



CITY OF TONAWANDA | ERIE COUNTY / WNY REDC

2023 DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

Mayor John L. White • mayor@tonawandacity.com





A message from the Mayor

John L. White

Dear Western New York Regional Economic Development Council:

It is with pleasure and appreciation that I respectfully submit the City of Tonawanda's 2023 Downtown Revitalization Initiative application, containing exciting plans we have developed in conjunction with private developers to move our city forward.

Sitting on the confluence of three historic waterways - the Niagara River, the Erie Canal and Ellicott Creek - the City of Tonawanda has great potential! As Mayor, my vision for our city has always been to create both a waterfront and downtown footprint that would become a destination for not only residents but also visitors across the region.

With the city's proximity to the three waterways, as well as major biking and walking trails that welcome approximately 850,000 people yearly via the Greenway Trail that runs from the South Grand Island Bridge along the Niagara River all the way to the entrance of the Erie Canal, our projects will create a streamlined path to our downtown merchants and will produce a "small town spark" that captures the excitement of both public and private investment into the future of the City of Tonawanda's downtown district.

Improvements to the city's docking facilities along the Erie Canal will not only enhance the waterfront, but also create a contagious energy that will inspire future private investment into our community, precisely what we as a low-income city, competing as a regional tourist destination, desperately need.

I thank you in advance for considering the City of Tonawanda, and our efforts to revitalize and redevelop our downtown and waterfront whereby creating a thriving community for our residents to call home.

Respectfully submitted,

John L. White

John L. White
Mayor



VISION



a testament
to our past,
an ode to
our future.



Located at the exclusive confluence of the historic Erie Barge Canal, Niagara River, and Ellicott Creek waterways, the City of Tonawanda stands as a testament to resilience and revival as it harnesses its unique geographic advantages to fuel a revitalization already underway. Building on an encouraging wave of renewal through public and private partnerships - motivated by the adaptive reuse and preservation of historical structures, rejuvenation of neglected properties, and breathing new life into public spaces - the City aims to redefine its downtown as a commercial and cultural hub offering a distinct blend of historical charm and modern vitality for residents, workers, and visitors alike.

Three waterfronts, Tonawanda's most valued natural assets, are not just scenic backdrops but a catalyst for community growth and central to this transformative vision. They will serve as a dynamic connector between Niawanda Park and the Niagara Street Corridor, teeming with visitors, and our vibrant downtown, thereby creating a seamless blend of commerce, housing, and recreation.

Rooted in the rich tapestry of our Erie Canal heritage and industrial past, our vision honors the City's unique history while pivoting toward a future where Tonawanda is not just a destination but a vibrant community where people come to live, work, and cherish the harmonious blend of past, present, and future.

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DOWNTOWN TONAWANDA

GEOGRAPHIC AREA & JUSTIFICATION

The City of Tonawanda holds immense potential for revitalization, supported by its strategic location and over a decade's worth of state and local investment into community resources and its most valuable waterfront assets. The City benefits from abundant recreational activities, destination events, and tourism. The proximity of our central business district to three waterways, the Blueways-Greenways Intermodal Hub, and Gateway Harbor Park creates a dynamic focal point.

Tonawanda's Main Street, comprised of historic buildings surrounded by a dense residential area, offers a promising canvas for enhancement. The existing network of blueways and trail systems, such as the Rails-to-Trails, Shoreline Trail and Empire State Trail, further enriches the area's appeal to cyclists, pedestrians, and outdoor enthusiasts. Recent investments have sparked enthusiasm and interest, particularly amongst the private sector, and set the stage for the downtown's connection to the waterfront. The development of a vibrant public plaza, pavilion, and docking facilities along Ellicott Creek has added to the City's allure. This space has become a hub for events, festivals, and community gatherings, attracting both residents and visitors.

The history of the Tonawandas is deeply founded in the industrial and manufacturing traditions that gave rise to the "Twin Cities" of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda we know today. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, combined with the natural harbor facilities along the Niagara River, gave rise to the lumber industry and by the turn of the 20th century the area was known as the "Lumber City" – the largest supply center in the world. Other world-famous industries arose from the countless supply of lumber in the Tonawandas, including iron and steel productions to closely rival the lumber business.



However, as with all-too-many American main streets and canal communities across NYS, the post-WWII era spurred a gradual but steady disappearance of heavy industrial and manufacturing industries. Despite a recent resurgence, the City is designated an economically distressed community and a Federal Opportunity Zone located in the Census Tract along Ellicott Creek's waterfront. DRI funds would capitalize on the investments and development of the last 15 years while leveraging new pools of investors that have been lacking in the downtown and waterfront area.

The proposed DRI investment aims to leverage existing strengths and assets to enhance access to the downtown and waterfront attractions. By creating a more inviting environment, the project plan concentrates on bringing public and private investments to its downtown and unique waterfront to draw more residents, visitors, and economic activity to these areas. This endeavor aligns with Tonawanda's vision of a thriving and distinctive destination community.



DRI Focal Map Area

- 1 Niagara Street Corridor
- 2 Streetscapes on Main Street
- 3 Erie Canal Docking
- 4 Historic Pedestrian Bridge
- 5 Public Sculpture
- 6 a. Long Homestead
b. Historical Society Museum
- 7 Public Parking
- 8 “The ELLI & The Riv”
- 9 Residential Redevelopment
- 10 Mixed Use Redevelopment
- 11 Downtown Events Center



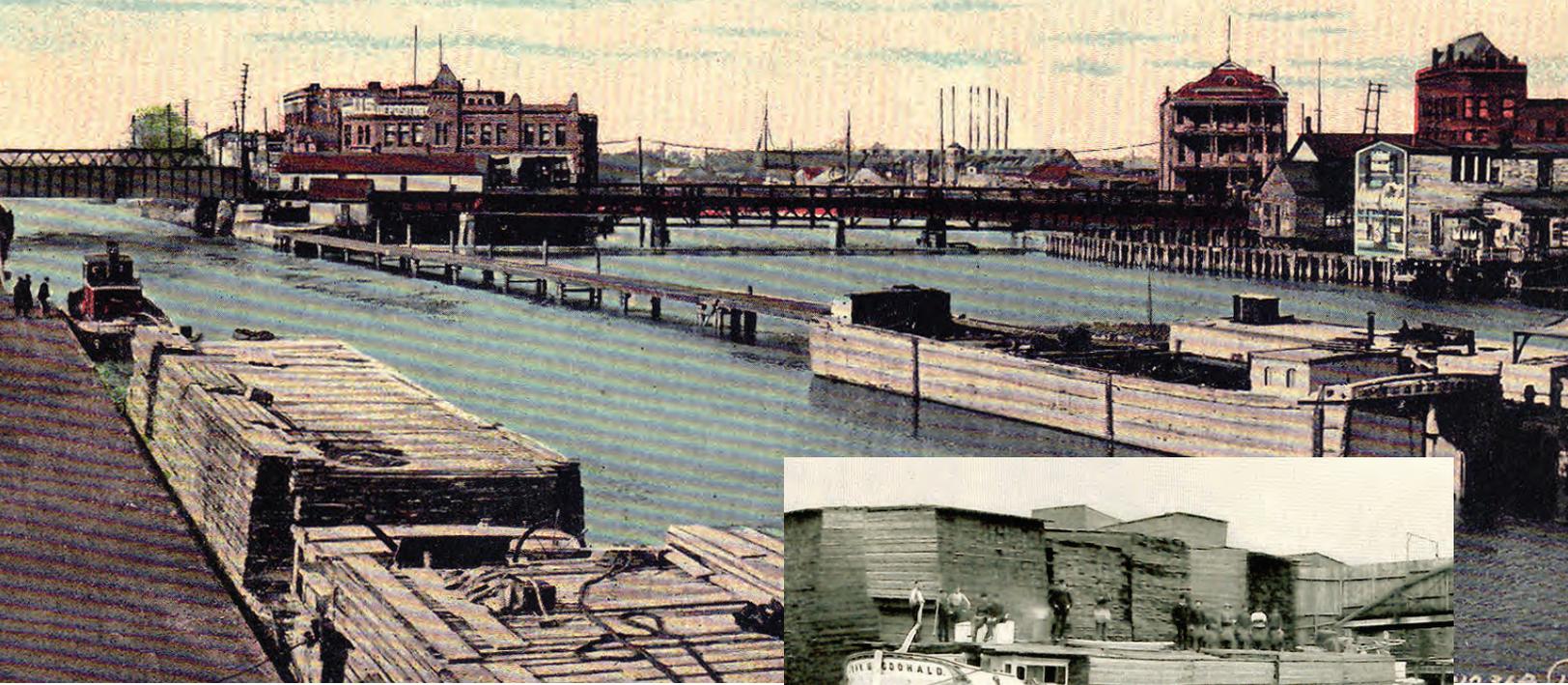
With robust public transportation infrastructure and connections to employment centers, DRI investment addresses critical accessibility issues and will act as a catalyst for economic development. Given the City’s economic challenges, with a significant portion of low-to-medium income residents, this investment is poised to address these disparities.

Today, the once bustling canal towpaths, waterfront lumberyards and industrial skylines are replaced instead by recreational boaters, leisure fishing, cyclists, outdoor enthusiasts, and public spaces for family gatherings, community events, and live entertainment. The history and heritage of the Erie Canal is engrained into the fabric of the City and its residents. Tonawanda is co-host to the State’s largest canal-based festival – the annual eight-day Canal Fest - held each July along its shared Canal shoreline with North Tonawanda. Where the Erie

Canal once flowed towards Buffalo in parallel with Niagara Street is now the linear Niawanda Park and Shoreline Trail, attracting hundreds of thousands of people to the Niagara River waterfront and the State’s most heavily used section of Empire State Trail. The downtown is a mixture of retail and restaurants, mixed-use housing, and community services.

The synergy between public and private initiatives, as well as a multitude of planning and development partnerships with New York State, underscores the readiness of Tonawanda for DRI investment. By fostering accessibility, vibrancy, and economic growth, this investment holds the potential to transform the City’s downtown and empower its long-term Smart Growth revitalization journey.





PAST & FUTURE INVESTMENT

Tonawanda experienced rapid industrial and commercial growth following the 1825 opening of the Erie Barge Canal. However, the post WWI-era decline of major employers like Spaulding Fibre, the City’s largest employer from 1911-1992, contributed to a 17% drop in population and a decrease in median household income, which remains below both the state and county averages. Spanning less than four-square-miles, the City has traditionally emphasized economic development with the aim of boosting tax revenue and property values. Despite these efforts, the reality is that Tonawanda serves primarily as a bedroom community, with 90% of its land parcels being residential. Recognizing this residential focus, City officials are now giving greater attention to housing as both a community asset and a personal investment. The guiding principle that “retail follows rooftops” underlines this shift, suggesting that a strong residential base is essential for attracting businesses like bars, restaurants, boutiques, and coffee shops that can enrich the community and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable growth.

For more than a decade now and across multiple administrations, the City has undertaken an array of strategic initiatives, ushering in a new era of revitalization and community enrichment. These endeavors, backed by public and private investments, have provided a solid platform for catalyzing future growth.

Key planning initiatives to spark revitalization include:

2017

- Complete Streets Action Plan

2018

- Tonawanda Main Street’s Conceptual Master Plan
- Economic Development Plan
- Comprehensive Plan Update

2020

- Niagara Street Improvement Study

2021

- Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan Update with an expanded LWRA boundary to include the downtown central business district

In 2023, Tonawanda will modernize its zoning to a more fitting Form-based system. This aligns with ongoing efforts to tackle the issue of vacant and “zombie” homes, aimed at preserving the City’s residential property values. On a commercial note, the downtown area is experiencing a revival with the opening of new small businesses, including a bakery and café as well as a sandwich shop that offers local favorites with an artisanal flair.



History of Notable Developments:



2015

ADA Fishing Pier

Completed in 2015 in collaboration with the NYSDOS, the handicap-accessible fishing pier is located under the east pier of the historic pedestrian bridge where Ellicott Creek meets the Erie Canal. This pier serves as a hub for various activities and connects pedestrians and cyclists to the Canal Street Plaza, the downtown area, and attractions like the Canalway / Empire State Trail, Rails-to-Trails, Prescott's Provisions restaurant, Gateway Harbor docks, and the Long Homestead Historical Museum.



2016-2017

Creation of the Blueways-Greenways Intermodal Hub

Constructed in 2016-2017, the Intermodal Hub leverages Tonawanda's strategic location near multiple waterways and trail networks. It serves as a multi-modal transit point for residents and tourists, whether arriving by car, bike, boat, or bus from the nearby Niagara Street Metro Station. The facility features an aesthetically pleasing comfort station equipped with lockers, bike racks, repair stations, vending machines, and a water bottle fill-up point. Additionally, it transformed a deteriorating parking lot into a public green space complete with seating areas, encouraging community gathering and promoting local businesses. The hub not only acts as a trailhead for the Empire Trail network but also hosts various public events. It has been instrumental in attracting visitors who might otherwise bypass Tonawanda's downtown area.





2020

Tonawanda Rails-to-Trails

Completed in 2020 with partnerships between Erie County, the City of Tonawanda, and the Town of Tonawanda, this multi-use path starts at Kenmore Avenue near the City of Buffalo border and runs north to connect with the Erie Canalway Trail in Tonawanda's urban center. The trail serves as a vital link to the Erie Canal waterfront. Its construction has sparked renewed interest in the area, illustrating how public infrastructure can catalyze private development.



2021-2022

Ellicott Creek & Niawanda Park Docks

Completed in 2021 and 2022 through collaboration with the NYSDOS, this project enhanced waterfront accessibility in multiple locations. Floating docks were replaced in Ellicott Creek, and additional amenities were added for kayak and pedal bike rentals. Niawanda Park's public piers were upgraded to improve safety and optimize the Niagara River's world-class views. The project also included the construction of a dedicated Police dock, bolstering the emergency response capabilities of the Tonawanda Police Department.



2022

Canal Street Public Plaza

Completed in 2022 through a \$2.5 million award from ESD, Young Street was transformed into the Canal Street Public Plaza. Located next to the Intermodal Hub and Gateway Harbor Park, the plaza features enhanced street lighting, picnic areas, a thriving greenspace, and an entryway arch. Additionally, a four-season pavilion serves to host community events. The plaza acts as a hub for public gatherings, connects to the downtown area, complements Gateway Harbor Park, and improves access to the Intermodal Hub. It's anticipated to further stimulate waterfront enhancements and encourage Smart Growth-compatible private developments.



Examples of

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE LEVERAGING PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

1



BEFORE



AFTER

Rails-to-Trails & Prescott's Provisions:

The Rails-to-Trails extension piqued developer interest in Erie Canal properties, culminating in the \$650,000 transformation of an old auto repair shop into Prescott's Provisions in 2018. The upscale eatery, which added a \$350,000 patio due to its success, sparked interest in nearby properties, including Carubba, Inc.'s commitment to develop "The ELLI and The Riv" projects across the street, at the base of Fillmore Avenue and the intersection of the Rails-to-Trails and the Empire State Trailway.



2



Canal View Commons

Fueled by a \$1.675 million in construction financing and an additional \$700,000 from the NYS Small Building Participation Loan Program, the former school building at 72 East Niagara Street was converted into a mixed-use facility. The building, adjacent to the Empire State Trail and Erie Canal, now offers 14 affordable apartments and 4,000 SF of commercial space already occupied by AMD Environmental. The units are accessible to those earning at or below 80% of the median area income.

Impact

These key commercial and housing developments, realized through collaborative efforts and diverse funding, pave the way for a thriving future. They align with the City's vision of melding historical richness with modern innovation, leveraging Tonawanda's unique assets for broader revitalization and waterfront stimulation.





RECENT & IMPENDING JOB GROWTH

Tonawanda's history is deeply entwined with the Erie Canal and Niagara River, which once positioned it as a formidable industrial hub. The Canal acted as the lifeblood of the local economy. The "lumber capital of the world" stimulated the growth of giant industries like Spaulding Fibre. However, as the Canal's economic significance diminished, so did the industries it inspired and sustained. The collapse of major players like Spaulding Fibre had a crippling effect on the local economy, leading to job losses and urban decay.

Fast-forward to today, and a transformation is underway with revitalized once-neglected areas. A \$20 million investment in the Spaulding Commerce Park has revived the 47-acre site, attracting new businesses and promising employment opportunities. Major tenants include Milton CAT and Simmers Crane. This economic rejuvenation extends to downtown

Tonawanda, reflected in increasing job numbers from 7,436 in 2018 to 7,631 in the labor force as per the 2020 Census. A growing population since 2016 indicates renewed interest in the City, which has learned to leverage its historic assets for modern gain.

Future prospects are shaping up to be exceptionally bright, thanks in large part to visionary private investments. Property owners at 77 Young Street (the former Smoke on the Water restaurant) and 81 Young Street (the former Consumer's Beverages) are committed to transforming these sites along the Ellicott Creek waterfront to feature new affordable housing and commercial space. Moreover, the ambitious Carubba Development Project is poised to revolutionize 20-40 Fillmore Avenue with a new six-story mixed-use building. This will feature five floors of high-quality apartments and vacation rentals, along with a ground-

level 6,000-square-foot indoor/outdoor steakhouse overlooking Ellicott Creek. These developments aren't happening in a vacuum; they are inspired by existing successes like Prescott's Provisions, an upscale eatery that has become a local favorite, and the Canal Street Plaza that has boosted both waterfront and downtown visitations and the City's capacity to host community events.

Together, these new and existing ventures exemplify Tonawanda's evolution into a vibrant, modern city that continues to attract both businesses and residents. By thoughtfully leveraging its historic legacy—including its once-pivotal role along the Erie Canal—Tonawanda is building a future that is as resilient as it is promising.





QUALITY OF LIFE

Tonawanda aspires to be a vibrant hub that melds livability, economic growth, recreation and touristic allure, all set against the stunning backdrop of a waterfront where the Niagara River, Erie Canal, and Ellicott Creek intersect. Despite past challenges, a community of over 15,000 is continually invigorated by its unique setting, evidenced by bustling streets, waterways and trailways filled with commuters, boaters, and outdoor enthusiasts.

Boasting panoramic waterfront views and a rich calendar packed with year-round events, Tonawanda aims to be a destination rather than just a pass-through community. The summer season is especially lively with a Wednesday Night Concert Series, Farmer's Markets paired with Food Truck Thursdays, and the Friday night "Theater Alongside the Canal" series. The waterfront comes alive as one of Western New York's primary spots for July 4th fireworks. In addition, every July the Twin Cities host New York's largest canal-based festival, an eight-day extravaganza featuring local artisans, restaurateurs, car and motorcycle shows, parades and celebrated acknowledgements of civic groups. Summer also features fishing derbies, more car shows, and fitness classes on the lawns of Niawanda Park. The community's enthusiasm extends into autumn with a Fall Festival marking the transition back to school, and come October, the Gateway Harbor transforms into a Halloween spectacle. Throughout the winter holidays and into spring, events like Neighbor Garden Walks and Arbor Day celebrations keep the communal spirit vibrant, honoring the City's longstanding status as a Tree City USA community.

However, revitalizing Tonawanda's economy and quality of life isn't without its hurdles. Census data shows some economic disparities, and the City's limited commercial space is further constrained by high traffic flow. With over 30,000 daily vehicles traversing its main thoroughfares and over 800,000 annual visitors to Niawanda Park, the challenge lies in bridging the gap between high-traffic areas and the downtown and Erie Canal / Ellicott Creek locales. This pivotal connection, defined by the Niagara Street corridor, serves as the cornerstone for DRI investment.

Recent surges in private investment underscore the City's untapped potential. From adaptive reuse of existing structures to newly rehabbed commercial properties, Tonawanda is shaping itself as a fertile ground for sustainable growth. Updated zoning laws further ease the path for development. Driven by successful public-private partnerships, the City has positioned itself as an attractive spot for diverse economic activities that enrich life for residents and tourists alike.

In embracing a holistic vision that incorporates sustainability, economic vitality, and enhanced public spaces, downtown Tonawanda stands ready to charm a wide range of people, offering a rich, vibrant setting for living, working, and visiting.



SUPPORTIVE OF LOCAL POLICIES

Tonawanda is committed to policies that prioritize quality of life, economic vitality, and environmental sustainability. The City is primed for DRI investment to reinvigorate its downtown and waterfront. Contagious momentum of the last decade has paid off for its residents and visitors alike, having leveraged unprecedented private investment with placemaking and quality of life at its heart. Key local initiatives include:

1

The Main Street Program, aligned with Main Street America principles, revitalizes the central business district through economic growth and historic preservation. It has led to the creation of a Conceptual Master Plan, Economic Development Plan, and Complete Streets policies.

2

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan focuses on energizing the downtown area, emphasizing multi-modal transportation and effective wayfinding.

3

Updated in 2021 for the first time since 1989, the LWRP expands its scope to include the central business district, highlighting the City's dedication to economic growth, tourism, and universal accessibility.

4

A Zombie Housing Initiative is in place, facilitated through a partnership with the state and a local land bank.

5

Public space improvements, such as the Canal Street Plaza and Niagara Street reconstruction, aim to enrich the public realm and promote wayfinding and multi-modal transit, particularly along the waterfront.

6

Current Zoning Updates set for 2023 will adopt Smart Growth Principles, like mixed land use, housing diversity, clean energy, climate resilience, and diverse mobility options, while shifting from Euclidean to Form-Based Zoning.

7

Collaboration is central, as demonstrated by organizations like the Local Development Corporation and Tonawanda Neighbors United, which serve as platforms for greater community involvement.

These coordinated policy measures position the City to evolve into an inclusive, sustainable, and bustling urban center, perfectly aligned with broader regional planning goals.



PUBLIC SUPPORT

In the last five years, Tonawanda has embarked on an ambitious journey to rejuvenate its downtown and waterfront, employing a multifaceted approach that includes updates to its LWRP (for which the City received multiple planning awards), a revised Comprehensive Plan, launch of the Main Street Program and reinvigoration of its LDC. A foundation of these efforts has been robust public engagement, ranging from public meetings and open forums to surveys, design workshops (charrettes), and extensive stakeholder outreach.

The DRI investment strategy is a direct extension of these well-laid plans, reflecting the community's shared vision and objectives. This commitment to transparent, community-focused planning has been manifested in a host of public hearings, presentations, and interactive forums, successfully cultivating community support for the proposed initiatives.

The City's recognition with ESD's 2018 Smart Growth Award provided an additional boost, energizing further community and private sector involvement. The transformation of Young Street into the Canal Street Plaza and the Gateway Harbor area have piqued the interest of private investors and businesses alike. The projects' 2022 completion served as a catalyst, propelling Tonawanda into the DRI regional competition. A public hearing and open forum in Fall 2022, presenting potential DRI-funded projects, elicited positive feedback and garnered community support.



Under the stewardship of Mayor John White, backed by the Tonawanda Common Council and subject matter experts, a dedicated DRI Planning Committee was formed to meet regularly and to guide the implementation of the revitalization strategy. Mayor White has led public speaking engagements that include:

- A session with the Rotary Club in August 2023.
- A Common Council Meeting & Open Public Hearing on September 5, 2023, which was also Zoom-broadcast and received unanimous Council approval.
- Presentation to the Kiwanis Club on September 14, 2023.

These comprehensive endeavors underscore Tonawanda's dedication to forging a community-centric, prosperous, and dynamic downtown and waterfront area, well-positioned for long-term success.



TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS



PROJECT 1

Transforming the Niagara Street Corridor

Building on the actionable insights from the City’s 2020 Niagara Street Improvement Study, conducted in collaboration with NYSESD, this multi-phase initiative aims to transform the Niagara Street corridor into a pedestrian-friendly, landscaped boulevard that seamlessly links City Hall with the downtown sector and its adjacent waterfront destinations. The project is geared towards improving walkability, enhancing wayfinding and access to key community focal points, and promoting mixed-use development.

The eastern stretch of the corridor is of particular significance, accommodating 10,500 vehicles daily and over 800,000 annual visitors to Niawanda Park and the Shoreline Trail - the most frequented segment of New York State’s Empire State Trail system. Despite this high traffic, the corridor currently fails to integrate the Niawanda Park area with the downtown business district, a critical gap to bridge for economic revitalization.

Phase 3 of the project is selected in order to streamline Niagara Street and its connection to downtown, starting from City Hall (located adjacently to Niawanda Park) and extending to the Seymour Street intersection and Main Street. It will focus on reducing redundant traffic lanes and paved surfaces while introducing shared bike and pedestrian pathways. The ultimate vision is to redevelop this stretch into a green boulevard and a vibrant transit corridor while simultaneously expanding significant acreage for infill and private development, opportunities for which are extremely limited.

To complement these infrastructural changes, the project will enhance entryways to Niagara Street’s business areas. In line with ongoing zoning modifications, incentives will be rolled out to encourage development of currently underutilized spaces. This rejuvenation of the public realm along Niagara Street is endorsed by the City’s updated LWRP as a key strategy for uplifting community life, fortifying tourism, and spurring economic growth.



Scope

City Hall to Seymour Street

- Addition of bike lanes
- Driveway & parking reconfiguration at City Hall
- Realignment of Niagara St. southwards
- Installation of round-a-bout at Clinton St. intersection
- Realignment of Seymore St. intersection
- Relocate traffic signal utilities

Seymour Street to Main Street

- Modify northern curb line to facilitate dedicated bike lane & expanded sidewalk
- On-street parking spaces
- Extended access driveways to Niagara Street

Project Cost \$7,000,000

Proposed DRI Funds \$6,300,000

City Funds \$700,000

Transformative Impacts

- Connect Niawanda Park visitors to downtown
- Increased wayfinding visibility
- Enhanced greenspace and corridor beautification
- Consistent bike lane and pedestrian accommodations
- Improved public safety
- Parking spaces & improved access for northern businesses
- Approx 5-acres made available for infill and development



Streetscapes on Main Street

Main Street serves as the central business district's arterial route, flanked by historic architecture that has withstood the test of time. Building upon the Tonawanda Main Street Conceptual Plan and Complete Streets policies, this project aims to elevate Main Street's aesthetics, functionality, and pedestrian safety. This enhancement complements Niagara Street's reconstruction, aligning with the City's ambition to draw the attention of visitors to explore our vibrant downtown and waterfront.



Scope

- Repave Main Street from Niagara to Morgan
- Four intersection bumpouts
- Upgrade sidewalks
- Repaint crosswalks with ADA-compliant ramps
- Designated on-street bike lanes
- New street furniture & decorative plantings

Project Cost \$1,700,000

Proposed DRI Funds \$1,530,000

City Funds \$170,000

Transformative Impacts

- Improved pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- Increase foot traffic
- Stimulate economic activity
- Revitalize Main Street





PROJECT 3

Enhanced Canal Docking Facilities

Tonawanda is fortunate to have its downtown business district situated along the banks of the Erie Canal. Along with that comes the need for safe and sustainable docking facilities to accommodate the growing boat traffic that comes to the Gateway Harbor area of the Erie Canal each summer. Currently, the City’s docking facilities are unsafe and have not grown with the needs of visiting boaters, often mooring overnight. Much of the boating traffic during local festivals and concerts are moored 3-4 deep across the Canal on the North Tonawanda side, while those who do find availability along our limited docking space encounter the obstacle of having to climb up a 6-foot steel ladder, which in turn is potentially hazardous for the boater and the City. The docking wall, originally designed for large Erie Canal shipping barges, lacks sufficient safety features to prevent falls and to assist boaters during docking.

Our vision for this exciting project is to construct an expansive floating dock facility of approximately 870 feet long, with a cantilevered deck down to the floating docks, with dual-sided handrail gangways that would allow for increased availability and safe access for boaters. Expanding our Canal docking infrastructure will substantially increase tourism traffic to our downtown merchants and restaurants, while ensuring safe and secure facilities for boaters to transition from their docking location to land.

Scope

- Design & construct permanent docking pier
- Install improved access features

Project Cost \$800,000

Proposed DRI Funds \$720,000

City Funds \$80,000

Transformative Impacts

- Increase mooring capacity
- Improved boater safety
- Stimulate economic activity





Historic Pedestrian Bridge

Listed on the National Register, the historic trestle bridge over Ellicott Creek requires urgent replacement. This vital footbridge links the Empire State Trail system, Gateway Harbor Park, boat docks, fishing facilities, the Long Homestead Museum, Canal Street Plaza, Prescott’s Provisions and prime opportunities for future development. It also serves as an essential connector from the economically disadvantaged “Gas Town” district to the downtown and its public transportation offerings.

Partial funding is already leveraged from New York State. Replacing this historic bridge is not just a structural necessity but a linchpin for community connectivity, waterfront accessibility, and historic preservation and tourism.

Scope

- Bridge to be replaced
- Wayfinding and signage

Project Cost	\$2,750,000
Proposed DRI Funds	\$355,000
Matching Grants	\$2,120,000
City Funds	\$275,000

Transformative Impacts

- Preservation of vital transportation, recreation, & economic linkage
- Improved pedestrian and bicyclist safety

Scope

- Contract with local artist to fabricate metal sculpture
- Install sculpture with City assistance

Project Cost	\$80,000
Proposed DRI Funds	\$72,000
City Funds	\$8,000

Transformative Impacts

- Inspire local artists
- Celebrate the history & heritage of the Erie Canal
- Addition of community art piece along waterfront
- Improve lighting & aesthetics at Canal Street Plaza



“The Canal Remembered” Sculpture

Commissioning a local public artwork at Canal Street Plaza to commemorate the Erie Canal’s historical significance. A 16-foot-tall metal sculpture will enrich the public space and engage visitors with the City’s heritage with images of the Erie Canal’s past – such as packet boats, canal workers and mules – interwoven into the foliage of a tree. The natural lighting at sunset and ground lighting at night will affect the sculpture’s stunning appearance. The base with electrical connections is already installed within the lawn of Canal Street Plaza.



Long Homestead & Historical Museum Improvements

Built in 1829, the Long Homestead is Tonawanda’s oldest structure and serves as a museum and tourist attraction near Gateway Harbor Park and the historic Pedestrian Bridge. Tourist visibility and access improvements are desperately needed via a new access driveway and parking spaces. Developing the greenspace behind Long Homestead will also improve the visitor experience with the construction of a pavilion. To protect valuable artifacts from UV damage and enhance visitor experience, urgent window repairs and replacements are needed. Investing in these updates would not only preserve this key piece of Tonawanda’s heritage but also invigorate the surrounding Gateway Harbor area, aligning with the vision laid out in Tonawanda’s LWRP. This complements ongoing efforts like the Canal Street Plaza project to make the area more vibrant and engaging.

Similarly, the Historical Society of the Tonawandas Museum, housed on Main Street in a building dating back to 1886, also requires window upgrades. Once a railway depot and later the American Legion headquarters and then library, the structure has historic significance and currently serves as a museum. Essential window replacements are needed for UV protection of artifacts and energy efficiency, further preserving the City’s rich history. Previous investments, including City resources and a \$310,000 contribution from DASNY in 2017, have been made to maintain this important community resource.



Scope

- Consult with NYS SHPO
- Construct access driveway to Long Homestead and at least four parking spaces
- Construct a park-like pavilion behind Long Homestead
- Replace and install period-relevant windows at the Long Homestead and Historical Society Museum

Project Cost \$275,000

Proposed DRI Funds \$247,500

City Funds \$27,500

Transformative Impacts

- Preserve the City’s oldest and most historic structures
- Inspire history and architectural interests
- Celebrate and preserve the City’s history and artifacts
- Improve visibility, access to, and visitor experience of historic tourist attraction
- Enhance the overall Gateway Harbor / Erie Canal waterfront



Downtown Parking Improvements

As the City endeavors to draw the hundreds of thousands of annual visitors from its Niawanda Park waterfront into the downtown and Erie Canal / Ellicott Creek waterfronts, parking accommodations must be enhanced. The current 3-acre parking lot that runs parallel to the Main Street business district is in total disrepair. This parking lot services the businesses and associations that line the east side of Main Street including the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans Association, Elks Lodge and Senior Citizen Center. Milling and paving along with construction of proper drainage and pitch will provide the much-needed repair to this aging lot and protect the health, safety and welfare of patrons visiting Main Street establishments. This lot also serves as off-street parking opportunities for annual festivals such as Canal Fest, Summer Concerts, Shakespear in the Park, Food Truck Rally's and Gateway Harbor events - all of which are held adjacent to this lot along the Canal Street Plaza and Gateway Harbor corridor.

Scope

- Repave and stripe 3+ acres of parking area
- Raise sewers level with parking lot

Project Cost	\$500,000
Proposed DRI Funds	\$450,000
City Funds	\$50,000

Transformative Impacts

- Increase safe and ADA-compliant parking access and capacity in the downtown
- Improve access to commercial and recreation destinations

Scope

- Prepare site for construction
- Construct six-story mixed-use venue

Project Cost	\$30,000,000
Proposed DRI Funds	\$1,000,000
Private Capital	\$29,000,000

Transformative Impacts

- State-of-the-Art mixed-use facility on the Ellicott Creek & Erie Canalway waterway convergence
- Destination location adjacent to the downtown
- Addition of 124 waterfront housing units
- First of its kind vacation rentals in the City will encourage overnight stays
- Stimulate job opportunities
- Encourage further private investment in the area
- Additional stopover along the Empire State Trail network
- Provide greater revenue stream and economic impact to the City and surrounding businesses
- Improve neighboring housing values



“The ELLI and The Riv”

Private investment inspired by the contagious success of new establishments, the 20-30-40 Fillmore Avenue mixed-use development project aims to be one the most transformative private development initiatives the City has seen in decades. Located across the street from the Prescott’s Provisions restaurant at the confluence of Ellicott Creek and the Erie Canal, the City is leveraging the development group Carubba Inc.’s private investment to build “The ELLI and The Riv” - a mixed-use development with 124 high-quality apartments, vacation rentals, and a top-class first floor restaurant and Dessert & Coffee Cafe. This project will vastly contribute to the City’s commercial and residential redevelopment efforts along its waterfront and downtown areas.



Residential Redevelopment of 77 Young Street

The owners of the building located at 77 Young Street have a new vision for their property which is currently occupied by their former restaurant, Smoke on the Water, and are looking to invest \$ 1,750,000.00 into their redevelopment plan. Beginning with the complete demolition of the current structure, the embankment along Ellicott Creek will then be stabilized. Once completed, a two-story, two-unit apartment complex will be constructed. This two-story residential structure will offer ample parking and afford beautiful waterfront views to its tenants, as well as the availability to easily access the City's up and coming downtown district.

Scope

- Demolish existing structure
- Prepare site for construction
- Construct a two-story residential establishment

Project Cost \$1,750,000

Proposed DRI Funds \$175,000

Private Capital \$1,575,000

Transformative Impacts

- Ellicott Creek waterfront stimulation
- Improved living aesthetic adjacent to the downtown, Intermodal Hub and Empire State Trail network
- Addition of waterfront residential space
- Encourage further private investment in the area
- Increase revenue stream and economic impact to the City and surrounding businesses



Mixed-use Redevelopment of 81 Young Street

The former Consumer's Beverage adjacent to the former Smoke on the Water restaurant (77 Young St) has also sat vacant for a few years. In response to the momentum of Prescott's Provisions, the private investment into "The ELLI and The Riv", and the redevelopment of 77 Young Street, the Kacvon Development is in the process of developing a vision for the property that will extend the Erie Canal excitement through to Ellicott Creek and inward to the downtown Main Street area. The intent is to develop a multi-family, affordable housing mixed-use building with first floor commercial space to activate the street level and feature views of the waterways. The Ellicott Creek streambank also requires stability improvements to foster the redevelopment project and public safety. As with 77 Young Street, this property has the unique ability to leverage multi-modal transportation via automobile, pedestrian, and boat traffic.

Scope

- Stabilize Ellicott Creek shoreline
- Construct mixed-use affordable housing and commercial space

Project Cost \$5,000,000

Proposed DRI Funds \$500,000

Private Capital \$4,500,000

Transformative Impacts

- Ellicott Creek waterfront stimulation
- Improved commercial aesthetic adjacent to the downtown, Intermodal Hub and Empire State Trail network
- Addition of waterfront residential space
- Encourage further private investment in the area
- Increase revenue stream and economic impact to the City and surrounding businesses





Downtown Events Center

The owner of the former American legion – a historic commercial building – is fostering a vision for a large indoor event space in the downtown footprint. The events center planned by RZ Real Estate & KC Buffalo Enterprises, located at 60 Main Street, is a great addition to the City’s downtown footprint. This project presents an exciting opportunity for the City to be a destination for celebrations, business professionals, and travelers.

With the ground floor slated to accommodate a conference center, the second-floor banquet facility will have the capacity to host up to 300 guests for a multitude of celebrations. The third floor brings forth an opportunity to host the return of hotel accommodations to the City with the construction of 8-10 boutique-style guestrooms. The owner has already invested \$500,000 into every level of the building, including fire suppression systems, and is primed for further investment to create a much-needed asset in downtown Tonawanda. Combined with the Main Street Streetscapes, DRI investment will inspire other Main Street businesses and the community as a whole to make investments that will attract both residents and visitors to the area.

Scope

- Extend elevator access to the third floor
- Second-floor renovations create a 300-person event space, bar and restaurant
- Third floor renovations to create 8-10 boutique style guestrooms

Project Cost \$2,000,000

Proposed DRI Funds \$1,000,000

Private Funds \$1,000,000

Transformative Impacts

- Preserve a historic Main Street building
- Add a much-needed asset in downtown Tonawanda
- Encourage further investment in the area and beautification/preservation of Main Street
- Encourage overnight stays in the downtown
- Stimulate job opportunities
- Increase revenue stream and economic impact to the City and surrounding businesses



Tonawanda stands as a city on the cusp of meaningful transformation.

These multi-faceted projects—from remaking vital corridors to safeguarding historical landmarks—are not isolated efforts. Our diverse array of public and private projects demonstrates not just a commitment to economic growth and quality of life, but also a comprehensive strategy for a vibrant future. These aren’t just projects on paper; they are initiatives supported by in-depth planning, public endorsement, and a proven track record of successful execution. The City is not just shovel-ready—it’s community-ready. Investing in Tonawanda through the DRI would be more than just financial support; it would be a strategic partnership aimed at unlocking the City’s full potential as a place to live, work, and enjoy. This is the right time, and Tonawanda is the right place for meaningful, impactful investment.

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY



Tonawanda boasts a strong administrative infrastructure for overseeing grant-funded endeavors, having successfully managed and executed more than 100 grants over the past decade and a half. Tonawanda's in-house team is well-versed in navigating various funding agency protocols, including those from NYSED, NYSDOS, NYSDOT, NYSDEC, NYSOPRHP, FEMA, DASNY, among others, and is augmented by external grants consultants and project specialists. The success of the City's strategic planning initiatives, namely the monumental LWRP update, have led to state-wide recognition and awards.

The DRI Planning Committee adds another layer of expertise and community perspective, featuring a diverse roster including Mayor White, the City's Administrative Assistant, engineers, historians, residents, LDC members, and even a representative from our elected assemblyman's office. This multi-disciplinary approach ensures a well-rounded view of the projects and their impact on the community.

Moreover, Mayor White has cultivated strong partnerships with officials and community developers in neighboring North Tonawanda. This provides the Tonawanda DRI Committee with the valuable opportunity to share insights and best practices as North Tonawanda advances in its own Round 5 DRI program. The City is committed to maintaining transparency, adhering to state guidelines, and ensuring the timely and efficient completion of all projects.



LETTERS OF INTENT & DRI SUPPORT



09.12.2023

Mayor John L. White
City of Tonawanda
200 Niagara Street
Tonawanda, NY 14150

RE: ELLI Project Update - 20-30-40 Fillmore

Mayor White,

I am happy to report several positive steps forward on the project in recent months. The project team has completed 100% construction documentation of the site and the structure. These documents have been submitted to The City of Tonawanda as part of our building permit application, we anticipate comments to this review in the next two weeks. Simultaneous to the permit review, we have publicly bid the project to prospective contractors and have received reviewed and vetted the construction bids for the project and are happy to report that we have construction bids that meet the project budget with trusted local companies.

Our voluntary election into the brownfield cleanup program crossed a major milestone this week as we signed and formally submitted to the state our remedial action cleanup plan. Additionally, this week we will begin to see work onsite with the demolition of 19 Fillmore Ave as it will occur on 09.14.2023.

The final steps for us to begin construction are the following 1) the state needs to sign-off on our Brownfield Cleanup action plan 2) we need to receive building permit approval from the City of Tonawanda 3) secure construction financing.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at any time.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Conroe, AIA LEED AP

716.430.3384

09.15.2023

Empire State Development
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12245

RE: Grant Application support for the City of Tonawanda LDC

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in support of the City of Tonawanda and Local Development Corp. as they seek funding for the continued revitalization of its waterfront and downtown core.

We are part of a team of developers on the future \$30 million mixed-use development planned for 20-30-40 Fillmore Street in the City of Tonawanda NY. This new facility will bring 124 high quality apartments to the downtown core along with a top of class restaurant along Ellicott Creek and Dessert & Coffee Café at the main intersection of Delaware and Fillmore. Planned site improvements for this site include the introduction of dedicated bike and walking paths along Fillmore and Delaware and a river walk along Ellicott Creek that will run the length of our property along the water's edge. We hope that this private investment will encourage our neighbors and the city to continue the boardwalk along the remainder of Ellicott Creek, providing another community asset to this area of the city. We have included renderings of our proposed development for your viewing pleasure.

What excites us the most about this project is the commitment of the city and the marked improvements that have already occurred with public space improvements at the Gateway Harbor site. If the city was awarded additional funds, we are confident that the City and LDC would apply the funds in the most advantageous way, building off of previous improvements and continuing to set the table for developers to invest private dollars into the City of Tonawanda.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at any time.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Conroe, AIA LEED AP

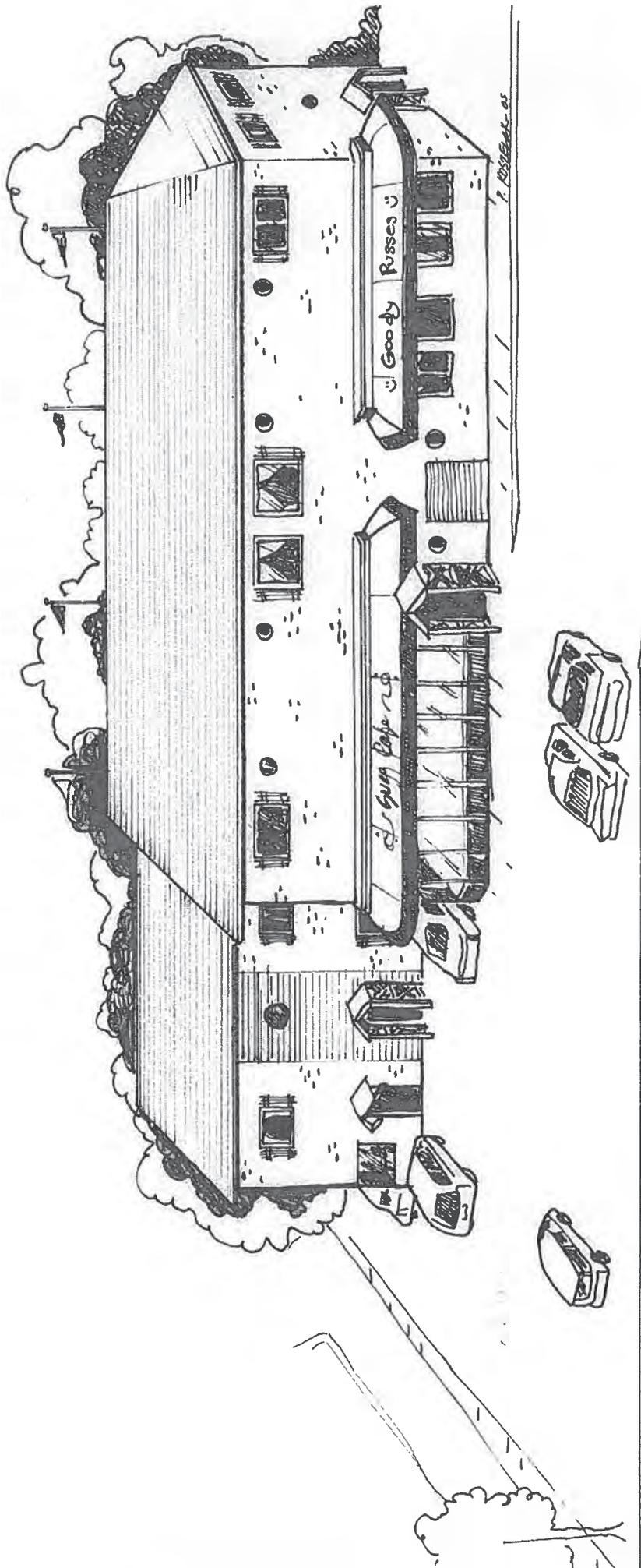
716.430.3384

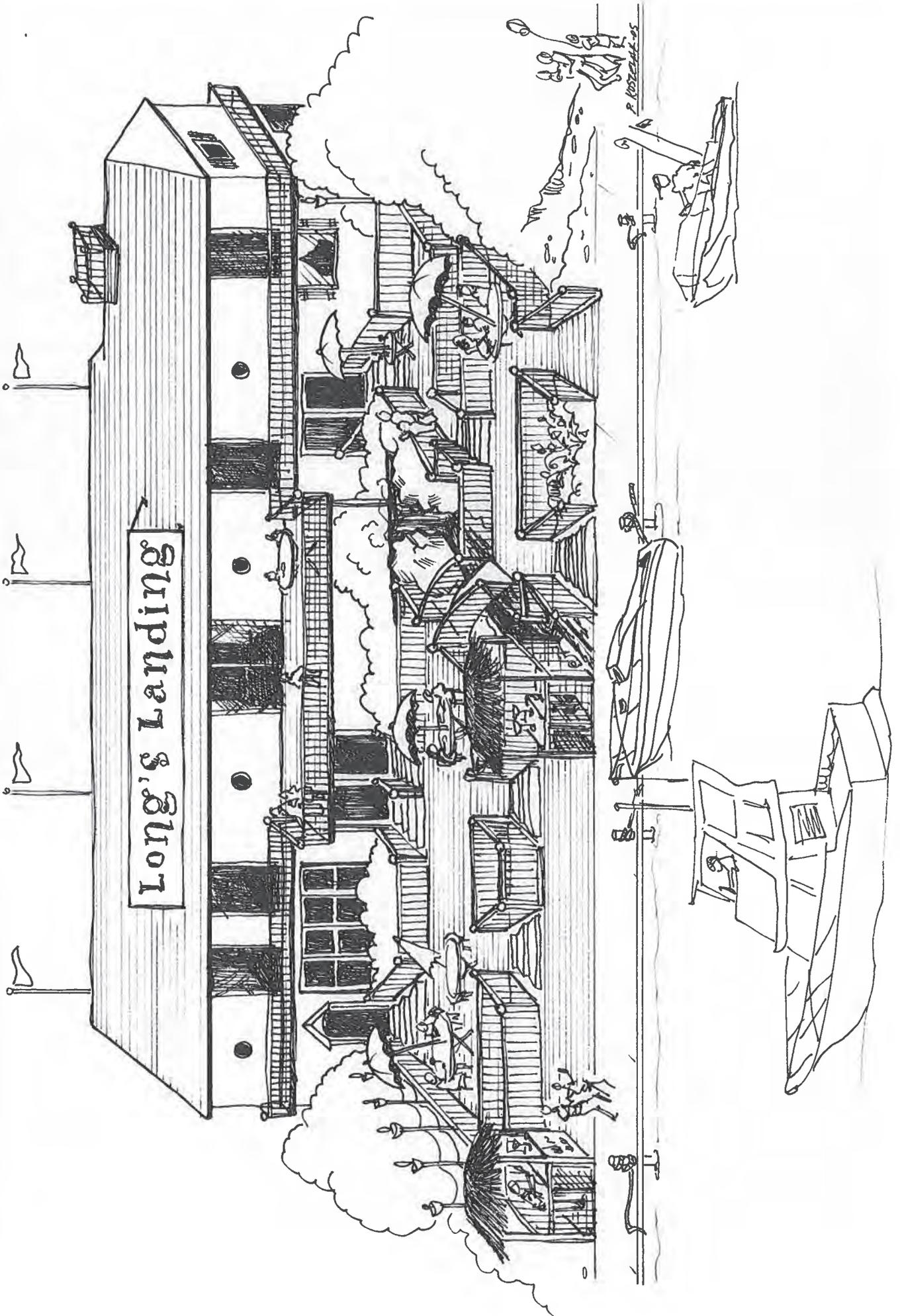


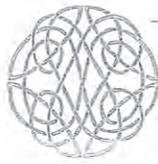


77 Young Street

The owners of the building located at 77 Young Street have a new vision for their property which is currently occupied by their former restaurant, Smoke on the Water, and are looking to invest \$ 1,750,000.00 in their plan. Beginning with the complete demolition of the current structure, they will then stabilize the embankment along Ellicott Creek. Once completed, they will construct a two-story, two-unit apartment complex. This two-story structure will offer ample parking and afford beautiful waterfront views to its tenants, as well as the availability to easily access the city's up and coming downtown district.







KAVCON DEVELOPMENT LLC

P.O. BOX 950 ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. 14127
(716) 599-1651

August 22, 2023

Mr. John L. White
Mayor, City of Tonawanda
200 Niagara Street
Tonawanda, NY 14150



Dear Mayor White,

Re: 81 Young Street, Tonawanda, New York
Letter of Intent to Develop

We write today in connection with the parcel Kavcon Development LLC owns at 81 Young Street in the City of Tonawanda. This property has been in the Kavcon portfolio for many years but has recently been vacant as we determine our next steps.

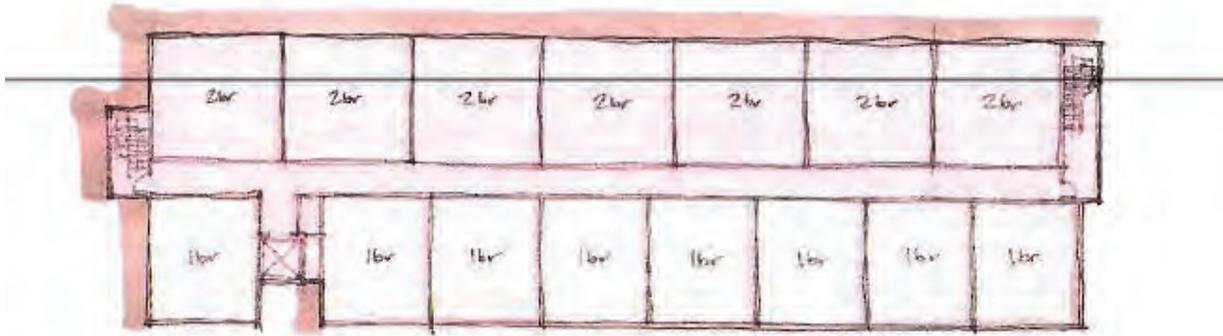
Our development team has been closely observing the exciting evolution taking place within the City of Tonawanda, including the success of new establishments such as Prescott's Provisions, the public improvements in parks and walking trails, Gateway Harbor, and the convergence of the Niagara River, Ellicott Creek, and the Erie Canal. We have been following the Carubba & Company plans for The ELLI and The Riv and are thrilled to see this level of investment coming to downtown Tonawanda. These developments all contribute significantly to both the aesthetic and economic prowess of the City, embodying the ideals of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The Initiative has the power to push projects from the visionary stages onto the map, an attractive prospect to all developers, Kavcon Development included.

Kavcon Development is in the process of developing a vision for the future of our property at 81 Young Street to further the momentum within the City. This location, on the banks of Ellicott Creek, is ideal for extending the Erie Canal excitement through to Ellicott Creek and inward to the Delaware and Main Street business districts. We intend to develop multi-family with commercial and/or residential space to activate the street level featuring views of the waterways for our residents. Our property has the ability to leverage transportation in the form of automobiles, walkers, and boaters.

The excitement in the City of Tonawanda is palpable and Kavcon is excited for a chance to be part of it. Please keep us informed as the City continues to foster this growth and maximize its downtown revitalization potential.

Best,

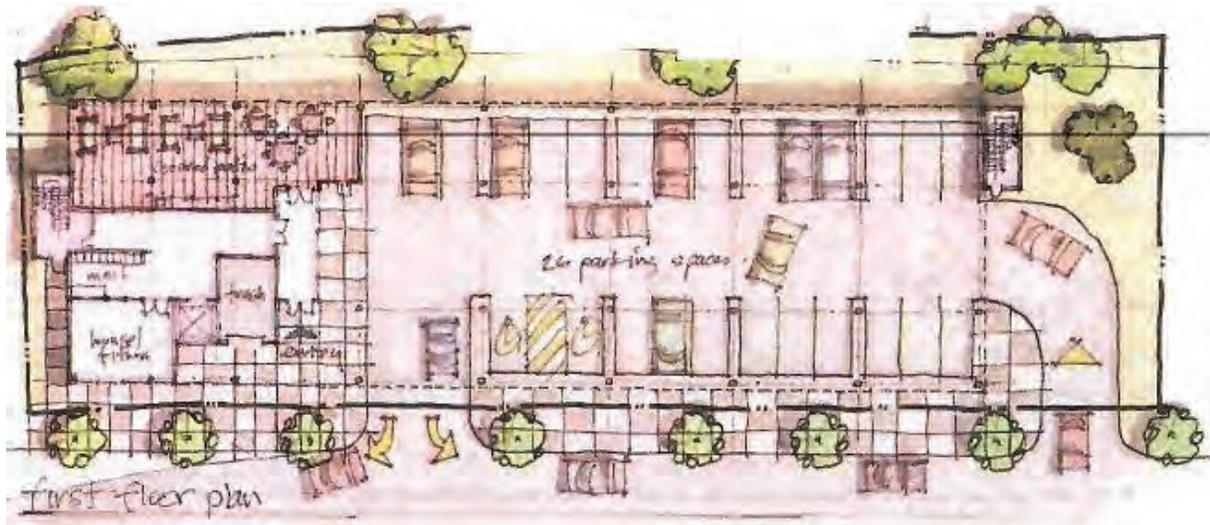
Matthew Kavanaugh
Managing Member



typical floor plan

7-2br /floor
 8-1br /floor
 15 units/floor

81 young street lofts .
 city of tonawanda, ny .
 carmina wood design .
 bellwether advisors



first floor plan

young

RZ Real Estate & KC Buffalo Enterprises
60 Main Street
Tonawanda
NY 14150

9/1/23

Letter of intent to the City of Tonawanda

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to inform you of our intent as an investor, development company and also a commitment to the city as a local business once open and operating at 60 Main Street.

We purchased 60 Main Street, a prominent commercial building with history on the Main Street in downtown tonawanda approximately 4 years ago with the intention of creating a large event space, incorporating, restaurant, bar and hotel rooms for both local residents and attracting others to the area from the surrounding areas in WNY to visit.

To date we have invested \$500,000 on purchase and general upgrades to the building on every level, however the required investment to complete what we envisage as a successful outcome for us, the city and the local community/area as a whole, would total in the region of \$2,000,000.

Kind Regards,



Rachel Aspland
RZ Real estate
716-253-7629



CITY OF TONAWANDA, NEW YORK

200 Niagara Street · Tonawanda, New York 14150-1099

Phone: 695-1800 Fax: 695-8315

COMMON COUNCIL

Jenna N. Koch
Council President

Monica Ljiljanich
1st Ward

Carl Nocera
2nd Ward

Sean Raufenstrauch
3rd Ward

David R. Mileham
4th Ward

September 13, 2023

Empire State Development
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 14225

Re: Downtown Revitalization Initiative Support Letter for the City of Tonawanda, New York

Dear Empire State Development and DRI Stakeholders,

It is my distinct honor and privilege to submit my unwavering support for the City of Tonawanda and the Local Development Corporation as we seek funding through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative through Empire State Development. The City's visionary efforts to transform its waterfront and downtown areas hold the promise of not only enhancing the physical landscape but also driving significant economic benefits for our region and the State of New York as a whole.

As the Common Council President in the City of Tonawanda and life-long resident, I have had the privilege to witness firsthand the remarkable progress that has been made within the City of Tonawanda. The City of Tonawanda has recently made significant strides in reimagining its Erie Canal gateway; which serves as a striking introduction to our central business district. The City's strategic location near the Niagara River and Niawanda Park amplifies its potential for growth and prosperity.

By securing an ESD grant, Tonawanda would experience a transformative boost that goes beyond physical enhancements, the City's well-planned initiatives to establish greenways, blueways, and improved walkability would not only promote healthier lifestyles but also stimulate economic activity. By positioning itself as a cyclist-friendly hub and an appealing destination for visitors, Tonawanda can tap into the burgeoning cycling tourism market and attract a diverse array of travelers.

The proposed enhancements to pedestrian and vehicular mobility, alongside increased public parking availability, would create a more inviting environment for residents and visitors alike. A beautified Main Street corridor and additional canalside docking facilities would create an atmosphere conducive to exploration, shopping, and leisure activities, thus nurturing a vibrant local economy.

One of the most exciting prospects lies in the potential for private entrepreneurship to flourish within this revitalized landscape. The commitment of private entrepreneurs to invest in public housing improvements, rental units, and new restaurant attractions on prime waterfront real estate underscores their confidence in Tonawanda's economic prospects. This not only adds to the City's appeal as a place to live and work but also generates job opportunities and stimulates economic growth.

For more information please visit us online at www.tonawandacity.com

Tonawanda's revitalization efforts aligns perfectly with the broader economic goals of the State. By investing in the City's transformation, we can create a ripple effect that resonates beyond our border. Increased tourism, boosted local businesses, and improved quality of life will inevitably contribute to increased tax revenue, fostering sustainable economic growth and benefiting the entire region.

In conclusion, I urge you to strongly consider supporting the City of Tonawanda's grant application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The economic benefits of this initiative are multifaceted, reaching far beyond the immediate enhancements to infrastructure and public spaces. I am confident that the success of Tonawanda's revitalization will serve as a beacon of progress and collaboration for other communities throughout the State.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly at 716-946-5753.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenna N. Koch', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jenna N. Koch
City of Tonawanda
Council President

For more information please visit us online at www.tonawandacity.com

162. By Council

seconded by Council

Whereas, the City of Tonawanda has an opportunity to apply for the 2023 Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) program to advance the City's waterfront, tourism infrastructure and revitalizing of our downtown area, and

Whereas, the total DRI award may be up to \$10,000,000.00. The total cumulative cost of both public and private projects shall be funded through the competitive application process for the DRI grant award, a 10% match from the City, and private equity, and

Whereas, the City of Tonawanda Common Council agrees that the further revitalizing our downtown is important and would make significant strides in developing the Central Business District, and

Whereas, the Common Council agrees to authorize the Mayor to start the process.

Now, therefore be it resolved, that John L. White, as Mayor of the City of Tonawanda is hereby authorized and directed to file a Downtown Revitalization Initiative application for funds, in accordance with the endorsement standards set forth by the New York State Regional Economic Development Council, and be it further

Resolved, that Mayor John L. White is hereby authorized to execute all necessary documents, pending review by the City Attorney, relating to the Downtown Revitalization Initiative application and submission.

Ayes: Ljiljanich, Nocera, Rautenstrauch, Mileham, Koch

Nays: None

Resolution declared adopted

STATE OF NEW YORK
County of Erie, City of Tonawanda, N.Y. { SS

I, James P. Kossow, City Clerk of the City of Tonawanda, do hereby certify
That I have compared the annexed copy of theRESOLUTION.....
Duly offered and adopted by theCOMMON COUNCIL.....
Of said City aREGULAR.....meeting thereof held on
The.....5thday ofSeptember 2023.....with the original
Record on file in my office and the annexed.....RESOLUTION.....
Is a true correct copy thereof and the whole thereof.

In Testimony Thereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said
City this7thday ofSeptember 2023.....

James P. Kossow.....City Clerk



September 12, 2023

Western New York Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry Street, Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Honorable Council,

On behalf of the City of Tonawanda Local Development Corporation, we are honored to support the City of Tonawanda 2023 Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant submission.

The City of Tonawanda Local Development Corporation has partnered with local business stakeholders and municipal leaders to begin collaborative efforts to revitalize the City of Tonawanda. Working together along with regional and state partners by leveraging our inherent advantage of the waterfront combined with the adjacent Main Street central shopping district, we believe the transformation of the City of Tonawanda has begun and will continue as we implement our vision.

The City of Tonawanda Local Development Corporation Stands with municipal and business leaders and is committed to working to support the city and the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council to revitalize and build a new City of Tonawanda that realizes all its potential. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Cancilla

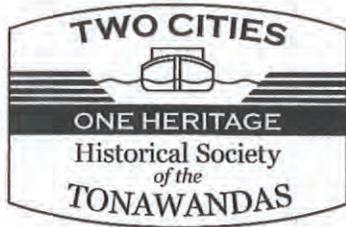
Martin Grunzweig

Michelle Moore

Sam Moscato

Mario Peña

Scott Sherwood



113 MAIN STREET
TONAWANDA, NY 14150-2129
716-694-7406
TONAHIST@GMAIL.COM
WWW.TONAWANDASHISTORY.ORG

August 22, 2023

Dear NYSESD and the WNY REDC:

The Historical Society of the Tonawandas would like to offer its endorsement of the 2023 Downtown Revitalization Initiative application.

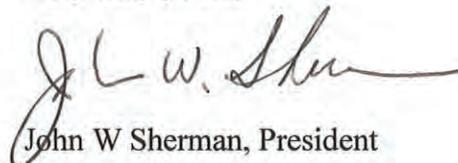
For over 60 years, our Society has been proud to chronicle the history and heritage of our community – from our humble beginnings as a small village along the Erie Canal, through our unprecedented growth during the 19th century as the result of our lumber trade, and our continued growth in the 20th century as we transformed into a manufacturing center along the Canal and the Niagara River.

Sadly, our community's history also includes the decline of Tonawanda's economic well-being, beginning in the 1960s and continuing to this day. The lumber era is long-gone, as are the numerous factories and businesses that once propelled the city's downtown area into a well-known shopping and entertainment destination here in Western New York. For many years now, there has been little reason for people – other than those who live here – to come to Tonawanda.

We believe, however, that Tonawanda has two remaining strengths that can potentially bring our city back to life. First, our three waterfront areas along the Niagara River, Erie Canal, and Ellicott Creek. Second, our fascinating local history – unique to our community - which we have accumulated over the past 200 years. Currently, our Society brings both together with our restored 1829 Long Homestead - an historic gem right on the banks of the Erie Canal - which would be a direct beneficiary of the proposed pavilion and parking lot project. In addition, attendance at our museum building at 113 Main Street will be greatly expanded by the proposed Main Street revisions that would lead more bikers, walkers, and joggers into our downtown area. Both facilities will be enhanced by the proposed new windows project, which will better protect our valuable artifacts on display from the sun's damaging UV rays.

In summary, we believe this Initiative will enhance our Society's efforts to fulfill our mission: to collect, preserve, interpret, exhibit, and publish the history of our community, while at the same time spark new economic growth and development. For all these reasons, we strongly endorse the 2023 Downtown Revitalization Initiative, and request your approval as we work together to move our community forward in the 21st century.

Very truly yours,



John W Sherman, President

August 19, 2023

To whom it may concern:

As the City Historian for the City of Tonawanda, I would like to take this opportunity to endorse the 2023 Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

My position as City Historian is, of course, focused on promoting our rich history – from once being the “lumber capital of the world” in the 1800s, and then becoming an industrial and manufacturing stronghold during most of the 1900s. These two separate economic engines powered our community back then and gave rise to a vibrant and exciting Main Street/Downtown area – full of stores, shops, and services that fulfilled every need an individual or family could have during those “boomtown” years.

Unfortunately, our Main Street has suffered dramatically in the last fifty years – resulting from factories closing or relocating from Tonawanda (taking good-paying jobs with them), combined with an Urban Renewal program which failed to achieve the success that was envisioned when initiated in 1960. Our Main Street/Downtown area of today is, simply put, a mere shadow of what it once was.

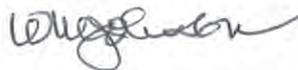
The excitement for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative opportunity is generated by recent years of downtown revitalization and Main Street redevelopment in our small yet extremely dense waterfront community of over 15,000 residents. While the lumber barons of the 19th century and factories of the 20th century are long gone, we now realize that here in the 21st century we have several significant assets that other communities can only dream of – the waterways of the Niagara River, Erie Canal, and Ellicott Creek, complimented by a fascinating local history that we can proudly share. We visualize that these assets have the potential to start a new economic engine and bring our Downtown back to life.

Keeping in mind our rich history, the two proposed DRI projects involving the museum of the Historical Society of the Tonawandas and the Long Homestead are of particular interest to me. Both structures need new windows to promote energy efficiency as to provide better protection to the many historic artifacts displayed in both facilities from UV damage from sunlight. The proposed pavilion and parking lot at the Long Homestead will greatly enhance our citizenry’s ability to utilize this 1829 structure more fully and allow better handicapped access than is presently available. Both facilities are within our downtown area and create an historic atmosphere that nicely complements the more contemporary projects included in the 2023 DRI.

The Downtown Revitalization Initiative’s proposed dockage project and the proposed projects to revise Main Street and Niagara Street will serve to better connect these thoroughfares to our waterways and make them more “user-friendly” to boaters, walkers, bikers, and joggers. All the proposed DRI projects will certainly benefit City of Tonawanda residents but – more importantly – also bring tourists from other parts of Western New York, New York State, and around our country. This translates into job creation, overall economic growth, and renewed prosperity for our community.

I strongly urge you to examine all these projects carefully, envision what we see as an incredible opportunity to reinvigorate our city, and help us move forward by approving this Initiative.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. M. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

W. M. (Skip) Johnson
City Historian

September 19, 2023

Arthur Pappas
Board President
Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas
254 Sweeney Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120

Empire State Development
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 14225

Re: Downtown Revitalization Initiative support for the City of Tonawanda, New York

Dear Empire State Development and DRI Stakeholders,

I am writing to express my strong support for the City of Tonawanda and its Local Development Corp. as they seek funding through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative from Empire State Development. The City's visionary efforts to transform its waterfront and downtown areas hold the promise of not only enhancing its physical landscape but also driving significant economic benefits for the region and the state of New York as a whole.

As president of the Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas, I have had the privilege to witness the remarkable progress Tonawanda has made in reimagining its Erie Canal gateway, which serves as a striking introduction to its central business district. The City's strategic location near the Niagara River and Niawanda Park amplifies its potential for growth and prosperity.

By securing an ESD grant, Tonawanda would experience a transformative boost that goes beyond physical enhancements. The City's well-planned initiatives to establish greenways, blueways, and improved walkability would not only promote healthier lifestyles but also stimulate economic activity. By positioning itself as a cyclist-friendly hub and an appealing destination for visitors, Tonawanda can tap into the burgeoning cycling tourism market and attract a diverse array of travelers.

The proposed enhancements to pedestrian and vehicular mobility, alongside increased public parking availability, would create a more inviting environment for residents and visitors alike. A beautified Main Street corridor and additional canalside docking facilities would create an atmosphere conducive to exploration, shopping, and leisure activities, thus nurturing a vibrant local economy.

One of the most exciting prospects lies in the potential for private entrepreneurship to flourish within this revitalized landscape. The commitment of private entrepreneurs to invest in public housing improvements, rental units, and new restaurant attractions on prime waterfront real

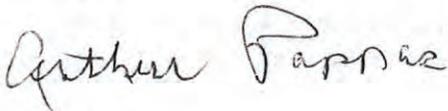
estate underscores their confidence in Tonawanda's economic prospects. This not only adds to the City's appeal as a place to live and work but also generates job opportunities and stimulates economic growth.

Tonawanda's revitalization efforts align perfectly with the broader economic goals of the state. By investing in the City's transformation, we can create a ripple effect that resonates beyond its borders. Increased tourism, boosted local businesses, and improved quality of life will inevitably contribute to increased tax revenue, fostering sustainable economic growth and benefiting the entire region.

In conclusion, I urge you to strongly consider supporting the City of Tonawanda's grant application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The economic benefits of this initiative are multifaceted, reaching far beyond the immediate enhancements to infrastructure and public spaces. I am confident that the success of Tonawanda's revitalization will serve as a beacon of progress and collaboration for other communities throughout the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Arthur Pappas". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Arthur Pappas
Board President
Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas
254 Sweeney Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120



August 25, 2023

Empire State Development
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12245

Re: Support for the City of Tonawanda grant application

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Tonawandas Gateway Harbor, Inc., I am writing in support of the City of Tonawanda and its Local Development Corporation as the City seeks funding from Empire State Development for the revitalization of our downtown and waterfront.

We are a community organization whose mission is to promote economic growth, tourism, recreation and cultural and historical heritage. We do this by bringing concerts and events to the Gateway Harbor area and we are in full support of continuing the transformation that has been happening in the City of Tonawanda. The grant would help to continue to connect our waterfront, downtown and greenways to further establish the area as a destination for visitors.

The potential is unlimited and this type of grant funding would offer opportunities for the City of Tonawanda to continue on its upward trajectory and bring continued renewal to all of our many waterfront assets while connecting them to our business district.

The entire board of Tonawandas Gateway Harbor is supportive of this grant application and we thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Foels".

Linda Foels
President, TGH

CITY OF NORTH TONAWANDA



AUSTIN J. TYLEC

September 15th, 2023

Empire State Development
625 Broadyway
Albany, New York 14225

Re: Downtown Revitalization Initiative support for the City of Tonawanda, New York

Dear Empire State Development and DRI Stakeholders,

I am writing to express my strong support for the City of Tonawanda and its Local Development Corp. as they seek funding through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative from Empire State Development. The City's visionary efforts to transform its waterfront and downtown areas hold the promise of not only enhancing its physical landscape but also driving significant economic benefits for the region and the state of New York as a whole.

As Mayor of a neighboring city, I have had the privilege to witness the remarkable progress Tonawanda has made in reimagining its Erie Canal gateway, which serves as a striking introduction to its central business district. The City's strategic location near the Niagara River and Niawanda Park amplifies its potential for growth and prosperity.

By securing an ESD grant, Tonawanda would experience a transformative boost that goes beyond physical enhancements. The City's well-planned initiatives to establish greenways, blueways, and improved walkability would not only promote healthier lifestyles but also stimulate economic activity. By positioning itself as a cyclist-friendly hub and an appealing destination for visitors, Tonawanda can tap into the burgeoning cycling tourism market and attract a diverse array of travelers.

The proposed enhancements to pedestrian and vehicular mobility, alongside increased public parking availability, would create a more inviting environment for residents and visitors alike. A beautified Main Street corridor and additional canalside docking facilities would create an atmosphere conducive to exploration, shopping, and leisure activities, thus nurturing a vibrant local economy.

One of the most exciting prospects lies in the potential for private entrepreneurship to flourish within this revitalized landscape. The commitment of private entrepreneurs to invest in public housing improvements, rental units, and new restaurant attractions on prime waterfront real estate underscores their confidence in Tonawanda's economic prospects. This not only adds to

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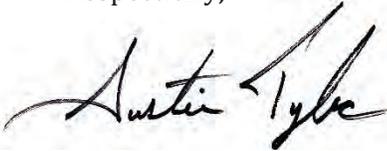
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In conclusion, I urge you to strongly consider supporting the City of Tonawanda's grant application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The economic benefits of this initiative are multifaceted, reaching far beyond the immediate enhancements to infrastructure and public spaces. I am confident that the success of Tonawanda's revitalization will serve as a beacon of progress and collaboration for other communities throughout the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

Sincerely,

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Austin Tylec". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "A".

Austin Tylec
Mayor



COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

August 15, 2023

Empire State Development
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 14225

Re: Support for Tonawanda's Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to express my strong support for the City of Tonawanda and its Local Development Corp. as they seek funding through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative from Empire State Development. The City's visionary efforts to transform its waterfront and downtown areas hold the promise of not only enhancing its physical landscape but also driving significant economic benefits for the region and the state of New York as a whole.

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August 15, 2023

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In conclusion, I urge you to support the City of Tonawanda's grant application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The economic benefits of this initiative are multifaceted, reaching far beyond the immediate enhancements to infrastructure and public spaces. I am confident that the success of Tonawanda's revitalization will serve as a beacon of progress and collaboration for other communities throughout the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

Sincerely yours,



Mark C. Poloncarz, Esq.
Erie County Executive

MCP/jah

ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

HON. JOHN A. BARGNESI, JR.
4TH DISTRICT LEGISLATOR



□ 2165 Sheridan Drive
Tonawanda, NY 14223
716/871-5905

□ 92 Franklin St., 4th Fl.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716/858-7500
FAX: 716/858-8895

August 10, 2023

John A. Bargnesi, Jr.
Erie County Legislator, District 4
2165 Sheridan Drive
Tonawanda, NY 14223

Empire State Development
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 14225

Re: Downtown Revitalization Initiative support for the City of Tonawanda, New York

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ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

HON. JOHN A. BARGNESI, JR.
4TH DISTRICT LEGISLATOR



- 2165 Sheridan Drive
Tonawanda, NY 14223
716/871-5905

- 92 Franklin St., 4th Fl.
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In conclusion, I urge you to strongly consider supporting the City of Tonawanda's grant application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The economic benefits of this initiative are multifaceted, reaching far beyond the immediate enhancements to infrastructure and public spaces. I am confident that the success of Tonawanda's revitalization will serve as a beacon of hope. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

Sincerely,

John A. Bargnesi, Jr.
Erie County Legislator, District 4
JohnBargnesiJr@erie.gov
(716)871-5905 (P)
(716)871-4122 (F)



ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER
KEVIN R. HARDWICK

August 14, 2023

Empire State Development
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 14225

Re: Downtown Revitalization Initiative support for the City of Tonawanda, New York

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Empire State Development
Albany, New York 14225
August 14, 2023
Page 2

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Thank you for your time and consideration. If you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

Sincerely,



Kevin R. Hardwick
Erie County Comptroller



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

COMMITTEES
Education
Energy
Local Governments
Science & Technology
Tourism, Parks, Arts & Sports Development

WILLIAM C. CONRAD, III
Assemblymember 140th District
Erie County, Niagara County

Aug. 10, 2023

Empire State Development
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 14225

Re: Downtown Revitalization Initiative support for the City of Tonawanda

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Sincerely,

William C. Conrad III

CHAIR
Commerce, Economic Development
and Small Business

COMMITTEES
Alcoholism and Substance Abuse
Codes
Internet and Technology
Judiciary
Labor
Libraries

**THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK**



**SENATOR
SEAN M. RYAN
61ST DISTRICT**

ALBANY OFFICE:
944 Legislative Office Bldg.
Albany, New York 12247
Phone: (518) 455-3240
Fax: (518) 426-6738

DISTRICT OFFICE:
40 La Riviere Dr., Ste. 121
Buffalo, NY 14202
Phone: (716) 854-8705
Fax: (716) 854-3051

EMAIL: ryan@nysenate.gov

September 22, 2023

Karen Utz, Regional Director
Western New York REDC
95 Perry Street
Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Ms. Utz:

I write today to express my strong support for the City of Tonawanda and its Local Development Corp. as they seek funding through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). The City's visionary efforts to transform its waterfront and downtown areas hold the promise of not only enhancing its physical landscape but also driving significant economic benefits for the region and the state of New York as a whole.

As an elected representative of New York State, I have had the privilege to witness the remarkable progress Tonawanda has made in reimagining its Erie Canal gateway, which serves as a striking introduction to its central business district. The City's strategic location near the Niagara River and Niawanda Park amplifies its potential for growth and prosperity.

By securing funding from the DRI, Tonawanda would experience a transformative boost that goes beyond physical enhancements. The City's well-planned initiatives to establish greenways, blueways, and improved walkability would not only promote healthier lifestyles but also stimulate economic activity. By positioning itself as a cyclist-friendly hub and an appealing destination for visitors, Tonawanda can tap into the burgeoning cycling tourism market and attract a diverse array of travelers.

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I respectfully request your consideration of the City of Tonawanda's application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The economic benefits of this initiative are multifaceted, reaching far beyond the immediate enhancements to infrastructure and public spaces. I am confident that the success of Tonawanda's revitalization will serve as a beacon of progress and collaboration for other communities throughout the state.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I ask that you please give this application your full consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean M. Ryan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sean M. Ryan

New York State Senator, 61st District



August 14, 2023

Empire State Development
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 14225

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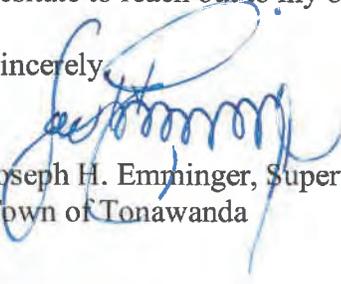
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Thank you for your time and consideration. If you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

Sincerely,



Joseph H. Emminger, Supervisor
Town of Tonawanda