

Meeting Notes

Clinton Square DRI Local Planning Committee Meeting #2

Albany Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Date/Time November 29, 2018 / 5:30pm
Place: Hampton Inn – Downtown Albany,
Attendees: Mayor Kathy Sheehan, Co-Chair
Linda MacFarlane, Co-Chair
Mark Aronowitz
John Curtin
Al DeSalvo
Mohamed Hemmid
Kelly Kimbrough
Steve Longo
Tracy Metzger
Sonya del Peral
Sarah Reginelli
Brenda Robinson
Joseph Scott
Georgette Steffens

Kaitlyn Smith, New York State (NYS) Department of State (DOS)
Darren Scott, NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR)
Steve Kearney, Stantec
Phil Schaeffing, Stantec
Nur Asri, Larisa Ortiz Associates (by phone)
Marc Norman, Ideas and Action

The second Clinton Square Local Planning Committee meeting took place from 5:30-7:00pm on November 29, 2018 at the Downtown Albany Hampton Inn. The meeting's purpose was to present the preliminary retail market analysis and review the draft goals and strategies for the Clinton Square DRI. Steve Kearney (SK) from Stantec presented most of the attached slideshow; Nur Asri of Larisa Ortiz Associates presented the retail market slides by phone.

Welcome 5:35

Conflict of Interest Statement 5:35

- Linda MacFarlane, LPC co-chair, read the conflict of interest statement for LPC members as required by NYS DOS. Recusals were stated and recorded at the end of the meeting.

Public Kick-Off Meeting Summary 5:40

- More than 60 community members attended the public kick-off meeting in early November

Vision Statement and Community Engagement Strategy 5:50

- After reviewing community input on the draft vision statement, LPC members discussed final modifications:
 - Clinton Square is already a destination and a gateway – remove “increasingly” from the first phrase and move closer to statements about investments
- LPC members received copy of community engagement strategy as approved by NYS.
 - Capitalize Albany has committed to meeting with other stakeholder groups; LPC members should contact Sarah Reginelli if they are involved in groups that would like a DRI update

Affordable Housing and Retail Market 6:00

- Consultant team member Marc Norman discussed his role on team:
 - Works to incorporate affordability into plans, create ladders of affordability to support existing residents (wealth generation, anchor institutions).
 - Met with housing developers today to understand development context, what gaps exist and what other funding sources might exist besides DRI to identify where DRI can have maximum impact by filling financing gaps
- Consultant team member Nur Asri (NA) presented preliminary retail market findings via phone:
 - Retail space vacancy mostly clustered along N. Pearl
 - Limited demand for grocery, approx.. 2,500 to 5,000 sq ft (very small format)
 - Physical environment limitations to retail environment include significant distances from parking to stores and currently vacant storefronts
 - Team will develop retail strategic plan focused on a few key areas
- LPC discussion of retail presentation:
 - Why focus on Columbia Street as pedestrian connection from riverfront parking garage to retail on N. Pearl Street instead of Steuben Street?
 - NA: Columbia has micro-retail spaces and leads to both Lodges and The Hollow, and discussions with Albany Parking Authority indicated they want to make Columbia the main entry to the garage
 - LPC: Can treat both streets similarly so that shoppers can choose their path; design template developed for DRI can be applied to other streets too
 - What about N. Pearl Street between Clinton and Wilson, and even to Colonie – it’s not a great place for pedestrians today
 - NA: Streetscape and lighting improvements, infill projects there will help
 - LPC: Important to make that connection especially once new CapRep opens
 - LPC: Broadway is the entry to Warehouse District and we want to strengthen that connection; N. Pearl is limited by industry on other side of rail bridge
 - Regarding potential demand for grocery of only 2,500 to 5,000 sq ft – shouldn’t that increase once future planned development opens, bringing more people and broader range of incomes? Seems like a larger urban format grocery could support all income levels.
 - NA: grocery demand will change slightly (need population and household income projections to quantify), but we looked at larger trade area so a few hundred more households won’t make significant difference
 - LPC: lots of people talked about desire for grocery at public meeting – we need to educate community about these findings so they understand why grocery might not be part of final project recommendations for DRI funding. Other achievable opportunities to address fresh food access we can focus on instead.
 - LPC: Should focus on increasing population here first and then try to recruit grocer; don’t want to force one here too soon and have it fail

Draft Goals and Strategies 6:35

- Mayor Sheehan commented that she would like to see equity and diversity reflected across all the DRI goals – public art, businesses should reflect Albany’s diverse population. Capitalize Albany commented that committee could add strategy under each goal specifically about supporting diversity
- Goal 1:
 - Consider adding strategies about parking, enhancements through public art, and diversity
- Goal 2:
 - Consider adding strategies about businesses that reflect local creative economy, and programming
- Goal 3:
 - Consider adding strategy about art that reflects diversity of the neighborhood
- Goal 4:
 - Consider adding strategy about supporting existing homeowners
- Goal 5:
 - Consider clarifying strategy about creating right-sized spaces for co-working or office suites
- **ACTION:** LPC members should consider ways to revise these strategies to personalize them to Albany and Clinton Square – what would make these more unique to the community?

LPC Conflicts of Interest 6:55

- NYS DOS expects some LPC members to have conflicts of interest since they were selected for their involvement in the study area; members just need to identify those and recuse themselves from discussion and voting on those specific projects
- Preliminary conflicts were identified by show of hands. Questions about potential conflicts of interest will be resolved by NYS DOS

Public Comment Period 7:05

- How will we make transition from existing N. Pearl retail downtown to emerging retail along Broadway (as discussed in retail strategy)?
 - SK: Active ground floor spaces important, even if it’s not always retail
 - Previously held after-work events Thursday evenings to keep workers downtown later
- Streetscape projects should include more places to sit, it’s hard to find downtown
- First Church parking lot could be good location for public parking spaces in a more central location to retail, also the Monroe Apartments surface parking lot

Meeting Adjourned 7:10

Next Steps

- The next Local Planning Committee (LPC) meeting will be held Tuesday, December 18 at 5:30pm at the Hampton Inn – Downtown Albany. These are working meetings for the committee but all LPC meetings are open to the public.