

Town of Seneca Falls

Downtown Revitalization Initiative Submission
- 2018 -



Downtown
Revitalization
Initiative



our history, your future

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Population: 6,493
Per Square Mile: 373
USA Average: 87

Air Quality: 83%
Ithaca, NY: 66%
Rochester, NY: 52%
Syracuse, NY: 60%
USA Average: 59%

Labor Force
Future Job Growth: 51.53%
(USA: 37.98%)
Jobs Increased: 2.77%
(USA: 1.59%)
96% Employed

Top 3 By Occupation
Production/Transportation: 23%
Sales/Office/Administration: 22%
Construction/Development: 18%

Education Attainment
92% High School Degree or Higher
29% Bachelor's Degree or Higher
14% Associate's Degree

11.4 Students per Teacher
US Average: 16.8

15+ Colleges and Universities within 45 miles.

Blue Ribbon School Award Recipient 2010 (Cady Stanton).

Average Home Cost \$86,900
Cost Index: 48 (USA Index: 100)

85 Total Cost of Living Index
USA Index: 100

Nearby Airports
Finger Lakes Regional
4 Miles
Syracuse International
47 Miles
Rochester International
58 Miles

6 Miles to New York State Thruway

Major state routes within Seneca Falls:
Route 414 Route 5 Route 20
Route 96 Route 89 Route 318



Downtown Revitalization Initiative

APPLICATION

BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: Finger Lakes

Municipality Name: Town of Seneca Falls

Downtown Name: Downtown Seneca Falls

County Name: Seneca

Contact Details: Seneca Falls Development Corp; greg@senecafallsdevcorp.org; (315) 338-4359

VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

By 2023, downtown Seneca Falls will be a vibrant, sustainable, mixed-use center for living, commerce, education and the arts. Our history of progress, particularly as it relates to Women’s Rights, will continue to be celebrated for its national significance. Located at the crossroads of a multi-modal transportation network that connects large cities and small towns, Seneca Falls will be recognized as the *Heart of the Finger Lakes*, complete with a revitalized downtown area featuring renovated infrastructure, an improved quality of life, and an excitement for the future as we rise to meet the challenges of the New Economy in America and worldwide.



JUSTIFICATION

Downtown Seneca Falls — Our History, Your Future

The Town of Seneca Falls first applied for a Downtown Revitalization Grant in 2016. While the grant was not awarded, it provided us with a foundation to build upon, and ultimately became the beginning of a two-year comprehensive community-wide planning process for 2018.

After nearly two years of collaborative efforts among government officials, residents, organizations, and the business community, the Town of Seneca Falls is proud to submit its application for the 2018 Downtown Revitalization Grant on the heels of our recently-adopted Economic Development and Revitalization Plan.



Since its inception, Seneca Falls has long been a community that embraces progressive thought, emerging technology, and comprehensive academia. We intend to carry that torch forward. Not only is this the best way to thrive, but it's also the most proper way to honor the legacy bestowed upon us. Motivated by the accomplishments of our past, business owners, community leaders, and residents alike are ready to play critical and welcomed roles in our resurgence.

Through our planning processes, and with your support, Seneca Falls is ready to undertake the transformation of one of the most distinctive and revered historic downtowns in the Central Finger Lakes area. We want to be an inspiration to like-sized towns and demonstrate that revitalization is possible for the entire region if you have the right team, the right vision, and the right support.

Recognized as the birthplace of Women's Rights, the efforts put forth by courageous men and women during the Women's Rights Convention of 1848 eventually blazed the path for the passing of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote. Visitors from all over the world come to Seneca Falls to explore and honor its history...to engage in year-round fun activities...and to enjoy our small-town charm. A vibrant downtown area can only help to galvanize their experience and encourage them to share what they've discovered with others.

With a highly motivated and educated workforce, an active business community, and easy access to everything the Finger Lakes has to offer, Seneca Falls is on the cusp of a historic revitalization. From established build-to-suit buildings in the heart of downtown to shovel-ready development sites nearby, we're poised to help businesses establish and strengthen their roots in Seneca Falls.

Evidence of revitalization is already taking shape around us and selecting Seneca Falls as the third-round recipient would serve to boost the reach, effectiveness, and impact of these surrounding projects and initiatives.

In particular, the City of Geneva is undergoing considerable development and seeing significant benefits following their DRI selection in 2016. As well, del Lago Resort & Casino, located less than six miles from downtown Seneca Falls, attracts more than 3 million visitors annually.



As a shining example of the kind of residual impact new development can have on the surrounding area, del Lago Resort & Casino has created over 1,300 permanent jobs, lowering the unemployment rate in Seneca County from 7% to 3.9% *(Robert Shipley, Chair, Seneca County Board of Supervisors and Finger Lakes REDC committee member).*

Live. Work. Play.

Our abundant outdoor activities, vibrant cultural scene, nearby upscale casino and destination resort, and historical significance all combine to serve as major draws that can deliver a steady stream of visitors, shoppers, and new business interests. Downtown Seneca Falls is a walkable community centered around Fall Street and the Sackett District, both of which cater to residents, businesses, and visitors. The area is home to restaurants, museums, the National Women's Hall of Fame, performing arts studios, the

Women’s Rights National Park, a wide variety of shops, professional offices, the Seneca Falls Farmers Market, and the historic Gould Hotel, a modern 4-Star boutique destination.



Within a thirty-mile radius of our downtown, one can enjoy world-class festivals, entertainment, dining, State and National parks, game reserves and the growing number of wine, beer, cider, spirits and cheese purveyors. Visitors are also within 45 miles of Rochester, Syracuse, Ithaca, and other communities.

Our downtown area, stretching along the Cayuga-Seneca Canal and historic Routes 5 & 20, features a well-defined area with more than 30 blocks of homes, businesses and historic sites.

Our East to West transportation corridor includes the Finger Lakes Railway (FLGK), which operates 167 miles of former NY Central, Pennsylvania, and Lehigh Valley railroad trackage. While this rail service supports agricultural and manufacturing industries, the railway is also a tourist attraction and often runs scenic Fall foliage and holiday rail tours.

North to South, downtown Seneca Falls has quick, easy access to NY Route 414 and lies within a few miles, east and west, of Routes 96 and 89. All of these intersect with the region’s major east–west routes: the Southern Tier Expressway (I-86/NY 17), Routes 5 & 20 and the Thruway (I-90). Each brings tourists to Seneca Falls from the surrounding areas while providing easy transport for goods going in and out of commercial and industrial locations.

Further extending transportation options, Seneca Falls also has access to the Regional Transit Service (RTS), which provides busing throughout downtown and Seneca County.

From small family businesses to larger box stores to manufacturing facilities, Seneca Falls has available acreage and buildings suitable for a variety of businesses, many of which are located in incentivized zones. Through the DRI grant award, Seneca Falls can be in a position to not only welcome new businesses to boost our tax base but welcome their employees as new residents as well.

Our forward-thinking community is poised to welcome professionals eager to escape the big city hustle without losing their competitive edge. In addition to the beauty of our downtown and waterfront areas, they'll find affordable housing, excellent schools, friendly conversations, and a wide variety of year-round recreational opportunities.

While we've set our sights on growing and diversifying our business base, we haven't forgotten the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between the pursuit of a brighter future and the history that forged our very foundation.

Much of the recent revitalization has happened "around the edges" of downtown Seneca Falls: The City of Geneva, del Lago Resort & Casino, area breweries and wineries, commercial growth along the Route 318 corridor, and the ongoing development on Routes 5 and 20 are just a few examples.

It's time to help revitalize the jewel within the crown of this bustling historic region...Seneca Falls, New York. As the birthplace of Women's Rights, our history is one of progress. And as a DRI grant recipient, you can help ensure that we have a future to match.



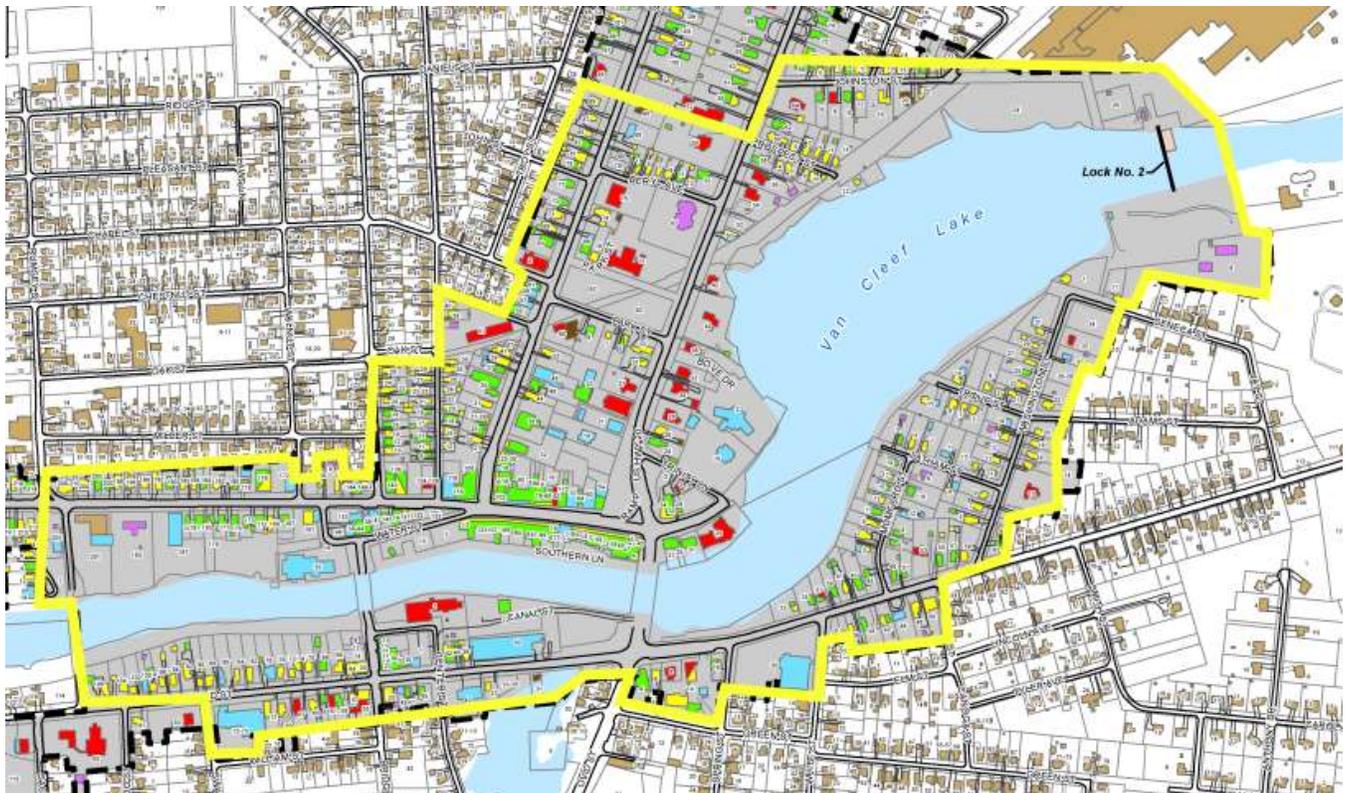
DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

1) Boundaries of the proposed DRI area

The map below illustrates the well-defined boundaries of our proposed downtown development district. This boundary is contained entirely within the Seneca Falls National Register Historic District (NRHD), which is outlined in black on the map. Seneca Falls' NRHD boundary contains more than 200 historically significant buildings and includes 100% of the central business district and areas adjacent to scenic Van Cleef Lake, which offers immediate recreational, residential and commercial development opportunities.

The proposed DRI area contains nearly a mile of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal; Van Cleef Lake; the future site for the National Women's Hall of Fame; the Women's Rights National Park; the Seneca Museum of Waterways; walking trails; significant commercial and retail property space; residential areas; arts & cultural destinations; public parks; and more.

Seneca Falls' DRI area also features undeveloped waterfront that is prime for economic development, and most of the proposed DRI district lies within a few blocks of our defining transportation corridors: The Seneca River (i.e., the Cayuga-Seneca Canal) and Routes 5 & 20. As well, the NYS Thruway is less than 6 miles from the downtown area, providing easy access.



2) Description of catchment area



Our proposed DRI area is approximately 220 acres in size (inclusive of water) with a perimeter of approximately 3 miles. The area runs nearly a mile along Routes 5 & 20 and the adjoining Cayuga-Seneca Canal. The DRI district encompasses Seneca Falls' central business district with over 30 blocks of homes, businesses and historic sites. The entirety of the outlined DRI area is easily walkable for both residents and visitors.

Downtown Seneca Falls offers a variety of retail, restaurant, professional, recreational, and cultural destinations for the surrounding area, and with additional storefronts and development opportunities available, we anticipate diverse population growth as opportunities are realized.

The transformation of our proposed DRI area will effectively attract new businesses and residents to both the downtown area and the surrounding neighborhoods within Seneca Falls. The quality of life and "Blue Ribbon" public school system, along with the abundance of lifestyle amenities, makes Seneca Falls an attractive place to work, live, and play.

No other community in the Finger Lakes region has the combination of three key population drivers – historical significance and destinations related to Women's Rights; del Lago Resort & Casino; and access to nearby world class wineries and tourist attractions, including Cayuga State Park with its beach.

With the impact of an increased tax base, increased national attention, and an increase in business and community cooperation, Seneca Falls is poised to begin leveraging the DRI investment immediately.

3) Past Investment, future investment potential

Over the past 40 years, strategic investments both public and private have helped alleviate the economic upheaval faced by our region. While many of these investments happened outside our immediate downtown area, the DRI grant can help complete the economic resurgence through an “outside in” transformation.

By enabling Seneca Falls to turn its focus inward, the efforts taking place on our outskirts will be enhanced and strengthened by any new revitalization efforts within our urban core.

Between 2000 and 2014, nearly \$90 million was invested in our district, of which \$63.9 million (74%) was through private investments. This illustrates Seneca Falls’ ability to complement public support with private funding and interest.



The following table summarizes some of the major investments and development plans since 2000:

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Dollars</u>
2012	BonaDent Laboratories	\$11,000,000
2013	Café XIX	\$500,000
2013	Generations Bank Headquarters	\$5,000,000
2009	The Gould Hotel	\$6,000,000
2013	ITT Goulds Pumps	\$30,000,000
2010 - 2013	Seneca Falls Central School District	\$19,200,000
2014 - 2015	Seneca Falls Central School District	\$1,400,000
2014	Seneca Falls Municipal Building	\$3,500,000
2014	National Women’s Hall of Fame	\$6,000,000
2011	Parker’s Restaurant	\$1,200,000
2015	Sauder’s Store	\$4,000,000
2006	Seneca Falls Public Library	\$2,000,000
		<u>\$89,800,000</u>

Seneca Falls' designation as a National Register Historic District took place in 1991, a designation that has since helped secure more than \$20 million in grants and investments within the area. These funds were used in part to save historic buildings, build a National Park, and maintain the integrity of the 200+ historically-significant structures within our downtown grid.

In addition to public investment in infrastructure, private investment into business development, and grant-based investment into restoration and preservation, private philanthropy has also helped support the Seneca Falls community. Just some of the philanthropic projects attributed to millions of dollars in giving over the years, include:

- Downtown historic churches (buildings and endowment);
- Local museum funding and support;
- Educational programs and sports programs;
- The founding of Eisenhower College, now home to the New York Chiropractic College;
- Historic building transformation to house non-profit organizations;
- Construction of the Seneca Falls Public Library;
- Construction of the Seneca Falls Community Recreation Center;
- Development and maintenance of the Ludovico Sculpture Trail;
- Redevelopment of the former Seneca Falls Hospital and Seneca Falls Municipal Building to create medium- to high-end apartments, walking trails, and lakeside amenities.



Future Investment Potential

The success of any pursued project begins with thoughtful planning, an experienced team, and wide-reaching support. Seneca Falls is prepared to adhere to all DRI guidelines with regard to project planning, development priorities, and request procedures to ensure a smooth transition and transformation.



In addition to working in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (FLREDC), all proposed projects mentioned in this application are supported by the recently-updated Seneca Falls Economic Development & Revitalization Plan.

This plan was the culmination of a broad year-long collaborative effort among business owners, government officials, residents, and community leaders to redefine the vision for Seneca Falls and better prepare a foundation for future growth. In line with the needs and recommendations outlined in our plan, we are confident that the DRI funds will be better leveraged for ongoing economic success.

While discussions with the FLREDC will help prioritize and determine the prime areas for investment and revitalization efforts, potential projects will be assessed against four key criteria:

1. Can it help capitalize on, or further establish, Seneca Falls' prominence?
2. Can it help foster new business, business support, business expansion, or entrepreneurship?
3. Can it help contribute to jobs, to the eradication of poverty, and a better quality of life for residents?
4. Does it align with our established strategic outline for economic development?

The planning process that would commence if Seneca Falls was selected as a DRI recipient would ultimately determine project pursuits, but aside from DRI-funded initiatives, the downtown resurgence would inspire additional investment by private and public sources to help capitalize on the revitalization taking place.

A small sampling of how the DRI award could inspire future investment, includes:

The Center for Great Women (National Women’s Hall of Fame): In 2019 the *National Women’s Hall of Fame* is slated to relocate from Fall Street to the historic Seneca Knitting Mill on the south side of the Canal. Both locations reside within the proposed DRI district. The Hall’s new home, branded as the *Center for Great Women*, will provide expanded space and facilities for exhibits and activities. Renovation of the Mill was supported in part by previous REDC grants and private contributions. This expansion, in conjunction with other area investments and improvements, will help make Seneca Falls a world-class destination, attracting numbers of visitors that were unimaginable just a few years ago.



Improved Parking and Walkability: In 2016, Seneca Falls conducted a comprehensive study that identified and documented a need to improve the safety, accessibility, circulation, and appearance of public parking facilities in its downtown business district.

The study was conducted to take an inventory of available parking in the downtown core, identify parking issues and concerns, and develop strategies to improve the parking experience in the downtown area for businesses, residents, and visitors. Potential solutions that could help alleviate parking shortages and concerns, include: parking wayfinding, pedestrian wayfinding, parking lot reconfiguration, walking & biking improvements, new parking policies, etc.

The downtown area assessed throughout the parking study is situated within the proposed DRI district, making it a prime candidate for future investment so that the expected influx of visitors, businesses, and residents can be handled properly.

Museums and Historic Sites: Seneca Falls has a special and enduring place in America’s history, and it’s crucial that our association with Women’s Rights be preserved and showcased for future generations.



Already, visitors can walk to the *National Women’s Hall of Fame*, the *Seneca Falls Historical Society*, the *Seneca Museum of Waterways & Industry*, the *Women’s Rights National Park* and the *It’s A Wonderful Life Museum*.

The homes of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Amelia Bloomer are near downtown, and 20 additional museums are located within a 30-minute drive.

As the town goes through its transformation via the DRI award, public awareness and visitation will increase, further supporting area businesses, boosting sales tax receipts, and dramatically increasing local spending.

Special Events: Seneca Falls hosts several unique events each year, all of which draw thousands of visitors to the area. The *National Women’s Hall of Fame’s* induction ceremonies occur every other year, pulling in dignitaries, revered women, and guests from around the country.



The annual *It’s a Wonderful Life Festival* is inspired by Frank Capra’s visit to Seneca Falls in the mid-1940s where scenes from the iconic movie of the same name included vignettes of Seneca Falls. The Festival draws nearly 10,000 visitors to Seneca Falls and features visits from the movie’s cast members. It concludes with a 5K race to benefit area charities that attracts over 6,000 runners, with several thousand more spectators and tourists. Through this festival, visitors and residents alike can take a step back in time and visit a simpler time in Bedford Falls.



The *Women's Right to Run 19K & 5K* raises funds for the National Women's Hall of Fame and Girls on the Run of Central New York, an organization committed to building confidence and inner strength in girls.

With more than 800 runners, and hundreds more spectators and guests, the Right to Run helps to further galvanize our significance when it comes to Women's Rights.

As Seneca Falls experiences a reinvigorated spirit through the downtown revitalization efforts made possible through the DRI grant, we expect to see even more support, participation, and visitation when it comes to our many branded events, further boosting our overall economic health.

Seneca Falls Performing Arts Center (SFPAC): Culture and the Arts have a long history in Seneca Falls and the SFPAC hopes to rejuvenate this interest through the restoration and rehabilitation of the former home of the Women's Interfaith Institute on Fall Street, located near the Women's Rights National Historical Park. A bold plan is underway to restore the property, which faced a near total-loss scenario after a devastating fire in 2009. According to its mission statement, the SFPAC looks to offer a broad array of arts, education and entertainment that preserves and enriches the local culture and economic development of our historic community.

Downtown Building Development and Restoration: Significant opportunities exist in our downtown building spaces, both at street level and in upper stories. Retail, professional, cultural, restaurant, and residential projects are all possible.

While challenges do exist with regard to size, required rehabilitation needs, accessibility, and sporadic disrepair, Seneca Falls looks to offset the costs associated with these larger projects and/or encourage private development efforts (by owners and new developers) to take advantage of the impending downtown resurgence.

Potential investment activities that can boost the attractiveness of downtown, both aesthetically and in the eyes of developers, might include a revolving loan and grant program to support new downtown development or the rehabilitation of downtown buildings. Here, DRI funds could be used in part to provide owners with the funding and/or resources necessary to offset costs associated with accessibility improvements, upper floor development, and street-level or façade restoration.



Seneca Falls has the leadership, energy and projected population growth to drive the transformation of our DRI district forward. It also has resources and strategies in place that are common among successful downtown revitalization initiatives, including:

- Retail, restaurants, commercial, and mixed-use buildings;
- Personal services, medical clinics, and senior housing;
- High tech manufacturing (ITT Goulds Pumps, BonaDent, Xylem, 5Star Medical Corp);
- Historic tourism opportunities, including those affiliated with the National Parks system;
- Nearby colleges: New York Chiropractic College; Hobart and William Smith; Finger Lakes and Cayuga Community Colleges;
- Abundant access to recreation and parks, including the Finger Lakes, Cayuga Lake State Park, Taughannock Park, Watkins Glen State Park, Finger Lakes National Forest, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, and dozens of local, state and national parks;
- Proximity to major thoroughfares, including Interstate Route 90, the Finger Lakes Railway, and other transportation provisions such as the Regional Transit System.

4) Recent or impending job growth

More than 2,000 jobs in or near downtown have been, and will be, created through the:

- \$440 million dollar *del Lago Resort and Casino* project;
- expansion of ITT Goulds Pumps and Generations Bank;
- impending home of 5Star Medical Manufacturing Corp;
- new restaurants, microbrewery, retail services, professional space and medical services.

These jobs represent a wide diversity of career paths in sustainable occupations, most with wages above the area's average compensation and benefits.

Projected job growth is reasonable given the increase in visitors from *del Lago Resort and Casino*, our attractions related to Women's Rights, incoming businesses, and new development initiatives.



With the advent of our updated economic development plan, Seneca Falls is well positioned to transform its downtown into one of the most robust combinations of ***live, work, learn and play*** environments in the Finger Lakes.

The DRI award would provide the opportunity to expand and further diversify employment opportunities in the downtown area and beyond. With a commitment to create, sustain, and diversify job growth in and around Seneca Falls, we're focused on providing a trifecta of catalysts, including:

- Support for business owners and entrepreneurs;
- Workforce development to prepare and retain prospective employees;
- Ongoing building rehabilitation efforts to replace vacant storefronts with viable employers.

Additional job growth considerations include:

5Star Medical Corporation secured an office in Seneca Falls in 2016 with the intention of making the Seneca Falls location its headquarters, medical manufacturing, and training facility. Based on its patents, proven track record, and expansion plans, 5Star Medical has the potential to become one of the area's largest manufacturing facilities.

In the two years since the original 2016 DRI application, Seneca Falls has attracted several new businesses to the downtown area: a Mexican restaurant; a digital design and marketing agency; a local artist’s lounge; a new local fare restaurant; two bakeries; medical facilities; and more. With building space and shovel-ready land sites available, Seneca Falls is primed to welcome even more growth.

Seneca Falls has also experienced a healthy demand and lengthy wait-list for moderate to upper-range apartments and condos. The current Stephanie Court Apartments, planned development along Van Cleef Lake to add 60-75 upscale units, and renovations to convert other locations into 27 additional apartments will help support and house our growing marketplace.

The DRI designation will help foster new projects, revenues, and employment opportunities in sectors such as local tourism, manufacturing, housing construction, renovation of existing housing stock, increased retail shopping, boosted downtown foot traffic, hospitality, cultural options, and industrial advancement.

Supporting the very objectives of the DRI program, our growing downtown area will offer an exciting diversity of services, restaurants, activities, production, and historic interpretation -- all in a location unlike any other like-sized town in the Finger Lakes region.



5) Attractiveness of physical environment



Seneca Falls is a quiet and stunning community. Our historic building stock serves as silent witness to the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 that's become recognized as the catalyst behind the advancement of Women's Rights. Of the 200+ structures downtown, the majority are multi-story buildings primed for mixed-use retail, local markets, tourism sites, professionals, and upper-floor housing.

Apartments in our district accommodate upper, moderate, and low-income families. Regardless of the types of apartments made available, there is always a waiting list of people eager to move into the downtown Seneca Falls area.

The Stephanie Court Apartments, Third Ward Apartments, and the Johnson Home are fully occupied and there is significant interest in other planned property development initiatives within our district that will offer affordable housing.

Local rents range from \$550 to \$1,500 per month depending on property size and location. The average home cost is \$86,000, with a range of \$60,000-\$350,000. Rental assistance and low-cost mortgage programs help make housing affordable for those in the lower income tier.

Some of Seneca Falls' highest-end housing consists of lakefront homes and stately mansions, the older of which are in the Colonial and Greek Revival style. Other historic structures illustrate the influence of Italianate, Second Empire and Queen Anne styles. Seneca Falls is also one of the largest intact Victorian infrastructures in the Finger Lakes.

Regarding food and dining options, downtown has convenience stores, restaurants, small bakeries, a health food store, and the seasonal Seneca Falls Farmers Market where visitors can shop for locally-grown fruits, vegetables, honey, jams, flowers, plants, and more. Located canal side in People's Park, the Farmers Market is a short 1-2 minute walk from downtown.

Three chain supermarkets are located within three miles of downtown and Sauder’s Market is just minutes away with a wide variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, grocery items, and baked goods. Our proposed DRI district also houses the county’s largest food pantry dedicated to serving the lower-income population.



Walkers, joggers, and bicyclists have plenty of paths and trails to explore while in Seneca Falls. The ten-mile Cayuga-Seneca Canal Trail is complete except for a small section in our downtown, which is a project that has community interest in completing so we can connect with Geneva and Waterloo.

Seneca Falls has several downtown parks, including People’s Park where frequent summer concerts, events, and the Seneca Falls Farmers Market are held. The former Mynderse Academy high school site also features a large park with an attractive fountain and various monuments honoring those who have served in the United States military.

The original bustling downtown area of Seneca Falls, referred to as the Sackett District, is split from the Fall Street portion of downtown by a canal that’s connected by two bridges, both of which feature pedestrian walking lanes.

One bridge in particular is the historic “Bailey Bridge,” thought to be the inspiration for the movie *It’s A Wonderful Life*. The completion of the *Center for Great Women* on the south side of the canal at the site of the former Knitting Mill, as well as other revitalization projects in the Sackett District area, will help encourage exploration by tourists and residents as they venture between both sides of the canal to experience everything Seneca Falls has to offer.

While Seneca Falls offers no shortage of inspirational and historical venues to visit, three significant sites in our downtown area deserve special notice. The first is the 16,000 square foot former Seneca Knitting Mill Complex. Thanks to FLREDC support, a RestoreNY grant, and millions of dollars in private contributions, the Mill will soon become the new home of the *National Women’s Hall of Fame*, an anchor to the redevelopment efforts in the Sackett District and Seneca Falls as a whole.

Our second gem is Van Cleef Lake, one of the Finger Lakes' most photographed locations. Van Cleef Lake resulted from the intentional flooding of a section of the town known as "The Flats" in 1916 to help enlarge the barge canal. More than 110 industrial buildings and homes were moved further into town, and some remain underwater, resulting in a significant underwater historical site.

Overlooking Van Cleef Lake is our third jewel, Trinity Episcopal Church, which is often photographed as the backdrop behind countless photos of the "three ladies" statue and monument erected on Bayard Street to commemorate the day Elizabeth Cady Stanton met Susan B. Anthony via an introduction by Amelia Bloomer.



6) Quality of Life Policies

In 2006, Seneca Falls started the process of realigning its objectives and processes to foster a more efficient and business-friendly environment that could also improve the quality of life for residents. Through its Comprehensive Plan and subsequent Economic Development Plan, the Seneca Falls Development Corp (SFDC) was formed as a Local Development Corporation (LDC) in 2007.



The SFDC is committed to economic and community development within the Town of Seneca Falls.

Through the planning and implementation of various programs, projects, and activities that encourage commercial growth and quality of life improvement, the SFDC works to stimulate the local economy, boost the Town’s visibility, and improve residential and commercial appeal.

One of the key objectives of the SFDC following the recent adoption of the Seneca Falls 2018 Economic Development & Revitalization Plan was to help streamline and modernize zoning codes to help foster business development and better guide prospective businesses and developers through the approval process.

By improving and modernizing Zoning, Planning, and Historic Preservation codes and procedures even beyond what was done in 2013, Seneca Falls can better set the stage for fast-tracked development while preserving our small-town charm.

Seneca Falls has low-cost, reliable public transportation via the Regional Transit Service, which could be expanded as part of the DRI effort to include additional stops for new downtown employers; extend current routes; and increase the frequency of stops.

When families are considering whether or not to move to a new area, assessing the quality of the local schools is often a top priority. The Seneca Falls School District is a designated *Blue Ribbon School System* in New York State and is capable of catering to a fast-growing community of young families by offering diverse educational opportunities.

Our award-winning schools provide the classroom instruction and accelerated programs children need to prepare for a life after or in place of college. Further enhancing our educational environment is the Seneca Falls Public Library, which is located just a few blocks from our downtown district.



Whether viewing our educational surroundings from an employer point of view or a parental point of view, Seneca Falls provides its students and residents (both young and old) with prime opportunities for advancement and ongoing learning through multiple programs and community meeting space.

Seneca Falls also offers one of the finest recreational centers in the area just a few blocks from the downtown area and well within the proposed DRI boundary. The Seneca Falls Community Recreation Center is a 21,800 square-foot facility featuring ADA accessibility, an air-conditioned indoor gymnasium with a full-sized basketball court for tournament play, diverse workout room for Seneca Falls residents, two cross-court basketball and volleyball courts, and plenty of room to handle community events.



The center also offers dozens of low-cost sports, arts, and educational programs to area youth and adults throughout the year. For those looking for additional adventures and activities, more options are available just minutes away

In addition to everything Seneca Falls already has to offer, the updated Economic Development & Revitalization Plan outlines several Quality of Life improvement projects, including:

- Parking, walkability, and cycling improvement;
- Creation of an interactive walking historical tour;
- Completing the Cayuga-Seneca Canal Trail to create a continuous route from Geneva to Seneca Falls to potential future communities;
- Supporting motorless canal activities, such as a dedicated launch area for canoes and kayaks.

Beautifying Seneca Falls and improving the quality of life and space for area residents remains a key objective. Through the continued implementation of initiatives that align with our comprehensive and economic development plans, we will build an enhanced environment, attractive public streetscapes, and an improved overall quality of life for guests, residents, and business owners.



7) Public Support



The Seneca Falls Town Board assigned responsibility for the DRI application, development, and implementation to the Seneca Falls Development Corp (SFDC). The SFDC is governed by a seven-member board that includes two members of the Town Council, as well as an independently-retained Director. The SFDC will act as the fiscal agent, convene the DRI Planning Committee, and help oversee the plan's development and implementation if awarded.

The projects and initiatives outlined within this DRI application are backed by the recently-adopted Seneca Falls Economic Development & Revitalization Plan, which was the product of community workshops and partnered support among residents, community leaders, and business owners.

Throughout the drafting of the revised economic development plan, which was recently adopted by the Town Council, the DRI opportunity was at the forefront. By educating community members about the potential impact of a Seneca Falls-FLREDC cooperative effort, their participation, input, and excitement grew collectively.

Acting on feedback and recommendations received following our 2016 DRI application, there has been a tremendous outpouring of support for our decision to submit a 2018 DRI grant proposal. We're ready. We're ready to be a productive cog in the revitalization efforts taking place all around us. And we're ready for a collaborative push with the DRI Team to help turn our vision into reality.

Rather than focus solely on gaining support from area businesses, we expanded this to involve everyone in the community. After all, while businesses are certainly a critical component to helping a town thrive, the Seneca Falls community extends far beyond the business district. By harvesting wide-reaching support from stakeholders throughout the community...residents, business owners, leaders, and organizations...we've created a more synergistic and inclusive process.

With letters of support from our officials, business owners, local groups and associations, non-profit organizations, government agencies, the Seneca Falls Central School District, and individual residents, it's clear that Seneca Falls has embraced the vision for our future while honoring the legacy of our past.

8) Project List to Demonstrate Readiness

Our initial project proposals—parking, incubators, technical assistance and building revitalization—will work cohesively to help revitalize our downtown core. We will also enhance our building and living spaces, thus encouraging more people to visit, work, and reside here in Seneca Falls.

Parking Improvement: In February of 2016, a comprehensive Downtown Seneca Falls Parking & Walkability Study was performed and published (<http://senecafallsdevcorp.org/parking>). This study was assembled by a committee comprised of local businesses, community leaders, and state, town and county employees. The study provides full assessments and detailed recommendations designed to address the limited parking in downtown Seneca Falls.

Maps outlining current and proposed parking areas, tables discussing the current and proposed parking supply, wayfinding recommendations, and an implementation plan are outlined in the report. Taking a methodical, step-by-step approach, we will make our downtown friendlier for all modes of transport: bicycles, cars, wheelchairs and foot traffic.



Commercial Building Improvement Program: Our strategic plan supports the establishment of a Commercial Building Improvement Program (CBIP) to assist property owners and downtown businesses willing to make interior/exterior commercial space renovations.

Because of our location within a National Register Historic District, we would work with all appropriate state and federal agencies, and our local historic district experts, to ensure that proposed projects meet relevant guidelines prior to the start of work. The contrast between new development that adheres to our historical charm and our existing historic structures will bring renewed interest to the entire downtown area.

Reducing the Number of Vacant Industrial and Commercial Sites: As with many upstate towns and cities, Seneca Falls has several viable but vacant commercial and industrial buildings. Economic conditions and land use regulations often make the redevelopment of these parcels more difficult than necessary. In addition to modernizing existing zoning laws and codes, Seneca Falls is prepared to work with the DRI Team to identify potential parcels, package incentives, and promote their redevelopment. By creating additional build-to-suit and shovel-ready sites for prospective businesses, we can revive downtown while encouraging additional private investment.

One of the key downtown areas prime for redevelopment is known as the Sackett District, which was the original downtown center of Seneca Falls. The Sackett District is located across the canal, well within the proposed DRI area, and acts as an extension of the downtown area. With the planned relocation of the National Women’s Hall of Fame to the site of the former Knitting Mill, revitalizing the Sackett District will increase tourism, residential living, and commercial development.



Area Signage Improvement and Additions: Prior to 2013, the Village of Seneca Falls developed and implemented directional signage for art, cultural and historic sites, as well as Town offices and facilities. These signs must be verified for accuracy and modified now that some locations have changed. We will also perform a study to determine ease of use, directional quality, and usefulness of signage to residents and visitors, including those with disabilities.

Additional signage will be put in place based on the study to direct people to parking, area business districts, points of interest, eateries, and key historic sites. This initiative could also include mall-style directory signage that can be updated as we welcome newly-formed businesses or seasonal events.

Seneca Falls Performing Arts Center: The former Women’s Interfaith Institute of the Finger Lakes, once the Congregational Church, experienced a devastating fire in 2009. Located on Fall Street near the Women’s Rights National Park, an enthusiastic group of local volunteers have embarked on a mission to redevelop the site into the *Seneca Falls Performing Arts Center (SFPAC)*.

The SFPAC has started a quiet capital campaign to renovate the Chapel, located just a block from the Women’s Rights Historical Park. Aligning with the SFDC’s vision of improving quality of life and place, its mission is to enhance the quality of life for residents of Seneca Falls and the Finger Lakes region by offering a broad array of arts, education, and entertainment that preserves and enriches the local culture and economic development for our historic community.

The development of a lively performing arts center that caters to adults and youth alike has repeatedly proven to be a key component of downtown revival. Working with the impending DRI Team, we would look to support the renovations of the physical structure and help bring this vitally important addition to Seneca Falls. Not only for our residents, but also to draw in visitors from neighboring areas.

Cayuga-Seneca Trail Completion: Seneca Falls, Geneva and Waterloo have expressed support for the completion of a ten-mile Cayuga-Seneca Canal Trail, which would unite these three historic canal towns. Walkers, hikers, and bicyclists alike could then have an interruption-free excursion, with welcomed stops in all three downtown areas.

Looking forward, the Trail could be extended through Seneca Falls to the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge. Montezuma is best known as the home for the reintroduction of the bald eagle throughout New York State. It is also one of the largest flyways for migratory birds along the Eastern Seaboard of the United States.

An extended Canal Trail represents a significant quality of life enhancement for Seneca Falls. It will also help support ongoing marketing and promotional efforts throughout the year by linking communities with safe, alternative, off-road travel opportunities.



Expansion of the Seneca Falls Farmers Market: Access to healthy locally-grown food is a focal point for the revitalization of any downtown. Now in its tenth year, the Seneca Falls Farmers Market is located a few blocks from the downtown area and provides visitors and residents with just-picked produce, fresh-based treats, artisan goods, beef and poultry, local maple syrups, honey, flowers, plants, and more.



The Seneca Falls Farmer’s Market participates in the Farmers’ Market Nutritional Program, EBT/SNAP, and the Farmers Market Coupons for Seniors Program, which provides healthy options for low- to moderate-income families and individuals.

The SFDC is charged with operating the Seneca Falls Farmers Market, which continues to grow in reach and popularity with their leadership. The current location of the market is completely maxed when it comes to vendor spaces, eclipsing vendors who would otherwise bring their goods as well. With the DRI grant, we could assess whether it’s better to build supporting infrastructure (lighting, water access, additional electric) and expand its current location, or potentially relocate to a larger footprint within Seneca Falls.

Beautifying the Ludovico Trail: The Ludovico Sculpture Trail is 1.7 miles in length and features two distinct sections. The first, a developed path that displays 14 sculptures and 6 murals; and the second, a wildlife habitat and wetlands area.

This trail is an attraction for residents and visitors, providing a quiet getaway in which to contemplate and reflect, or to learn about the people and events memorialized along the trail. Financial support through the DRI grant could help draw additional interest with additional signage, infrastructure, and benches along the waterway.

Community Foundation for Housing and Landscape Improvements: Establishing a community foundation to help finance or offset the costs of housing and landscaping improvements for low-moderate income property owners can help improve the aesthetics and attractiveness of Seneca Falls. The Foundation could support roofing, siding, cleanouts, structural repairs, paint, greenscape, and more.



By partnering with private funders such as the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation, funds can also assist with home repair, home ownership, and housing development programs. Seneca Falls also has an active chapter of Habitat for Humanity which has expressed support for collaboration in providing housing options and opportunities for low-income residents and families.

Increasing Housing Stock and Affordable Housing: The economic development plan supports several action steps related to housing. Addressing the limited housing stock in Seneca Falls is a key priority so we can welcome new employers and employees to our area.

Programs and initiatives possible with the help of DRI funds, include:

- Housing rehabilitation program targeting low- to moderate-income substandard housing conditions;
- Retirement housing community and apartments development;
- New housing development strategy for varying levels of socioeconomic status.

Support for Motorless Canal Activities: One of downtown Seneca Falls' great competitive advantages is having the New York Canal System run directly through it...separating the former downtown district from its current. Both districts are within our DRI area and each brings its own unique statement to history.



While motorized vessels can sail the canal into Lake Ontario, through the St. Lawrence Seaway and literally around the world, the attraction of the canal for residents is its serene, calm waters that are perfect for kayakers and canoers. Whether it's a short ride up the canal before going to work, or a weekend trip to sites along Seneca and Cayuga Lake, the downtown canal is an ideal recreational destination for local families.

By developing a park where families and enthusiasts can gather, and where motorless vessels can be launched, Seneca Falls can better attract outside visitors while providing a needed amenity to existing residents. Plans to offer canoe or kayak rentals, lessons, and launch assistance can also be explored.

Business Incubator: Seneca Falls has an outstanding history of inspiring and supporting entrepreneurs and risk-takers, going back to our first settlers along the Seneca River. The DRI grant can help support the creation of a business incubator within a downtown or nearby building in need of re-use. Based on the eventual DRI Team's recommendation, we will decide on the nature of the business incubator and shared office space.

The technical assistance program, provided through our partners in BOCES and/or FLCC, will focus on needs and challenges specific to women and minority business people, but our incubators will be open to anyone with a viable business idea that would remain in Seneca Falls.

A strong business incubation initiative will work toward meeting the economic development goals in our strategic plan. Incubators also serve to attract and keep younger people to a locality by enabling them to create their own exciting futures.

Adding the Seneca Falls Walk of Fame: Our economic development plan calls for the addition of a *Seneca Falls Walk of Fame* through downtown. Important historical figures and events, from the time of the Five Nations of the Iroquois through the tumultuous Nineteenth Century and into today, would be highlighted with informational signage and plaques. A GPS-based app could also be used to provide an entertaining and educational trip into history.



Completing this and other initiatives within the first two years of the DRI award is an important goal because of the upcoming Seneca Falls 2020 Celebration (<http://senecafalls2020.com>). To honor our rich and empowering history as it relates to Women’s Rights, the SFDC has taken the lead in planning and organizing a year-long celebration for 2020 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passing of the 19th amendment. Planning for a full calendar of events that will take place throughout 2020 is currently underway, and with tens of thousands of visitors possible, the timing of the DRI grant is ideal.

With statewide and national attention expected, it will give Seneca Falls and New York State an opportunity to show just how much can be accomplished when the right passion, team, and vision come together. And we can think of no better stage for the State to showcase the impact of the DRI program than during the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment...on the very corner where the quest for Women’s Rights began.



9) Administrative Capacity

Successful revitalization efforts require a dedicated, experienced, and energized team to lead the way. In Seneca Falls this leadership is vested in the Seneca Falls Development Corp (SFDC).

Should Seneca Falls be selected as the 2018 DRI recipient, the SFDC Board, its Director, and local Town Councilmembers will work together with the DRI Team and other NYS assigns to administer the initiative and its subsequent development projects.



With a diverse array of experience on the SFDC board ranging from business owners to government officials, the breadth of knowledge is extensive and more than capable of administering the grant and its requirements. Backed by years of experience and a proven track record of responsible management, the Town Council adopted the revised 2018 Economic Development & Revitalization Plan as presented by the SFDC and also authorized the SFDC to serve as the lead agency for this DRI proposal.

Additional community leaders are available to assist as needed, particularly in committee roles. One such asset is the Seneca Falls Business Association (SFBA), which was formed by our downtown businesses to advocate on behalf of merchants, organize downtown events, promote business opportunities, and offer ideas for further development.

Seneca Falls brings a unique level of administrative capacity unlike many other towns our size. With a vast network of eager partner agencies and individuals, including the Seneca Falls Central School District, Seneca County IDA, Seneca County Chamber of Commerce, Finger Lakes Tourism Association, and the many local businesses and non-profit organizations who have offered up their support, Seneca Falls is ready, willing, and able to perform as required.

10) Other

Seneca Falls has access to cargo rail service, major thoroughfare, increased water and sewer capacity, infrastructure to handle significant development, and close proximity to two international airports along with a local airport just minutes away that can accommodate corporate jet aircraft. In addition, Seneca Falls offers four key components to an attractive business-friendly environment:

A Talented, Motivated Workforce: Businesses have access to a growing, well-educated, and highly-skilled local and regional work force. Job training programs are also available through local programs and schools. 37 is the median age; 92% are high school graduates; 29% hold bachelor degrees or higher; and 14% hold associate degrees.

Established & Shovel-Ready Sites: From our historic buildings in downtown to business and industrial parks, Seneca Falls offers a wide range of site opportunities. We have vacant acreage and buildings that are suitable for a variety of businesses, from large manufacturing firms to small retail or service shops. Some of these properties are also eligible for property tax incentives.

An Active Business Community: Seneca Falls has a fast-growing network of businesses that profit from our recreation options, natural surroundings, historical significance, booming tourism, and supportive local business resources. Strong collaboration between business and community remains the driving force behind our progress.



Accessible Adventures: We love hearing stories from those who traded in hour-long commutes for the serenity of the Finger Lakes. They still work hard, they just enjoy playing harder, and the peace of mind gained only sweetens the experience. With recreational opportunities abound, the quality of life in Seneca Falls and nearby communities continues to expand.

A \$10 million DRI investment in Seneca Falls will truly transform our downtown district and help New York State further capitalize on revitalization efforts currently taking place in the surrounding region, including the City of Geneva, which was the 2016 DRI selection.

Geneva and Seneca Falls are the “twin sisters” at the north ends of Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake respectively, and have long shared likeminded ideals, resources, creative ideas, and challenges. With significant investment at the top of the two largest Finger Lakes, the FLREDC has the opportunity to create a regional synergy that’s unavailable to other DRI districts.

Once empowered to pursue the vision and strategies outlined in this proposal and our Economic Development & Revitalization Plan, we'll be able to achieve the objectives sought through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, making Seneca Falls a prime candidate for this award.



In summary, with the benefit of this award and by collaborating with the DRI Team:

- Seneca Falls will have an active and desirable downtown vibe with a strong sense of place and an enhanced quality of life;
- Seneca Falls will attract new “Main Street” mixed-purpose businesses that offer a wide array of shopping, dining, entertainment, and service options for residents and guests;
- Seneca Falls will see an increase in available jobs and careers, providing opportunities for a variety of skills and educational backgrounds;
- Seneca Falls will see the return of arts and cultural events to draw both existing residents and visitors into the downtown area;
- Seneca Falls will continue to attract a diverse population comprised of residents and workers as new businesses, commercial enterprises, and employers extend to our area to meet demand;
- Seneca Falls, Seneca County, and New York State will see an increase in tax receipts as a result of this significant investment.

Thank you for considering Seneca Falls for the 2018 Downtown Revitalization Initiative. We're ready to get to work and we hope you embrace our vision.

