

Hoosick Falls, NY



Lives Re-imagined

**Capital Region
NY Forward Grant
Village of Hoosick Falls, Rensselaer County, New York**

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Welcome to Hoosick Falls, New York

Hoosick Falls, a valley village of 1.6 square miles, houses 3,216 residents and is nestled in a beautiful natural setting along the banks of the Hoosic River, a tributary of the Hudson River, in the Town of Hoosick, with close proximity to two neighboring states. As described throughout this submission, our success as a community has been and continues to be uniquely and directly related to the presence of the Hoosic River.

Hoosick Falls is a rare example of a rural community whose historical and cultural legacy carries both local and national significance. Beginning with the revolutionary era, when the Battle of Walloomsac (popularly known as the Battle for Bennington) helped turn the tide in America's war for independence, Hoosick Falls has played an outsized role in the development of our nation. In the latter half of the 19th century, the village grew to become a hub of commerce, fueled by its rich agricultural economy and the industrial innovations of inventor and entrepreneur Walter A. Wood. Wood was a top manufacturer of farm implements in the United States, and his products earned accolades from around the world. His success became a magnet for investors and merchants that made Hoosick Falls a regional hub for agriculture and manufacturing.

The village's business success laid the foundation for community growth. Its unique blend of rural and civic culture gave rise to generations of artists, personalities, and public leaders, including Nathaniel Shipman, the real-life inspiration for James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo; renowned folk artist Anna Mary "Grandma" Moses, big-band vocalists the Eberle brothers; State Senator George Tibbits; and the 21st President of the United States Chester Arthur. Their contributions and those of many others drew an eclectic mix of people from regions around the world which further enriched the village's cultural scene.

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-SURVEY PARTICIPANT

Hoosick Falls also established a rich educational tradition that continues to this day, including Hoosick Falls Central, with 1,050 students in 2019, and Hoosac School, a diverse private college preparatory school with 222 students from 40 countries around the world. Fifty-one Hoosac students live in the village at the International Sports Academy campus and visit local eateries and grocery stores daily.

The village's rich agricultural, industrial, and cultural heritage continues to resonate in the modern era, with today's Hoosick Falls recognized as an evolving hub of economic, artistic and social activity that draws visitors and new residents from surrounding communities in the multi-state region and beyond.



Hoosick Falls has also gained a reputation as an amazingly resilient community that has faced and overcome significant challenges in recent years. In 2015, the village became the focus of a national health and water crisis associated with the discovery of hazardous PFOA contaminants in public drinking water, accompanied by the discovery of air and soil contamination. These emergencies required and continue to require intervention and remediation overseen by the EPA and the New York State DEC, as well as public health education and monitoring by the DOH. In July 2017, as the

cleanup and management of these pollutants was under way, a devastating flood hit the region that shut down major thoroughfares, blocked travel in and out of the village, and destroyed buildings and property, which damage is still evident in the community to this day. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 also delivered a hard economic blow to residents and local businesses. Throughout these hardships, the community remained optimistic and banded together to revitalize the village.

Thanks to the remarkable work of local residents and an influx of private investment in new and existing businesses, Hoosick Falls has experienced an economic and social resurgence that includes marked expansion of social and recreational opportunities and cultural development. The downtown of Hoosick Falls now enjoys a wealth of natural, recreational, dining, artistic, and other amenities that are unmatched by any other village of its size in the region.

The NY Forward opportunity will build upon the village's natural assets and its collective sense of community to further develop our historic downtown district and position Hoosick Falls as a community that welcomes new businesses, jobs, tourism, and residents who want to invest in the community and raise their families here.

Primary Focus Area

After community input and deliberation, the local planning committee narrowed the boundaries of our downtown focus area from what was originally described in the letter of intent. The focus area includes most of our historic district, our central commercial district, immediate neighborhoods, and a five-acre Superfund site, all as displayed in the map shown.

The focus area is comprised of highly accessible commercial, artistic, historic, recreational, and residential locations and Wood Memorial Park, a village green. Most of the 40 buildings in the Village's Historic District are included. There is a sizeable percentage of land classified as vacant land along the riverfront, which preserves the beauty of the village and provides opportunities for appropriate water-based amenities and supporting uses. There are three displays of public art – a 30-foot by 50-foot Grandma Moses mural on the side of a building in the village, a stunning spread-winged Owl that greets drivers coming up John Street, and decorative signage adorning the side wall of Hoosick Provisions.

Commercial establishments, most of which are in mixed-use buildings, are clustered on Church, John, and Main streets. The focus area's multi-generational housing options include 86 occupied apartments and 27 single family homes. We have witnessed in recent years a strong trend of the mixed-use apartments being occupied by younger tenants who frequent downtown establishments and stimulate the economy.

In the focus area, we have identified forty employers, including seven eclectic food/drink establishments that offer broad mix of French American, Chinese, Turkish, and standard American cuisine; 11 service and professional-businesses (including law firms, insurance brokers, hair salons, spa services, a funeral home, a laundromat, etc.); ten retail storefronts; two banks and a local controlled credit union; three art galleries (for-profit); and a 2nd floor Soho-style Airbnb. Added to this, the downtown includes a county

office with mental health services, a senior center, and a DMV satellite office; village and town offices and courts; and the village police station.

Our downtown also includes a historic library, a youth center that occupies our village's first church, a non-profit food pantry, an Armory that houses a non-profit community space, and three active churches - St. Mark's Episcopal which is on the National Register of Historic Places, the Immaculate



Conception Catholic Church, which is currently being rehabilitated after suffering flood damage, and the First Baptist Church, which features an historic cemetery. Within walking distance of downtown, Hoosick Falls also offers a health center and a retirement/assisted living center that serve the Hoosick Falls community as well as a large number of people from the tri-state area. Although parking has been a concern given the growth of commercial activity, there is currently a total 230 public parking spaces – 128 spaces across 4 separate public lots and 102 street spaces.

Community Outreach & Engagement

The application process for NY Forward has proven to be a catalyst for our community to mobilize a very robust and inclusive community engagement process that has generated optimism, creativity, and enthusiasm. The process has been highly informative and empowering, and has generated a tremendous amount of support for the initiative. Key outreach and engagement activities included:

Formation of Local Planning Committee (LPC) Upon hearing of the NY Forward opportunity, an initial planning group of 15 residents, elected officials and business stakeholders convened to form the local planning committee (LPC). As the efforts of the LPC became more visible within the community, support was unanimous. Five additional volunteers have since joined our efforts and we have met regularly to develop this proposal for the inclusion of Hoosick Falls in the NY Forward program.

Review of Previous Public Participation Efforts There have been several previous and relevant community planning efforts that involved public participation meetings focused on the village's assets and challenges, all of which have led to the development of numerous improvement plans with overlapping goals that would provide a well-developed platform upon which future development plans for the riverfront could build. These include a 2019 study and planning report relating to local waterfront revitalization that reflected robust public participation and input, the 2015 Hoosick Rising Community and Economic Development Implementation Strategy, and the 2003 Village of Hoosick Falls Parking and Pedestrian Project. These past efforts were highly informative in the development of this proposal, which benefited from significant community input specific to the purpose and goals of NY Forward.

Public Participation via Surveys The LPC designed, promoted, and conducted an online and hard copy survey between August 23rd and September 10th of residents and non-residents alike, including those who own property and businesses and/or work in or otherwise visit the village. The survey received 693 total responses, representing participation from 10% of the adult population residing within the village. Youth participation was also high. In addition to question-specific responses, the survey collected 390 written suggestions and comments. This data was reviewed and given significant consideration by the LPC in formulating this submission. Moreover, respondents were offered an opportunity to be

directly kept informed about or involved with the process moving forward with 239 participants electing to do so. The high sample of village adults, the unique level of youth participation, the number of written comments provided, and the number of people wishing to remain informed and involved signifies a high level of public support for NY Forward. Additionally, the LPC conducted a phone survey of 40 public and private sector employers located within the focus area.

Social Media We publicized our efforts on the highly popular local Facebook site – Hoosick Here and Now – and created our own Facebook page to promote the NY Forward effort, the survey, and provide updates on our progress. Our intention is that this page remain in place to foster continued community engagement, especially in the planning process should we be approved.

Direct Public Contact LPC members reached out to individuals and businesses through direct personal contact (including a phone survey of 40 public and private employers located in the focus area, 37 of which participated), as well as by attending community events, including but not limited to the Summer Concert Park series and other live music shows, community fundraiser events and tournaments, and other public places where residents and visitors of the village routinely gather for social and recreational activities alike. In addition, a promotional flyer with the QR code for the survey was posted on business windows throughout the village.

Village Board Meetings The LPC presented at Village Board meetings on August 9th and September 13th. These in-person meetings offer and routinely elicit public Zoom participation from a significant portion of the local community.

Letters of Support For your reference, included with this submission is an appendix with letters of support provided by community stakeholders and leaders who support Hoosick Falls' inclusion in the NY Forward program.

Community-Supported Strategic Vision

Hoosick Falls is a New York gem offering its community and visitors beautiful, accessible waterways that provide a significant opportunity for development and transformation from a community hampered by water issues into a community that thrives on its water presence. It likewise offers stately historic buildings alive with fresh local food, drink, boutique shopping, music offerings and entertainment, art, modern, sustainably-minded living spaces, and recreation for all ages. Hoosick Falls' vibrancy stems from its blended community of long-time residents and new investors who share an industrious, entrepreneurial spirit and a commitment to sustainability, diversity of all forms, and above all, progress.

Past Private Investments & Future Potential

Despite the flooding and water contamination issues and the ensuing pandemic, private entrepreneurial and philanthropic investors have invested considerable capital in recent years contributing to the revitalization of downtown Hoosick Falls. Many of these investments have been made during or since the pandemic. A sampling of business and property owners revealed that total investments over the past five years, made across just 11 of the most significant individual properties surveyed in the village, totaled \$3.5788M, and a two-year vision of future investments on these properties (some of which may include NY Forward investment) totals \$3.840M, as indicated on the next page.

Property	Business & Use	Recent Investments	Investment Vision (2 Year)
2 Center	Unihog, a multi-use grassroots outdoor and indoor performing arts space and restaurant with six second and third floor apartments.	\$395K private investment, including \$25K National Grid grant.	\$600K to construct eight to 10 individually oriented residential units with adjacent space to house work and retail spaces.
15 Church	Hoosick Provisions, a multi-use general store and bakery in an historic building focusing on local and regional food with two second floor apartments and potential for third floor apartment.	\$450K to purchase and preserve plus \$25K LDC loan for bakery.	\$120K to add third floor apartment and exterior work in accordance with preservation regulations.
8-10 John	Commercial first floor with three second floor apartments.	\$120K private investment.	N/A
9, 11, & 15 John	Byte Restaurant, 3rd eYe Gallery, and staY, three businesses in the historic Lurie building with 140 feet of street frontage. Renovated between 2013 and 2022, the building houses an artisanal pizza restaurant with local craft beer, an art gallery, and five short-stay accommodations.	\$525K private investment.	\$650K to add additional third floor short-stay units, an elevator (shaft is in place), fire safety updates, street level window replacement for energy efficiency and to allow for lighted rotating exhibits of local and children's art.
16 John	Hoosick Falls Jewelry, a multi-use boutique store in the historic 1865 Frank's Market building, with two storefronts (for jewelry and clothing) and two apartments.	\$270K private investment.	N/A
1-5 Main	The historic Wood Block, a former Opera House on 3rd floor to be renovated; four occupied rental ground store fronts and a vacant second and third floor.	\$613K, philanthropic donations and grants.	\$2Mil
21 Lyman	Sand Bar & Restaurant, a sports bar and restaurant featuring two outdoor volleyball courts with stadium lighting and a state-of-the-art indoor golf simulator.	\$180K private investment.	\$50K
30 & 32 Classic	Residential, commercial, and art studio.	\$365K private investment.	N/A
53 Classic	Hoosac Package Store, a multi-use with boutique wine and liquor store and two occupied second floor apartments.	\$130K private investment.	N/A
52 Classic	Office and commercial space.	\$160K private investment.	N/A
60 Classic	Office and commercial development on the riverfront.	\$240K private investment.	\$70K
24 Church	Thorpe's Pharmacy building.	\$130K private investment.	\$350K address problem areas, paint overhang, and complete facade. Create three new apartments on second floor.

Supportive Local Policies & Public Investment

Recent supportive local policies and public investments that have aided and/or will aid in the revitalization of our downtown include the following:

Zoning Revision and modernization of our zoning laws in 2017 helped promote and support mixed-use synergy downtown. The Village Board is also in the process of passing a local law that will expand the potential for outdoor dining, one of the priorities noted in the survey.

Public Safety Hoosick Falls is unique in offering its own, full-service village police department – one of only two in all of Rensselaer County. In compliance with a 2020 state executive law, the Village Board appointed a citizen’s police review board to develop a comprehensive reform plan for the village police department. The plan aimed at improving the department’s policies and procedures, engagement with the community, and overall public safety. It was adopted by the Village in 2021, resulting in the formation of a permanent Community Review and Reform Board that plays a continuing role in serving as a liaison between the community and the department, and as an advisor for the department on matters of public safety.

Flood Prevention The Village has received \$900K in FEMA floor funding and CDBG “green infrastructure” funding and is in the process of implementing a plan to use that funding to hold and slow the Wood Brooks flood waters that caused considerable damage in 2017.

Clean Water The Village has been successfully running a GAC Filtration System since January of 2017 to remove PFOA from the town water supply. An additional well was further developed by the state for additional pumping. The State of New York, through a DEC Consent Order, has announced that two new supply wells will be developed for future use for the Village of Hoosick Falls.

Demolition The Village has torn down five flood-damaged buildings in or around the focus area to date with plans to do more in and directly adjacent to downtown.

Eminent Domain Within recent weeks, the Village has initiated eminent domain proceedings to acquire three largely abandoned and unkempt lots comprised of prime property for creating a visual and physical connection with downtown and the Hoosick Greenway and river (discussed further under Transformational Projects).

Village ARPA Funds The Village has recently allocated the following ARPA funds to downtown public or nonprofit capital improvements: \$3,750 to repair and preserve the Grandma Moses Mural, \$10,000 for improvements to the Youth Center building, \$10,000 to the Town of Hoosick Rescue Squad which serves the Village, \$10,000 to Hoosick Rising, and \$10,000 to CiviCure for Wood Block.

Parking Study The Village has allocated \$10,000 to assess current and future parking needs downtown.

Lighting The Village, out of its own funds, is currently reviewing proposals to install \$125K in LED lighting in 400 plus light fixtures. This will take over a year to do and can potentially leverage decorative and related lighting improvements that may come from NY Forward investments.

Greenway Kayaking & Canoeing The Village has been awarded state grant money, with matching funds, to develop a boat launch off the greenway south of the village, as well as a parking area with kiosk and trail improvements at the end of the greenway north of the village. This would only serve to advance what is already a robust level of river-centric tourism within the village.

2019 Comprehensive Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan The 2019 Comprehensive Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan was approved by the Village Board on March 10, 2020.

Recent or Impending Job Growth

Overall economic and job growth downtown is increasing. Sales tax revenue received by the Village is one indicator. Sale tax revenue rose 6.5% between the fiscal and pandemic years of 2019-20 and 2020-21. For the current FY 2021-2022, we are projected to receive an additional increase of 16.3% over the previous year.

The largest employers within the village are located directly adjacent to our downtown focus area, and include St. Gobain, a manufacturing company with 190 employees, and three health care centers, which collectively employ approximately 200 additional employees. Moreover, small business is driving our downtown revitalization in particular. There are 40 identified employers in our focus area. The largest private sector employer in the focus area has 17 employees, a few have 12 employees, and twenty-six additional employers have five or fewer employees. Private sector employers, especially those in the restaurant and entertainment business, report a healthy upswing in workers in 2022 despite the post-COVID worker shortage. Based on the current trajectory, coupled with the potential investments from NY Forward, we project that private sector jobs based in our downtown will increase by at least 30% over the next two years, and would note that many of the current part-time service jobs show potential to move toward full time.

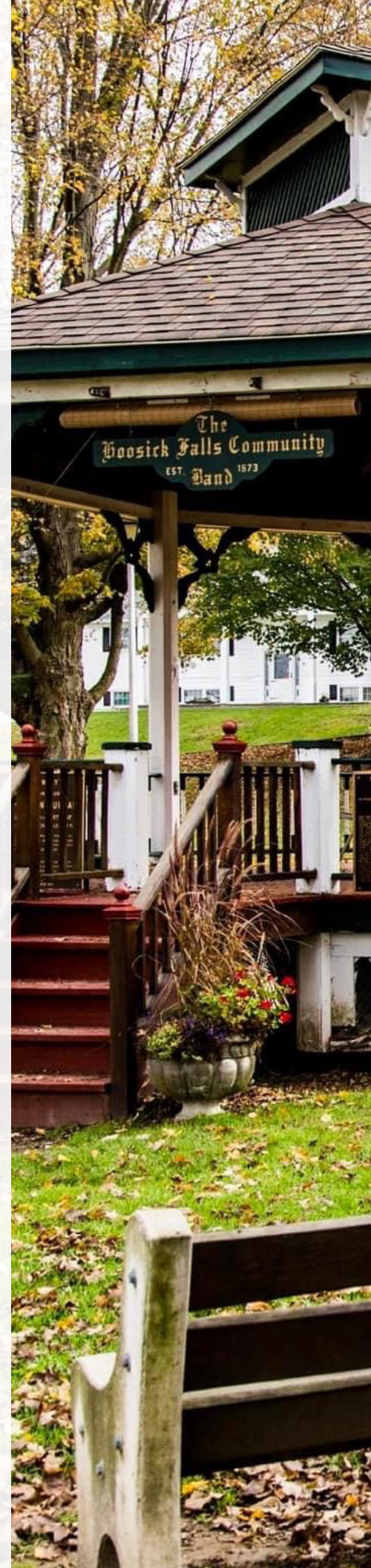
Quality of Life

There is a broad and stimulating array of activities for residents and visitors at locations throughout our downtown area.

The town's local culture can be enjoyed at local establishments that feature multiple amenities. Unihog is a grassroots outdoor and indoor restaurant and performing arts space located in the southwest corner of downtown. Converted from an old mannequin factory, Unihog quickly established itself as Rensselaer County's premier live music venue. Unihog enjoys a diverse customer base from around the region and is host throughout the year to live shows featuring local musicians and regular open mic shows. Fridays and Saturdays are dedicated to talent that includes Billboard-charting and Grammy-winning musicians. The space also serves as a venue for weddings, reunions, birthdays, etc.

Byte, at 15 John Street, is a restaurant with a wood-fired pizza oven and an atmosphere that has been described by patrons as "the best of Soho or Brooklyn right here in Hoosick Falls." The restaurant and art gallery welcome hundreds of out-of-town visitors each year for their live music events and art exhibitions. The Airbnb apartments on the second floor are booked year-round.

Downtown also embraces the village's historical heritage. The Cheney Library, which will celebrate its 100th year in 2023, is more than a lending





library. Documents, artifacts, and displays connect people with the village's past and encourage them to feed their intellectual curiosity. The library welcomes visitors for classes, workshops, and computer access, as well.

The Hoosick Township Historical Society, keepers of the village's historical legacy, regularly host authors, speakers, and educators at events and exhibitions that explore the various eras and facets of the village's past. The Historical Society is based at the Louis Miller Museum, which is located on Main Street, holds regular hours and features a renowned collection of local

historical artifacts, documents, old newspapers, and a genealogy room open to anyone who wants to research their family's Hoosick Falls roots. It is host to events year-round and features hands-on exhibits highlighting the region's importance within the local and national landscape. There are currently 380 Historical Society members.

Seasonal events in the downtown area are a major draw for local residents and have grown in popularity to include out-of-town patrons as well. The Hoosick Falls Community Band concerts are held every Wednesday during the summer in Walter A. Wood Park, averaging 300 weekly attendees who come to listen to music, visit, and patronize local merchants who exhibit their wares. There is also a popular music concert series in Wood Park held during five Saturdays each summer with 500 average attendees.

Three annual downtown parades are popular events that draw attendees from the surrounding towns and are often featured in local news media. The Hoosick Falls Memorial Day Parade averages 1,000 attendees; the St. Patrick's Parade averages 3,000 attendees; and Walter A. Wood Tractor in October and Agriculture Show and Parade averages 2,000 attendees. The village also hosts an annual Stephen Colvin Memorial 5K run, which takes place every October and draws hundreds of participants each year from all over the tri-state area.

Hoosick Falls hosts an impressive array of recreational and sports facilities spanning an aggregate 8.5 acres. Among the facilities located in the downtown area is the Village Youth Center, which hosts regular afterschool and summer activities for youth in the third through eighth

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grades. There are also youth and adult basketball leagues and an open gym which holds yoga and cardio classes. Other activities include dance parties, art workshops, and homework help for students. The center is staffed by Honor Society and community volunteers.

In the realm of organized sports activities, the Sand Bar and Restaurant downtown features two outdoor volleyball courts with stadium lighting and hosts four outdoor adult volleyball leagues. These leagues, collectively, are comprised of 49 separate teams with 260 players who travel weekly from a large radius of towns and cities in the tri-state area during the months of April through October. In the winter months, the Sand Bar is equipped with a state-of-the-art indoor golf simulator and lounge, and invites into the community more than 80 people per week to compete in their indoor golf league.



The Sand Bar



In addition, the local Armory hosts an indoor pickleball league with 100-120 regular participants between the ages of 12 and 89.

Moreover, the Hoosick Falls Country Club is a publicly accessible nine-hole golf course and club within walking distance of the downtown area, which also features fine dining. The 1,800+ square-foot main building and 3,600 square-foot permanent events tent serve as a venue for private events as well as many annual gatherings and celebrations.

Finally, easily accessible from downtown, Hoosick Falls also offers for community enjoyment a public pool, baseball and softball fields, a basketball court, three tennis courts, an enclosed playground, a perimeter-walking path, and the Reynolds/Gilchrest Multi-Purpose Building for year-round recreational and community activities.

Downtown also accommodates people who want to enjoy the beautiful riverside vistas along the Hoosic River Greenway, a lush trail adjoining the river that attracts visitors of all ages. The path encourages physical fitness with workout stations developed by Girl Scout volunteers scattered throughout.

Transformative Project Opportunities

Survey findings related to the vision and priorities are threaded throughout this proposal where applicable. This data is indicative of the importance of our community's revitalization not just to residents of Hoosick Falls (adults and youth alike), but also to non-residents who work, play, shop, and socialize here.

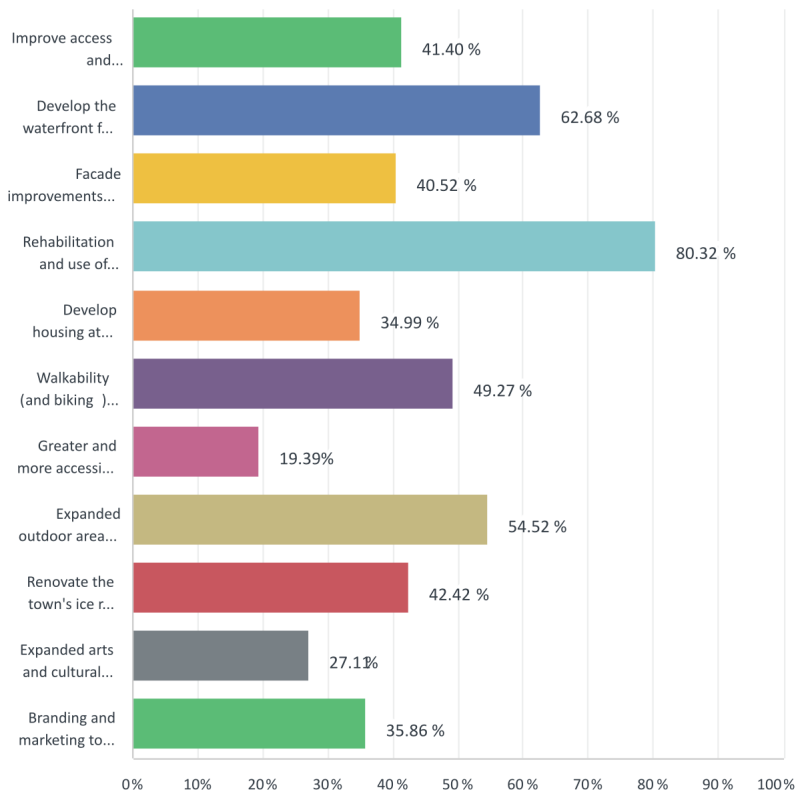


Fig. 1

As reflected in *Figure 1*, the building rehabilitation priority received the most support (80%). Two other areas received majority support: developing the waterfront (63%) and expanded outdoor areas for businesses and vendors (55%). Walkability, including improved sidewalks and lighting, followed (49%).

Survey Priorities

The public participation survey asked respondents to identify up to five downtown revitalization priorities from a list of 11 with space available for comments and suggestions. The 10 priorities identified by survey respondents within the focus area included:

- Improved waterfront access
- Developed waterfront
- Facade and Streetscape Improvements
- Rehabilitation and use of vacant storefronts
- Affordable Housing
- Walkability
- Accessible parking
- Expanded outdoor areas for businesses and vendors
- Expanded arts and culture
- Improved downtown branding and marketing

Based on public and private input alike concerning worthwhile development opportunities and priorities, we have developed, in the following two sections, a proposal for a total of \$9.47 million in public as well as private investment opportunities that would be eligible in the planning process for NY Forward funding.

Public Improvement Projects

The below projects, currently estimated at \$4.35 million, are envisioned as transformative public improvements that would contribute significantly to the revitalization of downtown Hoosick Falls.

Waterfront Access and the Hoosick River Greenway

Estimated Project Cost: \$3 Million

The Hoosick River waterfront is one of the Village’s greatest assets. Development of the riverfront, and greater connectivity between the river and the downtown area, would mean improved access and increased recreational opportunities throughout the entire Village. We envision the installation of a number of public amenities as well, such as public restrooms, benches, and aesthetic improvements. Enhancements in this area will surely serve to make downtown a more attractive draw for residents and visitors from outside the region alike. Evidence of this can be found in the past work done in the village to the Hoosick Greenway, including a “rail-trail” along the riverfront that runs along abandoned railroad tracks from the northeastern-most point in the focus area along the river to the most westerly point in our focus area, and beyond. The project included the clearing and installation of pedestrian pathways now used routinely for biking, walking, picnicking, and other recreational activities throughout the year. Plans for further development of the riverfront and greenway are a critical component of the vision of Hoosick Falls that would be pursued and made possible by a NY Forward Grant.

Indeed, riverfront and greenway improvements were a key feature in every iteration of several different planning efforts that have been undertaken in the last twenty years, including an Economic Development Plan developed by Dufresne-Henry in 2003, a Camoin Associates Economic Development Plan developed in 2015, and a Barton and Loguidice study and strategic planning report reflecting robust community participation and input concerning plans for local waterfront revitalization prepared in 2019. As just one example of the level of detail and planning associated with these prior efforts, *Figure 2* depicts an architectural drawing that was considered in 2003 in connection with the Dufresne-Henry Economic

Development Plan, which would have included greenway development and accessibility improvements, lighting, and opening of a viewshed to the river from the downtown area. We believe it is an asset to the village that such extensive prior plans and designs already exist and can serve as a platform for future development with the help of the NY Forward Program.

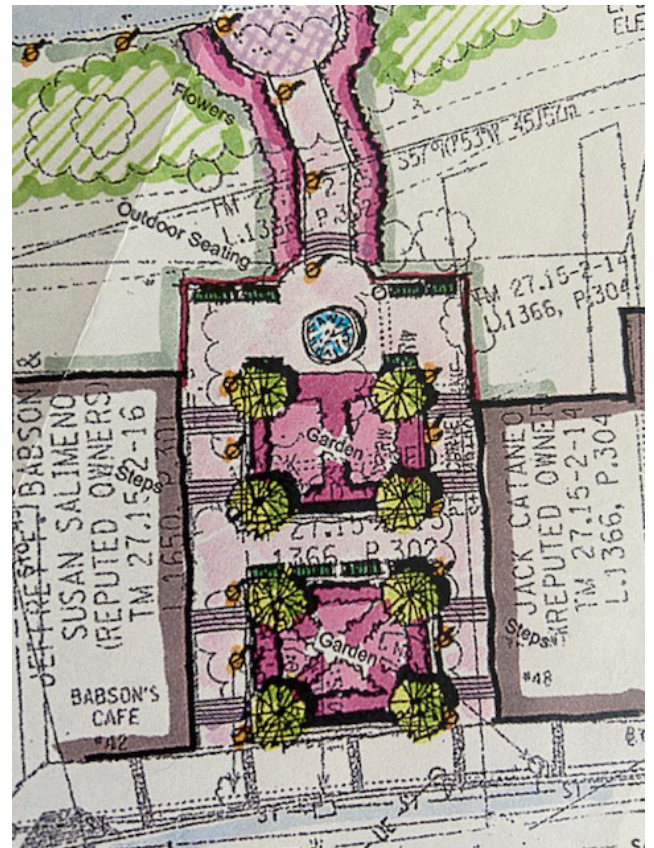


Fig. 2

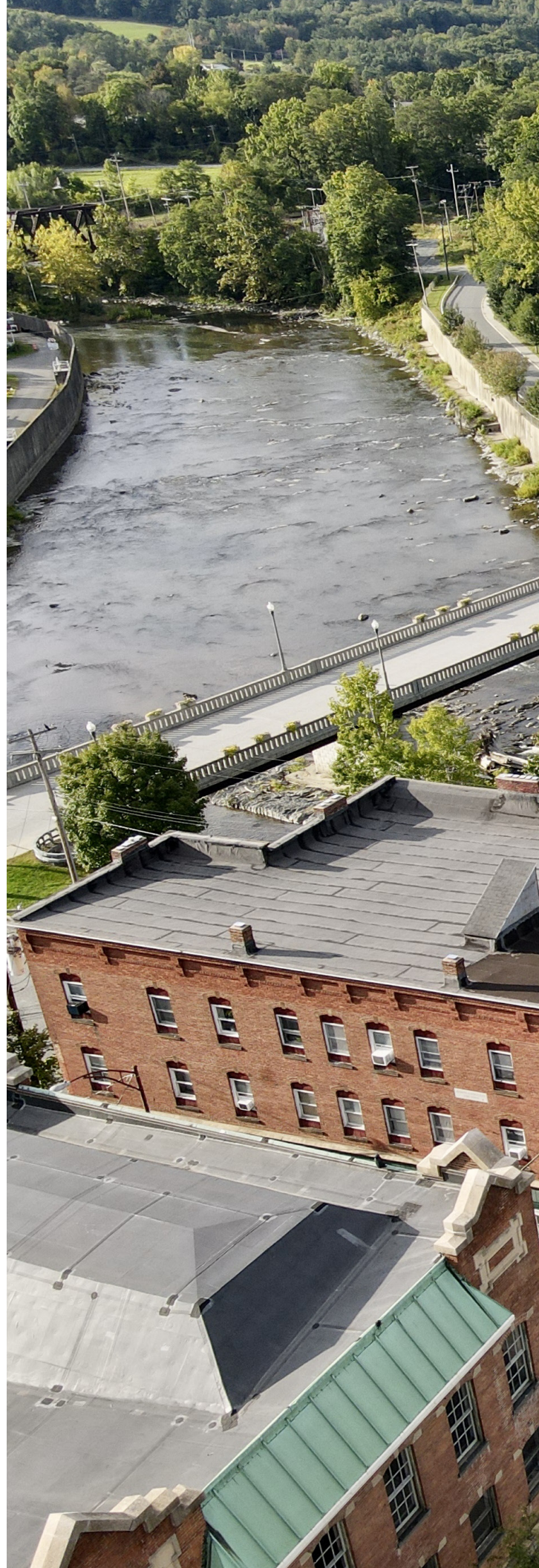
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In furtherance of these improvements, to increase visibility and accessibility in particular, the Village is already in the process of acquiring three vacant lots via eminent domain that will connect downtown with the waterway. (Current access is via a parking area behind downtown businesses). Once acquired, this land will feature terraced gardens and include steps that lead to the landing at the river. A switchback trail will run through the gardens for ADA compliant access. Lighting for the staircase area as well as some of the waterfront and trail is an integral step in developing this area.

Another central focal point of the Hoosic River waterfront is the Shop Bridge that crosses the Hoosic River at a point that lies essentially in the middle of the northern border of our downtown focus area. This bridge is an ideal candidate for beautification and lighting. The village is in consultation with the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, through its Light and Health Research Center, on a comprehensive design for functional and aesthetic lighting of the Shop Bridge. This lighting transformation, coupled with beautification measures that would include flowers, benches, and other attractions and amenities, have the capacity to transform this bridge into an attractive focal point for the village that accentuates the scenic beauty of the Hoosic River and rapids and is poised to become a scenic attraction for the village.

Also critical to the riverfront development is the existence of a 5-acre Superfund site at the west end of the focus area with stunning river views that is in the process of being acquired by the village for potential development as an amphitheater, skate park and picnic area for public use and enjoyment which is envisioned to include public restrooms and other amenities. Development of this lot would create an enormous asset for public utilization and enjoyment out of what was once an industrial, pollution-producing property in our village.



Facade & Streetscape Improvements

Estimated Project Cost: \$1.25 Million

To include funding by the Village valued at \$415K

Improvements to downtown building facades and the streetscape will add cohesiveness and accessibility, and improve overall safety while making the village more attractive to residents and visitors alike. Particularly with a large senior population, a growing number of young families, and an influx of young visitors who support weekly arts- and entertainment-based activities and a thriving nightlife in Hoosick Falls, new and restored sidewalks, new ADA compliant crosswalks, and increased pedestrian lighting are of the utmost priority.

Facade improvements, such as repairing historic buildings, restoring stained glass, and the addition of unique architectural details which make Hoosick Falls unique, could all be designed to polish the overall historic appearance of the village.

In addition, Hoosick Falls has historically been a walking town, in which a higher than average number of people do not even own or regularly drive vehicles, and it continues in this tradition to this day. Installing and repairing sidewalks that connect Hoosick Falls' historic sites as well as its businesses and residences would serve to maintain this unique trait of our village and would be valuable to both residents and visitors of our village alike, adding a sense of flow within the village to guide people and potential shoppers and patrons through visual cues and signage from place to place. There is also a significant need for installation of lighting fixtures along these downtown streets that connect the various businesses and establishments in the focus area, which would further enhance the walkability and unity of our downtown. Indeed, there is a particular need for sidewalks and lighting along the corridor that connects two of Hoosick Falls' most highly visited evening establishments in the village, which currently features no street lighting, no sidewalks, and extremely unsafe walking conditions. Another key lighting-related project goal would be to create more uniformity among the existing streetlights within the downtown area to address the current mishmash and disrepair of lighting fixtures and poles throughout the village.



Signage, Branding, & Marketing

Estimated Project Cost: \$100K

Hoosick Falls is poised for an exciting economic rebirth. The NY Forward grant opportunity comes at a moment of great momentum. The PFOA contamination issue proved an initial and significant economic set-back, but the spirit of downtown prevails, and with continued private entrepreneurial capital spending, coupled with the prestige and investments that would be derived from NY Forward, a concerted branding and marketing campaign that promotes our amenities and attractions can go a long way toward dispelling any lingering stigma.

This will accelerate the success of our current businesses, attract new businesses to our empty storefronts, and offer endless new opportunities to our arts and cultural and community organizations, all of which will in turn stimulate new economic and employment opportunities for people of all skill levels and experience. A Branding and marketing plan, complete with detailed signage throughout the village to guide residents and visitors alike through our downtown area and toward local businesses, attractions, and community events will be an integral component of capitalizing on the various revitalization projects highlighted herein.

Private Improvement Projects

The below projects, currently estimated at \$5.12 million, are envisioned as transformative private property improvements that would further contribute to the revitalization of downtown Hoosick Falls.

Building Rehabilitation Projects

The building rehabilitation projects discussed below focus on anchor buildings within the historic downtown, including Wood Block, Hoosick Provisions, the Byte Building, and the Thorpe Block.



The Wood Block Building

The 1873 Wood Block Building is the only major structure remaining in Hoosick Falls that was commissioned by the Village's most prominent inventor, entrepreneur and manufacturer, Walter A. Wood (1815-1892). Wood Block, as completed, was comprised of a three story, 21,000 square foot home for numerous commercial and professional ventures as well as third floor public performance space known as Wood's Opera House. Today the ground floor of the building continues to house several professional/medical offices while the two vacant upper stories are poised for revitalization.

Wood Block Building is owned by Civic and Cultural Restoration Inc. (CiviCure) and listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places. CiviCure is a public not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization founded in 2000 with a community driven, arts-centered mission centered on the Village and its surrounding communities. Thanks to a highly successful fundraising and gift campaign in 2017, CiviCure was able to purchase Wood Block without a mortgage. In 2021, CiviCure secured the building against water damage through a \$150,000 Main Street Revitalization grant that replaced the complex roof and restored decaying masonry. Ongoing fundraising has also allowed for the restoration of all of the

third floor windows. A \$25,000 gift from the Robert W. Wilson Foundation will help to support continued Wood Block revitalization work with matching funds.

The Wood Block Building is currently in need of upper floor renovations to accommodate a host of potential uses for the 14,000 square feet of space. With the addition of universal access to these two floors, the space could house co-working and shared maker's spaces, classrooms, studios/gallery space, public meeting rooms featuring high speed internet, and rental spaces. Additionally, the third floor offers stage and performance spaces with ideal acoustics for music and speakers and space for large events.

Building Owner: Civic and Cultural Restoration Inc.

Property Address: 1-5 Main Street

Project Proposal for Second Floor: Renovations to create rental space, classrooms, studio/gallery space, and public meeting rooms.

Project Proposal for Third Floor: Renovations to create handicap-accessible performance space.

Project Cost Estimate for Second Floor: \$2 million (\$1 million to be funded by foundations and other grant funds and philanthropic sources)

Project Cost Estimate for Third Floor: \$1 million



The “Byte” Building

This historic 24,000-sq-ft building with 140 feet of street frontage was the focus of a \$525,000 restoration between 2013 and 2022.

The first floor houses Byte, an artisanal pizza restaurant that features a wood-burning oven, a bar constructed from the building’s original materials, and seating for 60 indoors and 4-8 people outdoors on the sidewalk. Byte features local musicians monthly, and sells Turkish groceries and imports Turkish desserts from Brooklyn, NY. 3rd EYE is a 5,000 sq-ft art gallery that is also on the first floor and features local artists and the owner’s original work. The gallery has hosted numerous shows as well as wedding and prom parties attended by locals, guests from nearby towns and states, and the New York City - Washington, D.C. metro corridor.

The second floor features five stylistically distinct short-stay residencies. In 2021 the short-stay accommodations collectively booked 982 nights, with guests coming from New York City, Washington D.C., Boston, Chicago, Arkansas, Oregon, California, Arizona, Florida, and from Canada, England, Ireland, and Norway. Guests regularly

comment on enjoying local businesses (Iron Coffee, Hoosick Provisions, and Small Song gift shop), illustrating the broader impact guests have in the downtown area.

Further investment could support the addition of a working elevator to occupy an existing shaft for accessibility to the upper floors of the building. The third floor holds the potential for additional short-stay rental spaces. Other opportunities include an art studio, classroom space, and the expansion of exhibition space to accommodate other area artists.

Building Owner: Creatink, Inc.

Building Address: 9-11 John Street

Project Proposal: Additional third floor Airbnb units, addition of an elevator (shaft is in place), fire safety updates, street level window replacement for energy efficiency and to allow for lighted rotating art exhibits.

Project Cost Estimate: \$650K
(\$125K to be privately funded).

Hoosick Provisions

For over two decades, this historic anchor building had been left to decay, with a leaking roof and crumbling façade. The building is a three-story second empire jewel built in the late 1850's, one of the earlier commercial buildings in Hoosick Falls.

Since purchasing the building, the current owners have invested more than \$200K to secure the structure and restore the 1st and 2nd floors. Many of the building's original features have been carefully restored. These include tin ceilings on the first and second floors along with much of the building's original wood- and brickwork.

The first floor shop, a general store, opened in the Spring of 2020 and provides the community with a source of food stores even amid lockdown. The business quickly grew from just three employees to seven. A year later, the owners opened a bakery in the second storefront and are seeking additional employees.

A few projects remain for this building that will support the economic revitalization efforts of the

downtown. The 3rd floor which once housed the living quarters have not yet been restored and are neither electrified nor plumbed for water. Renovation of this floor would add a much needed three-bedroom apartment in the heart of downtown. Additionally, repair of the Mansard roofline and handcrafted framework surrounding the windows will preserve a stunning architectural feature characteristic of the historic downtown.

**Building Owner: Sunset Knoll Realty, LLC
(Marianne Zwicklbauer and Clifford Belden)**

Building Address: 15 Church Street

Project Proposal: Historic restoration of third story windows, addition of two third-floor residential housing units.

Project Cost Estimate: \$120K
(\$60K to be privately funded).

The Thorpe Block

The Thorpe Block is a 24,000 square foot mixed-use building that includes Thorpe's Pharmacy (operating in this location since 1876), a credit union, and storefront, as well as apartments on the upper floors. The building's facade is in need of repairs, and future investments could also be applied to create three new apartments on the 2nd floor.

Building Owner: HF Marmon, LLC

Building Address: 24 Church Street

Project Proposal: Pointing of brick, painting of overhangs, leak repairs, and the addition of 3 second floor apartments.

Project Cost Estimate: \$350K
(\$175K to be privately funded)



Opportunities for Development of Vacant Properties

Estimated Project Cost: \$Mil

(To be partially funded by other existing grant initiatives such as Restore NY)

There are several vacant properties located within the project area on Church Street, John Street, and Lyman Street that are in need of either demolition or renovation, some of which might offer a solution to the community's need for short-stay accommodations and/or parking needs, both of which were identified as priorities in the suggestions section of our community survey. A few of these properties are already in the process of being acquired by the village through eminent domain proceedings.

Grant or Revolving Loan & Administrative Capacity

In addition to the fund to be implemented with NY Forward guidance and state contracting of larger projects, we propose a community-controlled grant fund (no lands) through Hoosick Rising, our local member-driven economic development non-profit organization to support some of the more discrete projects described above (e.g., those individual projects that would require \$100,000 or less in funding), such as façade work, public art, street and sidewalk improvements, signage, and branding and marketing during the initiative. This community-controlled fund would offer the flexibility required to respond to village needs and opportunities as they arise.

Hoosick Rising is an all-volunteer organization that partners with and operates under the 501c3 status of Good Causes, Inc., an Albany-based affiliate of the New York Council of Nonprofits, Inc. Good Causes provides Hoosick Rising with the accounting and reporting capacity needed to meet the needs of the grant fund.

Conclusion

The generous funding that the NY Forward program can provide to the Village of Hoosick Falls would complement the people, the skills, and the vision of our village at the perfect time. Hoosick Falls has all of the natural assets, geographic opportunities, and personal resources necessary to achieve an historic transformation. Furthermore, the community has proven its resilience in overcoming adversity and its strength and commitment to pursuing and achieving a greater vision for their home.

Hoosick Falls is the living embodiment of the values and spirit that the NY Forward program is designed to foster, reward, and complement. With the \$9.47 million in proposed public and private investment opportunities set forth above, the Village would be perfectly positioned to become an indisputable point of pride for the State of New York.