

City of Auburn, New York
Downtown Revitalization Initiative
Opportunities for Transformational Development

The following statement is from Mayor Michael D. Quill
on behalf of members of the City Council.

The City of Auburn is poised for future economic success and New York State's 2016 Downtown Revitalization Initiative can be the catalyst to make such success become reality. With a plan for investment in key areas of heritage tourism, riverfront development and arts and culture, Downtown Auburn's next decade can bring transformational success providing economic sustainability for the City and region.

Downtown Auburn is positioned for success because of two decades of grassroots organizing, strategic planning and public and private investments, including:

- The seeds of the City's downtown renaissance were initially planted in the late 1990's with an effort to establish a Downtown Business Improvement District (BID). Established in 2000 this significant investment by Downtown property and business owners has been essential in making strategic incremental steps to improve our downtown.
- The past decade provided our downtown with strategic planning and dozens of private and public investments. Such planning and improvement has transformed our downtown into a vibrant, bustling place to gather and live.
- Following two decades of grassroots organizing and lobbying the effort to establish sites associated with Harriet Tubman as a National Park was realized this past year.

We believe Downtown Auburn's next great chapter can be written where the Owasco River meets the Harriet Tubman Memorial Highway (NYS RT 34) with projects designed to provide economic transformation for our City center that will significantly contribute our City's economic sustainability, as well as, regional economic growth.

The Auburn Downtown Revitalization Initiative plan calls for the following transformational economic development projects:

1. **Establish a 'Harriet's Hometown' Downtown Visitor Welcoming Center.**

After a nearly two decade effort on behalf of hundreds of individuals and groups, the City of Auburn is proud to be home to the recently established Harriet Tubman National Historical Park. The National Park Service will be administrating sites associated with Tubman and NPS (federal government) investment in the restoration, rehabilitation and historic interpretation of the Tubman sites is about to begin and will be a methodical process that will likely come to fruition over the next 3-5 years. As Auburn was Harriet Tubman's hometown for the final 50 years of her life, sites associated with Tubman are scattered about Auburn's landscape. These sites include her personal homestead and her nursing facility for former slaves, the Home for the Aged, located on New York State Route 34 which was designated by New York State as the Harriet Tubman Memorial Byway in 2010; her Church, the historic AME Zion Church on Parker Street; and, her gravesite at Auburn's historic Fort Hill Cemetery.

With the expected combination of Harriet Tubman as the new face to the U.S. \$20 bill and the opening of the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park by the year 2020, The City of Auburn and the National Park Service anticipate tourist visitation to increase steadily in the immediate term and then grow significantly for the next decade. The proposed Welcoming Center will become the hub for the local, regional and State-wide recognition that Harriet Tubman was an Auburnian, a New Yorker, and a significant American hero and her legacy has such profound significance we believe that it can assist with transforming a 21st century economy.

History's Hometown is Harriet's Hometown and with a new Downtown Visitor's Welcoming Center, Auburn will be prepared to strategically welcome visitors from all over the world to the learn the story of Harriet Tubman.

The proposed Downtown Visitor Welcoming Center would be designed to welcome the significant increase of travelers to Auburn at a visible central location in the City's Downtown located on the NYS Harriet Tubman Memorial Highway (NYS RT 34) and will contain the following features:

- By design the Welcoming Center will provide visitors with a central point and dynamic interpretive orientation to begin their journey to explore the many Tubman sites in the City, as well as, the William H. Seward House Museum, and all of Auburn's other historic and cultural sites.
- Technical interactive displays will provide introduction to the historic significance of Tubman and other regionally significant historical topics associated with her, such as the Underground Railroad, the Abolition movement, the Women's Suffrage Movement and the Seneca Falls Women's Rights National Park and Women's Hall of Fame, as well as, Auburn's 'Tubman Sister-City' status with Cambridge, Maryland and St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.
- The Welcoming Center will feature a significant art installation in honor of Tubman that will add to the Downtown public art landscape and can become an attraction in itself.
- The Welcoming Center will provide a new home for a coordinated Tourism strategy featuring the City's Historic and Cultural Sites Commission, as well as, provide a regional presence for the I Love NY tourism program.
- The center will be the nucleus of an enhanced City vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding program and seasonal tourist shuttle.
- Finally, the Center will establish a reliable transit shuttle service for visitor transportation to and from the main regional points of entry in Syracuse, NY, mainly the Syracuse International Airport and Syracuse Amtrack Station.

2. Develop a Riverside Regional Public Market Integrated With the New Owasco River Trail.

One unique geographic feature of Auburn is that the Owasco River runs directly through the City's Downtown. Utilizing existing and shovel-ready City-owned land a Regional Public Market will be established riverside that will be integrated as the centerpiece of the City's new Owasco River Greenway Trail system, delivering residents and visitors to a newly developed Finger Lakes waterfront experience.

The development of the Owasco River Greenway Trail Project will bring the Owasco riverfront experience to life for residents and visitors. The project in its entirety consists of a six-

mile multi-modal trail system along the Owasco River extending from Emerson Park at Owasco Lake to Wadsworth “Park” on the City of Auburn’s west side. The proposed Riverside Regional Public Market would be established in the center of the six mile trail system. The Owasco River Greenway Trail Project Master plan has already been completed and the City is in the process of developing final design and engineered construction drawings for the Downtown River Trail node with construction anticipated to begin in 2017.

The proposed Riverside Regional Public Market will creatively showcase made in the Finger Lakes food and beverage products with the following key elements proposed:

- Provide an enhanced home to the already established Auburn Farmer’s market in the form of a new Four Season Farmers Market, a permanent, year-round indoor market, entering its 66th year of serving the Auburn Community, the Auburn Farmers Market Co-Op will have 18 vendors in the 2016 season. This proposed project is needed to provide Healthy Foods to Auburn’s seniors and low-to-moderate income families and to grow the market through strategic partnerships with agri-tourism based industries.
- Establish a Finger Lakes culinary center and demonstration kitchen that will provide visitors with a dynamic experience of turning local product into culinary creations.
- Creatively leverage existing and develop new agri-tourism initiatives such as the Finger Lakes Sweet Treats Trail and Auburn’s growth in the craft beer industry

3. Complete the State Street Creative Corridor

- **A. Develop a Shared Use Public Performing Arts Center.** This civic building construction / rehabilitation of a new 14,000 sf, 2 to 3-story mixed use arts/ commercial building will be built to enhance Auburn’s thriving performing arts success. The mixed uses may incorporate commercial or retail spaces that complement existing entertainment venues including the Finger Lakes Musical Theater Festival, the Auburn Public Theater, downtown businesses and residents. No difficulty is anticipated in finding high-quality businesses or civic organizations to occupy the building, with the City having recently attracted over 38,000 sq. ft. of new commercial and housing uses along the State Street Creative Corridor.
- **B. Develop an Outdoor Public Event Park for Downtown’s Core Entertainment District.** Utilizing existing and shovel ready City-owned land, the City will construct a shared use outdoor Public Event Park which will enhance Downtown’s recently established and very successful series of festivals and encourage programming of other regional entertainment/festival offerings to draw increased visitation to the City center. This public event park will feature a public stage and be designed with a public art theme that will enhance an established Downtown Auburn public festival and public art scene.

4. Continue the Rehabilitation of the Historic Schine Theater.

Located on South Street in Downtown, this 20,893 sq. ft. 1938 Art Deco Theater was designed by famous architect John Eberson in the outer space atmospheric style. With guidance from NYSHPO, as one of last remaining Schine Brother Theaters in NY, 2,100 sq. ft. consisting of the marquee, façade and inner lobby will be rehabilitated and reopened to the public. This will provide public space that will be an additional venue to Downtown’s arts and cultural scene and will set a solid foundation for continuing restoration of the theater.

5. Establish a Downtown Housing Development Program to Expand Downtown’s Housing into Existing Underutilized Space.

Downtown Auburn has seen significant growth in the last 5 years with establishing attractive housing options in previously vacant/unused buildings. The State Street Creative Corridor; East Hill, and 10-14 Genesee Streets redevelopment projects have strategically renovated vacant buildings to bring (#100 – input real number) new units of housing to Downtown. The 2016 draft Auburn Sparks BOA Nomination outlines that there continues to be a “strong market for high-end residential rental” properties in the Auburn Downtown BID. There is also potential market demand for housing options to accommodate students that attend Cayuga Community College. Establishing a Downtown Housing Development Program to provide business incentives for the adaptive reuse of second and third-story downtown apartments is proposed. The 2016 draft Auburn Sparks BOA Nomination identifies 10 or more buildings in downtown that have the unused or underused space and over 100 (#100 – input real number) new units could be built.

6. Address Regional Public Safety Facilities.

Many of Auburn and Cayuga County’s public safety facilities are currently located in the Downtown Auburn area. This includes City and County Courts; Auburn Police; Auburn Fire; County Emergency Management; County Probation; County Parole; and NYS Corrections. Over the past year the City and County have begun discussion on addressing the current facilities which are all housed in very old, small and outdated facilities. Creating a joint City-County Downtown Public Safety Facilities Master Plan would allow for new modern facilities to be constructed to jointly house these vital services in proper modern facilities. Such a government modernization and consolidation project would vacate existing facilities that are prime downtown real estate for reuse as mixed use commercial/retail and housing or for one of the proposed projects outlined previously in this plan. The facilities identified for potential reuse include the existing historic fire and police headquarters station and historic post office buildings.