

Downtown Revitalization Initiative

“Resurging Rensselaer” – Submitted by the City of Rensselaer

BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: Capital District

Municipality Name: City of Rensselaer

Downtown Name: Rensselaer Transit Village

County: Rensselaer

Vision for Downtown. Provide a brief statement of the municipality’s vision for downtown revitalization.

The City of Rensselaer is reinventing itself as a bustling waterfront and multi-modal, smart and sustainable “Transit Village Downtown” at the geographic and historic heart of the Capital Region with an even mix of market rate and affordable units, diverse and proud neighborhoods, expansive recreational facilities, walking access to the multi-purpose Hudson Riverfront, minimal commutes to growing employers in Rensselaer, East Greenbush, and Albany, easy links to the nation’s 9th busiest Train Station to reach points in all directions, and a mixed-use Broadway Corridor with retail, cultural, and historic attractions and unique residential opportunities.

Justification. Provide an overview of the downtown, highlighting the area’s defining characteristics and the reasons for its selection. Explain why the downtown is ready for Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) investment, and how that investment would serve as a catalyst to bring about revitalization.

The proposed DRI Target Area is at the core of our community resurgence and built off of our recently completed and well vetted Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Nomination Study. This area, a stone’s throw from the State Capital complex, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, SUNY East, AMRI and RPI Tech Park offers employers and employees a diverse, safe downtown area ripe for investment and vibrant quality of life amenities. We are at the heart of an employment triangle that encompasses thousands of workers who could enjoy a commute of mere minutes on bike or bus.

At the center of the Target area is the nation’s 9th busiest train station, a major regional gateway, with frequent and regular bus service throughout. That is why the City of Rensselaer is resurging as a modern-day “Transit Village Downtown” with over 200 new residential units under construction along with new shops. We are finally on the map of where things are possible and opportunity abounds. People are recognizing the city with the best skyline views in upstate NY and strategic location with easy access to regional bus, rail and highway transportation systems. Waterfront recreation is within walking distance of affordable single and multi-family neighborhoods, new housing developments are being constructed for families, retirees, and professionals, a growing jobs base is present on both sides of the Hudson, and a mixed-use “Main Street” corridor is developing along Broadway. By proactively connecting these significant regional anchors, our smart, sustainable “Transit Village Downtown” will attract new residents and businesses, move more goods and services through the Capital Region, and bring visitors and employers to our Resurgent Rensselaer.

The area consists of a significant swath of both private and publicly-owned Hudson Riverfront ripe for redevelopment. There are several privately-owned vacant and underutilized properties now under new

motivated ownership that the city is actively engaged with and being planned for clean-up and new mixed uses. The Broadway Corridor running north-south in the middle of the Target Area anchors proud working class neighborhoods to the east along with the Train Station, and provides opportunities for retail development to connect with our revitalizing riverfront. We have identified several strategic sites which represent key redevelopment opportunities, and have already amended our zoning code to encourage the adaptive reuse of vacant commercial properties to create mixed-use development and higher density residential uses along the Waterfront and Broadway Corridor. Since those zoning changes, we have approved Waterfront and development projects valued at more than \$70M, resulting in new downtown apartment construction and in-fill housing (the first such development in decades), as well as new restaurants, proposed port rehabilitation projects, and other mixed-use projects being prepared by developers and residents. If the DRI is awarded, we expect to see millions of dollars in planned private residential and commercial projects, based on plans and permit applications discussed with the City just since 2016. That burst of development, in conjunction with the City's strategic investment of the DRI funds in areas that need added incentives to spur more private cash, will transform the core strengths we already have (our Waterfront, easy access to job openings on both sides of the River, the Train Station), to create a modern smart and sustainable Transit Village Downtown at the core of the employment triangle, where residents commute less, walk to parks and locally-owned businesses, enjoy the Hudson River, patronize historic and cultural facilities, and connect easily to their neighbors throughout the Capital Region.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

This section should be filled out with reference to the list of desired attributes for participation in the DRI as set forth in the DRI program description.

- 1) Boundaries of the Downtown Neighborhood. Detail the boundaries of the targeted neighborhood, keeping in mind that there is no minimum or maximum size, but that the neighborhood should be concentrated and well-defined. Core neighborhoods beyond a traditional downtown or central business district are eligible, if they can meet other criteria making them ripe for investment. Attach a map that clearly delineates the downtown neighborhood.**

Rensselaer's Transit Village Downtown is a well defined, physically constrained area between the Hudson River on the west and the Amtrak Rail Lines to the east. The area includes 4,000 linear feet of natural river shoreline both public and private, covering 200 acres of underutilized and vacant land which once acted as a hub for rail and commercial activity. Defined by the City's BOA Nomination Study, the City is committed to having the area serve as a catalyst for economic development, despite the fact that a long-standing impediment to redevelopment has been the existence of perceived or potential brownfield sites and potentially unmotivated ownership which has recently changed greatly. As referenced in this application, many of these sites have significant historical, recreational and cultural importance that can be reinvigorated.

Residents and visitor feedback tells us that the Rensselaer Waterfront provides the most spectacular urban views within the Capital Region, directly across the Albany Capital skyline. Despite this once overlooked resource, the City is focusing on major redevelopment projects that for decades have been hampered due to outdated regulations and the fact that the Amtrak rail lines create a physical barrier between our historic city neighborhoods and the Hudson. If awarded DRI funding, the City would ensure the viability of all prior, current

and future investments by undergoing a redesign of pedestrian and bike facilities connecting close-knit urban neighborhoods with the regionally significant gateway Train Station, the Waterfront, remaining open space, and the Broadway commercial spine that anchors our Downtown.

Downtown Rensselaer, largely situated within Census Tract 515, is a “distressed area” with roughly 20% of the population living at or below the poverty line and is a prime candidate for the state and federal “Opportunity Zone.” However, this tract is currently in the midst of economic rejuvenation. The end goal of the ongoing improvements is to create a new environment where residents can live work and play in downtown Rensselaer. Situated between a flourishing hub of leading technology businesses and educational institutions, the long-forgotten Waterfront will be re-born with the construction of new residential housing, a waterfront hotel, 165,000 square feet of retail space, and major recreational facility improvements and improved pedestrian and bike connections in and around the historic sections of the City. In order to round out the improvements and ensure the long-term sustainability of the investments being made, it is essential that the City follow through with a well devised public access plan to ease accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists in and around the City. The major goal of the City’s DRI will be to connect a multitude of important resident, visitor, and business centers within the compact Downtown. In fact, within a half mile radius, Downtown Rensselaer will boast access to waterfront recreation (fishing, boating, outdoor performances), the 9th busiest Amtrak Station in the country, a marina and historic district, institutions of higher education, the Broadway “main street” corridor, industry-leading pharmaceutical companies, government centers, a commercial port, modern mixed income housing, and easy access to the Capital city. It is our belief that no other community in the Region can offer so many public service assets and new private developments strategically located in such a compact downtown neighborhood.

At the center of the targeted DRI area, nestled between our historic city neighborhoods and the Waterfront, is the Rensselaer Train Station which serves as many as 800,000 travelers a year with planned and expected growth. Unfortunately, this population is not able to easily access Rensselaer’s “Main Street” along Broadway, or the waterfront due to a number of existing physical barriers. As a result, the vast majority of these travelers are using the station to get to and from other destinations such as Albany. Due to the fact that the City is moving forward with revitalization plans for the Waterfront, it makes sense to create a new system of accessible pedestrian and biking facilities which can help attract visitors to our Downtown and connect Rensselaer with residents throughout the Capital Region. The walk from the station is literally minutes from the Waterfront, existing recreational areas and green spaces, and the Broadway mixed-use spine.

Just to the northwest corner of the train station, amid other underutilized properties, is a 24-acre vacant parcel directly on the River which is considered our DRI “Project Anchor Site.” Known as DeLaet’s Landing, the former mill property and site of the old Rensselaer High School is being transformed with a \$300M project which includes a new four-story 96-unit apartment building, a new hotel, and a multi-tenant office building.

The rest of DeLaet’s Landing has also been identified by numerous developers as having high redevelopment potential due to its strategic Downtown location and its easy commute to Albany and the rest of the region. In fact, it has been proposed as the regional destination of Hard Rock Café and Casino, where massive amounts of money were invested to site their newest destination here. It has been proposed as a site of the Rensselaer Clean Energy Deployment Center (CEDC)—a mixed-use development which was identified as one of the top initiatives of the Capital 20.20 Strategy—as well as additional SUNY Polytechnic Institute campus space and

several other similar proposals. Most recently it was the focus of the Region’s Amazon HQ2 proposal. And going back to 1991 the site and its surroundings were the focus of a multimillion dollar plan by the late developer Salvatore Beltrone to transform 75 acres of waterfront into a massive mixed use development including hotels, apartments, offices and a boat basin. So, the city has seen its share of exciting new proposals and related let downs. But this time is different. Momentum is under way and gaining steam.

The current construction taking place at DeLaet’s Landing is being bolstered by the 2017 completion of a \$3M pedestrian esplanade and the receipt of a Transportation Alternatives Program grant in the amount of \$1.28M to construct the first section of the Rensselaer Riverfront Multi-Use Trail, going to construction next year. This trail will stretch along 5,000 linear feet of the Waterfront to connect to regional trail and bike paths on both sides of the Hudson.

This Project Anchor Site is our primary anchor point for a multi-phased revitalization effort emanating from the Rensselaer Waterfront and linking the Broadway Downtown Corridor with the regional gateway Train Station. It is important to note that the large majority of the DRI area is comprised of vacant and underutilized land which was formerly commercial/industrial, and therefore this revitalization project would not be displacing significant numbers of people, homes, or businesses. In this sense, it represents a “clean slate” to greatly improve the City of Rensselaer and Region economically, socially and visually. However, in order to implement this vision, the City needs well-designed multi-modal improvements and better pedestrian connections from all of its critical centers of place. When that happens, the city believes that the continued transformation of the once-blighted Waterfront area will result in the birth of a smart, sustainable “Transit Village Downtown,” situated along the Hudson River and providing decent and single and multi-family homes, short commute times, a thriving small business environment, and a proud family heritage and work ethic for our residents and visitors.

2) Catchment area. Outline why the downtown, or its catchment area, is of a size sufficient to support a vibrant, year-round downtown, with consideration of whether there is a sizeable existing or increasing population within easy reach for whom this would be the primary downtown destination.

The Transit Village Downtown is a compact redevelopment area that is centrally situated adjacent to multiple community and regional assets. In fact, redevelopment projects in and around the proposed DRI area have already begun to attract new residents and private investment, with new ownership of many strategic parcels. This fact is supported by an over 21% increase in population from the 2000 to 2010 Census. Due to continued investment and our convenient location, the City’s population is expected to rise even further after the 2020 Census is compiled. Because we’re at the center of a major employment triangle, Rensselaer is the ideal place to live if you want multi-modal options to commute. We are minutes via bike or bus from thousands of well-paying government, tech and pharmaceutical jobs. The City hosts a unique ability to act as a “town center” to serve the rest of the Capital Region and just a stone’s throw from the state Capital. From a physical standpoint, the following areas which encompass and surround our Rensselaer Transit Village concept are considered additional “catchment” areas for new residential, visitor, and business development and expansion:

1) Proud Residential Neighborhoods:

Rensselaer boasts a number of historic working class neighborhoods that currently support single and multi-family housing in and around the Downtown’s footprint. These neighborhoods provide a dense local population of residents who are within walking distance of jobs, retail, services and recreational

facilities in the midst of development. These areas can be seen just east of the DRI area on the Revitalization Target Area and Context Map. In fact, they support a population of more than 2,000 residents who are within a ½ mile radius, and more than 5,000 residents who live within a mile radius of the DRI area. These existing neighborhoods are also considered to be a catchment area for new population growth due to the fact that there are approximately 200 vacant residential properties within the half-mile radius of the DRI. These parcels have wonderful potential for housing rehabilitation and new “infill” housing development. Assuming that the majority of these sites will support single and multi-family housing, it is anticipated that their redevelopment can support anywhere from 500 to 1,000 new City residents. In addition, 339 new housing units are currently under construction or proposed for construction (2018-19) within the immediate catchment areas. It is assumed that these ongoing projects will add another 1,000 new residents. In combination, it is likely that the City’s population will increase by as much as 20% within the next decade, at a minimum.

2) City of Albany and Surrounding Communities:

Beyond the immediate one-half mile radius, Rensselaer offers several newer residential neighborhoods, as well as the close proximity to the City of Albany. This larger footprint supports a current population of 20,000 people and includes a population that will help to support the growth of new commercial and recreational uses in Rensselaer. In fact, the larger catchment area offers access to government, higher education, arts, culture, transportation and recreational facilities. Combined, this defines Downtown Rensselaer as potentially the most strategically situated “Transit Village” in the region. In addition, our Downtown will continue to serve as the center of commercial and recreational activities for additional suburban populations, such as in East and North Greenbush, who want to be close to their jobs at Regeneron, AMRI, and other regional employers as well as across the River in Albany.

3) Albany/Rensselaer Regional Gateway Train Station:

Few communities in the Capital Region, if any, can boast the existence of a major rail station which supports efficient travel throughout the eastern seaboard and to the Midwest. In fact, in relation to Rensselaer’s future, the presence of the Albany/Rensselaer Train Station cannot be understated, as it lies within the center of the DRI target neighborhood and offers a gateway to welcome a large influx of business travelers, tourists, and commuters into the heart of our Downtown. In fact, the Station sees up to 800,000 people getting on and off trains in Rensselaer each year with planned and expected growth. Yet, due to current physical barriers, very few of these people are getting to our Waterfront and Broadway Corridor to spend money and recreate. As a result, the majority of these travelers and their families are using the Station to get to and from other destinations.

In order to reroute these individuals to Rensselaer’s centers of place, the city is supporting the construction of new private housing, retail, services, restaurants, and the rehabilitation of arts and cultural facilities and year-round social activities to attract visitors to explore and patronize our Downtown. The prevailing desire is to offer a Downtown that includes mixed uses along the Hudson River and improved pedestrian connections between the Waterfront, the Broadway Corridor, the Fort Crailo Historic District to the south, and the Train Station at the center, to create a convenient and attractive destination for travelers and residents to enjoy. In fact, if only 4% of these existing train

travelers were drawn to our Downtown, for even an hour or two at a time, it would provide for 30,000 new shoppers, 30,000 new restaurant and bar patrons, or 30,000 new park-goers. Representing an extremely conservative estimate, these visitors will assist in spurring Rensselaer's future economy.

The Regional Gateway Train Station provides for a natural foundation for the continued development of a transit oriented Downtown which will not only be attractive for local commuters working in the emerging tech industry, but also for millennials looking to be easily connected with other parts of the Capital Region and the country. Considering all three catchment areas, the City of Rensselaer is capable of supporting a full-time resident population of at least 15,000 during the next decade and well over 1 million annual visitors and commuters via the Train Station and easy commute times to Albany and Troy via the I787 and I90 highways at the city's doorstep.

Rensselaer already serves as a natural catchment area for travelers to and from Albany, and with further pedestrian and bike access improvements, the City will have a new opportunity to act as a historic maritime Transit Village Downtown across the River from the State Capital. The Rensselaer of the future is starting now, and will be highlighted by expansive waterfront trails and parks, mixed-use housing and commercial developments, a thriving "Main Street" along Broadway, a growing commercial port, and an expanding jobs base for technological research and manufacturing industries (Regeneron, AMRI) in the city's "backyard" straddling with East Greenbush. These economic assets are wonderful catalysts for economic development, although the piece that will bind together private sector jobs growth, new mixed income housing, and our cultural and historic centers is the redeveloped Waterfront and a new system of pedestrian and bicycle access connections to our centers of place.

3) Past Investment, future investment potential. Describe how this downtown will be able to capitalize on prior or catalyze future private and public investment in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas.

The City of Rensselaer is seizing on the opportunity to capitalize upon recent, current and future private and public investments, as outlined below:

Historical Investment:

Rensselaer's historical legacy is our development as one of the Capital Region's most important centers of transit and commerce for more than 375 years. Over that time, Rensselaer's strategic position served as a transportation hub via shipping and distribution along the Hudson River, and then the freight and passenger rail lines and related infrastructure which continue to move people and freight throughout the Northeast Corridor and around the country. The New York Central Railroad, Boston and Albany Railroad and Delaware and Hudson Railroads all passed through the Station on a regular basis. This lifeline was critical to growth within the City, defining Rensselaer in the last century as a railroad town.

Our "Transit Village Downtown" vision is actually nothing new. Goods, services, and people have been moving through Rensselaer, via the River and by rails, for hundreds of years. In the past 50 years, the interstates (I787 and I90) have made car and truck access to the city that much easier, without cutting off the Hudson River completely as is the case on the other side. The volume of economic activity passing through Rensselaer created the need for thousands of workers, as mills sprang up to produce goods that could be easily shipped or transported to much larger markets. With workers comes housing, small businesses, suppliers, restaurants and

taverns, bakeries, and other business investment to serve our bustling population. So important was the investment from the freight rail lines that the Common Council for decades maintained a Railroad Committee to resolve issues concerning the railroad quickly so as to support the City's largest economic engines.

By celebrating this heritage, we have the opportunity to capitalize on the City's strategic Waterfront location and our upgraded railroad infrastructure to create a modern, professional, and accessible Transit Village to anchor our Downtown and connect Rensselaer with residents and visitors from the entire Capital Region. We believe there is a significant opportunity now to capitalize upon our history, particularly along the City's long stretch of public Waterfront and the Broadway Corridor wedged between the Hudson and the Train Station.

Emanating from the DRI Target Area would be connections to the northern end of the City's Waterfront and the historical homes within the former Village of Bath, which preceded the formation of Rensselaer. Moving south, historic New York Central Railroad infrastructure including the Maiden Lane Bridge and New York Central Roundhouse properties are slated for mixed-use and recreational development through private investments. Further south, near the current Dunn Memorial Bridge, resides a historic professional baseball field where the first major league "Grand Slam" was hit during a game. The City is planning capital improvements to this field in conjunction with its location next to the new hotel and 96-unit housing complex being constructed at DeLaet's Landing. The former baseball field will become the host for public festivals, concerts and events, capitalizing upon its prime riverfront views and close proximity to the new apartments and our existing neighborhoods along Broadway. Just south of DeLaet's Landing, a public marina and ferry has been proposed for the area adjacent to the Albany Yacht Club, taking advantage of the City's rich maritime history and commercial port activities. As Broadway continues southward it connects to the Fort Crailo Historic District, which is home to the Fort Crailo State Historic Site and a number of other historic properties which already attract visitors to Rensselaer and offer additional Waterfront access points.

The City is also capitalizing on our maritime, industrial, and rail heritage through support of several private housing and commercial projects and public-private recreational investments along our Waterfront, with plans to interpret the history and culture of the community to bolster the impact of those investments. As a point of reference, Rensselaer in many ways seeks to offer similar characteristics like those in Alexandria, Virginia; which was traditionally home to the Potomac Yard Rail Station, now in the midst of redevelopment. Alexandria has used its history and culture to reinvent itself as a historical, yet modern transit village directly across from a major metropolitan center and government capital (Washington, D.C.). Rensselaer is a natural fit for similar redevelopment efforts taking advantage of our accessible location and rail and shipping heritage.

Current Investment:

Our Downtown area has recently seen a number of aggressive private redevelopment proposals—particularly for the Project Anchor Site at DeLaet's Landing, and it is also benefitting from several public infrastructure upgrades which have been completed by the City since 2010. These combined efforts are expected to help leverage the DRI funding as well as other private investments and property improvements. In all, Rensselaer is currently spending over \$50 Million in ongoing public investments to upgrade roadways, sewer, and water infrastructure, on top of nearly \$15 Million bonded within the past five-years for completed infrastructure reconstruction and downtown revitalization (new sidewalks, historical street lighting, Broadway Esplanade).

At the Project Anchor Site, the completed Broadway Esplanade is facilitating the construction of a 96-unit apartment complex along the Waterfront adjacent to the Dunn Memorial Bridge. This, in combination with the conversion of an old convent into 20 market rate apartments, 12 units at Falls Edge, 33 units on Green Street and roughly 50 new housing units fronting Broadway north of the Esplanade, will continue to spur future middle income and professional housing investments. Furthermore, the recent auction of tax-foreclosed properties generated \$500,000 in private investment and the proposed rehabilitation of more than 30 underutilized structures, many also located along Broadway just north of the Downtown business district. In dealing with these new investors and developers, the City stresses the need to connect new and infill housing construction with our existing sidewalks and pedestrian facilities along Broadway, while we are working to incorporate additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities to link new residents with our established neighborhoods, and easily and safely connect the Waterfront to the Train Station for all visitors and residents from the Capital Region.

The following projects represent key investments which are recently completed or now underway in Rensselaer through both private and public sectors:

1) Private Sector Projects within and adjacent to the DRI Target Area - \$425 Million:

- DeLaet's Landing — Located at the DRI Project Anchor Site, this overall redevelopment proposal includes a diverse mix of residential, commercial/high-tech office and retail uses on a vacant industrial parcel next to the River.
- Kiliaen's Landing — Just north of the DRI Target Area, a \$60M mixed-use waterfront development which is estimated to create up to 450 permanent new jobs and generate \$1.5 million in annual property tax revenue.
- Cottage Hill Landing — Another \$60M 170-unit residential project east of the DRI Target Area, within the dense working class neighborhood that surrounds the DRI. This project is proposed on one of the many vacant residential lots that are found within a half-mile of the Target Area, a fact which illustrates the infill potential of the city's Downtown catchment areas.
- Belltop Apartments — A \$2M 20-unit residential project along East Street on the edge of the DRI Target Area. This proposal consists of the adaptive re-use of a former convent. These types of private-sector projects are seen as an important catalyst for revitalization, especially considering their proximity to the Train Station and the desire of middle income seniors, retirees, and "empty-nest" home owners who want to live independently within the City.
- Whistle Stop Apartments — A \$5M 33-unit residential conversion project within the DRI Target Area on Green Street. The project is approved at a former textile plant and is a full reconstruction
- Falls Edge Apartments — A \$1.5M 12-unit residential project that will replace vacant office space with flexible housing floor-plans for those who live active lifestyles near the Downtown and

Broadway Corridor. The site is located just east of the DRI Target Area but still within walking or biking distance of the Train Station and Waterfront.

- Stoneleigh Apartments – A \$1M 14-unit residential project will provide additional market-based housing and 800 square feet of neighborhood commercial/retail space in close proximity to the Downtown just north of the DRI Target Area. This project is a direct result of the City’s full reconstruction of the public street and infrastructure in a block along Broadway that hasn’t seen any significant investment in over 50 years.
- Casale Apartments – A \$1M 12-unit residential project will provide market-based housing adjacent to the Downtown just north of the DRI Target Area. This project is also a direct result of the City’s full reconstruction of the Broadway infrastructure within this well-established neighborhood.

2) Public Sector Investments (\$523 million):

Within the public sector, there have been several recent infrastructure upgrades and improvements completed, with more expected to be underway between 2018 and 2020.

- Amtrak Terminal Expansion (\$200M) - The busy Regional Gateway Albany/Rensselaer Train Station at the center of the DRI Target Area is currently undergoing a \$200M expansion to add a fourth track between Rensselaer and Schenectady, which will significantly increase ridership and bring more visitors and potential Downtown customers to Rensselaer.
- Livingston Avenue Rail Bridge Rehabilitation (\$250M) - This rail bridge, which crosses the Hudson River just north of the DRI Target Area, is currently under preliminary design for replacement, and it is expected to be upgraded to accommodate separate pedestrian travel across the River, connecting Rensselaer to the new Hudson Waterfront Trail.
- High-Speed Rail Upgrades – Amtrak and federal officials are considering high-speed rail upgrades to link the Albany/Rensselaer Station with New York City. A similar study to develop a high-speed rail link between Rensselaer and Buffalo has also completed its Environmental Impact Statement. These efforts to enhance and quicken train travel throughout the Northeast Corridor underscores the strategic crossroads that Rensselaer occupies for thousands of travelers and commuters living in Upstate New York.
- City Infrastructure (\$50M) - The City of Rensselaer has completed \$50M in significant infrastructure upgrades with the streetscape rehabilitation of Broadway—the primary boulevard through the center of the DRI Target Area—including all new water, sewer, gas, sidewalks, pedestrian lighting and a vehicle and pedestrian bridge over the rail lines. At the south end of the Target Area, other infrastructure upgrades include all new natural gas lines serving this downtown neighborhood.

- Future City Infrastructure Upgrades (\$10M Planned) - Similar to the Broadway improvements noted above, the City of Rensselaer is beginning another \$10M in significant infrastructure upgrades along East Street in the eastern side of the project area. This work is scheduled to go out to bid in the next month, and includes new underground utilities, streetscape upgrades as well as sustainable “green-infrastructure” storm-water controls.
- Hudson Waterfront Trail (\$2M) - Along the City-owned Waterfront within the DRI Target Area, plans are underway to construct a major segment of the Hudson Waterfront Trail, which will connect Broadway within Downtown Rensselaer with the Livingston Avenue Bridge noted above and areas along north Broadway to the proposed Kiliaen’s Landing mixed-use development.
- Rensselaer Waterfront Park Design and Construction (\$3M) - The city completed the \$3M DeLaet’s Landing Public Esplanade —located at the DRI Project Anchor Site—as the centerpiece for encouraging pedestrian access and recreational use of the Waterfront and promoting additional private development. This work was coordinated with private developers and the proposed Waterfront Trail to link the Downtown with new and existing neighborhoods along the northern Broadway Corridor.
- Broadband (\$2M) – The city is working to establish an ultra-fast city-wide broadband network to attract new technology businesses and provide broadband services to underserved populations, built from the existing fiber-optic trunk lines they have already established. These combined efforts are part of the city’s strategy to help attract new clean-technology businesses and smart, sustainable development within the Downtown as part of a vision for Tech Valley.
- Environmental Compliance (\$6M) - The City is proud to note that it is significantly ahead of schedule with upgrades needed to eliminate combined sewer overflows into the Hudson River in accordance with the Albany Pool CSO Long-Term Control Plan developed with the CDRPC and the NYS-DEC.

Future Investments and DRI Impact:

Just as the City’s major investment in water, sewer and gas upgrades has spurred new development in old neighborhoods (that haven’t seen investment in decades) the DRI will do the same. The City has identified Key DRI Projects which would be necessary to spur more private investment and realize the vision for our smart, sustainable Transit Village Downtown. Those DRI-sponsored projects include:

1) Pedestrian, Bicycle, and People-Powered Accessibility Improvements:

The City of Rensselaer suffers from the fact that pedestrian access to and from the Waterfront, Broadway and the Rensselaer/Albany Train Station, all very close together, is not easy and potentially unsafe. In fact, Amtrak’s Rail Lines are currently being increased from 3 to 4 North-South lines through the heart of the community, creating a major physical barrier preventing access to and from Broadway and the Waterfront. Moreover, both Columbia Street and Third Avenue support an average of 40,000 daily motorists within the heart of Rensselaer bringing them to and from the Dunn Memorial Bridge. This network of higher-speed roadways has hindered

Hudson River redevelopment for years, making it even more challenging for our hard-working families to connect to the assets, stores, and cultural facilities that anchor our Downtown and the DRI Target Area.

Therefore, the DRI funding will allow the City to move forward with a number of critical “people-powered” accessibility improvements along Broadway. These upgrades will ensure that Broadway properly serves as a “Main Street” corridor within the heart of our Transit Village Downtown, bringing people to and from the Waterfront, the Train Station, and directing residents and visitors to stores, arts centers, non-profits, public agencies, City Hall, and other businesses located along the spine of the DRI Target Area.

Completion of the Hudson Waterfront Trail and Esplanade:

The City of Rensselaer has many unique recreational and cultural opportunities, but these assets remain hidden from people passing through the City along Broadway and Columbia Turnpike, our other primary commercial “strip” type corridor. In fact, for years it was possible to drive through the heart of the City without ever seeing the Hudson River, despite it only being a few blocks away. The DRI Target Area includes a long stretch of city-owned Waterfront and our plan to construct a major segment of a new Hudson Waterfront Trail (non-vehicular) that will connect the Downtown with the Livingston Avenue Bridge. The City also plans to create new trail and waterfront recreational facilities north of the Livingston Avenue Bridge, connecting to the historic former village of Bath and the Patroon Island Bridge. This Trail Project is currently under construction, and the City has received an additional \$1.28M in federal TAP funding to add another 4,000 linear feet of trail along the river. DRI funding will be used to enhance connections and integrate wayfinding.

Maritime Heritage Center & Marina Project:

Directly south of the Dunn Memorial Bridge is an open space which is currently home to a historic professional baseball field, gazebo, playground, and tennis courts maintained by the City. This space is deteriorated, however, and ripe for redevelopment as a recreational area and Maritime Heritage Center. The City has already completed designs for upgrades and enhancements to the current recreational components, and we would like to promote construction of a new public marina in the area just north of Second Avenue with design plans to entice private developers. The pocket park-type setting currently hosts a handful of cultural and arts related events which could be expanded using the new marina as an anchor and with additional parking and trail improvements to bring more people to this underutilized facility. The ultimate vision is to leverage the City’s recreational improvements and a new marina with private investment to convert adjacent mill properties in this area as part of a Maritime Heritage Center with a restaurant (such as a brewpub) and retail activities connecting to Broadway, and a passenger ferry to bring residents (and commuters) across the River to and from Downtown Albany. The marina could also host historic ships on a regular basis for education and tourism, including vessels such as the OnRust, Mystic Whaler, Clearwater, Woody Guthrie Boat, and other ships which travel historic seaports to generate more tourist visits to the city.

- 4) Recent or impending job growth. Describe how recent or impending job growth within, or in close proximity to, the downtown will attract professionals to an active life in the downtown, support redevelopment, and make growth sustainable in the long-term.**

Over the past thirty years, Rensselaer's industrial base has eroded as the region and the State have moved from manufacturing to informational and serviced-based sectors. While the city retains its important role as a shipping and distribution center, the size of employers still located within the City limits and DRI Target Area is much smaller. Although Rensselaer has become a bedroom community for Albany and other parts of the Capital District, great potential for commercial redevelopment exists along the Waterfront and Broadway Corridor.

Significant stretches of public and privately owned land remain vacant and underutilized along the Hudson River, although many of these parcels are in the midst of redesign and redevelopment. In addition, the availability of well-established commercial and industrial areas are being re-marketed as affordable locations for flexible space housing, supportive office, research and development, distribution and warehouse spaces for the growing high technology industry of the Capital District. We believe these properties can be transformed to solidify Rensselaer as the Region's premier Hudson River Waterfront location, for living, working, and tourism investments.

The historical loss of heavy industry and resulting vacant buildings and industrial sites resulted in shrinking tax revenues for decades, which in turn increased the burden on residential property taxpayers. However, the redevelopment renaissance which is currently underway has placed the City in a position where it has been able to provide a slight property tax cut for residents each of the last two years, virtually unheard of in today's cities. It is anticipated that revenues will continue to stabilize and increase over time, and the community's mix of land uses will drive job growth in partnership with the Albany-Rensselaer Amtrak Rail Station. This is in part due to the fact that the City is surrounded by an employment triangle in the SUNY East Campus/Regeneron to the East and RPI Tech Park to the north with the state capital complex to the west. These facilities employ thousands of professional and technically skilled people, and facility and job expansion plans for firms including Regeneron are well underway.

The city is also at the crossroads of Interstate's 787 and 90, and a short cab ride to Albany International Airport, creating a suitable location for job growth with companies needing to be connected to the Northeast Corridor. The Port of Rensselaer is also growing with increased shipping distribution capacity. The recent large moves of turbines and parts by GE and Bechtel at our newly rehabbed wharf are evidence of that. This economic growth is evidenced by the fact that the City's population grew by an amazing 21 percent from 2000 to 2010.

Commercial/Technology Job Growth:

- Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc. — Just a short drive up the hill in the Town of East Greenbush, Regeneron is planning a massive expansion of an additional 480,000 square feet of manufacturing and research and development space to anchor a second campus. This expansion is anticipated to increase their local workforce of 1,300 people with an additional 1,000 jobs, as the company continues to experience significant revenue growth (\$4.1 billion in 2015, a 46% increase).
- DocStrats — A promising information technology and training company located in downtown Rensselaer which has been growing steadily. With revenue of \$3.17 million in 2013, they employ around 25 people, with plans to double their workforce over the next three years.

- Monolith Solar — Founded in 2008, this fast-growing company was started by two people in a garage and now employs 40 people in Downtown Rensselaer. With the recent trend for solar installations growing quickly, this company is looking to expand further.
- Albany Molecular Research, Inc. (AMRI) — Provides manufacturing of bulk active pharmaceuticals and advanced intermediates, with more than 1,300 employees worldwide. AMRI’s Rensselaer facility is located along the waterfront at the southern edge of the target area, with 260 local employees.
- Vision Data Equipment Corporation — A growing supplier of IT media/publishing software applications, with offices just outside of the target area. Currently employs 40 people.
- Rensselaer Technology Park (2,000 New Employees to be Connected with Kiliaen’s Landing and Waterfront) — A campus dedicated to university-related technology ventures with the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, located at the northern end of the city. The above list represents an important sampling of the local technology businesses which are already established and serve as a growing foundation for creating a high-tech industry center in this area. By hosting these emerging technology companies, and attracting similar technology firms and educational institutions, it is believed that the city would be well positioned with long-term sustainable job growth as the technology market continues to blossom. It is also anticipated that additional growth in the technology sector, along with a diverse mix of downtown housing, recreation and retail business, will make the downtown a very attractive place to live, work and visit for current and future generations.

Residential Growth to Support New Jobs:

In order to provide new job-holders with affordable and attractive places to live within the city rather than see them commute elsewhere, we are focused on promoting private investment for a variety of new housing construction in strategic locations and at price points to compete with suburban areas and offer connections to the Waterfront and cultural and historic centers of place. The housing boom is evidenced by the current list of projects that have recently been approved, are shovel ready, or are already under construction and serve as anchors for the new jobs coming to private companies within and surrounding our Downtown.

Anchors of the Transit Village Downtown:

- UW Marx (\$300M) – DeLaet’s Landing (Project Anchor Site at Full Build Out) – 515 Residential Units; 165,000 Square Feet of Retail Space, 250,000 Square feet of Office Space; 300 Room Hotel; 1,830 Parking Spaces; Adjacent to planned Maritime Heritage Center (City-sponsored with DRI funding);
- UW Marx (\$22M) – DeLaet’s Landing Residential – 96 Units – Currently Underway

Adjacent to the DRI Target Area and Connected to our Downtown:

- Falls Edge Apartments (\$1.7M) – 22 High Street – 12 New Housing Units
- Stoneleigh Apartments (\$1.5M) – 1040 Broadway – 14 units
- Whistle Stop Apartments (\$5M) – 2 Green Street – 33-unit
- Joe Casale Housing Project (\$1M) – 1047 Broadway – 12 Units

- Bell Top Apartments (\$2M) – Lawrence Street - 20 Units
- Cottage Hill (\$50M) – Partition Street – 173 Units
- Kiliaen’s Landing (\$60M) – Tracey and Forbes Avenue – 200 Units with additional mixed use potential

5) Attractiveness of physical environment. Identify the properties or characteristics that the downtown possesses that contribute, or could contribute if enhanced, to the attractiveness and livability of the downtown for a diverse population of varying ages, income, gender identity, ability, mobility, and cultural background. Consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, varied housing types at different levels of affordability, walkability and bikeability, healthy and affordable food markets, and public parks and gathering spaces.

The City of Rensselaer has a number of strong natural features that are in the midst of being enhanced or are planned for improvement through public and private investments. All of these physical features will be used as economic development drivers throughout the future:

Existing Location (Attractive, Livable, Active Lifestyles):

The strength of Rensselaer’s attractiveness is due to its proximity to the Hudson River Waterfront. In fact, the primary neighborhood target area includes more than 4,000 linear feet of scenic Hudson River waterfront, which is ideal for continued mixed-use development with restaurants, parks, trails, marinas and other recreational activities. The waterfront offers unparalleled views of the Albany skyline, which adds value to the attraction of Rensselaer as a maritime transit village.

Moreover, the Waterfront is located parallel to the City’s “Main Street” Broadway Corridor. Broadway is home to commercial and retail main street businesses, experiencing both housing and commercial investments over the last five years, including the opening of three new restaurants. Broadway has historically been Rensselaer’s most diverse thoroughfare, as it runs north-south throughout the community, connecting the neighborhood which used to be the historic Village of Bath, the Albany-Rensselaer Transit Station and the Fort Crailo Historic District to the South.

It is also important to understand that Rensselaer is located at the center of an employment and event triangle which includes the New York State Capitol, Albany Convention Center, Times Union Center, Rensselaer Tech Park, SUNY East Campus and Regeneron. In order to capitalize upon this fact, the City is also committed to establishing an ultra-fast city-wide broadband network, which will serve to attract new businesses, residents and serve underserved populations. The network will be built from existing fiber-optic trunk lines in order to support the city’s strategy to help attract new clean-technology businesses and sustainable development into the Transit Village Downtown concept.

Due to our location, Rensselaer is a regional crossroads for Upstate New York, with convenient access to important north/south and east/west corridors including Interstates 787 and 90, connecting to the Adirondack Northway, the New York State Thruway and active rail corridors.

Housing

The City is welcoming the construction of hundreds of new housing units through dynamic mixed-use developments along the waterfront. The addition of these units will help to attract skilled workers to the City of Rensselaer, and will drive the further development of a re-imagined maritime transit village. This approach will enable the attraction of the new Millennial Generation (born between the early 1980's and the early 2000s), which surpassed Baby Boomers as the largest generational cohort in the United States in 2015. Combined with the growing number of Baby Boomers contemplating re-location as they approach retirement, this demographic represents a sizable number of renters and buyers who are seeking areas that they can live, work and play. In a 2016 Report by the Regional Plan Association, it was noted that 56 percent of Millennials and 46 percent of Baby Boomers now prefer to live in more walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. Moreover, there is a growing shortage of multi-family housing, as the nation's current supply of single-family homes is estimated to exceed future demand for at least the next 25 years. Armed with this knowledge, and the resources to meet this demand, Rensselaer will now boast new housing stock in a prime transit village location. A continued commitment to such development, as well as complementary accessibility improvements, will ensure the sustainability of the City as it moves into future decades.

It is also important to note that the City's housing stock offers not only market-rate but affordable units throughout the downtown and along the waterfront. In addition to market-rate and affordable housing, the city boasts over 200 vacant lots within existing residential neighborhoods which can be redeveloped for single and multi-family housing units at a wide range of values.

Zoning:

The City significantly changed its zoning code in 2012 to allow for mixed-use development along the Waterfront and throughout the Downtown core (both sides of the Broadway Corridor). This has had a dynamic effect upon the City's housing stock and planned commercial developments. Despite the activity, there remains to be a host of additional developable, mixed-use spaces which exist along the waterfront and surrounding the train station. The City estimates that this change has opened up thousands of additional square feet of underutilized re-developable space downtown and along the waterfront that can offer affordable, market rate housing, commercial and recreational uses.

Recreation:

It can be argued that the centerpiece of the City's revitalization efforts is the creation of new arts, cultural and recreational opportunities. As evidence of this fact, the City is currently moving forward in the redesign and construction of a new Rensselaer Waterfront Park. The park will be connected to a waterfront trail as the centerpiece attraction for new private sector development along the river. Moreover, as a part of the project, there is also a public park at the Dunn Memorial Bridge, as well as a boat launch. In addition, the City's plan also calls for a Phase II of the project, which will extend the trail northward to the historic Village of Bath, including numerous new athletic fields and pedestrian plazas. The key for all of this redevelopment rests upon the city's desire to offer both passive and active recreation to visitors and residents alike.

Arts and Culture:

The City of Rensselaer offers a multitude of historic and cultural features that are currently underutilized. Among these are its waterfront, a number of historic properties relating to the City's story as a port and transit

community. As a result, we seek to capitalize upon these features by providing for a host of façade improvements along Broadway, strategic historical and artistic signage and the adaptive reuse of former rail infrastructure which has been discovered throughout the transit village. The city also plans to enhance connectivity to and from historic sites such as the Village of Bath to the north of the DRI area and Fort Crailo to the south of the DRI area, improvement of a historic waterfront baseball field, improved locations for public events such as farmer’s markets, an enlarged marina area with historic boats and the reuse of underutilized property for artistic purposes. In order to see this vision through, the City will work closely with those invested in its rebirth, as well as pursue alternate sources of funding through federal, state and charitable grant programs such as the federal Boating Infrastructure Grant Program, Maritime Heritage Grant Program and numerous creative place-making grants offered through the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts. However, the key to the integration of these sites is the creation of a full pedestrian and bike accessibility plan for the entire city, which is the pure focus of this DRI funding request. As cited, DRI funds would help to ensure the development of the plan and construction of many essential pedestrian and bike accessibility improvements.

Multi-Modal Transportation:

As cited, the City offers a multitude of transit related options which are founded in maritime, bus, rail, pedestrian, bike and vehicular modes of transportation. However, the current physical system which is in place does not encourage forms of transportation beyond vehicular to the degree desired by the City. It is this issue which is the focus of the City’s DRI Application, as there is a significant need for detailed planning and the construction of new pedestrian, bike, rail and maritime forms of transportation enhancements.

As highlighted, the primary anchor area of this project includes the Regional Gateway Albany/Rensselaer Train Station, served by two bus lines, with direct access to NYC, and a multitude of opportunities for new walkable, transit-oriented development. The transit station is ironically both Rensselaer’s greatest asset and largest barrier to reaching its goals. First, the station offers access and egress from the community for over 800,000 travelers each year (with planned and expected growth), a figure which feeds the outstanding growth opportunities which exist in the City. However, the location of the rail lines themselves and the Amtrak Maintenance Yard to the north create a multitude of walking and biking accessibility issues which prevent many of these travelers from experiencing what Rensselaer has to offer. In fact, the station itself is surrounded by a host of underutilized land, consisting of thoroughfares designed to encourage provide for direct connections to Albany and six underused parking lots. Moreover, the rail lines themselves bisect the City north to south, preventing easy pedestrian and bicycle access to Broadway and the waterfront from the east. In fact, Herrick Street offers the only form of pedestrian access, and no local wayfinding signage to ease access to Rensselaer’s centers of place.

As further justification for the need for these improvements, it is important to note that housing outside of the downtown consists of dense, older residential neighborhoods which provide hundreds of single and multi-family homes and potential residential properties that are also within walking or biking distance. Yet, the physical make-up of the community also makes it difficult for these residents to easily access Broadway and the waterfront. In order to ready itself for accessibility improvements, the city has been actively working to rebuild many of the primary downtown streetscapes with new sidewalks, pedestrian lighting and other amenities. It has

also spent upwards of \$50 million in public infrastructure improvement within these residential neighborhoods over the last 5 years.

In addition, Rensselaer's pedestrian and bicycling accessibility points to get to and from Albany are limited to the Dunn Memorial Bridge. Unfortunately, the bridge's design does not encourage pedestrian traffic in a manner which can truly reduce vehicular traffic and congestion. Rensselaer's main street, waterfront and Albany's downtown all lie from one half mile to one mile of the train station, but unfortunately this distance feels unmanageable due to the current pedestrian and bicycle routes which are offered. Despite this fact, the city plans to incorporate new forms of connectivity to and from Albany, to ensure the a DRI award provides for a seamless benefit between the two downtowns. Project ideas include a gondola linking Albany from the train station as well as a ferry service from the new marina to be constructed. The City is also considering the adaptive reuse of old rail infrastructure to offer new forms of pedestrian connectivity from both sides. All of these actions would ease the connection and support multi-modal transportation from Rensselaer's Transit Village.

6) Quality of Life policies. Articulate the policies in place that increase the livability and quality of life of the downtown. Examples include the use of local land banks, modern zoning codes, comprehensive plans, complete streets plans, transit-oriented development, non-discrimination laws, age-friendly policies, and a downtown management structure. If policies achieving this goal are not currently in place, describe the ability of the municipality to create and implement such policies.

The City of Rensselaer is currently in the process of re-defining itself as a model community for sustainable growth, clean technology, mixed-use housing and waterfront recreation. As part of this effort, it is actively working to encourage focused-growth within the downtown area and the reconstruction of local streetscapes to create a pedestrian-friendly environment that attracts those interested in living, working and playing in a smart, sustainable transit village. Moreover, as a result of the City's Brownfield Opportunity Areas Nomination Study, the Rensselaer Revitalization calls for the redevelopment of properties which have long been vacant or underutilized in a manner which promotes the continued growth of the transit village. This focus centers on a planned desire to integrate mixed-use development, parking features, revised zoning regulations, complete streets policies, transit oriented development and adaptive reuse policies to support a diverse and inclusive growing population within the limits of the City of Rensselaer. Unfortunately, this cannot be accomplished in an expedited manner without DRI planning and implementation support to integrate the many assets which exist in Rensselaer.

To set the stage for Rensselaer's renaissance, the city recently reconstituted its IDA, which has facilitated two major development projects in the city, with more to come. The centerpiece of the City's revitalization efforts are directly driven by the existence of the Albany-Rensselaer Regional Gateway Train Station, located at the center of the revitalization target area. To date, the station has played a pivotal role in helping to establish a more sustainable transit oriented community. Recent station improvements included investing in the development of a fourth rail line, which will increase ridership in a significant way for decades to come. In order to capitalize upon this investment, the City has recently pursued and conducted a number of critical actions the support the improvement of quality of life in the city:

- New Zoning Codes - The city adopted new zoning codes in 2012 which were designed to provide great flexibility while promoting a compact, walkable urban center to help encourage infill development. The City is also considering the development and use of a form-based code to bolster this initial change and guide redevelopment efforts moving forward.
 - Waterfront Redevelopment – The city completed a \$3M waterfront promenade adjacent to the \$300M DeLaet’s Landing Project, which will include 515 Residential Units; 165,000 Square Feet of Retail Space; 250,000 Square Feet of Office Space; a 300 Room Hotel; and 1,830 Parking Spaces. Moreover, the City just received \$1.28M in order to begin the construction of a proposed waterfront trail to run north from the Rensselaer Transit Village. The Transit Village will also include a ferry to and from Albany from Rensselaer, coupled with a Gondola from the Albany-Rensselaer Transit Station to downtown Albany; both of which are in the planning stages.
 - Transit Oriented Development - The Downtown is blessed with a very active regional transit hub, which provides the foundation for a successful transit oriented development. However, much of the land directly around the train station is currently vacant or devoted to surface parking. This provides an excellent opportunity for active mixed-use infill development to make more efficient use of the real estate and strengthen connections to the waterfront.
 - Complete Streets – The city is pursuing the adoption of a “Complete Streets” ordinance as a part of a comprehensive accessibility redesign for the Downtown. It is believed that such a policy will enhance connectivity, increase safety and encourage the use of alternate forms of transportation beyond vehicular. All of these benefits support the City’s future vision for growth and sustainability as a maritime heritage center and Transit Village Downtown.
 - Adaptive Reuse – As a part of current streetscaping and waterfront redevelopment efforts, the City is focused upon the need to reuse the historical footprints which exist. These include former New York Central Railroad property, a historic baseball field and former port related infrastructure. In addition, numerous abandoned properties exist that are slated for adaptive reuse to include new housing and commercial entities.
 - Supporting Tech Valley. The city has been actively working for the past several years to advance a forward thinking economic development strategy by becoming a model community for clean technology, sustainability and smart growth. As part of this effort, it is working to develop a bold Community Broadband project, which is designed to both provide city-wide WiFi to connect underserved populations, as well as attract new leading businesses with Gigabit speed internet.
- 7) Support for the local vision. Describe the public participation and engagement process conducted to support the DRI application, and the support of local leaders and stakeholders for pursuing a vision of downtown revitalization. Describe the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to preparing and implementing a strategic investment plan. Identify an initial local lead for the program that will work with outside experts to convene a local DRI Planning Committee to oversee the plan.**

If awarded, the local lead will be Charles Moore, the Director of Planning and Development for the City of Rensselaer. The Planning and Building Department is responsible for administering and facilitating the development and re-development of the city's land and structures through the administration of the City's Zoning Code and Building Code. The Department also administers the City's HOME and CDBG Programs, which provide income-based grants for home rehabilitation under the federal Housing & Urban Development Agency (HUD). As such, Charles is well in tune with the status of ongoing and planned redevelopment initiatives in the city, making him uniquely qualified to lead the DRI process.

The City's vision as a Transit Village Downtown is also supported by government, business, educational, healthcare and residential stakeholders that have an interest in our community. In order to effectuate the overall vision, the City must first move forward with all of the proposed improvements designed for the DRI Target Area. Such improvements include the construction of a new marina, waterfront trail system, hotel, mixed-use residential housing, sidewalk and street-scape enhancements, building façade improvements along Broadway, artistic and historical theming/beautification and accessibility improvements north to south feeding from the Albany/Rensselaer Train Station.

Prior to this application, the city planning staff, Common Council, interested stakeholders and local residents have been working toward a vision of creating an active redeveloped waterfront which is walkable and vibrant. In fact, the City has a long history of relevant planning documentation that dates back to the 1980's, making many of the designs well prepared for implementation. In addition, many project related plans exist that center upon the DRI Focus area, including the DeLaet's Landing and Brownfields Opportunity Area revitalization initiatives, which took at least two years of planning each.

Moreover, the City received a grant through the New York State Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program (BOA) to conduct a Nomination Study. This study contributed to the development of the city's Revitalization Plan, which provided an in-depth and thorough description and analysis of existing conditions, opportunities, and reuse potential for underutilized properties located within the BOA. Not to be missed, the BOA encompasses the same footprint as the DRI Target Area. One of the major flaws that the BOA Study highlighted is a current lack of creative urban design and physical amenities that support pedestrian connectivity and mobility to the city's major centers of place (BOA study excerpt below):

"This is especially true with the fact that the downtown core is virtually cut off from the adjacent neighborhoods by the Amtrak tracks. Very few intra-city pedestrian connections exist to allow residents to freely and conveniently walk from their neighborhoods into the downtown. The same could be said for connections from the downtown core to the Hudson riverfront. In recent years draft Design Guidelines were created for the City which addressed building facades, site layout, signage, amenities, site access, parking and circulation. However, these guidelines have remained in draft form."

It is this connectivity issue what the City needs DRI financial support in order to resolve. As with the BOA's adopted Revitalization Plan, the City's existing Comprehensive Plan outlines the full vision of what Rensselaer will be, as major redevelopment efforts take hold:

"Residents, workers and visitors will enjoy the high quality of life offered by the Rensselaer's unique combination of small-city charm and regional access to large-city amenities. The City will build upon its

unique heritage and exceptional location within the Capital District, renewing residents' sense of pride in their community.

The city's waterfront along the Hudson River will be reinvented as a place to live, work and recreate. Public access to the Hudson River from neighborhoods, the train station and the central business district will be of paramount importance. A waterfront pathway/trail will provide continuous public access, connecting to activity centers such as downtown, the train station and adjacent neighborhoods.

New businesses will be attracted to Rensselaer's quality-of-life assets, excellent transportation infrastructure, and proximity to major educational institutions. The City will include a variety of housing options that meet the needs of its diverse population. Residents will be encouraged to participate in the city's continuous planning and development process, especially at the neighborhood level. Their involvement will form the foundation of the city's future."

The city is committed to this effort to rebuild itself with a diverse mix of qualities which will make it attractive to new generations of home owners, professional and technical workers, commuters, and visitors and tourists. The City's Vision is also supported by the Rensselaer City School District, Capital District Transportation Authority, City of Rensselaer Common Council, Amtrak, and local state legislative representatives.

Recent city efforts toward this Vision include the 2011 Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan and the 2016 Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study. If selected for this third round of the DRI, the City of Rensselaer Office of Planning and Development is well equipped to act as local lead to convene a local DRI Planning Committee of experienced and interested stakeholders and coordinate the effort with experts. The focus of with will provide for the development of a comprehensive accessibility plan which will protect prior, current and future investments in a manner that encourages multi-modal transportation.

Re-investment in Rensselaer is also supported and bolstered by previous and ongoing investments being made by Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc., Documentation Strategies Inc., Vision Data Equipment Corporation, U.W. Marx Properties Inc., Fiscal Development LLC, Brayton Construction, Martin Electric, Albany Port District, Polsinello Fuels, Amtrak, CDTA, Monolith Solar, and many other small boutique retail shops and restaurants.

8) Readiness: Describe opportunities to build on the strengths described above, including a range of transformative projects that will be ready for implementation with an infusion of DRI funds within the first one to two years (depending on the scope and complexity of the project) and which may leverage DRI funding with private investment or other funds. Such projects could address economic development, transportation, housing, and community development needs. While such projects should have demonstrated public support, it is recognized that projects will ultimately be vetted by the Local Planning Committee and the State. Explain how the majority of projects proposed for DRI funding demonstrate their readiness for implementation.

The City of Rensselaer has developed a clear vision for growth which incorporates mixed-use redevelopment along the entirety of our Waterfront and focusing investment on our core strengths of quality and affordable housing, new and existing recreational facilities, easy access to growing employers in our eastern "backyard" (Regeneron, SUNY East research campus), and cultural and historical assets for visitors and residents alike. DRI funding will ensure the expedited growth and development of our core resources within Rensselaer and

accelerate the infusion of private capital that is slowly reaching the city for housing and mixed-use projects along the River and the Broadway Corridor.

Specifically, the city would use DRI assistance to design and implement a comprehensive pedestrian mobility and linkage plan that will connect the existing core resources that the City has to offer, the Waterfront, Broadway Corridor, existing affordable neighborhoods and new mixed-use riverfront housing developments, and the Train Station and rapidly expanding job centers just to our east. This accessibility piece is so vitally important to ensure the sustainability of current growth initiatives and that key performance indicators are met within the coming decade. If awarded, Rensselaer will be able to address and bolster the connectivity of ongoing and planned economic development, transportation, housing, and community development projects within our new Transit Village Downtown.

Below are a number of key aspects that prove Rensselaer is a “DRI-ready” community:

Bursting Redevelopment Plans:

Rensselaer is no longer an untested market, as there are numerous privately funded Waterfront projects which are underway, representing the construction of hundreds of new market rate housing units. Before the last two years, Rensselaer was in many ways a market that remain untapped. However, the ongoing projects at Cottage Hill, DeLaets Landing and Kiliaen’s Landing represent \$410 million in diversified private investment within the community that will create 888 new housing units, 165,000 square feet of retail space, 250,000 square feet of new commercial space and a 300-room hotel with 1,830 parking spaces within and surrounding the DRI Target Area.

Momentum for these and other job-expansion projects is underway. Martin Electric, a seventy-eight year old 50 employee company doing work for the region’s largest employers such as Global Foundries, Regeneron and the SUNY Polytechnic Institute has decided to relocate to vacant and underutilized space within the proposed DRI Target Area. Moreover, Martin Electric purchased virtually an entire city block and will relocate its headquarters to our Downtown in. They have recognized the potential and momentum that is currently underway and want to get in on the ground floor of the city’s resurgence. In addition, the city is also working with a number of other local and regional developers on the revitalization of the strategic parcels outlined in our BOA/DRI Map.

Existing Transit Hub:

The DRI Target Area is situated in the center of a major transportation hub, and includes a variety of underutilized and vacant properties that could provide jobs and services within a short walk or drive of several modes of transportation connecting to the rest of the Capital Region, including the Hudson River, the Amtrak Station, I787 and the Dunn Memorial Bridge, the proposed Empire State Trail, and a network of existing sidewalks and smaller public parks. In fact, much of the real-estate directly around the Regional Gateway Train Station is either vacant commercial land or underutilized surface parking. In order to successfully adapt this asset into a local economic driver, all transportation facilities must be connected to the rest of Downtown and the Waterfront with active mixed-use development and job centers to fully create a transit oriented community. Improving and enhancing physical connections, trails, sidewalks, pedestrian bridges, narrow tree-lined streets and safe dedicated cross-walks will break the pattern of downtown Rensselaer acting only as a “pass-thru” to other destinations, and instead becoming a destination itself.

A Community in Need:

We understand that our Downtown and Waterfront redevelopment must also benefit the entire community. Downtown Rensselaer, largely composed of Census Tract 515, is officially considered a “distressed area” according to the U.S. EDA, and we are classified just short of the threshold for a “highly distressed” area, with roughly 20% of population living below poverty level. The City and State have recommended this area be declared an “Opportunity Zone” to foster outside investment and fund millions in new private development. Planning efforts during DRI implementation will take the steps necessary to connect all populations to the quality of life assets which are under development. Moreover, planning efforts will also ensure that there will remain a diverse base of housing and job opportunities to protect the fabric that has made Rensselaer the wonderful community it is now and can be well into the future.

Underutilized Land:

As further evidence of how ripe the City of Rensselaer is in relation to redevelopment and sustainability, it is worthy of note that the community currently has the highest percentage of tax-exempt properties of any city in the state. Although this presents a situation that can support innovative planning, it also makes funding projects through local capital very difficult, as tax revenues have traditionally been very low. In order to expedite their redevelopment, the City is in the process of foreclosing on strategic parcels through the InRem process. As a result of this process, many of these vacant parcels within the BOA/DRI Transit Village area will become City property that can easily be leveraged for redevelopment purposes. A DRI award will ease this process by providing additional leverage to ensure innovative accessibility planning and the connection of all of Rensselaer’s positive assets.

How a DRI Award Completes the Transit Village Downtown Vision:

To summarize the final pieces to Resurging Rensselaer’s Vision as a Transit Village Downtown, these projects are all proposed for DRI funding (with local buy-in and state approval), if awarded:

People-Powered Mobility and Accessibility Improvements:

The Problem: The City of Rensselaer suffers from the fact that access to and from the Waterfront, Broadway and the Rensselaer/Albany Train Station is not easy. In fact, Amtrak’s Rail Lines, which are currently being increased from 3 to 4, run North-South right through the heart of the community. This creates a physical barrier that residents must contend with in order to get to and from Broadway and the waterfront. Moreover, the both Columbia Street and Third Avenue support an average of 40 thousand daily motorists traveling right through the heart of Rensselaer to the Dunn Memorial Bridge, as the main gateway to Albany’s downtown. This creates a number of accessibility issues for pedestrians and bicyclists in their desire to get to and from the downtown and waterfront. It has hindered redevelopment for years, and as a result jeopardizes all prior and current port, technological, housing, public infrastructure and commercial investments moving forward. Moreover, the city’s historic main street corridor along Broadway is in need of major accessibility and façade improvements to attract new residents and businesses alike in the heart of the Transit Village.

DRI Focus: The City would develop and implement a comprehensive multi-modal “people-powered” mobility and accessibility capital plan in order to ensure that all prior, current and future investments are sustainable and

lead to the creation of a safe, densely developed, and fully connected Transit Village Downtown, bringing people to and from their jobs and the Regional Gateway Train Station to our Waterfront, their new apartments and affordable homes, and our existing vibrant historic and cultural facilities to the north and south of the DRI Target Area.

Completion of the Hudson Waterfront Trail and Promenade:

The Problem: The City of Rensselaer has many unique recreational and cultural opportunities which currently exist, but these assets remain hidden from people passing through the City along Broadway and Columbia Turnpike. In fact, for years it was possible to drive through the heart of the City without ever seeing the Hudson River, despite it only being a few blocks away.

DRI Focus: Rensselaer's Transit Village Downtown includes a waterfront redevelopment plan that is already experiencing the construction a major segment of a new Hudson Waterfront Trail that will connect the Broadway Corridor with the Livingston Avenue Bridge. The City also plans upon creating new trail and waterfront recreational facilities north of the Livingston Avenue Bridge, connecting to the historic village of Bath and the Patroon Island Bridge. This overall project is currently designed and under construction, and the City has received \$1.28M to begin constructed. Nonetheless, the City will be seeking additional grant funds, hopefully through the DRI and from Federal, State and Charitable Programs to ensure the completion of the entire waterfront park as envisioned. Additional grants might include the Recreational Trails Grant Program, Major League Baseball's Baseball Tomorrow Fund, US Soccer Foundation's Safe Places to Play Program, NRPA's Play Spaces Grant Program and other recreation-based funding streams.

Construction of a new Marina to define the City as a Maritime Village.

The Problem: Directly south of the Dunn Memorial Bridge lies an underutilized (and city-owned) open space which is currently home to a dilapidated historic professional baseball field, and an outdated gazebo, playground, tennis courts and a small pedestrian plaza.

DRI Focus: This space is ripe for redevelopment, and the City currently has a designed project for the improvement of its recreational components. It is also desired to enhance this space by highlighting the city's history and culture via the construction of a dynamic new public marina in the area just to the north of Second Street. The area currently hosts a handful of cultural and arts related events annually, an aspect which the City plans to build upon. The ultimate vision is to construct a maritime village which boasts restaurant, retail and other commercial activities along Broadway in close proximity to the waterfront marina and a passenger ferry to bring pedestrians to and from downtown Albany. The City will also be pursuing funding from the federal Boating Infrastructure Grant Program. Once complete, the marina would also host Historic Ships on a regular basis for the public to view and learn about. In partnership with the Hudson River Foundation, Hudson River Valley Greenway, DEC Estuary Program, Scenic Hudson and National Parks Service, historic ships might include the Mystic Whaler, Clearwater, OnRust, Woody Guthrie Boat, John Harvey Fireboat, Columbus Ships and Jamestown Tall Ships.

9) Administrative Capacity. Describe the extent of the existing local administrative capacity to manage this initiative, including potential oversight of concurrent contracts.

The City of Rensselaer is committed to seeing its revitalization efforts through to completion, regardless of its ability to receive this DRI award. However, the process by which accessibility improvements will be made will certainly be much longer if the community is not the beneficiary of this award. It is the City's belief that it offers a setting for revitalization predicated on a shovel ready maritime transit village which is already under development. In comparison to other communities in the Capital Region, it is likely that no other municipality can offer an opportunity as strong as Rensselaer's as it relates to the creation and improvement of recreational, commercial, historical, transit, cultural and housing assets in a compact district. As a result, this proposal has the full support of the district's state legislators, municipal governing body, business district, Amtrak, Rensselaer City School District and existing residents. It is also important to note that the City is already undergoing such a transition as the population rose a staggering 21 percent from 2000 to 2010, and continues to rise.

The City is well suited to administrate such an award, through the leadership of the Mayor and his administration. As evidence of this fact, the City's planning department has been working tirelessly over the last decade in order to foster redevelopment in a responsible fashion, and would take the same approach through a DRI project. As a distressed community which relies upon grant funding to enable a host of critical projects on an annual basis, the City is well aware of the proper approach to work with the State in relation to grant requirements and the importance of adhering to program guidelines and timelines through implementation. In fact, the City is currently administrating over \$50 million in public projects that are tied to grant funds. This figure represents the shovel-ready nature of the community and the commitment city staff has to seeing its vision through to fruition. Also worthy of note, the City has adhered to the State of New York's 2 percent tax-cap, and has had two reduced taxes for residents each of the last two years.

10) Other. Provide any other information that informed the nomination of this downtown for a DRI award.

The City of Rensselaer has a proud history with most current and former residents speaking highly of the close knit community network we enjoy. It is a community that rallies together to help its neighbors. And we've had to do that more and more the last few decades. As many large manufacturers and employers have left so have many well healed residents. It's made it more difficult to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps. We've had many successes in just the last few years but here is some context from where we came: Rensselaer was a solidly middle class community forty years ago and beyond. Rensselaer had an exciting vibe with large-scale employers, restaurants, social clubs, a bowling alley, Movie Theater and all the amenities in a traditional city. The city hosted myriads of entertainers over the years, from Steve McQueen purchasing his Indian Motorcylce at Brownie's Bike shop (who also repaired FDR's wheelchairs) to Stanley Kubrick and crew filming the classic movie "Lolita" to John Mellencamp, The Police, Ramones, Dire Straits and Talking Heads among others. Rensselaer was always a unique destination. And we've endured many disappointments in the recent past, such as our budding relationship with SUNY Poly, our pitch to win the Hard Rock Café, or the excitement around Sal Beltrone's proposal in 1991 for a massive transformation of the waterfront.

However, like a Phoenix rising from the Ashes, Rensselaer's momentum of transformation is now underway and we can reclaim much of that excitement from years past. The stars are aligning with the execution of the first phase of DeLaet's landing, the potential creation of a state and federal "Opportunity Zone," the DRI Initiative, the state support of clean tech and biotech manufacturing, state and federal investment in our rail infrastructure and our public investments along the waterfront to finally open it up to the public for the first time in a generation. Investments are being made at record levels. This DRI funding will allow the floodgates to open and spur the kind of private investments needed to tie together all of the anchors listed in our application

(the waterfront, rail station, employment centers, vacant lots, etc). The time is now for Rensselaer. We will be the Region's first truly smart, sustainable Transit Village Downtown.

The following links are provided for easy access to relevant information supporting our application. We encourage you to visit some of these to see the progress and work which has gone into our local revitalization vision:

"City of Rensselaer – Hub of New York's Tech Valley"

www.rensselaer.ny.gov/Libraries/Clerk/WEB-CityofRensselaer.sflb.ashx

2011 Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan

http://www.rensselaer.ny.gov/Files/Rensselaer%20LWRP%20Update_Final%20Draft_July%202011.pdf

NEWS: SUNY Polytechnic Seeks Proposals for Rensselaer Riverfront

<http://www.timesunion.com/tuplus-local/article/SUNY-Poly-seeks-no-proposals-for-Rensselaer-7288088.php>

NEWS: Rensselaer Waterfront Transformation Wins State Funding

<http://www.bizjournals.com/albany/news/2015/12/10/rensselaer-waterfront-transformation-wins-state.html>

City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan

http://www.rensselaer.ny.gov/Libraries/Planning_Department/Comprehensive_Plan_2006.sflb.ashx

City of Rensselaer Future Land Uses Map

http://www.rensselaer.ny.gov/Libraries/Planning_Department/Future_Land_Use_Map.sflb.ashx

City of Rensselaer Zoning Map

http://www.rensselaer.ny.gov/Libraries/Planning_Department/Zoning_Map.sflb.ashx

Rensselaer Waterfront Esplanade

TRANSIT VILLAGE DOWNTOWN

- Connecting Jobs, Homes, & Visitors
- Wider Sidewalks, Dedicated Pathways, Pedestrian Bridges
- Waterfront Esplanade & River Access Points from Broadway to link established neighborhoods with new housing
- Connect Albany Rail Trail and Mill Creek Campus (Regeneron/SUNY Poly) to facilitate worker mobility to the Downtown

KILLIAEN'S LANDING

- New Housing
- Mixed-Use Development
- Passive Recreation, Waterfront Access, & Regional Trail Connections

DeLAET'S LANDING— Project Anchor Site

- 96 New Apartments (2018) with additional housing potential
- Proposed Hotel and Office Space
- Multi-Use Pedestrian Plaza
- Center of New Waterfront Esplanade

BROADWAY DOWNTOWN CORRIDOR

- Retail & Entrepreneurial Development
- Building Façade Program
- Streetscape & Landscaping
- Pedestrian Pathways, Sidewalks, Trails, and crosswalks to Train Station & Waterfront

TRAIN STATION—Transit Downtown


- Mixed Uses adjacent to Station
- New Housing
- Housing Rehabilitation
- Dedicated Pedestrian Pathways along East and Third Avenues & on the Broadway Downtown Corridor

MARITIME HERITAGE CENTER

- "Heritage Walk" to Fort Crailo Historic District
- Public / Private Marina
- Waterfront Festival Space
- Ferry Service to Downtown Albany
- Waterfront Housing and Entertainment

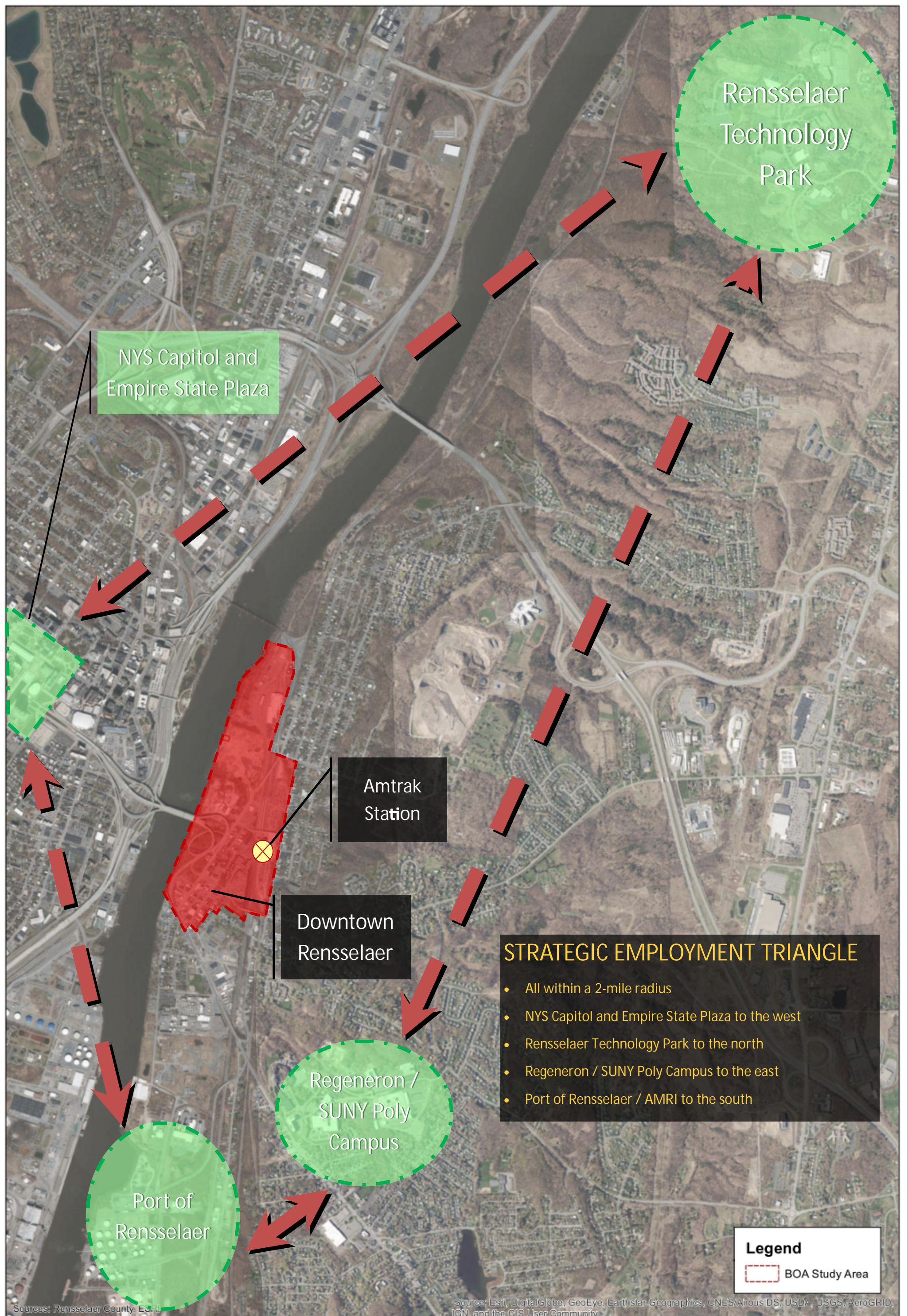
Pedestrian Linkages

To the south:
Regeneron/SUNY Poly Campus

Legend
 Strategic Sites



1 inch = 450 feet



NYS Capitol and Empire State Plaza

Rensselaer Technology Park

Amtrak Station

Downtown Rensselaer

Regeneron / SUNY Poly Campus

Port of Rensselaer

- STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT TRIANGLE**
- All within a 2-mile radius
 - NYS Capitol and Empire State Plaza to the west
 - Rensselaer Technology Park to the north
 - Regeneron / SUNY Poly Campus to the east
 - Port of Rensselaer / AMRI to the south

Legend
 BOA Study Area

Sources: Rensselaer County, ESRI

Sources: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, JGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

