

## PROJECT 4

# Liberty George Parking Garage

**Project Title:**

Demolish the Liberty George Parking Garage and Develop an Interim Public Use

**DRI Funding Request:**

Total Project Cost: \$1,800,000

DRI Funding: \$1,500,000

**Project Description:**

The Liberty George Parking Garage demolition includes the removal of a 40-year-old parking structure that sits on a strategically and highly visible 2+ acre site in the downtown core of the City. The City completed a structural analysis of the garage that concluded that the structure is unfit for reuse. The existing parking structure is a detriment to downtown, as it is a large eyesore and is widely recognized as a safety hazard due to the structural disrepair. The extent of structural damage within the garage makes reuse of the existing structure unfeasible.

The proposed DRI project includes the demolition of the structure to facilitate a short-term use on the site as a surface parking facility and public open space. Once demolition funding is secured, the City will commence an active Developer Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify and secure a developer for the site. The Developer RFP will stipulate the minimum requirements for future development on the parcel, which will be sold by the City to the preferred development team. This approach ensures a thoughtful and considerate developer selection process, guaranteeing the City gets the best possible redevelopment project on the site.

As determined through the DRI process, the desired end use for the site will include:

- Market rate residential units
- Parking for residents as well as additional spaces designated for public use
- Value-add amenities for tenants such as fitness facility and business center
- Commercial uses along street-level facade

**Strategies:**

This project exemplifies the City's key goal for downtown as defined in its Comprehensive Plan, DRI Application, and Brownfield Opportunity Area Program - to create a high-density sustainable residential and commercial center. The proposed project will ultimately facilitate new commercial space and modern, residential housing units. The long-term viability of downtown as the City's center of activity is not sustainable without a mix of uses, including market rate residential units that will help to attract new residents, activity, and spending into the downtown core.

In addition to supporting local goals and objectives for downtown development, the demolition of the Liberty George Parking Garage to facilitate new mixed-use development also supports regional strategies as identified in the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plan.

In particular, the proposed project will help to attract talent and a 21st century workforce to downtown Rome through the creation of a new, unique, and distinctive residential offering that is within a 5-minute walk to major arts and cultural destinations, restaurants, theatres, shopping, and recreation.

This project addresses the strategies identified in the 2011 Mohawk Valley Strategic Plan.

2011 Mohawk Valley REDC Strategy #4: Increase Spatial Efficiency:

- Promoting investment in downtown core to foster community revitalization – The proposed mixed-use project is the single largest redevelopment project proposed in downtown Rome since urban renewal changed the downtown landscape. The execution of this project will have a large and direct impact on downtown revitalization, creating a significant development parcel in the heart of downtown.

In addition, this project is consistent with the updated strategies and economic drivers identified in the 2016 Mohawk Valley progress report including:

- Tourism
- Vibrant Communities

This project addresses items identified as part of the City of Rome Community Needs Assessment:

- Revitalize downtown – The realization of the vision to attract mixed-use development to the site will facilitate downtown revitalization by bringing new residents and businesses into the downtown core. Numerous studies completed for the City in recent years have identified the need for introducing new, modern, market-rate housing into downtown to attract millennials and young professionals. When considered in conjunction with other projects that help to promote a vibrant, unique, and desirable place to live – such as streetscape improvements, the Capitol Theatre, City Green, CENTRO, and the Reach Center, this project becomes intricately connected to the long-term success of multiple projects.
- Make Rome a walkable city – The location of the project in the downtown core is within walking distance to the West Dominick Arts and Cultural District and multiple downtown projects also included within the DRI Plan, including but not limited to City Green, the REACH Center, and the Capitol Theatre. A concentration of diverse uses will enhance opportunities for residents and visitors to walk to a variety of destinations in a targeted area.

### **Public Support:**

Anecdotal feedback and comments received throughout the process indicate there is significant support for replacing the existing, deteriorating parking garage structure with a new development project. The development envisioned for the site would further meet the identified need of providing new, market rate housing into the downtown.

Throughout the City's related planning efforts, including multiple BOAs and the recent zoning update, the desire to see new mixed-use development introduced into the downtown core has been emphasized by residents as the single, greatest need to revitalize downtown.

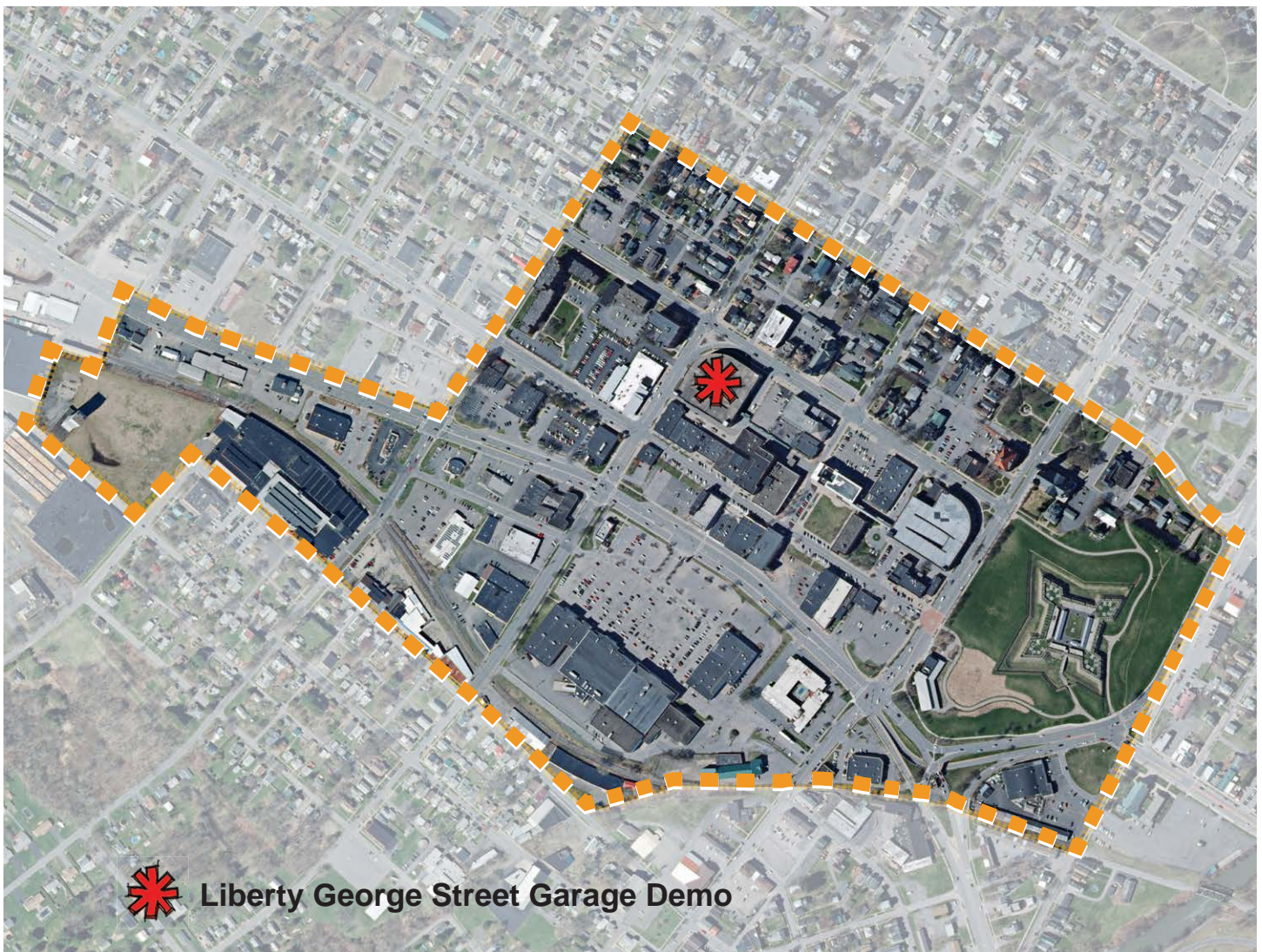
The Liberty George Parking Garage demolition was a highly supported project during the DRI prioritization meetings, reflecting strong support for the site preparation to facilitate a new development project.

### **Jobs Created:**

Up to 40 construction jobs would be created for this project, including the proposed demolition and redevelopment project. Additional jobs would be created with the completed build out of the site, in association with new commercial spaces.

### **Project Location:**

The site is located at the southwest corner of Liberty and George Street intersections.





**Site Ownership/Legal Jurisdiction:**

The property is owned and maintained by the City of Rome.

**Acquisition of Real Property:**

The City is the current owner and sponsor of this project. Upon completion of the demolition project, the City will solicit and identify a preferred team for the development of a mixed-use project. Upon identification of a development team, the City will sell the land.

**Anticipated Revitalization Benefits:**

In the immediate term, the demolition of the parking garage will remove visual blight and eradicate a safety hazard in the downtown core. Ultimately, the site will be redeveloped as a mixed-use development project, enhancing the mixed income, mixed-use nature of downtown Rome. The development project is consistent with the growing trend and shifting preferences of Americans, particularly young professionals, who prefer rental units in downtowns that are rich with amenities.

Specific benefits associated with the mixed-use project envisioned for the site include:

- Increasing utilization of the site. Presently, the Liberty George Garage site is underutilized and has a negative impact on the character of downtown Rome. In the short term, the visual character of the downtown will be improved through the removal of the unsightly and deteriorating garage. The proposed mixed-use project will bring new residents and businesses.
- Significant downtown investment. A project of this scale will be a game-changer for downtown, bringing new spending power, interest, and investment into the downtown core.
- Better utilization of urban land. At present, the Liberty George Garage site is underutilized. As one of the largest potential development parcels in the downtown core, the site is the best option to bring a significant and large-scale mixed-use project into the City.
- Diversified housing options. Notably missing from the downtown core today are market rate residential units that might appeal to young professionals interested in an urban setting and modern amenities. Ultimately, the site of the Liberty George Garage is envisioned to be a new option in the local marketplace, offering a type of residential unit that does not exist in the downtown today.
- Economic returns. Studies have shown that compact, mixed-use infill developments often raise property values at adjacent sites, and can bring vacant or neglected properties back onto the tax rolls. Investment at the Liberty George Garage site is likely to catalyze investment at other properties throughout the downtown.

**Future Use of Structure:**

The proposed demolition project on the project site would result in a cleared 2+-acre site in the heart of downtown, ready for redevelopment. The proposed new development that is envisioned for the parcel would be a mixed-use building consisting of office, commercial, and residential space.

**Project Budget:**

Total Project Cost:	\$1,800,000
DRI Funding:	\$1,500,000

**Demolition Costs                    \$1,135,000**

Mobilization	\$ 120,000
Demolition	\$ 700,000
Site Stabilization	\$ 315,000

**Interim Parking Lot                \$ 665,000**

The requested DRI funding is for demolition of the parking garage and site preparation for the interim parking lot. The local funding match will include design and site work for the interim parking lot use.

**Feasibility and Cost Justification:**

The anticipated redevelopment cost is based on industry standards for comparable development programs in the City of Rome.

The City will ultimately seek to identify a developer to build a market rate residential project on the site. The Real Estate and Market Analysis completed for the Downtown Rome BOA found that 1) Housing is affordable, but quality is lacking, and 2) There is demand for more modern housing in Rome, especially in downtown, driven by:

- Employees at high tech, regional businesses coming into the Rome-Utica marketplace, particularly high-tech workers at Griffiss Business and Technology Park. Many of these employees do not live in Rome due to the lack of modern housing options.
- Pent-up demand from local residents and workers. The study noted existing housing offerings do not align with current preference and needs. The Utica/Rome market has a backlog of demand for modern apartment units.

The Real Estate and Market Analysis showed the greatest demand for housing will be for apartments with mid-level to upscale finishes and fixtures that are located downtown and are walkable to retail, services, and entertainment options. The achievable rents for a two-bedroom unit in Rome are projected to be between \$1,200 and \$1,500 per month, according to the study.

Each of the key findings above directly supports the program envisioned for the demolition of the parking garage and the redevelopment of the site for a mix of commercial and residential uses.

**Regulatory Requirements:**

The demolition of the site will require local permits and compliance with state requirements. Work in the state right-of-way will require a highway work permit with potential project mitigation.

### Rendering of Completed Project:

The immediate completed project will include the demolition of the existing parking garage, resulting in a vacant site that can serve as interim surface parking. Interim parking will be developed as parking and open green space.

The site plan and rendering below represent the potential redevelopment that could be constructed on the site by a future development team.

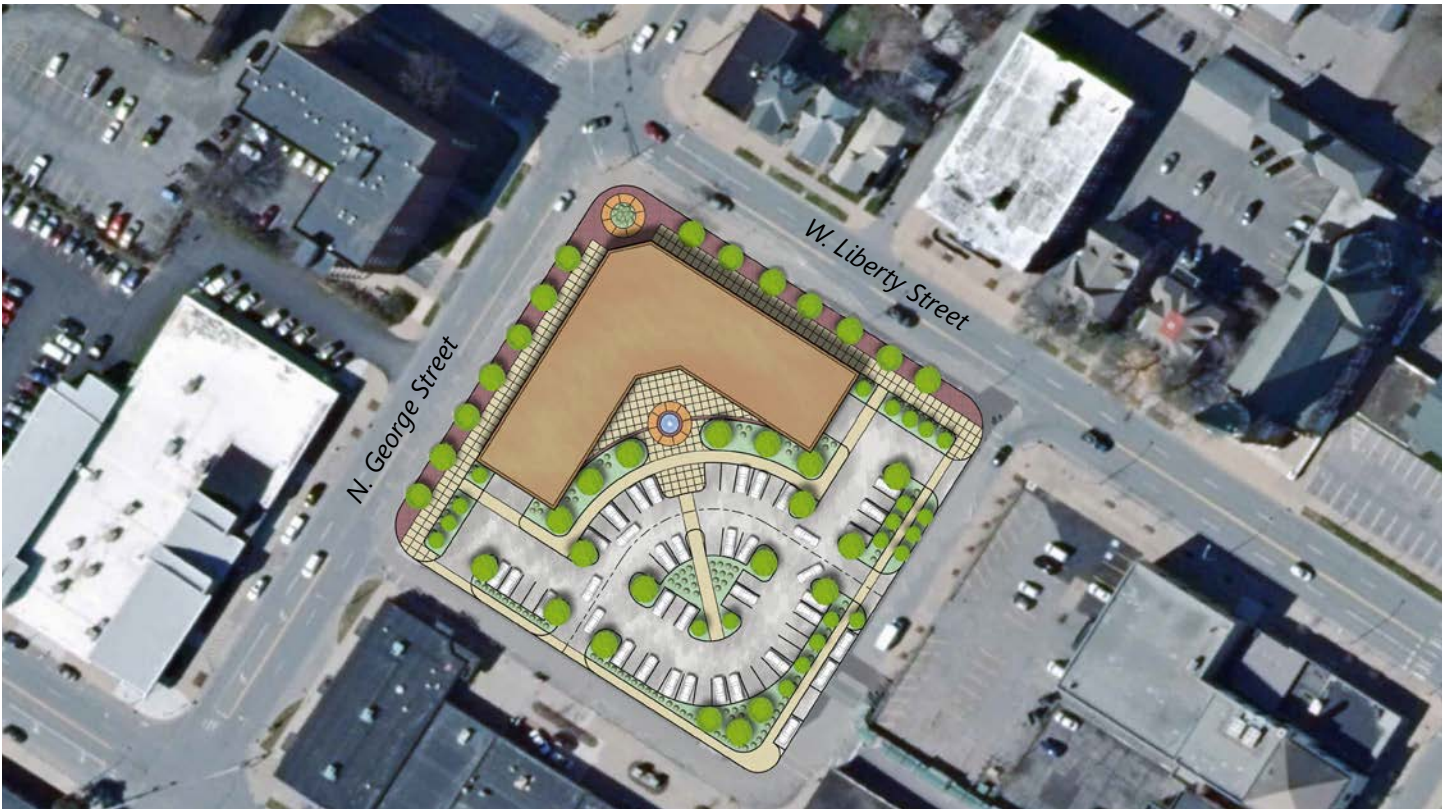


*Concept Rendering*



*Concept Rendering*





*Final Concept Site Plan*



*Interim Surface Concept Site Plan*





*Interim Surface Concept Site Plan*

### **Timeframe for Implementation and Project Readiness:**

The City is prepared to move forward with the demolition of the garage upon receipt of DRI funding. The demolition project can be completed within six months. Upon award of DRI funding for the demolition, the City will advertise a Developer RFP for the project.

The proposed redevelopment would commence upon completion of the site demolition project and upon successful completion of property acquisition from the City.

Developer RFP	Summer 2018
Garage demo bidding	Summer 2018
Garage demolition and site preparation	Summer / Fall 2018
Interim Use construction	Spring 2019

### **Project Reporting:**

The City will be responsible for overseeing the project and monitoring its progress and success against the project proposal. Metrics used may include:

- Cleared site within 12 months
- Developer RFP advertised within two months
- Improved public realm