

Rochester Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI)
Public Meeting #1
Wednesday, March 2, 2022 5:00-7:00PM
Monroe Community College

I. Welcome and Introductions

Steve Kearney (Stantec) started the meeting and introduced City of Rochester DRI Co-Chairs Tamara Mayberry (City of Rochester) and Robert Duffy (Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce). Steve shared the names of the 16-member Local Planning Committee (LPC), who will oversee the Rochester DRI:

- Malik Evans, LPC Co-Chair, Mayor, City of Rochester
- Tamara Mayberry Chief of Staff, City of Rochester
- Robert Duffy, LPC Co-Chair, Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
- Veronica Dasher RG&E
- Shawn Dunwoody Dunwoode Visual Consulting
- Eugenio Marlin Ibero-American Development Corporation
- Heidi Zimmer-Meyer, Rochester Downtown Development Corporation
- Clayton Jones, University of Rochester, Local Government and Community
- Ana Liss, Monroe County Planning and Development
- Lauren Gallina Payne, Gallina Development
- Rachel Laber Pulvino, Visit Rochester
- Ebony Miller-Wesley, RIT-Center for Urban Entrepreneurship
- Lisa Baron, Greentopia
- Joseph Stefko, ROC 2025
- Ken Glazer. Buckingham Properties
- Jim Brown, Rochester Riverside Convention Center
- Nichole Malec, Rochester Regional Health

The New York State agencies involved in the DRI include the Department of State, Homes and Community Renewal, Empire State Development and NYSERDA.

The consultant team will be led by Stantec with support from Highland Planning, BJH Advisors, Revby, Trophy Point, W-ZHA, and Zimmerman/Volk Associates.

Photos from the meeting, the small group handouts, and the mapping results are available at the end of this summary.

II. What is the Downtown Revitalization Initiative?

The DRI began in 2016 as an innovative and action-oriented program to improve the vitality of downtown areas across the state. This year, \$20 million was awarded to each region. In

December 2021, Rochester received a \$10 million award. The outcome of the DRI planning process is the development of a locally developed strategic investment plan.

The fundamental goals of the DRI include:

- Creating an active, desirable downtown with a strong sense of place;
- Attracting new businesses (including “Main Street” businesses), that create a robust mix of shopping, dining, entertainment and service options for residents and visitors, and that provide job opportunities for a variety of skills and salaries;
- Enhancing public spaces for arts and cultural events that serve the existing members of the community but also draw in attendees from around the region;
- Building a diverse population, with residents and workers supported by complementary diverse housing and employment opportunities;
- Growing the local property tax base;
- Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality of life; and
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by creating compact, walkable development patterns that increase public transit ridership and allow for adoption of district-wide decarbonized heating and cooling; and by supporting efficiency and electrification of buildings, installation of onsite renewable energy generation, and electric vehicle charging.

The DRI plan will:

- Encourage public participation to identify projects to recommend for funding
- Emphasize public and private capital projects such as public infrastructure or private development
- Identify strategic matching grant or revolving loan funds to support capital projects
- Seek to leverage additional public and private funds
- Develop metrics to demonstrate projects’ impact on downtown economic development

III. Key Ingredients of a DRI Strategic Investment Plan

First, the proposed DRI boundary will be reviewed, refined, and finalized. Second, the vision, goals and strategies will be established. A draft vision has been prepared for review at tonight’s meeting. DRI projects will be recommended to confirm they align with the DRI goals and strategies.

The table of contents for the Strategic Investment Plan will include:

1. Downtown Profile and Assessment
2. Community Vision, Goals, and Strategies
3. Downtown Management and Implementation Strategy
4. Public Involvement
5. Projects Recommended for DRI Funding

Projects that are eligible for DRI funding include:

- **New Development and/or Rehabilitation of Existing Downtown Buildings:** Projects in this category may include development or redevelopment of real property for mixed-use, commercial, or public uses. They should have a visible and functional impact on the downtown, serving as anchor, catalytic or transformative projects that will provide employment opportunities, housing choices, and/or services for the community. Projects should employ decarbonization strategies consistent with the State's goals under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. Construction or rehab of stand-alone parking garages not connected with other uses will not be considered for funding.
- **Public Improvement Projects:** These may include infrastructure projects such as broadband and other communications connectivity, green infrastructure, streetscape improvements, transportation, recreational trails, signage, new and upgraded parks and plazas, public art, and other public realm projects that will contribute to revitalization of the downtown.
- **Grant Fund or Revolving Loan Fund:** A locally managed fund may be proposed to undertake a range of smaller downtown projects such as facade improvements, public art and public realm improvements, and physical improvements to existing and/or vacant commercial or mixed- use space. Projects that are significant, such as new construction, should not be proposed for a fund and instead should be proposed as their own individual project. Funds are typically capped at \$600,000.
- **Branding and Marketing:** Examples include downtown branding and marketing projects that may target residents, investors, developers, tourists, and/or visitors. The costs eligible under this category must be one-time expenses, such as those to develop materials and signage. Ongoing operational costs, such as to fund a downtown manager or maintain a website, are not eligible for DRI funding.

Ineligible projects include:

- Planning activities. Following the preparation of the DRI Strategic Investment Plan, all DRI funds must be used for projects that directly implement the plan. Utilizing DRI funds for additional planning is not the goal of the program.
- Operation and maintenance. DRI funds cannot be used for on-going or routine expenses, such as staff salaries and wages, rent, utilities, and property upkeep.
- Pre-award costs. Reimbursement for costs incurred before the DRI plan is complete and before funding awards are announced is not permitted.
- Property acquisition. A DRI project profile may include the cost of acquisition in the budget of a larger redevelopment, but it must also show that the acquisition itself will be, or has already been, covered by another funding source.
- Training and other program expenses. DRI is a one-time infusion of funds, and cannot be used to cover continuous costs, such as training programs, that would cease to exist once the DRI funds have been expended.
- Expenses related to existing programs. DRI is not intended to supplement existing programs or replace existing resources.

Project requirements are:

- Projects must be able to break ground within two years or sooner. Grants to projects that do not meet this goal may be rescinded.
- No DRI awards of less than \$100k will be considered to ensure projects are of a significant size and scale to be truly transformative in nature.
- To be considered for DRI funding, a fully residential project must include at least 8 units and must include an affordable component.
- DRI will not cover more than 40% of privately-sponsored projects, except as described below.
- Leveraging for public and non-for-profit projects is strongly encouraged (local planning committees may set match requirements or goals). If a grant or loan fund is proposed, the state will work with the community to establish appropriate match requirements.
- New and substantial rehabilitation construction projects will be required to meet the Stretch Energy Code, whether or not the locality has adopted that code.
- Privately-sponsored projects that commit to meeting higher standards, including efficiency combined with full electrification or the integration of climate resiliency measures, onsite renewables, energy storage or electric vehicle charging equipment, may be eligible for a larger DRI subsidy of up to 50%. Projects achieving these higher levels of performance should also seek incentives from NYSERDA to co-fund their development.

IV. Timeline

The DRI process began in December 2021 and will continue through Summer 2022. In late fall, the State will make an announcement of projects selected for awards in Rochester. Implementation will take place in 2023 and beyond.

The strategic investment plan begins with a downtown profile and assessment and the development of vision, goals and strategies. The process will include three public workshops and monthly LPC meetings. By the end of July, the strategic investment plan will be complete.

V. Ways to Get Involved in the Process

There will be four LPC meetings through July. The first will be virtual. The second will be virtual on March 16th. The second public workshop will be in May. The third public workshop will take place in June. The project website is <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/DRI/>. You can learn more about the DRI program at www.ny.gov/programs/downtown-revitalization-initiative.

VI. Vision and Goals Exercise

The planning team invited meeting participants to review the draft vision and draft goals and provide individual comments on a meeting handout. At the time of the meeting, the draft vision was:

The City's vision is for our Downtown to be the vibrant heart of our region; a place that will continue to attract a diverse population of new residents, while developers continue to report low vacancy rates; a place where investments will boom, while making it the fastest growing area in the region; and, finally, a place that will continue to attract more innovation, arts, culture, and entertainment so as to boost yearly visitors and overall economic development.

The infusion of additional investments triggered by a DRI grant will put the finishing touches on our Downtown revitalization and cement it as the centerpiece of the Finger Lakes region.

At the time of the meeting, the draft goals were:

- Reimagine and revitalize East Main Street
- Create a vibrant urban center and attractive public realm that welcomes everyone
- Increase the amount of mixed-use, mixed-income housing in Downtown
- Increase our emerging technology and creative class businesses; support our existing businesses; and grow Downtown's retail sector
- Further strengthen Rochester's reputation as the cultural center of the Finger Lakes region

Participants were asked to reflect on both the vision and goals individually, consider what resonates with them and what could be better. After a few minutes of individual work, each table discussed the vision and goals as a group. Below is a compilation of written comments. A summary of comments from both the in-person and virtual roundtables follows.

What could be better? What is missing from the vision statement?

- Would like Rochester to be in a position to drive tourism to our downtown and our community. I believe, if we leverage this correctly, we can attach our downtown more closely with the Finger Lakes and drive tourism as a result
- The river, the canal, the downtown should speak to the general public; it should allow them to do something happy
- Growth and improvements are never finished
- DRI is kick start of our reimagining our downtown into the next century
- Synergy is the importance of linkage between booming East End and ROC the Riverway, North side of Main Street. Must have vibrant retail if folks will be incentivized to walk

from booming East End to the Riverway. The small historic structures on the NW corner of Main and Clinton will apply, of course. But Granite Building, vacant hotel, and CGI need renovation to include ground floor retail. Please incentivize that.

- Business center (currently)
- Not vibrant
- Too long
- Statement embodies all very well
- What is the City's logo? As it relates to visitors?
- We claim to be a city of the arts but lack dollars. There was a recent City article referring to how little is designated.
- Our architecture, the river, canal and downtown need a cohesive plan
- Focus on activating first floor spaces and the public realm
- Streetscape should be modern; be able to look through windows
- We need a central gathering place with benches
- Food and beverage, wineries, breweries, distilleries, recruitment of our region's best
- Connectivity; encourage walkability
- What could be better is a focus on announcing the important of first floor activities (e.g. closed hotel, Granite Building, CGI, which is about half of Main Street frontage of the project areas). Construction dollars will be needed.
- Business hub
- Pop-up shops along riverway
- Permanent igloos
- Security at Mortimer
- Revitalize N/W corner of Main/Clinton
- Addressing the safety and security issues (panhandlers, homeless, etc.)
- How to handle obstructionist minded property owners
- Elaborate on what diverse population of new residents means, give recognition to minority residents
- Diverse housing (along with population) and sustainability
- Elaborate on/define "investments." Rochestarians have an opportunity to be invested in revitalization (as opposed to people outside the community lining pockets)
- Need a greater sense of public safety in the investments/developments that occur
- Emphasis on what is uniquely Rochester/character in the boundary. It has good bones.
- Where do native residents fit in. Vision should be more people-focused and note solely to build up businesses
- Investment in high-quality public realm and public spaces that attract people to spend time downtown. Add language about vibrancy of streets and spaces. Look to examples of other DRIs around the state.

Comments Regarding Draft Goals

- Reimagine and revitalize East Main Street
- Create a vibrant urban center and attractive public realm that welcomes everyone
- Increase the amount of mixed-use, mixed-income housing in downtown

- Increase our emerging technology and creative class businesses; support our existing businesses; and grown downtown's retail sector
- Further strengthen Rochester's reputation as the cultural center of the Finger Lakes region
- Highlight some of the other major corridors: St. Paul, Clinton, Andrews are important corridors that could benefit from revitalization.
- More green space. Union Street revitalization looks like a concrete corridor with many apartment buildings and few trees. Revitalization means bring green into the picture, especially for mixed-income housing. Hope that does not mean more concrete.
- More competition /options for internet/broadband. Bring in new technologies that people didn't know they wanted or needed. More freedom of choice and better service.
- Highlight some of the other major corridors: St. Paul, Clinton, Andrews are important corridors that could benefit from revitalization.
- More green space. Union Street revitalization looks like a concrete corridor with many apartment buildings and few trees. Revitalization means bring green into the picture, especially for mixed-income housing. Hope that does not mean more concrete.
- More competition /options for internet/broadband. Bring in new technologies that people didn't know they wanted or needed. More freedom of choice and better service.

What resonates with you:

- Provide class streetscape that is welcoming and pedestrian friendly
- Reimagine and revitalize East Main Street, including its connections to the Genesee Riverway Trail and other ROC the Riverway projects
- Further strengthen Rochester's reputation as the activity and cultural center of the Finger Lakes region
- "Innovation, arts, culture, entertainment"
- Boost yearly visitors
- "Finger Lakes"
- Our downtown is the vibrant heart
- Where economic, social and cultural investments will grow and thrive (not boom)
- ~~Fast growing~~, our downtown development will attract
- Vibrant heart! Economically, socially, culturally
- Investments to be used to nurture and grow
- Investments boom
- Boost yearly visitors
- Centerpiece
- Arts, culture and entertainment; the people will come downtown for that (i.e., Jazzfest, Broadway plays). Too late for shopping. Resurrect Parcel 5/Golisano project or even downtown casino
- Vibrant urban center
- Investments will boom!
- Will help put the finishing touches
- All of the above

- All of the above
- Reconnecting pedestrian route from East End to Riverway. To get folks to walk to the river with its millions of new state dollars. That walking experience but be vibrant, therefore we need ground activity.
- Mixed income housing
- Downtown's retail sector
- Primarily, corner Clinton and Main
- Paley
- Pharmacy
- Urgent/primary care
- Redevelop the NW corner to equal or better than the other corners

VII. Project Idea Map

After the visioning and goals discussion, the group discussed the project idea map and discussed (a) what they love about the DRI area, (2) what are the area's challenges and (3) what opportunities people see for the area. The final part of the exercise was to list the top five priorities for the DRI area. A summary of findings is below.

What do you love about this area?

- Huge potential
- Constellation coming and want nice housing
- Synergy
- Pedestrian connection between Roc the Riverway and East End
- Parks availability
- ROC Holiday Village (activity, food)
- Easy transportation
- Jazz Festival
- Rich cultural experience
- The river
- Variety and sale of architecture
- Intact historic buildings
- River and proximity to Eastman and Grove Place
- Welcome to Rochester Sign
- Revit of Sibley building
- Transit center, St. Joseph's church, garden at Andrews Terrace and the Sister Cities bridge

What are the area's challenges?

- World Wide News
- Convenience store on Saint Paul alley
- Hire beat cops or ambassador program
- Corner of South Clinton and Main Street

- South side of Main Street is dead
- “I don’t know if I like anything about downtown”
- Parks not accessible by transit
- Where’s entertainment besides bars?
- Recreation activities need to be broadened
- Separate tenancies on first floors on Main Street
- Parking is available but not free
- No access directly for pedestrians between river and restaurants
- Division – backs of buildings could be pedestrian destination
- The amount of vacant space and cost to renovate
- Change in retail patterns makes business recruitment difficult. People want Amazon
- Entertainment/shopping
- More walkable, or at least sidewalks can be improved. For example, St. Paul. Once you get out of the Pleasant Street area, the sidewalks are better. St. Paul area is more focused on cars
- Appears more upscale than anything else
- Vacant and underutilized buildings and first floor retail
- Parking garages are not best environments to walk along. Surface parking lots, the streetscape environment is not a pleasant walkable experience.

What opportunities do you see for the area?

- Put a store into Saint Andrew’s Terrace
- Put a well-lit gas station in World Wide News location
- Nicer streetscape with stamped concrete
- Multiple entrances to retail
- Reconnect pedestrians between two major hubs downtown
- See Milwaukee to support entrepreneurs and utilize riverway
- Renovating and preservation of historical buildings; build on existing good work
- Everybody has to transfer, give them amenities between buses
- Free parking on Main Street
- Reconnect pedestrians between two major hubs downtown
- Replan hotel, Granite and CGI to permit ground floor retail
- Lack of amenities near the transit center
- Permanent igloo (ROC Holiday Village)
- Pop ups along the river
- Retail near the transit center
- Permanent retail
- Art along river
- Access to cross the river
- Art along wall of river

Top Priorities

- Elimination/demolition of northwest quadrant
- Primary care and pharmacy at Sibley's facing transit center
- Albert Paley Archives and exhibition space facing Liberty Pole at Sibley's
- Better security at Mortimer Garage
- Sibley's
- Relocate World Wide News and redevelop the site
- Safety and security via Ambassador Program
- Access to safe parking for new residential buildings in the area
- More greenspace
- Local shopping opportunities (mini-Target, grocery, pharmacy)
- Walkability/multi-modal (less car infrastructure) & ground floor activity for a positive vibe
- Public safety
- Housing that is available to all incomes and people from all walks of life
- Green space, upgrade the look- and connections/access to the river and ROC the Riverway

Meeting Photos



Meeting Handouts

ROCHESTER DRI INDIVIDUAL VISION STATEMENT EXERCISE

Please help us build on the Rochester DRI Vision. Read the original statement from the application and let us know what's working, what's not, and what's missing.

DRAFT VISION STATEMENT FROM APPLICATION:

The City's vision is for our Downtown to be the vibrant heart of our region; a place that will continue to attract a diverse population of new residents, while developers continue to report low vacancy rates; a place where investments will boom, while making it the fastest growing area in the region; and, finally, a place that will continue to attract more innovation, arts, culture, and entertainment so as to boost yearly visitors and overall economic development.

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WHAT RESONATES WITH YOU:

WHAT COULD BE BETTER / WHAT IS MISSING:

ROCHESTER DRI INDIVIDUAL GOALS EXERCISE

Please help us build on the Rochester DRI Goals. Read the list of goals below and let us know what's working, what's not, and what's missing.

DRAFT GOALS

- Reimagine and revitalize East Main Street
- Create a vibrant urban center and attractive public realm that welcomes everyone
- Increase the amount of mixed-use, mixed-income housing in Downtown
- Increase our emerging technology and creative class businesses; support our existing businesses; and grow Downtown's retail sector
- Further strengthen Rochester's reputation as the cultural center of the Finger Lakes region

WHAT RESONATES WITH YOU:

WHAT COULD BE BETTER / WHAT IS MISSING:

PROJECT IDEA MAP

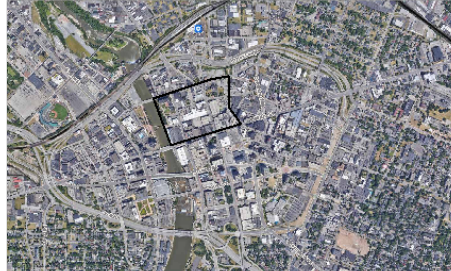


- A Mortimer St Improvements:** Minor improvements in the vicinity of the RTS Transit Center to support enhanced bus and multi-modal access and improve the public realm.
- B Division St Improvements:** Rehabilitation of Division Street to improve the pedestrian and public realm to support adjacent new residential and commercial uses.
- C NW Corner Main and Clinton:** Vacant and dilapidated buildings that present an opportunity to reintroduce this previously a corner as an asset to the surrounding area and investments.
- D Main Street Commons:** Create new public plaza and pedestrian connection between East Main Street and Division Street to support proposed retail/restaurant spaces and enhance multi-modal circulation in the district.

TOP FIVE PRIORITIES


- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

DRI AREA CONTEXT




 What do you love about this area?

LOVE

 What are the area's challenges?

CONCERN

 What opportunities do you see for the area?

OPPORTUNITY

Project Idea Map Images

ROCHESTER, NY DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

VISIONING SESSION

PROJECT IDEA MAP

MARCH 2022

Project ideas from City's application

- A** Market St Improvement: Improve public realm and bike and pedestrian access.
- B** Division St Improvement: Transform Division St into a public realm to support active transportation and commercial uses.
- C** NW Canal Mall and Clinton: Address vacant and blighted properties and enhance opportunities and active transportation along the canal.
- D** Main Street Commons: Create new public space and pedestrian plaza from Main Street to Division Street to support and enhance multi-modal circulation in the district.
- E** Convention Center Expansion and Development: Develop outdoor expansion spaces.
- F** Building Rehabilitation Grant Fund: Support the rehabilitation of existing structures (eventually) renovation of structures (eventually) renovation of existing structures for commercial space.

TOP FIVE PRIORITIES

1. Elimination / Demolition of NW Boulevard
2. Ramsey Carez + Pharmacy @ Sibky's Faring Transit center
3. Albert Park Architects + Exhibits spoke Faring Liberty pole @ sibky's
4. Better security @ multi-tier damage
5. Sibky's Demolish

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DRI AREA CONTEXT

LOVE

What do you love about this area?

CONCERN

What are the area's challenges?

OPPORTUNITY

What opportunities do you see for the area?

ROCHESTER, NY
DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

VISIONING SESSION

Downtown Revitalization Initiative
MARCH 2022

PROJECT IDEA MAP



- Project Ideas from City's Application
- A. **Main St** Improvements: Improve public realm and multi-modal access.
 - B. **Dixson St** Improvements: Transform pedestrian and public realm to support adjacent new residential and commercial uses.
 - C. **NW Corner Main and Clinton:** Improve public realm, buildings, and pursue public realm improvements and enhancement opportunities and electric vehicle charging stations.
 - D. **Main Street Commons:** Create new public plaza and pedestrian and bicycle street to support proposed retail/restaurant spaces and increase pedestrian circulation in the district.
 - E. **Convention Center:** Expand and develop additional exhibition space.
- Building Renovation Grant Fund (Awarded):** Support a portion of the renovation and scale renovation or signage projects.
- Several privately-owned structures (renovated):** Renovation of mixed-use to include first floor commercial spaces.

What do you love about this area?

- High potential
- Construction coming and want nice housing

LOVE

What are the area's challenges?

- World wide news
- Convenient Street on St Paul alley
- Hire Post-cops/not actually PD (Ambassador program)
- Corner of S Clinton / Main St.

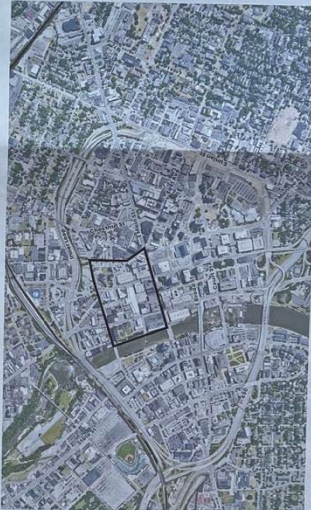
CONCERN

What opportunities do you see for the area?

- Put a store into St Andrews Terrace
- In world wide news location got in a week in 90s station
- Near streetscape, stamped concrete...

OPPORTUNITY

DRI AREA CONTEXT



TOP FIVE PRIORITIES

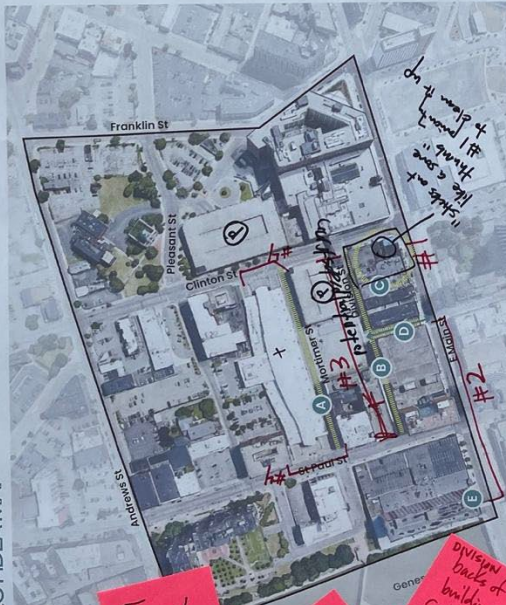
1. Reinvigorate world wide news (convenient store) (Allocate these businesses)
2. Authority around area to secure safety (Ambassador Program)
3. Access parking for new residential buildings in area (Safety)
4. Near streetscape, stamped concrete, more sidewalk
5. Need greenspace

ROCHESTER, NY
DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

VISIONING SESSION

Downtown Revitalization Initiative
MARCH 2022

PROJECT IDEA MAP



- Project Ideas from City's Application
- A. Main St Improvements: Improve public realm and bus and multi-modal access.
 - B. Division St Improvements: Transform pedestrian and public realm to support adjacent new residential and commercial uses.
 - C. NW Corner Main and Clinton: Build new public realm improvements and enhance, such as multimodal transportation and enhance multi-modal charging stations.
 - D. Main Street Corridor: Create new pedestrian connection between East Main Street and Division Street to support and enhance multi-modal circulation in the district.
 - E. Convention Center: Expand and develop additional exhibition space
 - Building Preservation Grant Fund (one-way): Support a portion of the costs of smaller scale renovation, redevelopment, facade improvement or signage projects.
 - Severely privately-owned existing vacant buildings for mixed use to include first floor commercial spaces

TOP FIVE PRIORITIES

1. Restoration E-Main/West of Main
2. Retail/Armenities
3. Pedestrian friendly development
4. Retail near transit center
5. Recreation/Entertainment - pop up along riverway

DRI AREA CONTEXT



LOVE

What do you love about this area?

Transparency
T-Fest
Park
Roc
Handy Village
Parks
Surreal
Pleasant
T-Fest
Roc
Handy Village
Parks
Surreal

CONCERN

What are the area's challenges?

Transparency
T-Fest
Park
Roc
Handy Village
Parks
Surreal

OPPORTUNITY

What opportunities do you see for the area?

Transparency
T-Fest
Park
Roc
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