

ATHENS COMBINED NY FORWARD MEETING TWO AND LWRP MEETING ONE

October 7, 2024

MEETING NOTES

Participants Joining Online

- Robert Brunner
- Lydia Krent

Facilitators

- Amy Serrago, Mayor, Village of Athens
- Margaret Irwin, Principal, River Street Planning & Development

Overview

Margaret Irwin and Amy Serrago welcomed the participants (approximately 20) and presented the PPT presentation, which:

1. Updated the public on the New York Forward (NYF) proposal due in October 2024, a significant amount of which is within the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP).
2. Introduced basic information related to updating the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.
3. Reviewed potential projects for the LWRP and for NYF.

Update of NY Forward Proposal

The facilitators presented information about the NYF program including:

- Categories of eligible projects
- What makes a transformational project
- What is needed from the community to support the proposal: letters of support
- Proposed NYF Boundary (entirely in the LWRP)
- Summary of Proposals
- Description of Potential Proposals

Downtown Projects

- The Stewart House
- Brooks Opera House
- Athens Cultural Center
- Tenth House Health
- Commercial Building at 46 2nd St.
- D.R. Evarts Library
- Warren Arms Building
- Mixed Use Building at 18 Second St.
- Rivertown Senior Center
- Alleyways of Athens
- Glenco Building
- Athens Antiques
- Trinity Episcopal Venue

Downtown Projects con.

- Multi Use Rehab of Affordable Housing
- Implement Wayfinding and Branding
- Update the Athens Tourist Map
- Implement the Small Projects Fund

Waterfront Projects

- Hudson River Garden
- Athens Community Building
- Complete Streets
- Repair the Sea Wall
- Upgrade the Ferry Slip
- Extend Transient Boating
- Improve Riverfront Park
- Improve the Kayak Launch
- The Trojan Kayak Race
- Stella's Restaurant

Introduction to the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan

The facilitators presented PowerPoint slides to introduce the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) process including:

- What is an LWRP?
- Village of Athens has an LWRP adopted in 2002 that is being updated
- Waterfront Advisory Committee
- LWRP Website
- Planned Community Engagement
- History of the LWRP in NYS
- Purpose
- LWRP Sections and Additional Components
- Gives Preferred Access to Funding for Projects Consistent with LWRP
- Review Process
- 2025 Boundary Proposed to follow State Coastal Boundary
- Next Step: Inventory and Analysis and Mapping
- Potential Waterfront Projects including NY Forward

Waterfront Projects

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Other Potential LWRP Projects

- Riverine Museum and Education Center sponsored by Scenic Hudson, Maritime Museum, Columbia Greene Community College
- Emphasize parts of the Village waterfront outside of downtown core including walking trail the entire distance of the riverside.

DISCUSSION

Can funding benefit private homes?

- Improvements in historic district to private residences like façade improvements still contribute to community as a whole. Shared co-workspace is pro-rated benefit, if vacant or underutilized and being developed for housing it's eligible.

For NYF the cost of included projects is higher than potential awards (\$4.5 million)

- It's a good thing at this stage to have more projects in case things change or projects become infeasible or are not priority for NYF selection. If funded, Athens will restart the process with a call for projects that may increase the list of potential investments.
- These projects give diverse snapshot of what we're like as a community.

Can you expand NYF Boundary, so it includes the Athens Community Pool?

- Pool is in the LWRP but likely too far from the downtown core to be included in NYF. Noted that last year NYS legislature approved funding for pool upgrades.

How strict is the boundary for NYF?

If funded a consultant team and the community will reevaluate the boundary. If you want to suggest changes that would be the time. There is currently 48 acres within boundary – need room for other investment to happen.

Are changes needed to LWRP Boundary?

The NYF area is entirely located within the LWRP, so projects are likely to be included if they are consistent with LWRP Policies. Participants supported leaving the LWRP boundary as it is.

How would we justify Middle Ground Flats as part of this?

Middle Ground Flats is part of the LWRP Boundary. Proposal to locate a composting toilet on the island is a good idea. State likely owns the island, but a Friends of Organization could be the recipient of a grant. Participant noted that composting toilets would have to be elevated because it floods occasionally.

NYF deadline for letters of support? Can we get example of a letter of support?

ASAP. Say why you love Athens and why we would do well with the funding. Submit through project gmail or to the Mayor. Personal and organizational letters are helpful.

Projects Involve Accessibility

Please solicit people who can't enter buildings to write letters.

Are there other projects Athens needs that are not necessarily appropriate for NY Forward but are consistent with the LWRP?

- Plantings and beautification of all streets.
- Pocket park across the street from Stewart's (where swallow historic marker is). 50 feet by 30 feet deep. Wrought iron fence around it with wetlands between fence and river.
- Develop a waterside boardwalk with benches all the way to the river then another boardwalk at the end so residents can walk over the water.
- Landscape along the fence of sewer plant and create a walkway.
- Determine who owns the old ELCO factory and engage the owner in LWRP planning.
- Improve the area behind the softball field that fronts river, which is currently wetlands.
- Make the Riverine Museum and the Brice Marden Public Garden anchors of the LWRP projects to educate local people and attract visitors.
- Athens Museum in dire need of rehab.
- Is Trinity Episcopal still a church? If so, can it receive funding? Trinity Episcopal is not being used for sectarian purposes. Someone bought a church and is reusing it as mixed use. Pop up events in grand space.
- Need to address flooding on Water Street with storms. Landscape improvements to increase resilience and runoff.
- Park – Rehab of riverfront park and accessibility improvements.

- Add things to attract families? Parks or playgrounds.
- Could do small natural playground at waterfront park as well.
- Dredging – ferries and river taxis to get them out of transient docking area, create area for ticketing and other amenities.
- Sidewalk improvement/Construction
- Mayor – already working on through different pot of money, DPW did drainage on 2nd St. this summer and more on its way. \$1.25M through Congress Molinaro for sewer and underground improvements.