

VILLAGE OF  
**HOMER**  
BUILDING ON HISTORY

**Central New York Region**  
DRI Round 6 and NY Forward Application  
**Village of Homer, Cortland County**  
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**2. GEOGRAPHIC AREA AND JUSTIFICATION**

Welcome home to Homer! Quaint, bucolic, charming - all appropriate descriptors, yet ones that inevitably fall short in describing the Village’s true nature. Celebrated in book and film as “Homeville” the Village’s broad Main Street is lined by majestic trees and historic mansions that give way to a Village Green that seems to have leapt from the canvas of a Norman Rockwell painting. Restored brick buildings house restaurants, bakeries, boutique shops, and grocers. As a resident was overheard saying recently, Homer “looks like it belongs in a snow globe.” The Village looks forward to building upon its historic small-town character as a catalyst for future development.

Homer is quintessential Americana. A Village of familiarity and tradition. It’s the type of place that residents can return to and feel as if they never left, and strangers can visit and seemingly experience a nostalgia for something they never had. The buildings might be different, the faces might be new, but the togetherness remains. It is not surprising that Homer is the most sought-after place to live in Cortland County. Behind this quiet, comfortable façade is the beating energy of an engaged community building upon its unique character to create a strong future. There is a community-centeredness that, like the adjacent Tioughnioga River, flows naturally with the renovation and repurposing of its existing assets. The stage is set for major redevelopment in Homer’s downtown. The Homer Center for the Arts has become a regional performing arts destination; buildings have been redeveloped with unique residential living units; and new



investment by private developers is driving momentum forward. This has primed the community to take its efforts to the next level by reactivating the riverfront, expanding on its cultural assets, and attracting new residents to call this central New York jewel, home.

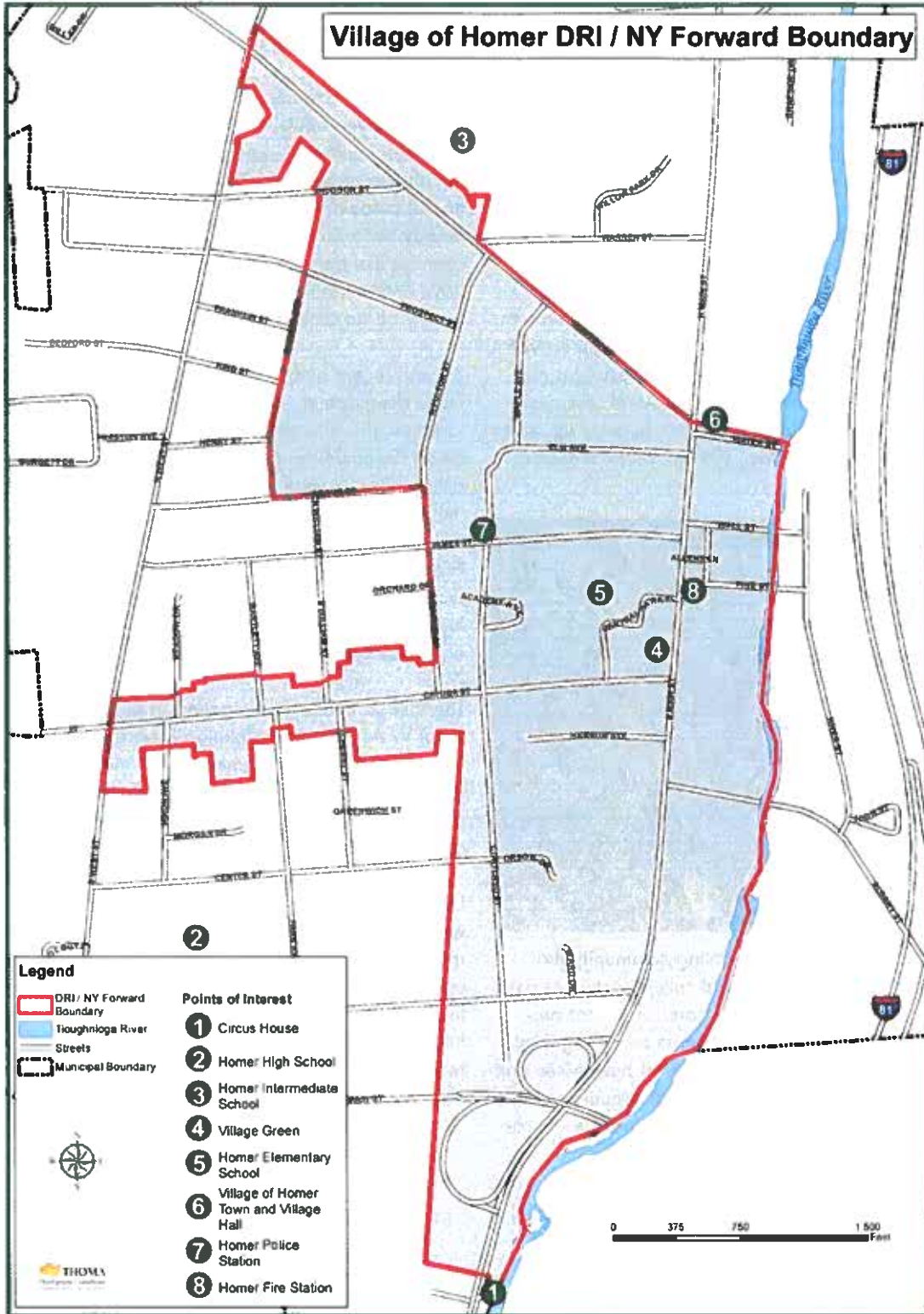
The community has identified a well-defined, walkable 270-acre section of the Village of Homer as both its DRI and NY Forward investment area. This area includes the entirety of both the Old Homer National Register Historic District and the zoned Central Business District, including the historic Village Green. It encompasses a mix of residential, commercial, civic, and religious structures. The eastern boundary begins at Water Street and follows the Tioughnioga River south to the I-81 interchange, ending at the iconic Circus House before following the New York Susquehanna & Western Railway northward. It also extends westward to NYS Route 281 along two essential gateway corridors into the community, Cayuga Street (Route 90, a Scenic Byway) and Clinton Street (Route 41). This area is the core of the Village, includes the primary gateways into the downtown area, and provides great investment potential. Therefore, the Village has determined that this extent of the community is an appropriate investment area for the DRI and NY Forward programs.





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### 3. VISION STATEMENT

Historic. Artistic. Enterprising. Homer is a community that is building on its history to create a stronger future. The Village will leverage its unrivaled character through the continued renovation of its historic buildings and the enhancement of the public realm. The historic and beautiful waterfront will be re-activated and re-connected with the downtown to spur new economic activity. Regional cultural institutions will be strengthened. Most importantly, Homer will be home: Welcoming and walkable neighborhoods with a range of housing choices; a bustling downtown center with vibrant local businesses; a community where residents can live a sustainable life, with everyday goods and services a 15-minute walk or bike ride away; a place to grow up, raise a family, and age in a supportive, vibrant, and connected place. Home.



Homer will be a captivating and exciting community that embraces its plentiful recreational and cultural activities as a foundation to a high quality of life, a community that preserves and celebrates its historic past while providing 21st Century infrastructure to support the needs of businesses and remote workers alike, and a community that encourages and supports visitors to come, stay, and enjoy the unique character of Homer that residents value.

### 4. PAST INVESTMENT AND FUTURE POTENTIAL

The Village of Homer is uniquely positioned to capitalize on prior investments and catalyze future private and public investment within its downtown. Homer is experiencing a downtown renaissance that has been fueled by a concentration of creative individuals and thoughtful public planning. Steady, incremental improvements have been implemented over the last decade. Recent investments and planning efforts have enhanced the Village's charm, character, and existing quality of life amenities.

Several recent and ongoing planning efforts are guiding future development and enhancements in the Village. For instance, the Village adopted the New York State Climate Smart Communities pledge in 2018 and subsequently took actions that resulted in the Village being certified as a Climate Smart Community. Some of the Climate Smart actions include formation of a Climate Smart Communities Task Force; completion of a Government Operations Greenhouse Gas Inventory; adoption of the Unified Solar Permit process; installation of electric vehicle charging stations; and adoption of a Municipal Climate Action Plan.

The Village is also participating in the Tioughnioga River Local Waterfront Revitalization Program. This planning effort is creating a guiding framework for municipalities along the river to protect the riverine environment and better utilize it as a community asset for recreational and economic development purposes.

Past and pending investments in Homer have been aligned with the goals and intentions of recent and ongoing planning efforts in the Village. The investments detailed below are the products of a conscientious planning effort and the resulting unified vision that has been advanced for the future of the Village of Homer. This sampling of investments represents more than \$30 million that has recently, or will be invested in the next five years, in and around the downtown.





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**23 South Main Street Reconstruction** – In 2016, the historic Ames Block was destroyed in a destructive fire that rendered the building unsalvageable. In 2019, Yaman Development undertook a project to completely reconstruct the building from the foundation up. The new 6,200 square foot building required a \$1.7 million investment and now houses six upper floor apartments and one first floor commercial tenant on Main Street. The project utilized private financing, assistance from the Cortland County Industrial Development Agency, and grant funds from Empire State Development.

**Exchange Building Redevelopment** – Over the last two years, DM3 of Cortland, LLC has been involved in a comprehensive renovation project of its buildings located at 19-29 North Main Street. To date, this project has demolished one structurally unsound building on the corner of Water Street and North Main and has restored the remaining buildings at 19-25 North Main Street. This ongoing project is a significant multi-million-dollar mixed-use building restoration and reuse project.



**Barber Block Redevelopment** – The Barber Block is downtown’s most prominent building. From 2017-18, the owners of the Barber Block at 1-5 South Main Street completed an adaptive reuse project of the second and third floors of the historic Main Street anchor building. The long vacant third floor, which originally housed the historic Keator Opera House, was completely renovated, while maintaining the prominent historic performance space, to accommodate three luxury apartments. The second-floor commercial space was also reconfigured and renovated into four new apartments. Including exterior façade renovations, this project required a total investment of over \$1.5 million.



The former Opera House before and after it was renovated into a modern loft apartment

**Microenterprise Assistance Programs** – The Village of Homer has administered two Microenterprise Assistance programs since 2015. Those programs were both funded with Community Development Block Grant funds from the Office of Community Renewal. The programs provided \$340,000 of direct assistance to existing businesses to help with business expansion and to individuals to create new businesses. In total, 15 businesses were assisted, and seven fulltime equivalent jobs were created.

**Route 11 Greenway Corridor** – With assistance from the Environmental Protection Fund, the Village of Homer acquired three blighted parcels of land along the Tioughnioga River at the southern gateway to the Village in 2020. Two of the parcels were occupied by a rundown auto repair shop and the other was the sight of a motel which had burned to the ground in 2015. The Village has demolished the dilapidated structures and is in the process of creating a greenway park along the river. The park will include lighted walking paths, landscaping, and edible fruit trees and bushes. The total investment to date is more than \$400,000, with more investment imminent.



**New York Main Street Program** – The Village of Homer administered two NYMS building renovation programs from 2010 through 2016. Under those programs, fourteen downtown buildings were renovated, and the Village installed a decorative clock along Main Street and renovated the Homer Band Stand. More than \$600,000 was invested into downtown buildings as part of the recent NYMS programs.

**Family Health Network Expansion** – Family Health Network is proposing to construct a new health center in the Village of Homer that will include a primary care facility, specialty care, and lab services all under one roof. The total investment is anticipated to be roughly \$14 million. The facility will serve the residents of Homer and the greater Cortland County area.

**Guthrie Cortland Medical Center** – In 2018 the Guthrie Clinic of Sayre, Pennsylvania formed a partnership with the Cortland Regional Medical Center under which Guthrie is now the parent organization with control of operations. The original proposal from Guthrie included a pledge of \$100 million of investment over the course of the first 5 years. Early developments have included the new construction of the Renzi Cancer Center and exterior building and parking improvements. Guthrie Cortland Medical Center is less than a 5-minute drive from downtown Homer.



**CNY Living History Center** – Located at the southern end of the DRI boundary, the Living History Center has completed more than \$2 million in expansion and renovation work in the last five years. Improvements have included a “firehouse” addition on the south side of the museum space, renovations to the original facility space, parking improvements, and a riverfront garden/seating area along the Tioughnioga River. The Living History Center is actively

planning another \$275,000 of improvements to the adjacent “Tractors of Yesteryear” building and other associated site improvements.

**DOT Roundabout** – The New York DOT is proposing to install a roundabout at the intersection of State Routes 281 and Clinton Street in 2023. The Clinton Street gateway is the main gateway from the north into the Village of Homer. Roughly 9,000 vehicles travel through this intersection daily. The Village will leverage this DOT project with gateway and streetscape improvements along Clinton Street to draw traffic into downtown. The Village will work with DOT to ensure that similar gateway elements are incorporated into the new roundabout.

**Byrne Dairy & Deli** – In 2020, Byrne Dairy constructed a new gas station and convenience store at the corner of NYS Route 90 and Cayuga Street in the Village of Homer. The new gas station facility offers a full-service deli and grocery options. Byrne Dairy invested roughly \$2.6 million into the new 4,200 square foot Homer facility.

**Arbor Brook Flats** – This proposed new housing development will be located at the north end of downtown. The development will build-to-suit 19 duplexes with 38 residential units. Each unit will include its own garage and the housing community will be located on a quiet cul-de-sac within walking distance of downtown. The development will provide low maintenance, modern housing amenities for residents of all ages. The investment is expected to be around \$250,000 per residential unit for a total of about \$9.5 million.

**Public Improvements** – Since 2019, the Village of Homer has invested nearly \$2 million into public improvements such as parks, water and sewer infrastructure, streetscape and pedestrian improvements, downtown lighting, way finding, climate smart initiatives, and other public facilities improvements. These investments resulted in direct improvement of the quality of life for residents in the Village.

**Homer School District** – The school district recently passed a \$26 million capital improvements budget. There are three school facilities within the Village. The funding will be utilized to improve the school buildings, recreational facilities, and parking. The recreation facilities and parking are often utilized by the public during non-school hours and are an important asset to the Village, all within walking distance to Main Street.





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## 5. RECENT OR IMPENDING JOB GROWTH

Although the Village of Homer is largely dominated by residential neighborhoods and small businesses, the Village understands that its downtown is both a center for quality jobs and a tool for attracting and retaining jobs and investment in the community. Main Street is home to over 25 businesses and there are multiple anchor employers located within a short drive of downtown Homer.

There are over 1,700 people who are employed in the Village of Homer. The largest percentage of people employed in the Village work in educational services and healthcare. There is great diversity in area job opportunities represented in or near the Homer DRI/NY Forward area. Jobs include entry level service jobs, maintenance and cleaning positions, teaching and instruction jobs, tech jobs, jobs for administrative professionals, nursing positions, and medical professional jobs, just to highlight a few. A sampling of the job creating entities in, and around downtown Homer is highlighted below.

**SUNY Cortland** - Located just two miles from downtown Homer, SUNY Cortland is the largest employer in Cortland County with over 1,400 employees. SUNY Cortland offers full and part time employment at all income levels including academic instruction positions, administrative staff and leadership, jobs in athletics, facilities and maintenance positions, and food service. The college is currently seeking to fill 44 faculty positions, 36 staff positions, and 43 student employment positions. The College typically hires 60 full-time persons on average annually.

**Guthrie Cortland Medical Center** – The second largest employer in the County, the Guthrie Cortland Medical Center, is located less than three minutes from downtown Homer. In 2019, the 162-bed acute care and 80-bed residential care facility, which was originally known as the Cortland Regional Medical Center, came under the umbrella of the Guthrie Clinic. Guthrie originally pledged \$100,000,000 for improvements to the hospital and the arrangement has already yielded significant dividends with the recent construction of the Renzi Cancer Center. Since 2017, Guthrie Cortland Medical Center has hired over 1,000 people. The hospital is currently seeking to fill an additional 162 vacant positions in the next couple of years. Jobs are

available for physicians, nurses, administrative professionals, facilities and maintenance workers, and food service providers.

**Homer Central School District** – The largest employer located within walking distance of downtown Homer is the Homer Central School district, employing over 400 fulltime staff. All school district buildings are located within the Village and provide in demand jobs for teachers, teaching assistants, maintenance workers, and custodians. The school district has several entry level job openings for keyboard specialists, teaching assistants, grounds workers, and bus drivers.

Located in close proximity to Cortland, job creating initiatives in the city also provide a great opportunity for the residents of the Village of Homer, within a ten-minute drive. The most recent job creating engines in Cortland include the newly established CBD food and beverage facility operated by New York Hemp Oil and the high-tech cable manufacturing venture operated by Seven Valley Specialty Cables. Both companies are being assisted by CDBG Economic Development grants from the Office of Community Renewal. New York Hemp Oil has pledge to create 38 jobs by 2023 and Seven Valley Specialty Cables has pledged the creation of 22 additional jobs. Albany International also employs over 100 people and is located at the southern border of the Village.

It is also important to mention that the Village of Homer is located centrally between the cities of Syracuse and Ithaca. Those cities alone offer thousands of job opportunities to residents of the Village of Homer. For example, Cornell University, just a short 30-minute drive from Homer, has nearly 500 job openings that it is looking to fill in the coming year.

As evidenced above, there are hundreds of diverse job opportunities, at all salary levels, within walking distance or just a short drive from downtown Homer. These job opportunities are critical to supporting and sustaining a strong downtown economy.



## 6. QUALITY OF LIFE

The Village of Homer is a picturesque Village nestled in the rolling hills of Cortland County, and tucked beside the scenic Tioughnioga River. The combination of this bucolic setting and the Village's historic downtown with its tree lined streets, bustling businesses, and cultural events makes Homer an extremely desirable place to live, work, and play. The Village is fortunate to have the following resources:

**Housing Affordability and Type** – The Village's residential neighborhoods include both single and multi-family housing, and the downtown consists of retail on the bottom floor, with residential units on the upper floors. The variety of housing in the downtown supports a diverse residential population including students, low-to-moderate income families, seniors, and professionals. The development and rehabilitation of market rate housing within the downtown has been a top priority for the Village, as they recognize that the availability of new and improved housing is essential to attracting people to Homer. With the reactivation of many upper floor apartments on Main Street, the availability of subsidized senior housing, and the Village's walkability, Homer has become a desirable place to live for people of all ages.



**Commercial, Retail, Restaurants** – Homer's downtown offers visitors and citizens a variety of commercial and retail choices. Main Street is home to the Village Food Market, Homer Men and Boys' clothing outfitters, Bev & Co women's fashion outfitter, many shops, and as several restaurants. The Village offers everything from a sit-down meal at Dasher's restaurant, to a quick stop at the local Chinese restaurant, or maybe dessert at the Village's bakery or chocolate shop. The Village also provides day to day necessities such as two bank branches, a post office, hair salons, barber shops, and a number of other professional services.

**Access to Healthy Food** – The Village of Homer is fortunate to have access to the Village Food Market, a full-service grocery store, and deli right on Main Street. Additionally, the Village has had a weekly Farmer's Market in the summer months, making local produce accessible to those who live within the Village, and those passing through.

**Multi-modal Transportation, Walkability, and Bikeability** – Downtown Homer is compact and walkable, allowing for most daily needs to be met by foot or by bicycle. The Village's sidewalk network is in good shape, with accessible locations and crosswalks in strategic locations. Cortland County Transportation provides bus service between Homer and Cortland, with additional connections to Ithaca. There are additional bus services in Cortland, such as Greyhound, that will also provide longer distance bus services to Syracuse or Binghamton, and beyond.



The Village recently installed a new bus shelter to encourage use of public transportation





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**Abundant Recreational Opportunities** – The Village has several significant parks within walking distance of the Village downtown and two within the DRI study area. Homer parks offer a full range of recreational amenities which truly enhance Village life. Recreational opportunities include ball fields, playground equipment, basketball courts, fishing access, and boating among other items. The Village Green, while not classified as a park, provides abundant open space for picnics, small gatherings, and events.



**Academic, Cultural, and Entertainment Amenities and Events** – Downtown is home to a multitude of events throughout the year that keep the community engaged and proud of their home. Summer brings concerts and musical performances to the Village Green, Farmer's markets, and the Village's popular "Holiday in Homer", held in mid-July. The 2-acre Village Green is filled with vendor's tents, food, entertainment, and hundreds of attendees. In August, the Brockway Truck Show brings people from all over the country to celebrate the place where Brockway trucks were built. Main Street was lined with these iconic trucks, with the Village bustling with activity and food vendors throughout the weekend. The end of summer brings the Village's "Magic on Main", a celebration of community where the entire main street is closed and replaced with food, fun, and entertainment for the entire family. Winter brings the Village's "Winterfest", with a parade, bonfire, ice skating, sled racing, food, music, and fun. The Village also sprinkles other small events throughout the year as well, reinforcing that small town, familiar feel. The Village also benefits from its nearby academic institutions. Tompkins Cortland Community College is located 12 miles from Downtown, and SUNY Cortland is a 5-minute drive from the center of downtown.

**Arts and Culture** – To go with the many events within the Village, Homer Center for the Arts also gives the community life as an economic, social, and cultural anchor on the Village's Main Street. Formally established in 2003, and located in a 130-year-old former Baptist Church building, the Homer Center for the Arts offers a unique and affordable venue attracting top entertainers from across the globe. With plans for expansion and future shows, the Center for the Arts is another bright spot in the Homer downtown.



**Access to Health Care Facilities** – The Village core is located approximately 2.3 miles from Guthrie Cortland Medical Center and 2 miles from medical offices on Fisher Ave. Additionally, the Village has several smaller practices for various medical needs closer to the Village.

**Community Design that Caters to All** – The Village of Homer is intrinsically designed as a place that someone could work, live, recreate, and entertain without ever having to leave the charming streets and small shops to do so. Amenities and events are available for all ages, abilities, and income levels. Important assets within walking distance include the Village Food Market, Homer Center for the Arts, libraries, churches, restaurants, banks, a post office, parks, shops, and a plethora of events throughout the year that cater to all.

**Broadband Accessibility** – The Village has broadband accessibility by way of fiber optic cable. Broadband is an important asset to the Village of Homer and ensures that residents, families, and students in the Village can stay connected with the fastest and most reliable technology available.



## 7. SUPPORTIVE LOCAL POLICIES

The Village of Homer encourages local policies that are fair, modern, and consistent, ensuring that all citizens are included and accommodated. The Village has a long history of proactively developing plans, policies, and initiatives to protect and enhance its quality of life, with strong emphasis on the Central Business District. These supportive policies have been put in place to steer the Village's development toward a successful and sustainable future.

These policies include:

### PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION DOCUMENTS AND POLICIES

**Comprehensive Plan** – The Village of Homer's Comprehensive Plan was written in 2010. This long-range plan was drafted to provide an in-depth look at the Village's existing conditions, and provide a snapshot in time, with attainable goals and recommendations for the future. The Comprehensive Plan is a wide-ranging document, covering topics such as housing, community development, land use and zoning, economics, and community services. Additionally, the Village has applied for a Smart Growth Community Planning Grant in the 2022 Consolidated Funding round to update the Comprehensive Plan.

**Tioughnioga River Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)** – The Tioughnioga River passes directly through the center of Homer's downtown, making waterfront revitalization an important goal. The City of Cortland, Town of Preble, Town of Homer, Village of Homer, Town of Cortlandville, and Village of Marathon are working together to create an overall plan for the river. The goals for waterfront revitalization primarily focus on improved public access to water resources, stimulating tourism and economic development in downtown, protecting natural resources, and improving pedestrian safety to and from waterfront areas. The DRI / NY Forward project area is within this LWRP boundary. The goals of the LWRP will guide all riverfront planning and infrastructure projects undertaken by the Village. The LWRP funding along with Village resources will ensure the protection, enhancement, and reconnection of the downtown to the Tioughnioga River waterfront.



### Village of Homer Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Master Plan

– This plan, written in 2010, includes inventories, programs, priority projects, design guidance, and a plan for implementation that will enhance community livability through alternative transportation options, a network of open spaces, and promotion of healthy active lifestyles. The Village has made considerable progress implementing the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Improvements in downtown infrastructure include reconstruction of sidewalks, improved crosswalks, and shared lane markings for bicycles, wayfinding signage, and intersection improvements. The plan also involves linkages to the NYS Peacemaker Trail project.

**Zoning** – The Village recently worked with General Code to modernize, reorient, and digitize the Village Code Book. The Village took a close look at the zoning, as General Code worked with them, and are currently in the process of analyzing the code for updates.





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**Sustainability** – The Village of Homer has been designated a Clean Energy Community since 2018 and a Certified Bronze Climate Smart Community since last year. The Village Board engaged a Green Team consisting of municipal leaders, students from the High School, residents, and SUNY ESF staff to assist in implementing actions needed for certification. The Village has installed its first dual-port electric vehicle charging station in a public parking lot and is in the process of converting to LED street light fixtures. LEDs or other high-efficiency lighting has been installed in all municipal buildings.



**Downtown Organization** – The Homer Business Association is highly active in the Village. The business association makes recommendations to the Homer Village Board of Trustees regarding policies and actions that would improve economic vitality by enhancing the experience, image, and lifestyle of Downtown Homer. Along with the Homer Business Association, the Village has established an Economic Development Committee comprised of the Mayor, Trustees, and local business leaders. This is a diverse group that brings vision and expertise to all initiatives.

**Tax Incentives** – The Village understands that, despite the need to generate property taxes, it must also provide incentives to businesses with the knowledge that short term incentives yield results in the long term. The Village actively participates in researching tax incentives that would benefit homeowners, building owners, and business owners.

## COMPLETE STREETS PRINCIPLES

All of the Village's plans that include transportation elements include and encourage the concept of Complete Streets. The Village has a robust sidewalk system and wide streets. It makes logical sense to engage bicyclists, joggers, and walkers in a way that will allow them to move throughout the Village, and if possible, in a completely safe and healthy way.

## PRESENCE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION LAWS

The Village of Homer has a long history of diversity and requires all areas of the Village government to remain non-discriminatory. The Village is an equal opportunity employer where discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, age, marital status, disability, or veteran status is not permitted. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment. The Village follows the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as the Fair Housing Act. Homer also adheres by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, prohibiting discrimination based on disability in programs and activities conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or by those that receive financial assistance from HUD. In addition, the Village also follows Section 3 of the HUD Act of 1968, which requires that recipients of certain HUD financial assistance, to the greatest extent feasible, provide job training, employment, and contracting opportunities for low- or very-low-income residents in connection with projects in their neighborhoods.

## ELIGIBILITY FOR AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY CERTIFICATION

According to the 2020 Census, the Village of Homer's median age is 52.1 years old, and while this is indicative of an aging population, the Village of Homer has and will continue to keep the population engaged, involved, and active. The Village prides itself on its accessibility, as well as its continuous cycle of improvements that serve the community regardless of age or limitation. The Village encourages people of all ages to participate as stakeholders or board members, and prides itself in that inclusion. The downtown has made great strides in allowing for easy entry to most buildings, and encourages investment in elevators, ramps, and accessible amenities to all buildings in the downtown. The Village is a community for all ages, and reflects that in its policies, services, and support, and would be an ideal candidate for an Age Friendly Community Certification.



## 8. PUBLIC SUPPORT

The Village's revitalization efforts are the product of years of work and significant public input dating from the development of its Comprehensive Plan in 2010. The development of the Comprehensive Plan included significant public input and set the Village on its current path. The development of the DRI is building on the foundation set by the comprehensive plan and is the product of a community-wide effort. Over two dozen stakeholders guided development of the vision and revitalization strategy through a series of meetings during the spring and summer of 2022. The Village also issued a public call for projects, directly mailing every commercial property owner in the DRI area, to solicit input on the future of the downtown and to identify specific projects to further its revitalization goals. In addition, the community also developed an online survey that was completed by more than 100 residents. This survey requested input on the current state of downtown, and what residents foresaw as the future of downtown. The steering committee held two public meetings to gather additional public input and support. One meeting was held virtually and one in-person at the Center for the Arts in downtown to ensure that all residents had an equal opportunity to participate in a format that best suited their needs. The meetings provided information regarding the DRI process and created a framework for residents to help guide the direction of the downtown as well as identify initiatives proposed in the application. In summary, Homer residents, business owners, developers, and institutional leaders agree regarding the direction of the community and the downtown. The development of this DRI is based on years of public opinion and the projects proposed herein enjoy broad support within the community. Letters of support from many community leaders are attached and are a testament to this support.



## 9. TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

Homer residents are proud of their community today but are not satisfied with the status quo. They are ready to build upon their history and culture to launch downtown to the next level. Residents are seeking to leverage the historic buildings, cultural attractions, and the riverfront to create a downtown for the 21st century. With DRI/NY Forward assistance, the Village can truly be one of the finest in the region and beyond. To accomplish that goal, the Village has engaged its citizenry, non-profit organizations, and the development community to establish a vision for the future and has identified a series of interrelated public and private projects to achieve that vision. These transformational opportunities have been carefully crafted so that each investment builds upon and supports the others. Together, they will reactivate the waterfront, restore historic buildings, create new job opportunities, increase sustainability, and reimagine public spaces. The projects are realistic and achievable and have support from developers, property owners, the Village, and the community at large. Homer is prepared, with DRI assistance, to achieve great success. These transformational opportunities are detailed below.

### PRIVATE PROJECTS

**Boutique Hotel & Spa** – Local developer and entrepreneur, Dan McNeil, of DM3 of Cortland, LLC, is proposing the adaptive reuse of two nineteenth century downtown buildings. The project will redevelop the Manor at Briggs Hall, originally constructed in 1825, and an adjacent residential structure to establish a new downtown boutique hotel and spa. The two structures will be renovated and connected by a new historically correct addition as depicted in the project renderings. The hotel will offer 20 to 30 rooms and a luxury spa in the heart of the Village of Homer. The Village views this as an anchor project of the DRI application as it will have a profound impact on the economy and liveliness of the historic downtown. **Project Sponsor: DM3 of Cortland, LLC; Timeline: 2-3 years; Cost: \$9,000,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$2,500,000, CDBG Economic Development, ESD Capital, Cash Equity, Bank Financing.**







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**Brewster House Independent Living Facility** – The Elizabeth Brewster House is an adult care assisted living facility located in a historic building on the river. To fully meet the needs of seniors in the community, they are proposing to construct a new 20-unit independent living facility. The building will be constructed at the rear of the existing property or on part of the site now occupied by the vacant Jaline Togs factory. This will allow independent living residents to access facilities at the Brewster House. *Project Sponsor: Elizabeth Brewster House; Timeline: 2-4 years; Cost: \$8,200,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$1,500,000, Developer Equity, Homes and Community Renewal*

**Jaline Togs Factory Redevelopment** – This former textile plant has sat vacant on Pine Street for many years. The 14,000sf building and 1.5-acre lot are key redevelopment opportunities in the downtown. The site will be redeveloped to support new housing opportunities, including the aforementioned Brewster House Independent Living Facility at the south end of the site and new market rate townhouses lining Pine Street. The 115 feet of riverfront will be used for the proposed Homer Riverwalk and promenade. Redeveloping this property will also improve the character of Pine Street, an identified corridor connecting Main Street to the river, that is slated for streetscape improvements. Costs for this project do not include the Riverwalk or Brewster House components. *Project Sponsor: Bruce Crandall/Yaman Development; Timeline: 2-4 years; Cost: \$3,200,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$1,200,000, Developer Equity, Restore NY, Homes and Community Renewal, New York Main Street.*

**Village Food Market** – This downtown grocery store has been an anchor in the Village for 133 years. Following a major façade renovation a number of years ago, they are now proposing an interior renovation that will include new finishes, renovation of vacant space for a new deli/hot food lines, and an upgraded rear entrance. The goal is to reimagine the look of the 1899 grocery while expanding offerings. *Project Sponsor: Village Food Market; Timeline: 1-3 years; Cost: \$850,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$340,000, Developer Equity, ESD, New York Main Street.*



**RH Miller Mixed-Use Redevelopment** – Homer Development LLC., owner of the 4.5-acre property at 43 James Street, has been in negotiations with various developers regarding the former R.H. Miller Industrial site. The property includes several buildings that are currently vacant. The proposed project is a mixed-use commercial/residential development including market rate apartments and commercial space. *Project Sponsor: Homer Development, LLC; Timeline: 2-4 years; Cost: \$6,750,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$1,500,000, Brownfield Tax Credits, Restore NY, ESD Capital Funds, Private Equity.*

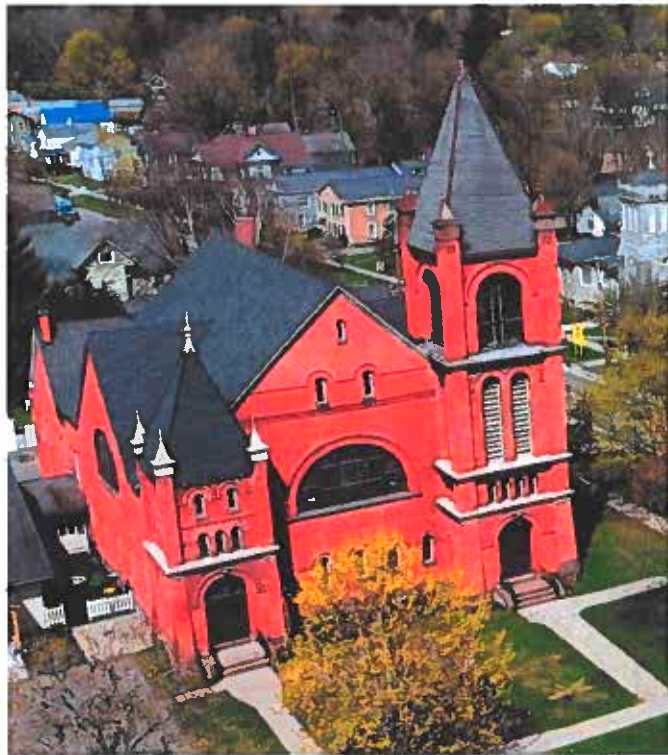
**Little White Church Restoration** – The Center for the Arts of Homer is proposing renovation, reconstruction, and repair of the Little White Church building located on the Village Green. The structure referred to as the Little White Church Community Center is located on the west side of Central Park Street, facing east toward the Village Green, and consists of the original 1832 episcopal church sanctuary as well as the attached 20th century Parish Hall and connecting link. The church building, at 190 years old, is the oldest and only original building on the Village Green. Current plans are to restore the building and use it as an assembly and performance space for the Homer Center for the Arts. Repairs include the following: 1. Complete foundation repair; 2. Reconstruction of the porch and steps in the link between buildings; 3. Reconstruction of the front steps of the church; 4. Renovation of the link, enclosing basement stairs; 5. Roof repairs and gutter installation; and 6. ADA improvements including bathroom renovations and installation of a ramp. *Project Sponsor: Homer Center for the Arts; Timeline: 2-3 years; Cost: \$1,120,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$560,000, Capital Campaign, Environmental Protection Fund, Historic Tax Credits.*





**Homer Center for the Arts Exterior Restoration –**

The Center for the Arts of Homer is a local anchor institution in the Village of Homer, providing arts and entertainment from all over the world. The Center for the Arts is located in a 130-year-old church at 72 South Main Street. The owners are planning to restore the exterior of the building by repairing missing and delaminated stone, washing the stonework, re-pointing brick masonry, and caulking specific areas in need of repair. Additionally, the Center for the Arts is proposing to replace existing exterior signage to provide wayfinding that will fit in with the character of the surrounding historic neighborhood. *Project Sponsor: Homer Center for the Arts; Timeline: 2-3 years; Cost: \$350,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$275,000, Capital Campaign, Environmental Protection Fund.*



**Circus House Restoration –** The owner of the property is proposing to restore and redevelop the famed "Circus House". The 9,800 SF Circus House, located just off Exit 12 of I-81 at the gateway into Homer and Cortland, is a unique two and a half story octagonal building that was constructed as the winter home for the Sig Sautelle Circus and housed everything from elephants to trapeze artists. Last used as an antique store, it is currently vacant and deteriorating. It has been listed by the Preservation Association of Central New York as an "Eight That Can't Wait" historic structure in jeopardy. The current owner is proposing to fully renovate the structure with commercial office space on the first floor and residential units on the upper floor. The project will remove a significant blight on the community and restore one of Homer's most beloved structures to productive use. *Project Sponsor: Kimberly Cawley Trust; Timeline: 1-3 years; Cost: \$1,500,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$500,000, Historic Tax Credits, Restore NY, ESD Capital Funds.*







# VILLAGE OF HOMER

BUILDING ON HISTORY

**Brockway Factory Redevelopment** – 121 South Main Street is a long vacant and blighting building near the downtown’s southern gateway. The 1800’s building is integral to Homer’s history as it was the original site of the Brockway Carriage Work, which grew into the storied Brockway Truck Company. The Brockway Museum at the CNY Living History Center is located only a half mile south from the site, and the annual Brockway Truck show has drawn thousands into the community. The structure will be renovated and restored to be used as a mixed-use residential and commercial building, preserving an important piece of local history, and improving the gateway to downtown. *Project Sponsor: DM3 of Cortland, LLC; Timeline: 2-3 years; Cost: \$1,500,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$700,000, Cash Equity, Bank Financing, ESD, Historic Tax Credit*



**Holistic Wellness Center** – A private development team is proposing to renovate the property at 8 North Main Street to accommodate a new age wellness retail business. The project will renovate the existing residential structure to create a storefront that interacts with the existing historic downtown vibes and an interior that can accommodate the proposed retail space. Once the space is renovated, the new retail business will offer the sale of local artisan wares, pottery, specialty gifts, glassware, and herbal remedies. *Project Sponsor: Private Developer; Timeline: 1-2 years; Cost: \$150,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$60,000, CDBG Small Business, Bank Financing.*

**American Legion** – This historic building is located on Main Street across from the Center for the Arts. It is used as a community gathering space by a wide range of local organizations. Its upper floor, multi-use room can accommodate 120 people. It is served by a commercial kitchen and can be utilized as an emergency shelter as needed. The building is not ADA accessible. A new elevator will be installed to provide full access to the building. The Legion will also install a new monument sign to replace its existing sign. The new sign will be more in keeping with the standards of the historic district. *Project Sponsor: American Legion; Timeline: 2-3 years; Cost: \$150,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$100,000, American Legion Equity.*



**HomerWorks** – This proposed minority & woman-owned coworking space will support freelancers, remote workers, and aspiring entrepreneurs by providing affordable work-spaces, meeting rooms, and educational offerings on all aspects of building a business. The +/- 2,000 SF space will offer community members a place to network, learn, and socialize together. Funds will be used to complete the interior buildout of the coworking space as well as for fixtures, furniture, and equipment. The project sponsor had identified two potential locations for the facility: 45 James Street adjacent to the planned RH Milled mixed-use redevelopment, or 121 South Main Street, the Brockway Factory, also proposed for redevelopment via the DRI. *Project Sponsor: Liz Arnold; Timeline: 1-2 years; Cost: \$135,000; Funding Sources: DRI \$95,000, Developer Equity*



## PUBLIC PROJECTS

**Homer Riverwalk** – The Tioughnioga River runs along the eastern edge of downtown Homer but has been a largely overlooked resource. A primary goal of the Village is to re-activate the waterfront and to improve the physical and functional connections to the downtown. A main component of this effort is a proposed Homer Riverwalk. The Riverwalk will run 1,500 feet from the Homer Center for the Arts on Main Street, to the riverbank, and along the river to Wall Street in the heart of downtown. This will include 800 feet of paved trail along the water, providing views of the river and the historic lenticular truss bridges that carry Pine and Wall Street over the Tioughnioga. While most of the Riverwalk will be naturally landscaped to celebrate the peaceful beauty of the waterfront, the intersection of the Riverwalk and Pine Street will be developed into a formal waterfront promenade and gathering space. The brick-paved promenade will measure approximately 15'x30' on each side of Pine Street. Pavers will extend across Pine Street, creating a shared vehicle-pedestrian space. The promenade will include benches and public art to create a waterfront focal point and destination. Trail heads will be developed on Main Street near the Center for the Arts, at the central downtown parking lot, and at Wall Street. The Riverwalk will be developed on public and private lands. Existing private landowners, all institutional or commercial owners, are supportive of the proposed Riverwalk. *Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 2-4 years; Cost: \$1,750,000; Other Funding Sources: LWRP, EPF, Recreation Trails Program.*



**Streetscape Improvements** – In order to ensure that public spaces meet the same high standards as the rest of Homer's historic built environment and to support connectivity goals, the Village will undertake selective streetscape improvements as detailed below:

- **Pine Street and Wall Street** – Both of these narrow streets run for only 450 feet from Main Street to the riverfront, where historic one lane bridges cross the river. For years, these streets have been relegated to secondary status rather than important connections to one of the Village's main assets, the river. As part of the Village's strategy to reconnect Main Street to the river, these streets will be redeveloped with new curbing, sidewalks, decorative lighting, and landscaping. The improvements will provide a welcoming and attractive pathway to draw people to the river. The Pine Street improvements will connect directly to the waterfront promenade that will be developed as part of the Riverwalk.
- **Main Street** – The eastern side of Main Street between Wall Street and Pine Street is the primary downtown commercial block. Proposed improvements to this 200-foot section of the street will include selective new curbing and sidewalk replacement, handicapped curb cuts, and new street furniture.

*Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 2-4 years; Cost: \$300,000; Other Funding Sources: Village In-kind, Federal Intermodal Funds.*



Pine Street is in need of streetscape improvements to provide a welcoming connection to the river. Jaline Togs building on the right is also slated for redevelopment.





# VILLAGE OF HOMER

BUILDING ON HISTORY

**Downtown Gateway Improvements** – The gateways into downtown Homer are incongruent with the charming character of the community. The Village is proposing to develop uniform community gateways that match the character of the Village.

- **Cayuga Street (Route 90) at Route 281** –

This street connects Main Street to Rt. 281, a major highway commercial route through the west end of Homer. Cayuga Street is the eastern terminus of the Scenic Byway. This Rt. 90/Rt. 281 intersection is typical highway commercial development and provides no indication that the historic downtown is only 1/3 of a mile east. New masonry and wrought iron structures, inspired by the entrance to the historic cemetery across the street, will flank each side of Cayuga Street. Six hundred linear feet of new curbing will extend from Rt. 90 down Cayuga Street for 300 feet. Landscaping and decorative lighting fixtures will be installed along the same stretch. This will clearly denote Cayuga Street as a primary entranceway into the downtown. The Village also considers the intersection of Clinton Street and Rt. 281, north of Cayuga Street, a primary gateway as well. NYS DOT has proposed to convert that intersection to a roundabout. The Village is working with DOT to ensure that similar gateway elements are included in the DOT reconstruction of that gateway.

- **North and South Main Street** – The I-81 Exit 12 Interchange on South Main Street leaves visitors from the interstate facing modern commercial structures with no indication of the community's historic character, on full display a mere 200 feet north. A new masonry entrance sign and landscaping will be installed opposite the I-81 off-ramp. Asphalt medians between the curb and sidewalk will be replaced with grass medians, providing this southern gateway with the same sense of place found elsewhere on Main Street. Similar masonry structures will be installed on North Main Street near the Town Hall. *Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 2-3 years; Cost: 950,000; Other; Funding Sources: Federal Intermodal Funds, NYS DOT.*



**Downtown Parking Lot Enhancements** – The central parking lot for the downtown is located between Wall and Pine Streets. This lot is unattractive, poorly signed, and poorly laid out. To maximize use of the limited parking available, the Village will upgrade this lot, including new planting beds and landscaping, lighting, new fencing, new signage, and restriping to accommodate more vehicles. *Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 1-2 years; Cost: 550,000; Other; Funding Sources: Village In-kind.*

**Pedestrian Enhancements** – As a sustainably-focused community, the Village wants to encourage walking and biking as alternatives to driving. There is a need to increase pedestrian safety. New accessible curb cuts, and high visibility crosswalks with activated lights will be installed along Main Street at the Center for the Arts to connect to the Riverwalk, at the Village Green near the elementary school, and at the intersection of James/Main. The Village will also use these crosswalks as an opportunity for creative placemaking. *Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 2-3 years; Cost: \$750,000; Other Funding Sources: Federal Intermodal Funds, NYS DOT.*



Standard utilitarian features, such as crosswalks, will be used as an opportunity for creative placemaking.



**Homer Festival Grounds** – The Village owns a 2.3-acre site on Main Street across from the Homer Center for the Arts and the Village Green. This site has an administrative office, basketball courts, parking, and a recreation building/picnic pavilion, but is poorly laid out. It has 230 feet of river frontage. This is a prime location in the downtown and the Village wishes to maximize its potential. It will be reimagined into a multi-purpose public space. The basketball courts will be relocated to a new recreation park and that area will be used to consolidate parking. The waterfront will become the southern terminus of the Riverwalk. The existing recreation building/pavilion will be upgraded and publicly accessible restrooms will be constructed. New lighting and landscaping will be installed. This area will be used for needed overflow parking for the Center for the Arts, a trailhead for the Riverwalk, and a public gathering space for events and festivals. The Center for the Arts is looking to utilize this area for outdoor events. *Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 3-4 years; Cost: \$1,000,000; Other Funding Sources: Village In-kind, EPF.*



This area is used for fairs, festivals and community gatherings but is disjointed and unattractive. It will be reimagined using DRI funds.

**Recreation Park** – As detailed above, the Village needs to relocate its popular downtown basketball courts to allow that prime location to be better utilized. Public input during the DRI development process identified a strong desire to maintain recreational amenities in the core of the community where they can be accessed by all. The Village will develop a recreation park including the two relocated basketball courts, two pickle ball courts, and a skate park/pump track. The Village has identified a former vacant industrial site near the Intermediate School as the prime location for this facility. There is sufficient acreage for future expansion. *Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 2-3 years; Cost: \$975,000; Other Funding Sources: EPF.*

**Electric Vehicle Charging Stations** – Sales of electric cars doubled from 2020 to 2021 with over 6 million units sold last year alone in the United States. As part of the Village's decarbonization efforts, modern high-speed EV charging stations will be installed in several locations. An estimated 6 DC fast charge stations will be installed at key points within the downtown. *Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 1-2 years; Cost: \$260,000; Other Funding Sources: NYSEERDA.*

**Building Renovation Program** – The Village will establish a building renovation program to provide matching grants to individual downtown buildings to upgrade facades, install new signage, and undertake interior renovations. As part of Homer's public call for projects, several property owners indicated a desire to improve buildings in the downtown. It is estimated that 6-8 buildings will be assisted through this program. *Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 2-4 years; Cost: \$600,000; Other Funding Sources: New York Main Street Program.*

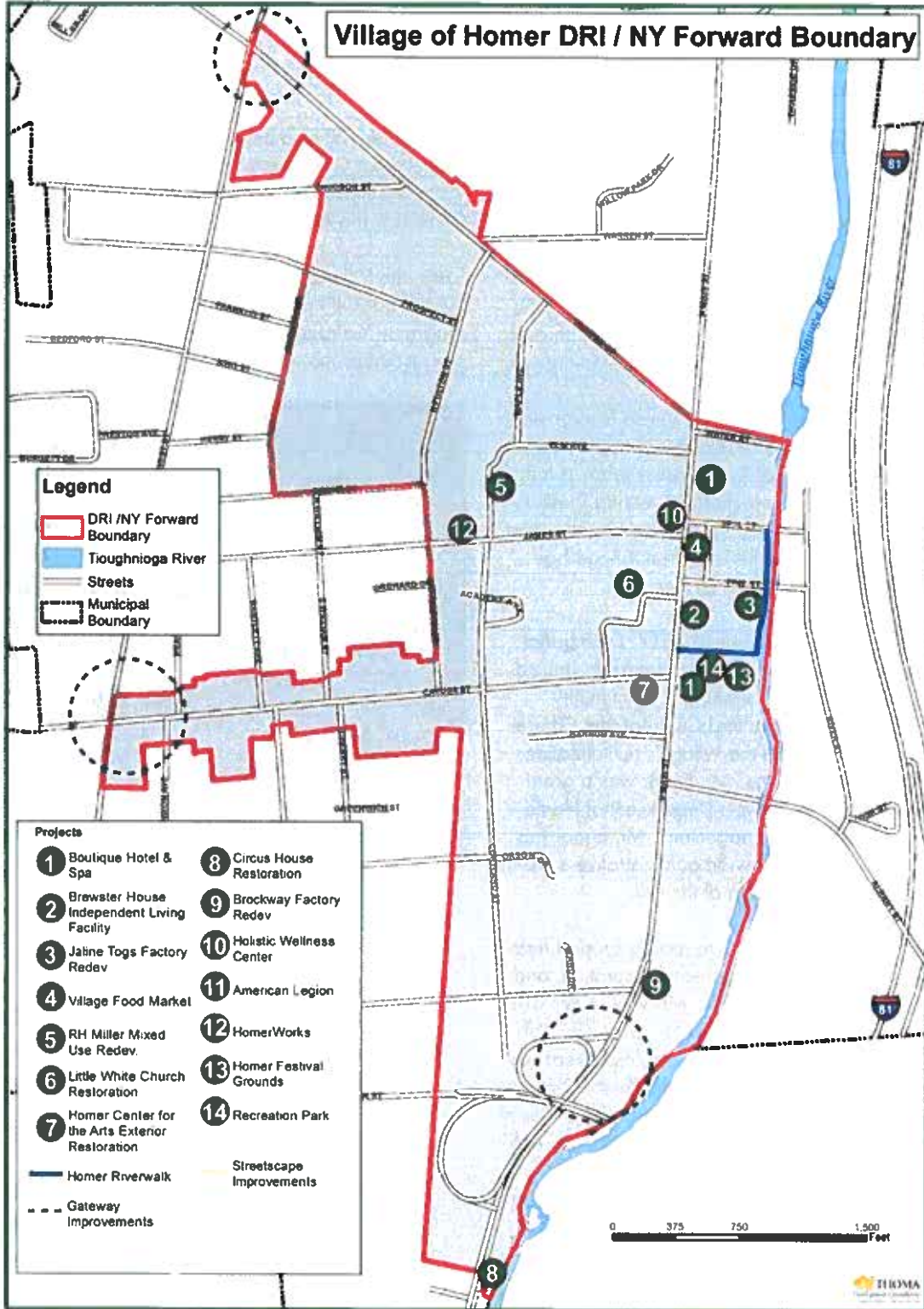
**Marketing and Branding** – Homer's charming character is not well-known outside Cortland County. With the development of a new boutique hotel, a riverwalk, and expanded cultural infrastructure, the Village needs to establish its brand and better market its unique assets. *Project Sponsor: Village of Homer; Timeline: 1-2 years; Cost: \$75,000; Other Funding Sources: Market NY, NYSCA, Cortland Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cortland County Chamber of Commerce.*







VILLAGE OF  
**HOMER**  
 BUILDING ON HISTORY





## 10. ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

The Village of Homer, with the support of its partners, is fully qualified and prepared to implement the DRI should funds be awarded. The community has the capacity to develop a visionary and yet attainable investment strategy as demonstrated by previous planning efforts. Upon award and final development of the investment strategy, the Village can expeditiously implement resulting public contracts, and work with the private sector to ensure that individual private contracts move forward quickly. This confidence in implementing the DRI funding stems from the experience the Village staff and officials have with successfully implementing past initiatives.

Mayor Hal McCabe has guided the Village as Mayor since 2017 and is the current Executive Director of the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. He has a long history of public administration including working in every level of government from local to federal. He is well suited to guide the implementation of the DRI. The Village has made significant progress under his leadership.

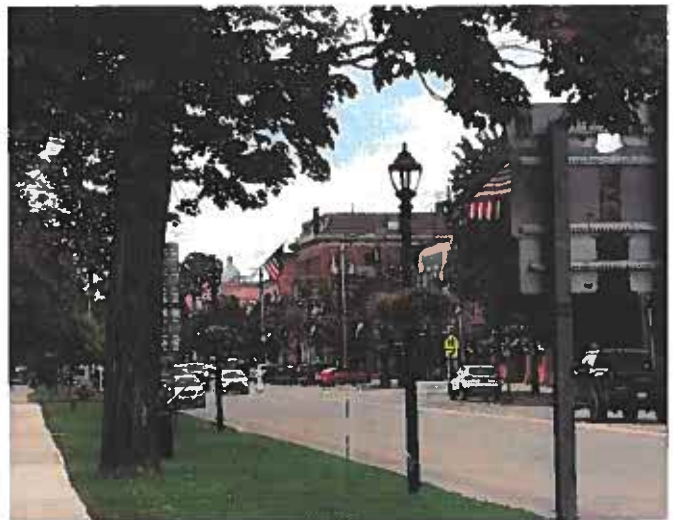
Dan Egnor has been Village Clerk since 2017. During that time, he has administered numerous grant programs, including Restore NY, New York Main Street, and Community Development Block Grant Microenterprise Programs. These programs have greatly furthered the Village's revitalization efforts. Prior to joining the Village, Mr. Egnor was a grant administrator with the State of Iowa's Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Mr. Egnor has the qualifications necessary to provide administrative support to ensure the proper implementation of the DRI.

The Village of Homer is also fortunate to receive support from the Cortland County Business Development Corporation, and its executive director, Garry VanGorder. Mr. VanGorder was named executive director of the BDC and President/CEO of the Cortland County IDA in 2009 after serving eight years as executive director of the Cortland County Chamber of Commerce. Prior to joining the Chamber, he was a staff member of the Metropolitan Development Association, Central New York's premier regional economic development entity now known as Centerstate CEO. Mr. VanGorder also served as the Co-Chair for the City of Cortland's Downtown Revitalization Initiative and is intimately familiar with the mechanics and processes

of implementing a successful DRI program. Mr. VanGorder and other staff at the BDC will work closely with the Village to implement the DRI.

The Village will also be supported by the Cortland County Chamber of Commerce, the Cortland Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and non-profit partners such as the Homer Center for the Arts.

Lastly, the Village has working relationships with several outside consulting firms with past experience with the DRI program, including Thoma Development Consultants. These are resources that the Village can draw upon as needed.







VILLAGE OF  
**HOMER**  
BUILDING ON HISTORY

**11. LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

**Darren "Hal" McCabe**  
Mayor  
Mayor@HomerNY.org

Village Office  
31 N. Main Street  
Homer, NY 13077  
Phone: 607-749-3322  
www.HomerNY.org



Village Police: 607-749-2022  
Newton Water Works: 607-749-2511  
Glenwood Cemetery: 607-749-3517  
Streets and Parks: 607-749-3813  
Recreation: 607-749-2161  
Codes: 607-745-3177  
Homer Fire Department: 607-749-3121

September 23, 2022

Mr. James Fayle  
Regional Director  
Empire State Development Corporation  
620 Erie Blvd W # 112  
Syracuse, NY 13204

Dear Mr. Fayle:

As the Mayor of the Village of Homer, it is my pleasure to submit the Village's application to the CNY Regional Economic Development Council for nomination to Governor Hochul's Downtown Revitalization Initiative Round 6 and NY Forward program. Upon your review of our submission, I believe that you will find that the Village's past, present, and proposed efforts will place the downtown in a favorable position to capitalize on the investment provided by the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and NY Forward.

I have always made a point to recognize the successes of our wonderful downtown. Downtown Homer embraces the spirit of the Village; it is a gathering place for residents; it is walkable from all corners; and as a center of arts and culture in the County, downtown Homer attracts people from around the County and beyond. For those reasons, we have invested heavily in Main Street, and we believe that our efforts have placed our downtown on the verge of great success.

The Village, in partnership with private sector investors, has completed many downtown projects in recent years, and we are anticipating several more that will come to fruition in the very near future. I trust that the Regional Economic Development Council will recognize the foundation for success that has been laid in downtown Homer and see that the Downtown Revitalization Initiative or NY Forward will result in lasting measurable impacts.

I am honored to submit this application to Governor Hochul's Downtown Revitalization Initiative / NY Forward. On behalf of the Village of Homer, and all the members of the Homer community who have contributed to this application, I would like to thank you and the Regional Council for your consideration of this submission.

Very truly yours,

Hal McCabe  
Mayor, Village of Homer