

Meeting Summary

Local Planning Committee #2

August 12, 2026

ATTENDEES

LPC Members	NYS and Consultants
• Jeffrey M. Lanigan • Charles Green • Robert Angelicola • Steven Bulger • Jennifer DeWeerth • Alicia Dicks • Bruce Hairston • Tami Lucia • Danielle Martin • Amy O'Shaughnessy • Cameron Stewart	• Stefan Lutter, DOS • Paul Bengtson, DOS • Allison Madmoune, ESD • Sam Gordon, EDR • Laura Lourenco, EDR • Aidan McKibbin, EDR • Cheyenne Steria, MRB

OUTCOMES AND DECISIONS

- The LPC identified year-round waterfront activation, additional dining and entertainment, trail and boater amenities, and stronger concentrations of complementary businesses as major opportunities for the DRI area.
- Bellamy Harbor Park should continue to be explored as a flexible, multifunctional destination that can support events, boating services, recreation, and winter activities.
- The Open Call for Projects was extended through August 28, 2026, to allow additional time for submissions and promotion.

Meeting start: 3:01

- Welcome, Code of Conduct, Schedule Updates
 - The co-chairs opened the meeting and read the preamble.

- The planning process remains in the information-gathering stage. Desktop review of existing data and plans is underway.
- The Open Call for Projects remains active. LPC members and partners were encouraged to continue promoting it because submissions had been limited.
- The consultant team noted that draft goals would be discussed at the meeting and presented at Open House #1.
- DRI Area Snapshot
 - The consultant team reviewed the history and evolution of the DRI area, including the canal, canal-related industry and iron production, Griffiss, Fort Stanwix, and more recent development.
 - Existing planning and policy documents shaping the area include the City master and comprehensive plans, zoning, the Brownfield Opportunity Area plan, parks planning, the housing market strategy, and planning for the technology park near Griffiss.
- Character of DRI Area
 - The presentation reviewed the district's design character, zoning, and existing land-use pattern.
 - Brownfields remain a defining legacy of the area's industrial past, while cleaned up and publicly owned sites may create opportunities for private investment, new activity, and growth in the tax base.
 - Parks and recreation assets include Bellamy Harbor Park, the Empire State Trail, and other regional trail and byway connections.
- Transportation & Access
 - The presentation highlighted major thoroughfares, the train station, and the need to consider the experience of bicyclists, boaters, and pedestrians.
 - LPC comments reinforced the importance of trail connections, water access, and amenities that encourage visitors to stop and spend time in Rome.
- Demographic & Economic Trends
 - Rome has experienced slight population decline, with a rate of loss that has outpaced the county and State. The share of older residents is increasing.
 - The poverty rate is higher and household income is lower than county and State benchmarks.
 - Employment is growing, led in part by government and computer-systems-related work. Chobani is expected to add approximately 1,000 jobs by 2029, and semiconductor-sector growth may also affect the regional economy.

- Members asked whether government employment figures include government contractors and Oneida Indian Nation employment.
 - New jobs and additional housing will increase demand for community services and infrastructure.
- Housing
 - The homeownership rate has remained relatively stable, but affordability continues to be a concern.
 - The presentation identified an estimated gap of approximately \$11,000 between typical household income and the income needed to afford homeownership. Members asked whether the cost-burden analysis also applies to renters.
 - Lower-cost housing and property options elsewhere in Oneida County may compete with Rome, while unmet demand and projected job growth point to a continuing need for additional housing
- Challenges
 - The consultant team reviewed challenges identified in the DRI application and initial LPC questionnaire.
 - LPC members added absentee ownership and its relationship to property maintenance and disinvestment as a concern.
 - Homelessness affects the DRI area. The City has staff working to connect people with services, although members recognized that the DRI alone cannot fully resolve the issue.
 - Approximately 10% of housing units are vacant. Members noted that a vacancy rate near 5% is generally healthier, while very low vacancy can also limit options for new residents.
 - Older homes that remain on the market may deteriorate and become vacant. Members also noted concern about increasing foreclosure activity.
- Opportunities
 - Expand places to eat and gather, including restaurants, food trucks, markets, and visible food and beverage options near the waterfront.
 - Support businesses and activities that can adapt across seasons rather than relying only on summer traffic.
 - Use available water and electrical service to support recurring artisan markets, vendors, and events, potentially in or around the Terminal Building.
 - Add bicycle and kayak rentals and other amenities that serve trail users and boaters.

- Create concentrations of complementary destinations - such as restaurants, breweries, shopping, and entertainment - that give visitors several reasons to stay in the district.
- Capture more spending from visitors, employees, and customers who currently come to Rome but leave the area for dining and entertainment.
- Increase consistent foot traffic to enliven the waterfront and improve the perception of safety.
- A possible goal concept discussed was to grow local businesses while attracting visitors to spend more time and money in Rome.
- DRI Draft Goals Discussion
 - The LPC reviewed the draft revitalization goals that would be shared at Open House #1.
 - Members emphasized community pride and suggested revising Goal 7 so that this theme is more explicit and prominent.
- Public Projects Discussion - Bellamy Harbor Park
 - The discussion focused on how public improvements at Bellamy Harbor Park and nearby properties could support private investment and business activity.
 - EDR and the City reported productive discussions regarding the park, Terminal Building, and waterfront.
 - Potential amenities included bicycle and kayak rentals associated with the new launch, restrooms and washrooms, water service, and other basic services that would make boaters more likely to stop in Rome.
 - The partnership model used by iCan and organizations in Little Falls was cited as a useful example for providing facilities and supporting visiting boaters.
 - Members favored a multifunctional space rather than a single-purpose facility. Flexible infrastructure, including electrical hookups and usable lawn areas, could support concerts, markets, community events, and private functions.
 - The Lake George amphitheater was mentioned as inspiration for entertainment programming. Members also noted that Rome and Utica have limited affordable space for company or employee events of approximately 250 people.
 - The Copper City Commons concept was discussed as part of a broader vision for a concentrated, one-stop destination.
 - Year-round ideas included ice skating or hockey, snow and ice festivals, snowman-building activities, and a holiday or Christmas market in the Terminal Building.

- Members stressed that low-cost or free programming will require sustained effort but could change how residents and visitors perceive and use the waterfront.
- Railroad Access Road and a private access easement were identified as site considerations. Existing rail tracks within the street could potentially be incorporated into the design character.
- Members asked how DRI funds would be used if private interest remains limited. The discussion noted that visible public investment can help demonstrate market opportunity and encourage private development.
- Public Projects Discussion - Pinti Clubhouse & Recreation
 - The Pinti Clubhouse was discussed as a small recreation facility that could be expanded into a more regional, year-round destination.
 - The broader park master plan includes land on both sides of the river, including school property and Pinti Field/Park.
 - Members emphasized affordability and access for the surrounding lower-income neighborhood.
 - The free bus service previously provided for pool access was discussed as a model that might be expanded to serve clubhouse programs.
 - Potential uses included ninja or cross-training space, ropes-course-style activities, arts and crafts, table tennis, and an indoor walking or exercise track for winter use.
 - Community and philanthropic organizations were mentioned as potential partners or sponsors.
- Next Steps
 - The Open Call for Projects was extended through August 28, 2026. Only two submissions had been received at the time of the meeting, and additional promotion was encouraged.
 - Open House #1 was scheduled for later that day.
 - An online survey will be available from August 17 through August 28 for people unable to attend the open house.
 - The next LPC meeting is scheduled for September 21, 2026, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
 - The consultant team will circulate the draft goals to LPC members.
- Public Remarks
 - A commenter expressed confidence that well-designed programming could attract people year-round, including snowshoeing, skiing, snowmobiling, and other winter activities.

- Trails were described as a major opportunity for the district.
- Comments emphasized the need for water and boater facilities at the Terminal Building, as well as a harbor master and support for canal-related programs.
- Suggestions for the harbor area included a farmers market, artisan vendors, ice cream stands, a dog park, a playground, and a walkable line of shops and storefronts.
- A commenter supported public access along Railroad Access Road, including the area near 720 Railroad Street.
- A railroad quiet zone was suggested because of frequent train whistles, although the nearby tunnel and crossing conditions may make implementation difficult.
- The district was described as needing a higher-quality restaurant suitable for lunches, banquets, and date nights, in addition to brewery-oriented uses.
- Other ideas included lodging and the return of a seasonal Halloween attraction.