

BALDWIN

Downtown Revitalization Initiative

DRI Baldwin – Local Planning Committee (LPC) Meeting #3

January 29, 2020 Baldwin High School, 6:00 pm

Meeting Notes

Lou Bekofsky (VHB) opened the meeting with introductory remarks and welcomed the LPC and public. LPC members and other members of the Consultant Team introduced themselves. Supervisor Clavin also welcomed the LPC members and community members to the meeting, and outlined priorities for DRI projects, including incorporating renewable energy alternatives, a cohesive branding program, transportation amenities such as information kiosks at Baldwin LIRR Station, development of green space and local gathering spaces, provision of additional commuter parking, and pedestrian safety and streetscaping upgrades to complement anticipated Transit-Oriented Development facilitated by the newly-approved Baldwin Mixed Use Overlay Zone.

Following Supervisor Clavin's opening remarks, VHB introduced the goals for the meeting which included presenting the full list of projects and discussion of opportunities and challenges for each and beginning to narrow down the list of potential projects to focus on opportunities that are viable and have public support. Mr. Bekofsky asked the LPC members to group the projects being presented into one of four categories:

- A – Transformative and Project Ready – Will Be Recommended for DRI Funding
- B – Additional Details Needed but Likely to Be Recommended for DRI Funding;
- C - Project Has Support from LPC But Is Not Ready for DRI Funding
- D - Project Is Not Supported by The LPC And Will Not Be Recommended for Funding

LPC members were also asked to consider certain project evaluation criteria, including how well the project achieves the DRI Goals; if there is a project need; if the project has the potential to revitalize downtown Baldwin and/or catalyze future investment; what the potential economic impact is; and if the project is ready for implementation.

Representatives from the Consultant Team (VHB, FX Collaborative, and Urbane Development) presented each of the projects submitted through the public Call for Projects, including information on potential project sponsors, a project description, funding requests, and opportunities and challenges for each project. Overall, 29 projects were received, including 16 fully formed projects, 5 projects with details to be developed before funding could be awarded; and 8 project ideas in need of formulation.

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The projects discussed included the following:

Fully-Formed Projects

- Baldwin Dog Park
- Baldwin Downtown Public Art Project
- Implementation of Green Infrastructure/Storm Resiliency
- Baldwin Historical Society and Museum Site and Building Renovation
- Kellogg House Community Space Improvements
- Baldwin Library Interior Renovations
- Coach Diner Signage and Lighting
- 800 Merrick Road Redevelopment
- Baldwin Business Center
- Revolving Loan Fund or Grant Program
- Baldwin Chamber of Commerce Façade Renovation and Digital Sign
- Placemaking and Streetscape Improvements
- Baldwin Public Library Plaza Enhancement and Reactivation
- Malkin Appliances Site Renovations

Projects in Formation

- Baldwin High School Gateway Improvements
- 775 Brooklyn Avenue Transit Oriented Development
- Enhance Commuter Amenities
- Downtown Branding or Marketing Program
- Merrick Road Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Improvements

Project Ideas

- Transit-Oriented Development
- Baldwin LIRR Station Plaza
- Recreation Center
- Food Business Incubation and Grocery
- Sunrise Trail and Sunrise Highway Pedestrian Improvements
- Pedestrian Walkway Improvements
- Improve Connectivity Across Sunrise Highway
- Arts and Cultural Center

The remaining time in the meeting was used for the LPC to hold open discussions on each of the projects presented. The LPC expressed the need for more robust transit-oriented development projects to achieve the goals of the DRI program, including development of housing opportunities and transformational projects. The Consultant Team explained that there continues to be developer interest in downtown Baldwin, particularly following the approval of the overlay district zoning.

After all the projects were discussed, VHB concluded the presentation by discussing the next steps in the DRI process including upcoming LPC Meeting 4 and Community Meeting 2, development of strategies to achieve the DRI Goals, narrowing the list of projects proposed for funding, and drafting of priority project profiles.

The meeting was then opened to the public. LPC and public comments are summarized below.

- Members of the LPC and the public are concerned that the projects are not visionary and will not stimulate private investment that people are looking for in downtown Baldwin. The reason why Baldwin received the DRI grant was because of the new zoning and its focus on mixed use walkable TOD around the LIRR train station. Few of the projects capitalize on that.
- Focus needs to be on building new residential near the train station as that is key to revitalizing the downtown.
- The projects presented included a wish list, but funding may be available elsewhere.
- The DRI funding should focus on green spaces and cultural projects that often do not have other sources of funding.
- The LPC should not be thinking about smaller projects. Funding should focus on bringing new businesses into the community and making the community look good.

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- Issues were raised with using DRI funds to pay for library renovations.
- Concern that library expansion and historical society building addition/expansion (totaling \$5 million of the \$10 million awarded) is not a good use of DRI funds.
- Many of the projects focus on streetscape, lighting, façade, branding, etc. These (as well as the Dog Park) should be funded through the Town (CDBG, Parks Dept.) rather than DRI.
- The Kellogg House and Historical Building renovation/expansion projects both provide community space and are somewhat redundant in their programs
- Need to look at the Town-owned properties as an opportunity for leveraging.
- Support the food business incubator as well as mixed-use developments.
- The community needs a supermarket along Grand Avenue.
- Projects should be evaluated fairly – a lot of projects could be funded through public funding.
- Projects brought forth by Nassau County – Green Infrastructure, Merrick Road traffic and safety improvements, Sunrise Highway connectivity should be funded by the County (not DRI).
- 800 Merrick Road development has been slowed down by National Grid, but funding is being requested to revitalize the property at the corner of Merrick and Grand with sidewalk and landscaping enhancements to make it a nice corner for the community.
- How have property owners been engaged, particularly about the possibility for funding or to sell development rights to adjacent owners?