



CITY OF RENSSELAER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

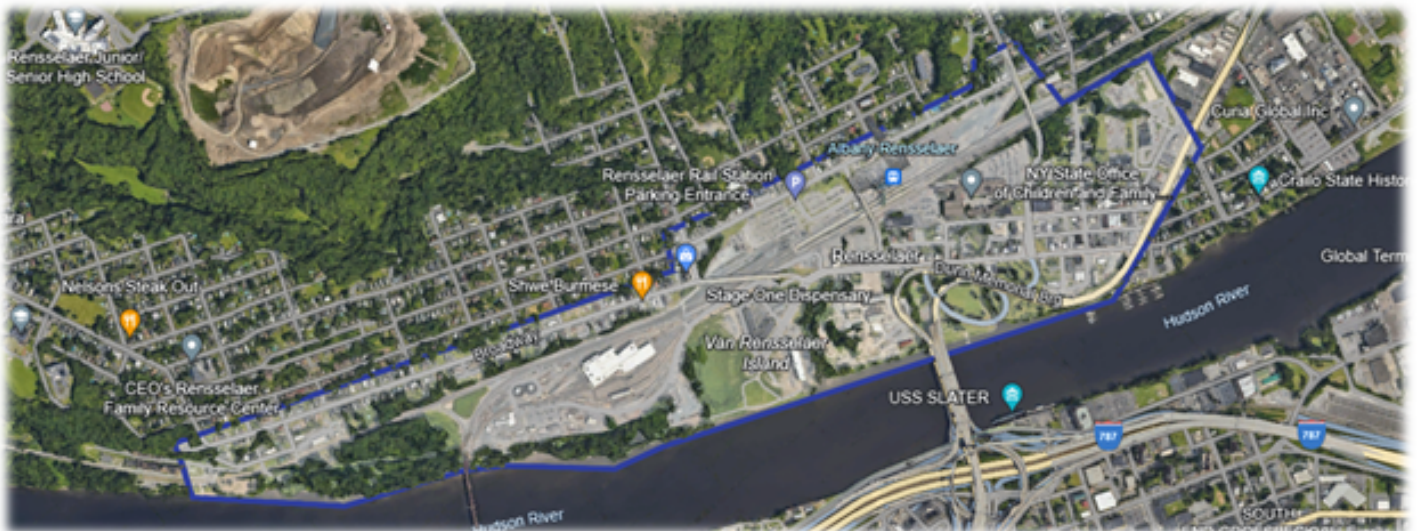
CITY HALL, 62 WASHINGTON STREET
Planning (518) 462-4839 Building (518) 465-1693



Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Open Call for Preliminary Project Proposals

Released: August 20, 2024

Proposals Due: 3PM September 6, 2024



The City of Rensselaer intends to apply to the New York State Department of State for Round 8 Downtown Revitalization (DRI) Funding. We are seeking transformative projects for an improved and expanded downtown. Rensselaer’s expanded downtown includes the core of Rensselaer Rising, a current Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) study, that should lead to a BOA designation in early 2025. The area includes most of the Downtown and Waterfront Mixed Use portions of the city as well as two Planned Development Districts. The area is 0.52 square miles and begins at Columbia Street from Aiken Avenue to the river, then proceeds north along the Hudson River to Hilton Park, then proceeds along Broadway to Partition Street then up to East Street to Adams Street where it connects to 3rd Avenue and follows the train tracks to Aiken Avenue then back to Columbia Street. The area serves local residents and regional visitors and includes waterfront access, the Amtrak Train station with 800,000 visitors annually as well as 254 new units of housing, 121 under construction and 50 with approved plans and many more to come.

More information about the Rensselaer DRI and the Preliminary Project Proposal Form are on our website.



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DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

"DRAFT" VISION STATEMENT *

The City of Rensselaer aspires to capitalize on the unique amenities and momentum within the city to enhance, expand and revitalize our downtown business area. Located on the Hudson River, with significant waterfront access and great views of the Albany Skyline, the city is home to the Joseph L. Bruno Amtrak Train Station, the 8th busiest train station in America. The Dunn Memorial Bridge connects Rensselaer's downtown to Interstate 787, making it an easy commute from Albany and all locations in and around the Capital District.

On April 17, 2024 the City of Rensselaer was designated a New York State Pro Housing Community. This was based on the significant growth in housing in the city since the 2020 Census, with 254 units of housing added, 121 under construction, 50 with plans approved and many more in the planning stages. The growth in housing is partly due to our proximity to major employers including New York State (with an office campus in the city), Regeneron, local hospitals and educational institutions.

Given all of the residential growth, the time is right for our downtown to be revitalized. Some new businesses are starting to move into the vacant and/or under-utilized properties along Broadway, including a dispensary, music studio, vintage store and an ice cream stand. These are being added to established businesses including several restaurants offering a variety of ethnic cuisines, convenience stores, hair salons and hardware and automotive retail establishments. Through this Downtown Revitalization Initiative new development will be attracted to the expanded Business Areas that now extends from the Hudson River to East Street from Columbia Street to Hilton Park. Developable areas along the Hudson River will become activated with new housing and business development taking advantage of the waterfront access and views of the Albany Skyline. A unique artistic linkage will also be created to an expanded downtown area on East Street, adjacent to the Train Station, to create additional development opportunities and transportation hub that includes car rental, bike share, retail and residential components. The transportation hub will include a new short bike path that will lead to the Empire State Trail which connects to several communities in the Capital District and expands to New York City, Buffalo and the Canadian border. The end result will be a thriving City of Rensselaer downtown that emanates from the waterfront, expands around the train station, has great views of the Albany skyline and becomes a destination for regional and local residents (existing and new) and the 800,000+ visitors to our region each year that come to us by train.

** This Draft Vision Statement will be refined with input from the community during the DRI Planning Process.*



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How to Submit a Project

1

Review the Eligibility Criteria

on page 4 to make sure your project is eligible to be considered for DRI funding.

2

Review the Project Requirements

on pages 5-6 to learn about the requirements for projects and how your project will be considered by the City of Rensselaer Local Planning Committee (LPC) and New York State.

3

Review the Evaluation Criteria

on page 7 to see how the State evaluates projects and to understand how the City of Rensselaer LPC may evaluate projects.

4

Fill out the Project Proposal Submission Form

on pages 6 through 15. Address each topic thoroughly and completely. The LPC will use this information to consider projects to be included in the City of Rensselaer DRI Strategic Investment Plan

5

Submit your Completed Application

Submit your Completed Application (and any supplemental materials) either electronically, in- person, or by mail no later than 3PM on Friday September 6, 2024.

To submit via email:

Email your completed application and any supplemental materials to Thomas Hulihan at thomas.hulihan@rensselaerny.gov

You will receive a confirmation email shortly after submitting. Please contact this email as needed to arrange for delivery of any large file attachments

To submit a hard copy:

Mail or hand-deliver to:

Planning Department
DRI Preliminary Proposal
Rensselaer City Hall
62 Washington Street
Rensselaer, NY 12144



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Project Types & Requirements

It is expected that DRI funds will be used for capital projects that will transform the physical environment of the downtown in ways that will benefit current residents and future generations. Certain non-capital projects or projects that may lead to capital investment may be considered to the extent that they will contribute to the revitalization of the downtown. The following is a description of eligible and ineligible project types.

Eligible Project Types

- **Public Improvement Projects.** These may include projects such as streetscape and transportation improvements, recreational trails, wayfinding signage, new and upgraded parks, plazas, public art, green infrastructure, and other public realm projects that will contribute to the revitalization of the downtown.
- **New Development and/or Rehabilitation of Existing Downtown Buildings.** Projects in this category may include the development or redevelopment of real property for mixed-use, commercial, residential, not-for-profit, or public uses. All projects should be capital investments or should lead to capital investments. They should have a visible and functional impact on the downtown, serving as transformative projects that will provide employment opportunities, housing choices, and/or services for the community.
- **Small Project Fund.** Following the open call, a locally managed matching small project fund may be proposed to undertake a range of smaller downtown projects such as facade enhancements, building renovation improvements to commercial or mixed-use spaces, business assistance, or public art.
- **Branding and Marketing.** Examples include downtown branding and marketing projects that may target residents, investors, developers, tourists, and/or visitors. The costs eligible under this category must be one-time expenses, such as those to develop materials and signage. Ongoing operational costs, such as funding a downtown manager or maintaining a website, are not eligible for DRI funding.

Ineligible Project Types

- **Planning activities.** Following the preparation of the Strategic Investment Plan, all DRI funds must be used for projects that directly implement the plan.
- **Operations and maintenance.** DRI funds cannot be used for on-going or routine expenses, such as staff salaries and wages, rent, utilities, and property up keep.
- **Pre-award costs.** Reimbursement for costs incurred before the completion of the Strategic Investment Plan and the announcement of funding awards is not permitted.
- **Property acquisition.** The cost of property acquisition can be included in the overall project budget, but the acquisition must be funded by another funding source.
- **Training and other program expenses.** The DRI program is a one-time infusion of funds and cannot be used to cover continuous costs, such as training costs and expenses related to existing programs.
- **Expenses related to existing programs.** DRI funds cannot be used to supplement existing programs or replace existing resources.



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Project Requirements

- **Project Location (see next page).** Projects must be located within the DRI boundary. If your project is located near but outside the DRI boundary, please provide a brief description of how the project relates to the downtown and supports the stated goals of the DRI. **Minor** boundary modifications may be considered by the LPC.
- **Project Timing.** Projects must be able to break ground within two years or sooner of receiving DRI/NYF funding.
- **Project Funding.** Projects should have financing commitments largely secured or be able to demonstrate a clear path to securing sufficient financing. It is strongly encouraged that all projects, especially private projects, use non-DRI funds that leverage requested public funding. The state requires a minimum 25% equity for private projects. The Local Planning Committee has the discretion to set additional match requirements.
- **Project Size and Scale.** Projects must be large enough to be truly transformative for the downtown area.
- **Project Sponsors.** Every project must have an identified project sponsor. Sponsors may be public, not-for-profit, or private entities with the capacity and legal authority to undertake the proposed project.
- **Building Decarbonization.** For DRI/NYF communities, all public, private, and not-for-profit projects that meet the criteria for new construction, substantial renovation, or a building addition shall include decarbonization techniques. Each project that meets the criteria will be required to select a method of demonstrating that the project satisfies the requirements *More information on this requirement can be found in the [DRI/NYF Guidebook](#).*

Have a general idea for downtown revitalization that does not meet the criteria for a DRI project? Please submit a comment and/or learn about upcoming public events by visiting <https://www.rensselaerplanning.com/>.

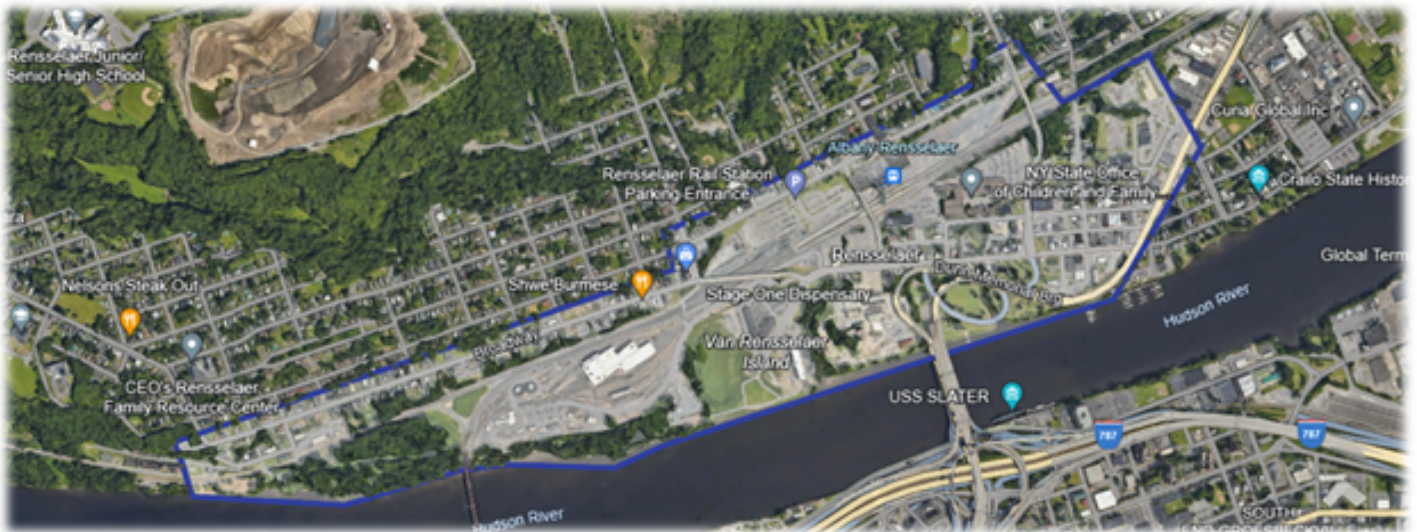


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Rensselaer DRI Boundary



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Evaluation Criteria

The following are the State criteria by which each proposed project will be evaluated. The Local Planning Committee will use these criteria as a guide for local evaluation criteria.

1 Alignment with State and Local Goals

DRI State Goals

- Create an active downtown with a strong sense of place.
- Attract new businesses that create a robust mix of shopping, entertainment and service options for residents and visitors, and that provide job opportunities for a variety of skills and salaries.
- Enhance public spaces for arts and cultural events that serve the existing members of the community but also draw in visitors from around the region.
- Build a diverse population, with residents and workers supported by complementary diverse housing and employment opportunities.
- Grow the local property tax base.
- Provide amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality of life.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

2 Catalytic Effect

The project is likely to have a positive impact on the revitalization of the downtown by attracting other public and private investment at a scale appropriate for the DRI community.

3 Project Readiness

The project should be well-developed and poised to proceed in the near-term in a way that will jump start the redevelopment of the DRI area.

4 Eligible Project Type

The project must be one of the eligible project types outlined in the Eligibility Criteria section and must meet all the requirements for that specific project type.

5 Cost Effectiveness

Investment of DRI funds in the project would represent an effective and efficient use of public resources.

6 Co-Benefits

The project will result in secondary benefits to both the community and project developer, beyond the primary goal of the project, which will generate additional economic activity, grow the local property tax base, improve quality of life in the neighborhood, and/or result in healthier, more comfortable and productive environments in which to live and work.