

# City of Tonawanda Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI)



## Public Workshop #1

May 16, 2024, 5:30 and 6:30 PM



City of  
Tonawanda

Downtown  
Revitalization  
Initiative



Downtown  
Revitalization  
Initiative

# Tonight's Agenda

- Welcome
- DRI Overview Presentation
  - DRI Program Overview
  - DRI Planning Process
  - Public Engagement
  - Project Requirements & Open Call
- Individual Visioning & Goal-Setting Exercise
- Group Mapping Exercise
- Next Steps

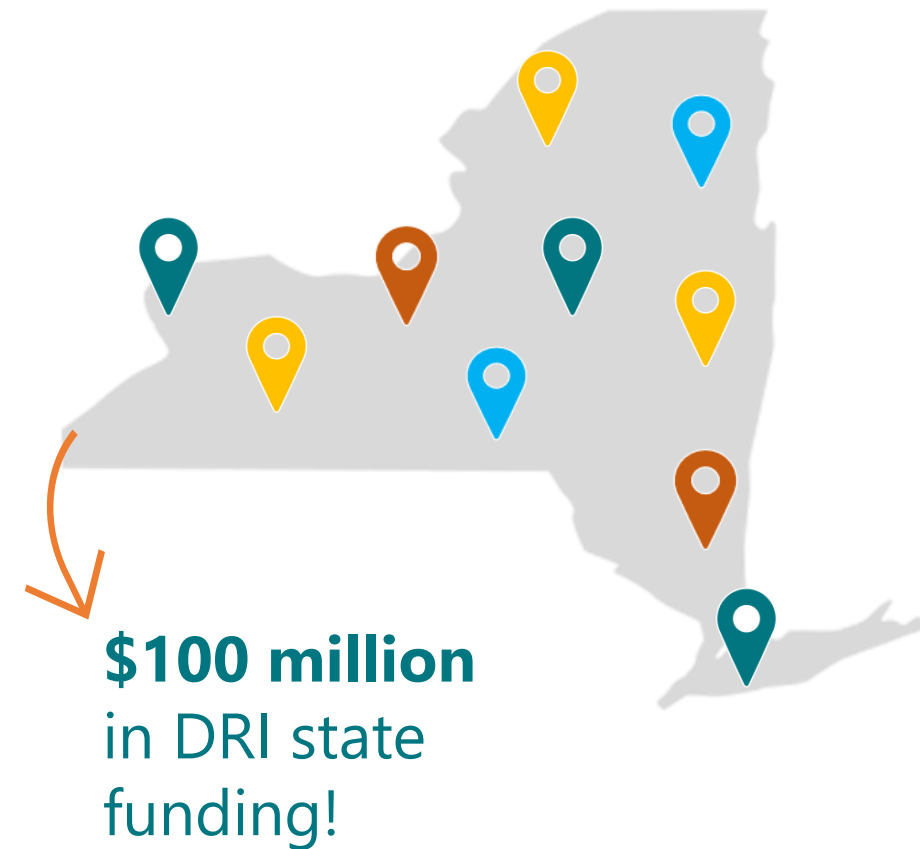


# DRI Overview Presentation



# DRI Program Overview

- Launched in 2016 to improve the vitality of urban centers across the State
- Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) nominate communities for significant investment to revitalize their downtowns
- In DRI Round 7, each of the REDCs chose one community to receive \$10 million (\$100 million in funding statewide)
- Each community prepares a Strategic Investment Plan that guides the implementation of transformational project
- City's winning application can be found online at [www.TonawandaDRI.com](http://www.TonawandaDRI.com)





# Statewide DRI Program Goals



**Create an active downtown with a mix of uses**



**Enhance downtown living and quality of life**



**Create diverse housing options for all income levels**



**Provide enhanced public spaces that serve those of all ages and abilities**



**Encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions**



**Provide diverse employment opportunities for a variety of skill sets and salary levels**



**Grow the local property tax base**

# DRI Partners



## State Representatives

- Ben Bidell, Department of State
- Angela Keppel, Department of State
- Erin Corrado, Empire State Development
- Mo Sumbundu, Empire State Development
- Lenny Skrill, NYS Homes & Community Renewal

## LPC Co-Chairs

- Hon. Mayor John White, City of Tonawanda
- Paul Brown, WNY Regional Economic Development Council

## Consultant Team

- Led by WSP with support from Highland Planning and other partners

# Local Planning Committee

## LPC Co-chairs

- Hon. Mayor John White, City of Tonawanda
- Paul Brown, WNY Regional Economic Development Council

## Members

- Marty Grunzweig, City of Tonawanda Local Development Corporation
- Skip Johnson, Historical Society of the Tonawandas
- Nhi Kah, Sativa Remedy
- Debbie Jaeger, Erie Heights Apartments
- Alice Roth, City of Tonawanda Planning Board
- Joan Horn, City of Tonawanda Board of Visual & Performing Arts
- Jeffrey Ross, Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas
- Mark Saltarelli, Tonawandas Gateway Harbor, Inc.
- Bob O'Brocta, Boys and Girls Club of the Northtowns
- Michelle Lockett, Niagara River Greenway Commission
- Suzanne Zuchlewski, Resident
- Julia Ann Davis, Cats Like Us

## Roles & Responsibilities:

- Participate in LPC meetings
- Provide direction on planning efforts
- Provide feedback to consultant team and State
- Review documents
- Assist with community engagement and outreach

# Planning Process

## 8-9 Month Timeframe (April – December 2024)



### Visioning

Refine the community's future vision, establish priorities and gather input



### Opportunities + Challenges

Understand the community's unique characteristics and key opportunities



### Project Development + Evaluation

Identify, develop, and evaluate potential projects



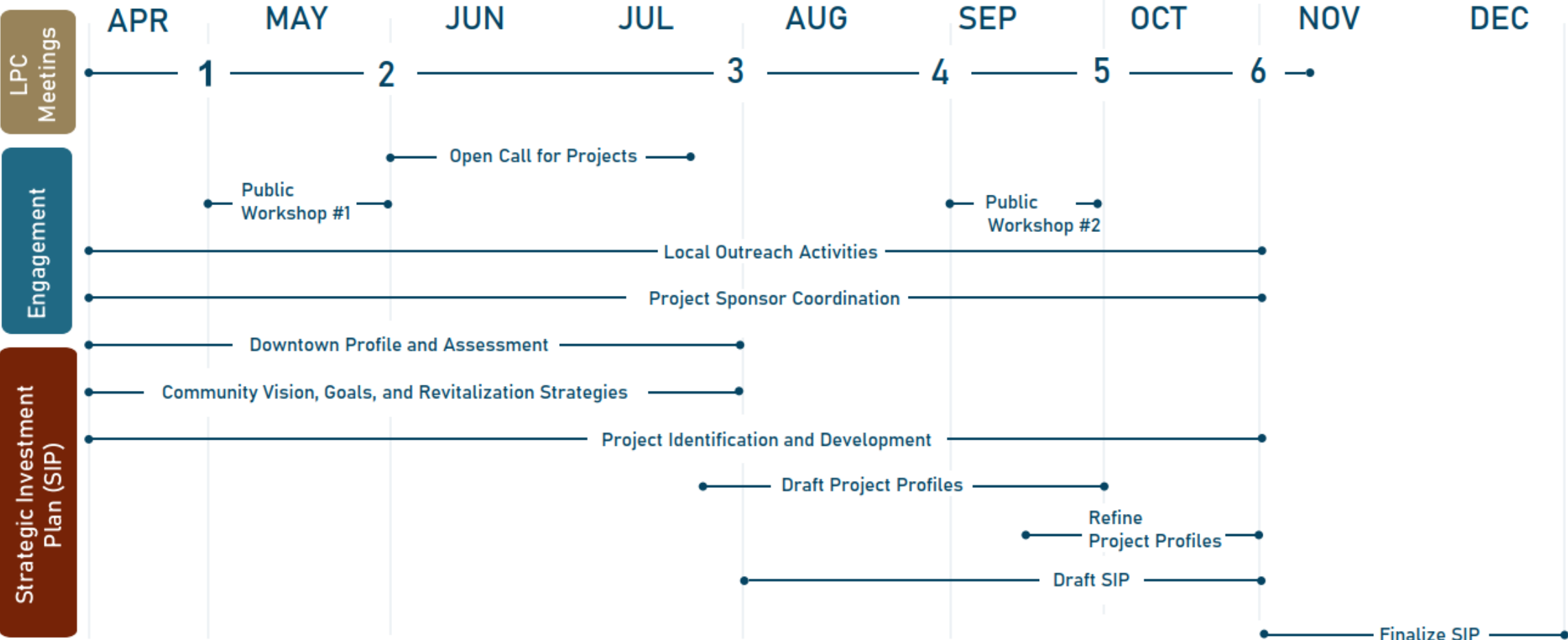
### Project Recommendations

Recommend projects that align with the community's goals

- **Local Planning Committee (LPC) will oversee the development of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)**
- **LPC will recommend a slate of projects to be included in the SIP that may receive a DRI funding award**
- **New York State will make final project funding decisions and announce awards**



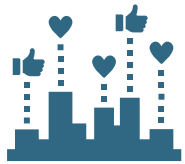
# Tonawanda DRI Process & Schedule



# Role of the Public Throughout the DRI Process



## Role of the Public:



Provide input on community issues, opportunities, and needs



Provide feedback on the draft vision statement and goals



Generate transformative project ideas



Provide feedback on DRI projects proposed for funding

# Opportunities for Public Input

- **Public Workshops**
- **Pop-up Events**
  - Held events earlier today at the Senior Center and High School
- **Local Planning Committee Meetings**
  - LPC Meeting #2: May 29, 6:00-7:30pm at Senior Citizens Center
  - LPC Meetings #3-6: Scheduled July 25, August 29, September 25, and October 24, 6-7:30pm, locations TBD
- **Website:** [www.TonawandaDRI.com](http://www.TonawandaDRI.com)
- **Public Survey** open until July 19. Paper copies available here, or visit the TonawandaDRI.com website to take it online
- **Online Engagement Activities** after each workshop
- **Open Call for Projects** runs through July 12
- **Tonawanda DRI Facebook Page**





# Proposed DRI Boundary

- All projects receiving DRI funds must be located within the final boundary
- Projects submitted for funding consideration must be within or near the proposed boundary
- LPC can make minor boundary adjustments based on projects submitted through the Open Call for Projects



0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Miles





# General Guidelines on DRI Projects

LPCs may develop local project evaluation criteria, building from the State criteria:

- Aligned with State and Local Goals
- Advances Revitalization Strategies
- Transformational and Catalytic
- Capacity and Readiness
- Eligible Project Type
- Cost-Effective

\*\*\*Final slate of projects should total \$12-\$15M



# Eligible Project Types



## Public Improvement Projects

Streetscape and transportation improvements, recreational trails, new and upgraded parks, plazas, public art, green infrastructure, and other public realm projects.



## New Development and/or Rehabilitation of Existing Downtown Buildings

Development and redevelopment of real property for mixed-use, commercial, residential, not for profit, or public uses. Development / redevelopment should result in employment opportunities, housing choices or other community services.



## Small Project Grant Fund

A locally managed matching small project fund (up to \$600,000) for small downtown projects, such as façade improvements, building renovations, business assistance, or public art.



## Branding and Marketing

Downtown branding and marketing projects that target residents, tourists, investors, developers and visitors.



# DRI Project Requirements

**Timing** - must be able to break ground within two years and be completed in five years

**Sponsor** - must have an entity (not an individual) that agrees to undertake the project

**Site Control** - must have authority to undertake the project at that location

**Scope** - must have potential to transform the downtown area

**Budget** - should have a detailed budget and leverage other funding

**Decarbonization** - may be required to meet energy efficiency requirements

**Financing** - DRI is a reimbursement-based grant program, and sponsors must be able to finance all project costs prior to DRI reimbursement at project completion

**Match** - private projects must include a minimum 25% match (non-DRI funds)

# Open Call for Projects

- Provides business and property owners an opportunity to submit a project for funding consideration
- All projects must be submitted during the Open Call to be considered for funding, including example projects in the City's DRI application
- Private, non-profit, and public entities are eligible to submit projects
- Projects must be 'shovel-ready' (e.g., well-defined and ready to be implemented in the near term)
- Applicants must complete and submit a Project Form (available online or in hard copy at accessible locations) starting May 30.
- Submission period will be open for six weeks from May 30 – July 12
- Information sessions and technical assistance will be available during and after July 12

**The State is looking for projects that are ready to be implemented in the near-term, are transformational, and are feasible!**

# Individual Visioning & Goal-Setting Exercise



# Instructions: Visioning and Goal-Setting

- **Timing:** 5-10 minutes
- **Fill out your worksheet with feedback on the draft Tonawanda DRI vision and goals.**
- **Page 1: Review the draft vision**
  - What parts of the draft vision do you like?
  - What could be better? What is missing?
- **Page 2: Review the draft goals**
  - What parts of the draft goals do you like?
  - What could be better? What missing?
  - What strategies or project ideas will be most effective to achieve the goals?

Tonawanda Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI)  
Individual Visioning and Goal-Setting Exercise

## Tonawanda Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Please help us build on the Tonawanda DRI Vision. Read the draft vision statement below and let us know what works, whether anything is missing, or how it could be improved.

**DRAFT VISION STATEMENT:**

*Downtown Tonawanda will become a commercial and cultural hub at the confluence of the Erie Canal and Niagara River, offering a distinct blend of historical charm and modern vitality for residents, workers, and visitors of all ages. By capitalizing on its natural and built assets as a historically rich waterfront community, downtown Tonawanda will be sustainable; a vibrant place to live, work, and gather; and a unique destination to connect with history and nature.*

*What parts of the draft vision statement do you like?*

*What could be better / What is missing from the vision statement?*

# Group Mapping Exercise



# Instructions: Group Mapping Exercise

- **Timing:** 25 minutes
- **Break into groups of up to 10 people and gather around a table map.**
- Mark up the map with stickers and markers. Add notes on post-its, on the map, or in the margins.
  - What existing features of the DRI Area stand out to you?
  - What would you like to see in the DRI Area?
- Consider & discuss as a group:
  - What are the top three things that make the DRI Area special?
  - What are the DRI Area's top three issues or challenges?
  - What are the top three opportunities for the DRI Area? What strategies or project ideas can make the most of these opportunities?



# Example: Group Mapping Exercise



Instructions: Mark up the map with stickers & markers. Add notes on post-its, on the map, or in the margins.

What existing features of the DRI Area stand out to you?

- ★ Point of interest
- Activity center or gathering place
- ♥ Scenic area
- Problem area

What would you like to see in the DRI Area?

- Park improvement
- - - Bike/walk trail
- ↔ Roadway change/reconfiguration
- Building/land redevelopment
- ~ Waterfront access/amenity
- ★ Other (Please specify)

## Consider & discuss as a group:

1. What are the top three things that make the DRI area special?

Waterfront views and access  
 Historic architecture and landmarks  
 Strategic location between Buffalo and Niagara Falls

2. What are the DRI area's top three issues or challenges?

vacant and underused buildings and lots  
 Road safety issues  
 Lack of shops and businesses

3. What are the top three opportunities for the DRI area? What strategies or project ideas can make the most of these opportunities?

More housing options  
 Attracting boaters to spend time and money downtown  
 Add more recreation facilities and amenities to parks and harbor

# Next Steps

- **Complete the public survey!** Open until July 19.
  - Online at [TonawandaDRI.com](http://TonawandaDRI.com)
  - Paper copies and drop-off available at the workshop, City Hall, City of Tonawanda Public Library, and Tops on Niagara Street
- **LPC Meeting #2:** Wednesday May 29, 6:00-7:30 pm at Senior Citizens Center
- **Open Call for Projects:** May 30 to July 12
  - Informational Sessions Thursday, May 30, 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm at City Hall Community Room
  - Virtual Session week of June 3rd
- **Stay tuned for other events** this spring and summer!
- **Visit [www.TonawandaDRI.com](http://www.TonawandaDRI.com)** for more information and to sign up for the email list.