

NY Forward – Capital Region - Athens

Subject	MINUTES LPC Meeting #2	Date	Monday, July 14, 2025
Place	Volunteer Firehouse 39 Third St.	Time	6:00-8:00pm
Distribution	<u>Local Planning Committee</u> Amy Serrago, Mayor (co-chair) James Hannahs (co-chair) Tim Albright Todd Bernard <i>Stephan Bradicich (absent)</i> Sarah Grinberg Mike Lee <i>Jim Martino (absent)</i> Paul Petramale Carol Pfister Merrill Roth Andrea Smallwood Jeff Strockbine	<u>State Team</u> Matthew Smith, DOS <u>Consultant Team</u> Ian Nicholson, Buro Happold Shona Paterson, Buro Happold Kate Chapman, Interboro <u>Public</u> ~16 individuals	

Meeting Summary:

Please see 'AT_LPC Meeting 2_Slides_record' for the presentation shared during the meeting which parallels the discussion summarized below.

Action items are called out in ***bold-italic highlight***

Welcome and Agenda

Matt (DOS) welcomes the group to the second NY Forward LPC meeting. He reminds the room that these meetings are open to the public, but not intended to be public interactive workshops.

He then briefly overviews the meeting agenda.

Opening Remarks

Mayor Serrago (LPC co-chair) delivers brief opening remarks thanking everyone for their contributions.

Code of Conduct

Matthew Smith (DOS) reads the Code of Conduct preamble, and reviews key points from the Code of Conduct that LPC members are expected to abide by.

Guidance is delivered regarding conflicts of interest and recusal, although emphasis is placed on the importance of recusal during the third LPC meeting when potential projects are discussed.

Planning Process Updates

Ian (BH) reviews the NYF timeline of actions since June 4th, including the website going live, the first LPC meeting, and the first public workshop. He also informs the LPC that 14 sponsors have attended technical sessions with him and Matt Smith (DOS) to discuss potential projects. He then outlines the upcoming steps in the planning process, the next of which is the deadline for projects to be submitted on Aug 4th.

Ian also shares a calendar illustrating the vision of how the NYF program will proceed, placing today's meeting in context of the overall process.

Downtown Profile and Assessment

Shona (BH) presents research done for the downtown profile. She explains the purpose of the downtown profile section.

Review of history & trajectory, recent plans and investments, alignment with REDC, geography & ecology, architecture & urban form, streets, circulation & parking, parks & open spaces, land use & zoning, socio-economic conditions, employment & commuting, and real estate market.

Shona (BH) discusses key observations drawn from the downtown assessment, emphasizing opportunities and challenges. LPC is invited to provide any feedback – there is none given, with acknowledgement that information presented seems broadly accurate and representative.

NYF Boundary / Map

Ian (BH) reviews a map of Athens' current NYF boundaries for LPC members to comment on. He informs members that they can extend boundaries during the next LPC meeting as well, while reviewing project submissions. The LPC confirms that potential sponsors outside the boundary are being encouraged to apply, and agrees to revisit the boundary at the 3rd LPC meeting when projects are known.

Public Workshop #1 Overview

Kate (Interboro) provides a brief overview of the first workshop, explaining the overall purpose and structure of the workshop, including a description of the walking tour activity where participants wrote observations and thoughts on comment and dream bubbles and placed them spatially on a foldout map. She also shares the number of participants (roughly 25-30) and the consultant team that attended the workshop. Photos from the workshop are shared.

The team received 122 comments from the workshop participants, with the top three focused on pedestrian infrastructure, streets, and public space. Kate showed the comments placed on the maps to elaborate on which areas of the Village were prompting certain kinds of feedback. She also grouped them as relevant to the 3 goals laid out in the NYF application.

Kate presents some key themes synthesized from the activity:

- Increase docking space and access to the waterfront
- Protect and strengthen the waterfront
- Restore facades along 2nd St.
- Improve pedestrian infrastructure
- Upgrade downtown buildings and sidewalks to meet ADA compliance
- Activate the alleys and explore their unique potential

Visions and Goals

Ian (BH) presents the preliminary downtown vision from the NYF application. He presents two alternative vision statements for the LPC to discuss and workshop. LPC members all agree on preference for Alternative #2, and provide various slight modifications to wording and emphasis.

A finalized downtown vision is drafted collectively from this input:

"The Village of Athens is a unique place that celebrates its distinct charm and diversity. We honor our heritage with continued restoration of our historic downtown. We embrace our Hudson River roots by expanding waterfront access for all. We drive prosperity by committing to innovation and sustainability. We welcome visitors with art, culture, and recreation. We nurture our low-key, laid-back vibe to welcome new families to our community, to make Athens home, generation after generation."

Ian (BH) presents the preliminary downtown goals adapted from the NYF application. The goals are compared to key themes identified at the workshop, illustrating clear connections between the two. Proposed goals are offered by consultant team that attempt to incorporate feedback heard to date. Using this information, LPC members discuss alterations to the existing goals. Finalized goals are drafted from this discussion:

- Expand public access to and from the Hudson River
- Upgrade safety and accessibility of downtown buildings and public spaces
- Enhance impact of historic charm of facades and alleys
- Attract downtown retail opportunities
- Increase availability, quality, and choice of housing

LPC Q&A / Discussion

No comments/questions from LPC other than those noted above.

Public Comment

- Question about limits to density in the downtown area. Mayor responds that density is controlled through the local zoning code.
- Various recommendations offered on verbiage in vision and goals discussion.

Closing Remarks

N/A

END OF SUMMARY