

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*For Additional Information Contact:*

Sarah Davis

Executive Director, Seneca County IDA

Office: 315-539-1722

Mobile: 315-835-5223

E-Mail: s.davis@senecacountyida.org**Seneca County IDA Moves Forward on Willard Highest & Best Use Study**

WATERLOO, N.Y., March 23, 2023 – The future of the former Willard Drug Treatment Campus may still be unknown, but the Seneca County IDA Board of Directors is poised to help the communities of Ovid and Romulus chart a path forward for the 550-acre site that sits on the eastern shore of Seneca Lake.

The IDA Board voted at its March 23rd meeting to contract with MRB Group to provide a Highest and Best Use Study of the Willard campus. The study, which is expected to cost approximately \$164,000, will include engineering, architectural, environmental, and historical reviews of the site plus market analysis and public input sessions that will guide the development of a site master plan and corresponding economic impact analysis. The IDA will fund the majority of the study using an Empire State Development grant and the fees it collects from economic development projects; the agency plans to make a request to the county's special American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) committee for the remaining \$20,000 needed. Final results of the study should be available sometime late summer 2023 and will be made publicly available on the IDA's website.

"We're pleased to support the IDA in developing an innovative and compelling re-use program that is market-tested, realistic, and achievable," said MRB Group's Matt Horn. "The goal is to create a plan that will entice developers, and serve as a catalyst for further investment and positive growth in Seneca County," he added.

"We've been very intentional in the way we've chosen to move forward with our partners on the redevelopment of Willard," said IDA Director Sarah Davis. "This site holds so much significance for the community, historically and otherwise, that we want to make sure we engage with community members and state and local officials in a meaningful way. We believe MRB will help us do that while creating a cohesive vision for the future of Willard and Seneca County," she added.

A letter to IDA Chairman Steve Brusso dated March 15, 2023 from Hope Knight, the Commissioner of Empire State Development emphasized the state's support of the IDA's "efforts to engage with the community" via the Highest and Best Use Study and recognized the "key role strong local leadership will play in the successful revitalization of communities with shuttered prison sites."

Rochester-based MRB Group was one of five firms that submitted a response to the IDA's Request for Proposals (RFP) issued in November 2022. Proposals were evaluated by a selection committee comprised of representatives from Seneca County government, the IDA, and the Willard Task Force. Members of the

selection committee were drawn to the breadth and depth of expertise MRB and its partners at Bero Architecture, Elan Planning, and HRP Associates brought to the table. “We look forward to working with MRB’s team to bring this project to fruition and will share updates with the community as we work to get our first public input session scheduled,” said Davis.

The public is also encouraged to share their thoughts on the future of Willard in writing by e-mail to k.kline@senecacountyida.org or by mail to Seneca County IDA, One DiPronio Drive, Waterloo, NY 13165.