

REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN ATHENS

September 18, 2024

New York Forward

Community Meeting One



[Home | Revitalize Athens NY](#)

<https://www.revitalizeathensny.com>

Why Athens? Why Right Now?

What We Need From You.

- Identify community needs
- Define a distinct and walkable boundary
- Document investments made past 5-10 years
- Document full, part-time and seasonal jobs created
- Describe transformational projects you would like the Village to advance
- Provide endorsement letters of support
- Encourage others to be involved
- Next Steps

Proposal must tell Athen's story:

- Quality of Life
- Vision
- Distinct and Walkable Boundary
- Recent and Future Documented Investment
- Recent and Future Documented Job Creation
- Transformational Projects
- Capacity to Succeed
- Community Endorsement in Letters of Support

NYS Downtown Revitalization Programs

NYS DRI

- \$100 million among 10 (or more) downtowns
- 2-3 in the same region can submit together
- GOAL: vibrant places where next generation of New Yorkers will live, raise families, work & play

NY FORWARD

- NY Forward creates an easier path for small communities to receive funds
- NYF will fund two winners at \$4.5 million each

ATHENS' CHOICE

- Athens has chosen to apply for NY Forward
- If selected, a consulting team will be assigned to develop a Strategic Investment Plan



The Capital Region Regional Economic Development Corporation (CREDC) will nominate, and the State will choose, downtowns that are “**ripe for revitalization** and have the potential to become a **magnet for redevelopment**, business, job creation, greater economic and housing diversity, and opportunity.”

Steps in the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)



DOWNTOWN PROFILE

- Defined **compact** target area
- Assessment and analysis of **conditions, assets and needs**



DOWNTOWN VISION & STATE STRATEGIES

- Clear **vision and goals**
- Projects that **accomplish the vision**



PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Open call for projects
- Demonstrate ability to **kick-start action**
- Pick projects that **leverage public & private funds**



MANAGEMENT & IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

- Show **local capacity to manage** the NYF process and implementation of projects

SIP will parallel the update to the Village's 2002 LWRRP

Life In Athens

- Athens, first settled in the late 17th century, is a small Hudson River waterfront community
- The historic downtown continues to be economically viable as the hub of activity



Most buildings in this photo stand today on 2nd Street, the business district.

Life In Athens

- **Take pride** in our beautiful waterfront, which offers a variety of recreational activities, small businesses, and cultural amenities
- **Continuously strive to create a vibrant community** that has plenty to offer residents and visitors, and to preserve the casual and welcoming atmosphere that we all love
- **Focus on being environmentally sustainable**, resilient to a changing climate, and protective of our natural resources, especially the Hudson River
- **Continue upgrades to water and sewer infrastructure** that will allow for future expansion
- **Designated by NYS** as a disadvantaged community in terms of climate change. This has strengthened our commitment to climate resilience

To help realize this vision, the Village of Athens requests \$4.5 million in NY Forward funding.





NYF Area Vision Statement

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE & HONORING OUR PAST

*“Our vision for a transformed Village of Athens's historic waterfront business district includes **modernizing infrastructure** while **honoring our history** and **embracing our riverine roots**. We will continue our commitment to **environmental sustainability** and improved **access to our waterfront** while we expand upon our ongoing economic initiatives to drive **tourism, greater prosperity, and an enhanced quality of life for current and future residents**. We strive to build a **vibrant community** with plenty to offer residents and visitors while preserving the **laid-back atmosphere** for which Athenians new and old have settled here.”*

“With historic architecture, stunning river views and a lower-key vibe than other upstate areas, this Greene County community is growing in popularity.”

Karen Angel
New York Times
9/28/22

NYF Goals: Choose Transformational Projects

- Meet Needs of Local Residents to Keep & **Attract Families**
- Increase **Walkability, Bikability & Local/Regional Trails**
- Grow Healthy **Local Food**
- Improve Community **Wellness**
- Reinforce Village **Identity** as a Small, Rural Hudson River Waterfront Village
- Promote and Protect **Scenic Resources**
- Preserve **Historic Resources**
- Improve and Expand **Parks and Greenspaces**
- Celebrate Resources Like the **Lighthouse**
- Rely On Established Committees and **Collaborations**
- Adaptively Re-use **Historic Structures**
- Improve **Accessibility for People of All Ages and Abilities**
- Provide **Ample Parking Access to Businesses and Services**
- **Upgrade Waterfront Park** to Drive Foot Traffic



[Athens, NY - Shop Local - Greene County River Towns \(buyinggreene.com\)](https://www.buyinggreene.com/)

What Gives Athens a Wonderful Quality of Life

Quality of Life Attributes	Supportive Local Policies
Scenic Waterfront	Pro-Housing Community
Active Boating Amenities	Stretch Energy Code Adopter
Historic Multiuse and Commercial Buildings	Tree City USA
Active Urban Forestry Program	Updated Mixed Use Waterfront Zone
Recent Investment in Accommodation	Updating 2002 LWRP Currently
Cultural Heritage & Historic Character	Resilience Vision 2020
Various Housing Types	2020 Village/Town Comprehensive Plan
Senior Housing/Center	Plans to Update Smart Growth Zoning
Available Buildings & Upper Stories for Housing	Flood Hazard Prevention Law
Village Investment in Infrastructure	Various Water Quality Efforts
Community Garden	Designated Climate Smart Community
Affordable Homes	Protect Hudson River Waterway/LWRP
2 nd Street is Strong Central Spine	Water and Sewer Being Upgraded
Middle Ground Flats Island Creates a Safe Recreation Waterfront Out of the Shipping Channel	Designated Disadvantaged Community for Climate and Environmental Conditions

Community Support

- In 2023 the Village held a well-attended **informational meeting** about NY Forward
- In 2024 the Village is **conducting two community meetings** (hybrid in-person and online) and developed an interactive **webpage**, conducted a **community survey** and issued a **call for projects**
- The 2020 Comprehensive Plan survey found that **downtown revitalization was one of the most important issues** for the Village to address. The community was widely supportive of these efforts.
- A recent **business leader meeting** on NYF discussed recent and pending projects, investments and job creation
- We need your letters of support to support the **NY Forward application**



Community Support

VISIT <https://www.revitalizeathensny.com>

About New York Forward

NY Forward supports a more equitable downtown recovery for New York's smaller and rural communities, with a focus on hamlets and villages. The program builds on the success of the "Plan-then-Act" Strategy of the [Downtown Revitalization Initiative \(DRI\)](#). The State allocates two \$4.5 million awards per REDC region. With bones built for a vibrant downtown, these communities, through NY Forward, will attract more businesses, residents and visitors. A healthy regional economy relies on a critical mass of vibrant downtowns of various sizes, character, history, needs and challenges. **NY Forward completes that picture.**

Read more about the NYF program at <https://www.ny.gov/programs/ny-forward>



NYF Brochure

Read the [State brochure](#) that describes both the NYF and DRI programs intended to help NY's downtowns, "the heart and soul of our regions."



Athens' 2023 NYF Proposal

In 2023, the Village of Athens submitted its first [New York Forward proposal](#). Many of these projects to revitalize our downtown may be considered again for inclusion in the 2024 proposal, which is **due on October 18, 2024.**



NYF Application Guidance

Review [State requirements](#) for the Round 3 New York Forward proposals.

Letters of Support

Support Athen's 2024 NYF Proposal by writing a heartfelt letter of support that explains why you think Athens is ready to invest \$4.5 million in downtown projects. What do you love about the Village? What types of projects will make it a better place to live, work and play? **Winning NYF proposals show strong community support for the initiative!**

Address letters (but do not mail) to:

Capital Region Economic Development Council (CREDC)

Michael Yevoli, Regional Director

433 River Street, Troy, NY 12180

EMAIL YOUR LETTER TO:

RevitalizeAthensNY@gmail.com

Or you can mail or drop your letter at the Community Building:

c/o Village Clerk

2 First Street

Athens, NY 12015

Questions?

Please contact us at RevitalizeAthensNY@gmail.com

Join us at the Second Community Meeting - October 7, 2024

Administrative Capacity

- Village staff have the **skill and capacity** to oversee multiple projects. They live locally and have a **vested interest in our success**
- Elected leaders are committed to **revitalization of our historic downtown**
- Athens has **volunteer committees** including:
 - Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee
 - Local nonprofit “Friends of Athens”
 - Village of Athens planning board
 - Athens Conservation Advisory Council
 - Athens Waterfront Advisory Committee
 - Athens LWRP Steering Committee



Establishing NYF Area Boundaries



The downtown boundary should be compact, with well-defined edges.

- There is no absolute minimum or maximum size, but it must be concentrated, defined and walkable
- It can range from a corridor or few blocks to the municipality's traditional central business district
- An arts or entertainment district could be the focus if investments would complement an existing downtown

Proposed NYF Area Boundary

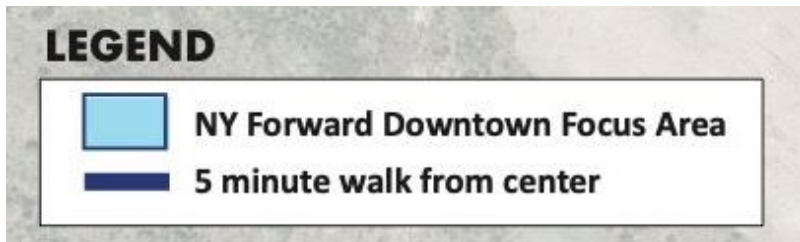
- The Athens NYF area encompasses most of the **Historic Village**
- This **compact walkable area shows off** all facets of our vibrant Village including:
 - **Public services** (post office and volunteer fire department)
 - Low-density **single-family homes**
 - **Housing above ground floor retail** (and room for more)
 - Medium density **senior living**
 - **Commercial uses, retail and professional businesses**
 - **Mixed-use** properties
 - **Arts, museums and cultural organizations**
 - **Faith-based** organizations
 - **Not-for-profits** including our library and museum
 - Seasonal **community garden**
 - **Amazing waterfront park** with views of our **historic lighthouse**
 - **Municipal government offices**



Many of the homes and buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and date to the 19th century.

DRAFT NYF Boundary

- **Eastern** boundary is Water Street and Waterfront Park
- **Western** boundary is N. Church Street
- **Northern** boundary is Market Street
- **Southern** boundary is 3rd/4th Street
- Includes the heart of the **Athens Downtown Business District** along Second Street, which contains small shops, restaurants and retail



Recent Investments and Growth

- **Quantify investments** in and around downtown (past 5+ years)

Examples include:

- **Public infrastructure improvements**
 - **New infill** development projects
 - Reuse of vacant or **underutilized spaces**
 - **Streetscape upgrades** increase walkability
 - New or expanded **community services**
- Describe recent (past 5 years) and **impending job growth** in or near downtown
- Explain how this growth will **attract a diverse workforce** and population, support redevelopment efforts, and **make growth sustainable** in the long-term



Past Investment & Future Potential

- **Restore Historic Athens School House** - Once home to Columbia-Greene Community College, it houses the Athens Museum, Community Gymnasium and Auditorium and the municipal offices
- **Repairs to the Gymnasium** - \$50,000 grant received to repair gym floor and reopen it for public enjoyment
- **Signage and Marketing** - Partnered with a local graphic artist to create and implement branding for the Village including signage
- **Village of Athens App** - Friends of Athens, a local non-profit that focuses on civic improvements is completing a new Village of Athens app including walking tours and business information for visitors



Census and Jobs Data

Village of Athens Basic Demographics

Population	
Census Population (2020)	1,586
2022 Estimated Population	1,821
Median Age	51.7
Senior Population	28.10%
Disability (14% have ambulatory difficulty)	17%
Est. Seasonal Homeowner Population (Est. 20%)	380
Housing	
Median Home Price	\$266,100
Year/Year Median Home Price Increase (2022)	17.60%
Median Gross Rent	\$1,175
Homeownership Rate	72.60%
Economy	
Median Income	\$79,306
Employment Rate	59.80%
Poverty Rate	10.00%
Number of Employees Village Wide	965
Number of Employees NYF Area/Nearby	486
Athens, Coxsackie, Catskill Pop. (15 Miles)	23,596

Village of Athens NYF Area/Nearby Jobs by NAICS Code

Construction	49	10.10%
Manufacturing	27	5.60%
Wholesale Trade	25	5.10%
Retail Trade	65	13.40%
Transportation and Warehousing	26	5.30%
Information	13	2.70%
Finance and Insurance	25	5.10%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	7	1.40%
Professional, Scientific, Tech. Services	30	6.20%
Management of Companies/Enterprises	6	1.20%
Administration, Waste and Remediation	19	3.90%
Educational Services	20	4.10%
Health Care and Social Assistance	74	15.20%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	6	1.20%
Accommodation and Food Services	55	11.30%
Other	39	8.20%
	486	100.00%

Recent & Impending Investment and Leverage

Recent & Future Investments and Leverage		Total: \$25,450,165
Public Investment in NYF Area		\$4,036,897
Village Investments: DPW Building, Fire Truck, WTP Drying Beds, Front Loader, WTP And Sewer Studies, Slip Lining Sewer Lines, EV Charging Stations, Comprehensive Plan Update, AC Heat Pump; Community Building Floor Repair, Urban Forestry Grant, NYS DOS LWRP Grant/Match, Infrastructure (Federal Congressional Directive)		
Private Leverage in NYF Area		\$12,001,268
Private Investments: Stewart House, Elco Boat Factory, Brice Marden Memorial Garden & Restaurant, Brooks Opera House, Library, Athens Antiques, Tenth House Health, Trinity Episcopal, Athens Cultural Center, Downtown Businesses such as the Athens Rooster (café), Seconds Restaurant, Lighthouse Liquors		
Pending/Future Leverage in NYF Area		\$9,385,000
Future Non-profit Public Investments: Hudson Athens Light House and Riverine Museum and Education Center		

Multiple Sources of Spending Value: Recent/Impending Jobs

There are multiple ways to look at increased investment and local spending that are enhanced by Athens being designated as an NYF Area:

- This spending potential overlaps and has not been de-duplicated.
- **\$25.24 M Investments:** We build on +/-**\$25,450,165** in recent and ongoing public, nonprofit and private investments.
- **Growing Population:** Village year-round population in **2022 estimated at 1,821** and seasonal population is estimated at **380 people (20%)**.
- **Workforce: 710 year-round and seasonal residents live in NYF Area/Nearby and 468 work locally. More work remotely.**
- **20% Job Growth:** Considering current market and proposed investments from NY Forward (**120 new jobs**), private and nonprofit sector jobs in the NYF Area will **grow by 20% in the next 5 years**.
- **\$172+ M Spending Potential: \$171,965,272 in annual spending potential** in and nearby NYF Area.
 - Spending by 710 residents of the NYF Area and nearby including seasonal owners
 - Annual earnings at median income (+/-**\$45,844**) from 468 current residents
 - Annual earnings from jobs created by NYF investment (120 jobs+) at median income
 - Spinoff spending from local workers (current and NYF jobs)
 - Spinoff spending by residents within 15 miles of the NYF Area (23,500 people)
 - Spinoff spending from annual recreational boaters (Est. 20,000 visitors)
 - Construction period spending estimated at 50% of construction cost

Discussion For Community Meeting

- What does the Village need to do to help downtown be more successful?
- How should the preliminary boundary be modified while still being compact and walkable?
- Document how much private investment can be generated in response to NYS funds awarded to private, nonprofit and public partners at all levels



What makes a great (and eligible) project?

“It is expected that the majority of DRI/NY Forward 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.”

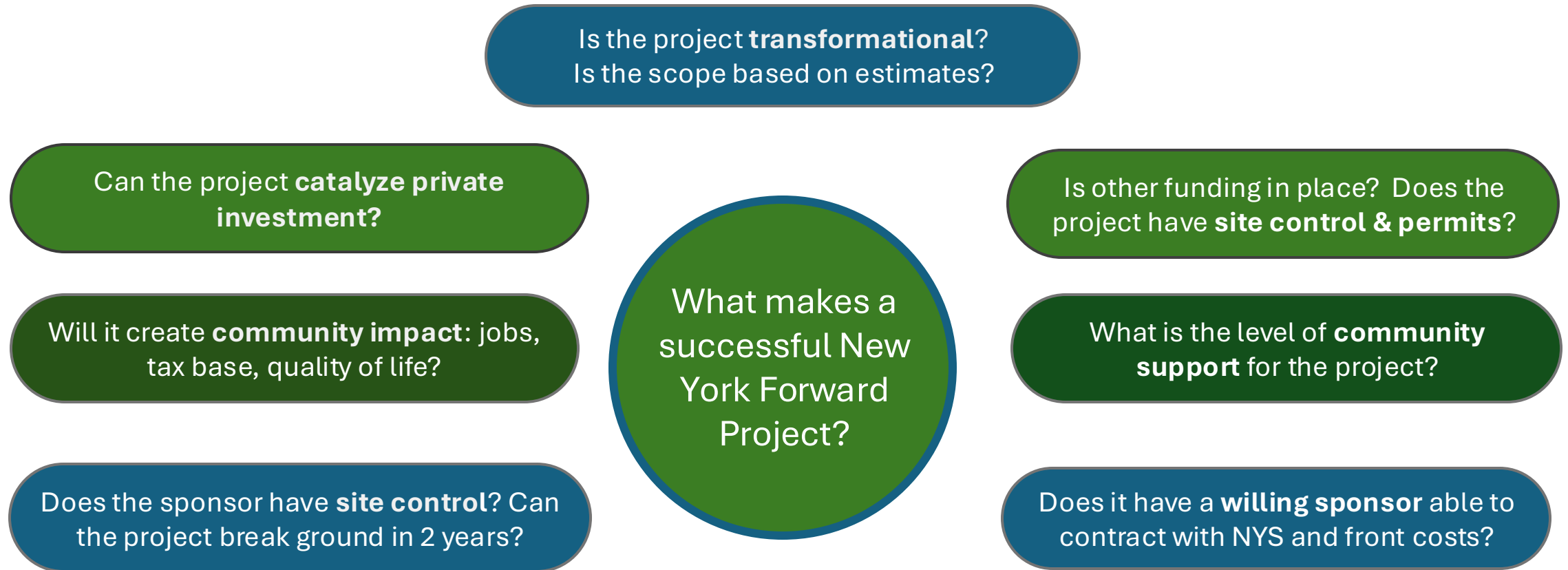
2024 Guidance

Need to identify a robust range of transformative projects and opportunities that could become part of the community’s **Strategic Investment Plan**.

- Need to make sure each project:
 - Fits in an **eligible project category**
 - Coordinates with property owners/**project sponsors**
 - Aligns with the **vision** for revitalization
 - Aligns with the **State’s program goals**
 - **Is supported by the public**
 - Benefits the **broader community**, not just the sponsor
 - **Is ready** for implementation
 - **Leverages funding** to the greatest extent possible
 - Is led by a project sponsor with the **ability to implement and administer a State grant**

For a \$4.5 million NYF proposal, Athens needs \$8-10 million in projects to assure NYS there are options if a project cannot advance.

What makes a great (and eligible) project?



Four Categories of Eligible Projects

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

Such as investments in **transportation, streetscapes, open space, broadband, public art, accessibility** and other public realm projects

NEW DEVELOPMENT AND REHABILITATION OF EXISTING STRUCTURES

Can be for **mixed-use, commercial, or public uses** that provide jobs, housing, or community services

SMALL PROJECTS GRANT FUND

One locally managed fund (up to \$600K) to undertake smaller projects such as façade upgrades, public art, and sidewalk repairs

BRANDING AND MARKETING

One-time costs for downtown projects that **target residents, investors, developers, or visitors** (e.g., for materials or signage)

What is not eligible: Planning, operations/maintenance, property acquisition, most parking

Public Improvements

Invest in transportation, streetscape, open space, broadband, public art, accessibility and public realm

- Complete Streets: 2nd St. (Water to Warren St.)
- Riverfront: Expand docks, add boardwalk, improve gazebo
- Upgrade the kayak launch and restore Ferry Slip
- Build Farmers Market
- Provide Free Wi-Fi
- Improve the “Central Plaza” at the foot of 2nd St.
- Build rest rooms, kiosk and ticket office
- Implement wayfinding
- Rehab. Community Building Museum and Gym

Small Grant Fund

Fund for smaller projects: business needs, accessibility, façade upgrades, public art, etc.

- Trojan Kayak Race from Athens to Troy

New Dev., Rehab.& Reuse

Mixed-use, commercial, or public uses that provide jobs, housing, or community services

- Brooks Opera House
- D.R. Evarts Library
- Athens Antiques
- Tenth Health House
- Trinity Church Event Venue Reuse
- Athens Cultural Center
- Brice Marden Waterfront Garden and Restaurant
- Stewart House
- Expand Ferry Trips to Hudson and the Light House

Marketing & Branding

One-time cost for materials or signage targeting residents, investors, or visitors

- Marketing program, materials and social media
- Visitor guide with historic walking tours

Discussion For Community Meeting One

PROJECTS

- What projects do you think are most important to pursue?
 - Rehabilitation and Reuse
 - New Construction
 - Public Improvements
 - Grant Fund
 - Marketing and Branding

VISION

- What words or phrases express your vision for downtown Athens?
- What is your favorite place in the village?
- What part of the village do you feel would benefit MOST from a revitalization project?

INVESTMENT, QUALITY OF LIFE AND POLICIES

- What recent or impending investments should we list?
- What quality of life or supportive policies should we mention?

DRAFT VISION

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE & HONORING OUR PAST

*“Our vision for a transformed Village of Athens’s historic waterfront business district includes **modernizing infrastructure** while **honoring our history** and **embracing our riverine roots**. We will continue our commitment to **environmental sustainability** and improved **access to our waterfront** while we expand upon our ongoing economic initiatives to drive **tourism, greater prosperity, and an enhanced quality of life for current and future residents**. We strive to build a **vibrant community** with plenty to offer residents and visitors while preserving the **laid-back atmosphere** for which Athenians new and old have settled here.”*

What's Next?

New York Forward (NYF)

HELP SHAPE ATHENS' NYF PROPOSAL FOR **\$4.5 MILLION** FOR OUR DOWNTOWN!

Save *the* Date!

Village of Athens
New York Forward (NYF)

**How would you
invest \$4.5 million?**

New York Forward helps
small downtowns to be great
places to live, work, and play.

COMMUNITY MEETING ON DOWNTOWN

*Join us to discuss the potential
projects for Athens' NYF Proposal!*

Tuesday, October 7, 2024, 6:00-7:30 PM

Community Building, 2 First St., Athens, NY

Or join meeting online at www.RevitalizeAthensNY.com

Please visit RevitalizeAthensNY.com to take the NYF Survey to show your support for projects!
For more information, contact us at RevitalizeAthensNY@gmail.com or clerk@athensvillageny.gov.

<https://www.revitalizeathensny.com/>

Open Call for Projects

Submit Project

Do you have a project that you would like to submit for NYF funding? Use the survey link above to learn more and complete the application.

Proposals due by:

September 27, 2024

Community Survey

Take Survey!

Take a short community survey to **share your vision for Athens' downtown** and **identify the types of projects you would support**. We want to hear from you about your passion for the village and your support for ready-to-go projects that will help our downtown to thrive.

Join us at the Second Community Meeting - October 7, 2024

An aerial photograph of a wide river valley. In the foreground, a river flows from the bottom left towards the center. The middle ground shows a large, winding river with a small town or village nestled along its banks. The surrounding landscape is covered in dense forests with trees displaying vibrant autumn colors of orange, yellow, and red. In the far background, a range of blue mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Thank You

Photo Credit: Scenic Hudson - [Victory in Athens](#) - Scenic Hudson