AND NEARBY

BY THE NUMBERS

8,000,000 tourists annually
$437 Million 5 year investment
1,337 jobs in 5 years
1.5 Million residents within a 30 minute drive
32 projects in 5 years
12,500 persons per square mile

NIAGARA FALLS DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE