

PUBLIC WORKSHOP 01

School District Office Boardroom
June 27, 2023

The presentation slides can be downloaded at: www.MedinaNYForward.com/get-involved.

Attendees

Project Team:

- Samantha Aldrich, DOS Project Manager
- Greg Parker, ESD
- Kimberly Baptiste, Bergmann Project Manager
- Jeanette Petti, Bergmann

Other Attendees:

- 15 community members
- Several LPC members

Welcome and Introductions

Kimberly Baptiste, project manager with Bergmann, welcomed participants to the public workshop and thanked them for their interest in the NY Forward (NYF) program. She explained that Bergmann is the lead consultant helping the Village of Medina facilitate the NYF program, with support from other subject matter experts and representatives from multiple New York State (NYS) agencies.

What is the NYF Program?

Kimberly began the session by providing some background on the NYF program. She explained that NYF is a New York State program designed to invigorate and enliven downtowns in New York's small villages and hamlets. This round, the program is infusing a total of \$100 million in 24 communities across New York State. The Village of Medina has been awarded \$4.5 million as part of the program to plan and implement transformative projects downtown.

The program has multiple goals, including:

1. Enhancing downtown living and quality of life
2. Creating an active downtown with a mix of uses
3. Providing a diverse mix of employment opportunities

4. Creating diverse housing options for all incomes
5. Providing public spaces that serve all ages and abilities
6. Encouraging the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
7. Growing the local property tax base

Projects will be identified through a 6-month planning process. The planning process began in May and will conclude in November with the completion of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), which is the report that documents the planning process and recommends to New York State which projects the community believes have the most potential to positively impact downtown Medina. The State will review the SIP and determine which projects will receive funding from the \$4.5 million allocation. NYF grant awards will be announced tentatively in Spring 2024, with project implementation to follow.

Kimberly explained that Medina’s NYF planning process will be led by the Local Planning Committee (LPC), with assistance from a Project Team of industry experts and representatives from multiple New York State agencies. The LPC is a group of community members selected by NYS and local leaders to lead Medina’s NYF planning process and to determine which projects have the most potential to bring transformative change to downtown Medina. LPC members represent a diverse segment of the Medina community, from business owners, to residents, to local officials. They are required to act in the public interest and to adhere to a Code of Conduct. LPC members who have a conflict of interest with a proposed project must recuse themselves from discussing or voting on that project. LPC members volunteer their time.

The LPC will evaluate all proposed projects based on a set of established criteria and determine which projects to include in the SIP. Projects can be proposed by the Village of Medina as well as by community members. Kimberly emphasized that not all proposed projects will be included in Medina’s Strategic Investment Plan. Similarly, not all projects included in the SIP will receive NYF funding. Ultimately, New York State will make the final decision on which projects are funded.

The Planning Process

Kimberly outlined the steps involved in the NYF planning process, which begins with visioning and a baseline analysis of the community, then moves into project development and evaluation, and concludes with the development of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP).

Visioning

The first step in the planning process is to establish a community vision for Medina’s NYF and create a set of supportive goals and strategies to achieve this vision. LPC and community members will participate in visioning exercises to help craft Medina’s vision. A summary of the results from this visioning session can be found later in this document.

Downtown Profile

The Project Team will perform a baseline analysis of Medina’s demographics, economic activity, physical setting, recent plans and ongoing efforts, and other topic areas. This analysis will identify Medina’s opportunities and challenges and help the LPC understand existing conditions as they stand today in Medina.

Project Development

Project development is a critical step in identifying projects that might be potential candidates for NYF funding. Potential projects are identified through two streams: (1) through the projects proposed by the Village of Medina in its application for NYF funding; and (2) through the Open Call for Project Proposals which gives community members the opportunity to submit project proposals for the LPC to consider.

Four types of projects are eligible for NYF funding:

- **Public Improvement Projects:**
Streetscape and transportation improvements, recreational trails, wayfinding signage, new and upgraded parks, plazas, public art, green infrastructure, and other public realm projects.
- **New Development and/or Rehabilitation of Existing Downtown Buildings:**
Development and redevelopment of real property for mixed-use, commercial, residential, not-for-profit, or public uses. Development and/or redevelopment should result in employment opportunities, housing choices, and/or other services for the community.
- **Branding and Marketing**
Downtown branding and marketing projects that may target residents, investors, developers, tourists, and visitors.
- **Small Project Fund**
A locally-managed matching small project fund (up to \$300,000) for small downtown projects such as facade enhancements, building renovations, business assistance, or public art.

There are several activities that are *not eligible* for NYF funding. These include:

- Planning activities
- Operations and maintenance
- Pre-award costs
- Property acquisition
- Training and other program expenses
- Expenses related to existing programs

All proposed projects must meet the following requirements:

- Projects must be located in the Medina NYF boundary
- Projects must be able to break ground within 2 years or sooner of receiving NYF funding
- Projects should have financing commitments largely secured or be able to demonstrate a clear path to sufficient financing
- Projects must be large enough to be truly transformative for downtown Medina
- Projects must have a sponsor who has the capacity and legal authority to carry out the project
- Certain projects will be required to meet decarbonization requirements based on the type and size of the project

Project Evaluation

The LPC evaluates all proposed projects based on a set of established criteria to determine which projects should be included in the Strategic Investment Plan. The evaluation criteria are as follows:

- Projects must advance the goals established by the LPC and the State for Medina’s NYF
- Projects must have a significant positive impact on the revitalization of downtown Medina
- Projects should be well-developed and ready to proceed upon the award of funding
- Projects must be one of the eligible project types described above
- Projects must represent an effective and efficient use of public resources
- Projects must result in benefits to the community, beyond just the project sponsor, such as: additional economic activity and improved quality of life

Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)

The Strategic Investment Plan is the final deliverable of the NYF process. It documents the planning process and recommends projects to NYS for potential funding. Not all proposed projects will be included in the SIP. Similarly, not all projects included in the SIP will receive NYF funding. The State will review the SIP and make the final determination on which projects to fund.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is an integral and on-going part of the NYF process. A Community Engagement Strategy will have been developed to create a plan for engagement throughout the NYF process.

Engagement activities will include, at a minimum:

- Two public workshops
- Monthly LPC meetings
- A series of stakeholder meetings
- The Open Call for Project Proposals
- On-site meetings with project sponsors
- Youth engagement
- The project website (www.MedinaNYForward.com)

Snapshot of Downtown Today

Jeanette Petti, planner with Bergmann, presented several preliminary findings from the Project Team’s on-going development of the Downtown Profile. These key findings include:

- **Medina has a strong foundation to grow from.** Main Street defines downtown Medina. Historic architecture, a continuous street-wall, and unique placemaking features make downtown Medina instantly recognizable and give it a strong sense of place.
- **Medina is a destination on the Erie Canal.** Medina’s Erie Canal frontage is a major asset. Medina should continue leveraging and enhancing its waterfront for recreation and tourism.
- **Investment is likely necessary to stimulate new population and job growth in Medina.** Population growth in Medina is stagnant; Medina lost 0.1% population per year from 2020 to 2023. Between 2010 and 2020, 161 jobs were also lost in the Village. Current trends are projected to continue, with Medina expected to lose 0.2% population per year from 2023 through 2028.
- **There are relatively low incomes and low discretionary spending levels in Medina.** Poverty is relatively high and many people can’t afford their housing costs. Because of this, current household spending potential is low as households have less income available to spend on goods and services at downtown businesses.
- **The existing housing stock is not meeting demands.** Units are old, vacancy rates are high, and many people who work downtown do not live in the Village. This suggests that people cannot find attractive housing that meets their needs.

Open Call for Projects

Kimberly explained that community members can submit project proposals through the Open Call for Project Proposals. Any private or not-for-profit entity can submit. Applicants must complete the Application Form and answer basic questions about their proposed project. **All Open Call for Project Proposals applications are due by Monday, July 10th, 2023.**

Visioning Session

Kimberly led workshop participants in a visioning session. Participants were asked a series of questions to begin crafting a vision for Medina’s NYF program. The questions and participant responses are shown below:

- What is Downtown Medina’s greatest asset?
 - Canal (x3)
 - Businesses (x2)
 - Buildings (x2)
 - Architecture
 - History
 - Charm
 - Enthusiasm

- What is the greatest challenge facing Downtown Medina today?
 - Poverty
 - Economics
 - Taxes
 - Workforce
 - Growth
 - Parking
 - Hours
 - Access
 - Underutilized
 - Balance
- How would you like to be able to describe Downtown Medina in 5 years?
 - Vibrant (x3)
 - Thriving
 - Destination
 - Dynamic
 - Popular
 - Awesome
 - Edgy
 - Affordable
 - Quaint

Next Steps

The next steps in the planning process are as follows:

- **July 10th**: Open Call Applications DUE
- **July 25th at 6 PM**: LPC Meeting #3
- **Public Workshop #2**: TBD – stay tuned for updates on the website!

Public Questions and Comments

- Are projects awarded at the same time?
 - *Answer*: Yes, all projects receiving NYF funding in Medina will be announced at the same time.
- Is it possible to receive partial funding?
 - *Answer*: In some cases, the State may partially fund projects (i.e., fund less than the NYF funding request) but the State tries to avoid doing this as much as possible.
- Can you share the projects proposed by the Village?
 - *Answer*: Projects proposed by the Village in its initial application for NYF funding can be found at: www.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2023-02/Medina_NYF_1_Application.pdf.
- Is there a time by which projects must be completed?
 - *Answer*: Typically, projects are completed within 5 years of breaking ground.

- Can NYF funding be used for improvements to single-family housing?
 - *Answer:* No. NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) typically does not fund single- or double-unit residential properties through the NYF program. HCR funds are reserved for upper floor residential units in mixed-use buildings or for larger residential complexes.
- How does reimbursement work?
 - *Answer:* In this hypothetical example, assume that a project's total cost is \$100,000, to be funded with \$50,000 from NYF funds and \$50,000 in private match. The project sponsor must complete all \$100,000 worth of work and provide documentation to the State to prove this before the State will release the \$50,000 reimbursement. This often requires project sponsors to get a bridge loan to cover project costs up front.
- How long does reimbursement take?
 - *Answer:* Typically 60 days.
- Who bids projects out? Is that the State's responsibility?
 - *Answer:* The Village of Medina is responsible for bidding out any public projects. For private projects, it is the responsibility of the project sponsor to contract out the work. Projects sponsors will need to adhere to the State's MWBE requirements, which require that 30% of the awarded amount be contracted out to certified minority- or women-owned business enterprises. A database of certified MWBE contractors can be found here: ny.newnycontracts.com/FrontEnd/searchcertifieddirectory.asp.
- What if the project budget changes after funding is awarded?
 - *Answer:* If the total project cost increases, the project sponsor would be responsible for filling the funding gap. This is the case for both private and public projects. The intention of this planning process is to flesh out project budgets so that this scenario does not happen. The Project Team spends significant time working with project sponsors to solidify project budgets – building in contingencies where necessary to ensure that all funded projects can be fully implemented.