

Public Workshop #3 Event Summary

Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Peekskill, NY

February 26, 2020, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Peekskill Central Fire Station, 1141 Main St, Peekskill, NY 10566



Introduction

The third and final Public Workshop for the Peekskill Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) was held on February 26, 2020 at the Peekskill Central Fire Station located at 1141 Main Street in Peekskill. The workshop was attended by over 60 members of the public, including members of the Local Planning Committee (LPC), Common Council, City Staff, and Mayor Andre Rainey.

The Workshop started with Open House stations where public attendees visited five stations to learn more about each of the potential projects being considered for DRI funding. The five stations were organized to represent the five goals of the Peekskill DRI and the projects that meet the specific goal. Public attendees spent approximately 30 minutes reviewing all of the potential projects. Upon the completion of the Open House, Mayor Andre Rainey welcomed the Peekskill community with introductory remarks, which was followed by a brief presentation by Susan Favate and Simon Kates of BFJ Planning. The presentation covered the DRI program and process, the project timeline, the types of projects included in the DRI plan, the overview of the public outreach process throughout the DRI process, and the public survey updates.

After the presentation, BFJ Planning concluded the Workshop with an open public comment where public attendees were encouraged to ask the consultant team questions about the DRI process and the potential DRI projects. This discussion allowed members of the public to hear other attendees' comments and the consultant team's answers to the variety of questions asked. Services were available for Spanish-speaking attendees, including copies of the presentation in Spanish and translations provided by the consultant team. The presentation and workshop materials are available at <https://www.peekskilldri.com/>.

Workshop Agenda

1. Open House to Review Potential DRI Projects
2. Brief Presentation
3. Public Comment

Open House

The Open House was comprised of five open house stations illustrating the potential projects being considered to receive a portion of the DRI award. Each of the five stations was organized by one of the five Peekskill DRI goals. There was also a station with the vision and goals of the Peekskill DRI plan. Attendees were encouraged to stop by the stations to learn more about each of the potential projects. For each of the projects, there was information about the sponsor, location, total project costs, requested DRI funding, and maps, photos, or renderings. Each station also included blank paper where attendees could write general comments about the projects.



Presentation

Susan Favate and Simon Kates led a presentation that lasted approximately 10 minutes midway through the meeting. The presentation included an overview of the DRI program, the DRI planning process and timeline, the project evaluation criteria and types of projects included in the plan, the comprehensive public engagement events, public survey updates, and ended with an outline of final steps of the DRI process.

Overview of DRI Program and Schedule

Ms. Favate gave an overview of the DRI program, the main components that make up the DRI plan, including the vision, goals and strategies, and potential DRI projects. She discussed the overall project timeline and the project status. Upcoming community engagement opportunities include the public survey and the final LPC meeting.

Project Evaluation Criteria and Types of Projects Included in the Plan

Mr. Kates described how the LPC will evaluate each of the DRI projects that will be recommended for DRI funding using an evaluation criteria system. This evaluation includes a two-step process where projects must meet the first threshold of feasibility or project readiness to continue through to the second threshold where other factors are considered, including the project's alignment with State and local goals, cost effectiveness, co-benefits, catalytic effect, and public support. Mr. Kates discussed the types of projects that will be included in the DRI plan, including projects recommended for DRI funding and projects recommended for other funding.

Public Engagement in the Process

Mr. Kates reviewed the comprehensive public engagement events that have occurred throughout the process. Public engagement has included LPC meetings, public workshops, a public meeting in Spanish, pop-op events, stakeholder interviews, an open call for projects, and a business owners roundtable. Future public engagement opportunities include the ongoing public survey and the final LPC meeting that will be held on March 18. At this meeting, the committee members will be selecting the final projects to be included in the DRI plan.

Public Survey Updates

Mr. Kates concluded the presentation with updates on the public survey. Mr. Kates reminded the attendees that the survey is available in English and Spanish in hard copy available at City Hall and the Library, and online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PeekskillDRI>. Attendees were encouraged to spread the word about the survey to help gather the most information on which projects have the most public support for funding. The public survey is open from February 21 to March 13. Hard copies of the survey and laptops were available at the workshop to take the survey in both English and Spanish.

Public Comment

The Public Workshop concluded with a public comment session where participants had the opportunity to ask the consultant team questions about the DRI process and the list of potential projects being considered for DRI funding. Attendees were invited to the microphone to partake in the question and answer session. Main discussion topics were centered on requests for additional information on project details, project logistics, and the public survey.



Project Description

- Further details were requested about the DRI criteria for public and private projects to show a match of private leverage on projects. There was a question on why some projects show a private match and others do not. BFJ Planning clarified that public improvement projects are not required to show a funding match; however, privately sponsored projects must show a private match. The specific match will vary according to individual factors of each project; there is no set percentage across projects. Each project will be evaluated on its merits.
- For the Reconstruction of Fleischmann Pier project (Project 4A), meeting attendees were interested to learn if the City of Peekskill has already made agreements with interested tour boat operators that would be using the pier. The City's Director of Planning Jean Friedman responded that, as part of the City's 2019 CFA application, the City was required to identify interested tour boat operators, and a number of operators indicated interest. Once the reconstructed pier is complete, the City will make firm agreements with an operator.

Project Logistics

- For the Coordinated Public Art Installations project (Project 3C), there was a question about how the art installations will be selected. BFJ Planning responded that the project sponsors will administer a Request for Proposal to identify local artists that are interested in proposing a mural, banner, or light sculpture.
- There was interest to learn if the DRI projects could hire local employees. BFJ Planning indicated that it is difficult to require local hiring but the DRI Plan could note that local hiring is a strong preference. Also, the DRI plan will note that projects are required to hire through employers registered as a NYS certified MWBE.
- One attendee indicated not all projects will be selected to receive funding; however, projects that are not selected should not be discouraged. With some projects overlapping in similar themes, there is an opportunity for these project sponsors to collaborate in future projects.

New Project Ideas

- Some meeting attendees were interested in recommending new project ideas, including the creation of a business such as an auction house, and a proposed escalator along Central Avenue or South Street. The timing of the process makes it very difficult to accept new project ideas, because the public will not be able to weigh in on these projects, and the LPC will be voting on the final list of projects at their meeting on March 18, which will not give them sufficient time to review new projects. However, BFJ Planning encouraged those interested in the creation of a new business to apply for the Downtown Revitalization Fund.

Public Survey

- There were questions about the specifics of the survey, including where hard copies are available. BFJ Planning responded that hard copies are available in both English and Spanish at City Hall and Field Library.

- Some attendees discussed what seemed to be a glitch when selecting how they would rate a project from strongly disapprove, disapprove, neutral, approve, and strongly approve. BFJ Planning clarified that there is no glitch with the survey and that when selecting a rating, all previous stars prior to that rating will be shaded in.
- Several attendees mentioned they will help spread the word about the survey and will distribute hard copies to locations such as the Senior Center and local schools. BFJ Planning indicated they could send additional hard copies of the survey if needed to City Hall.
- There was a question about the importance of the public survey in the LPC's decision-making process for the final project list. As part of the project evaluation criteria, BFJ Planning reminded the attendees that the LPC will be looking to see if there is public support when deciding on projects.
- There was interest to learn about the results of the survey. BFJ Planning indicated that the survey results will be compiled into a summary of findings that will be presented to the LPC on March 18. The survey results will be posted shortly after at <https://www.peakskilldri.com/>.

DRI Process

- Several attendees expressed their appreciation of the DRI process and the various forms of community engagement opportunities that have been provided. One attendee recommended that they would like to see these economic development efforts continue through a committee or process. It was suggested that Peekskill youth should be included in these ongoing efforts.

