

City of Beacon 2021 Downtown Revitalization Initiative

BASIC INFORMATION

- REDC Region: Mid-Hudson
- Municipality Name: City of Beacon
- Downtown Name: Main Street Corridor
- County Name: Dutchess
- Applicant Contact(s) Name and Title: Christopher White, City Administrator; Lee Kyriacou, Mayor
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VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

Beacon’s core approach to furthering its ongoing revitalization rests on its commitment to creating places of shared prosperity, equal access to opportunity, environmental sustainability, and inclusive public engagement. As the center of economic and social opportunity, the Main Street district impacts the wellbeing of all City residents and in many ways, defines the character of the community.

The City’s DRI vision focuses on transformative strategies that will further prepare the City to adjust to new realities including the changing face of commerce and workplaces, shifting demographics, housing affordability challenges, and the need for promoting environmental sustainability. With these new realities in mind, the City of Beacon recognizes that it must continue to remodel its Main Street core by developing a more pedestrian- and transit-friendly downtown featuring new public park spaces, additional street level commercial spaces, affordable housing opportunities, green parklets, and more sustainable parking solutions.

The City of Beacon’s vision is to ensure the long-term sustainability, vibrancy, and accessibility of its Main Street to serve its socio-economically diverse community and includes the following:

- Redevelop Veterans Place to include the construction of a 3-story mixed-use, infill building, featuring an artists’/maker space and installing an eco-friendly park with new transit stop;
- Reimagine municipal parking lots into mixed-use buildings and affordable housing;
- Development of pocket parks and other green public facilities along Main Street;
- Preservation of historic structures while increasing fill-in development where Urban Renewal design was previously deployed;
- Bring key institutional facilities such as City Hall back onto Main Street; and,
- Building out efficient and inviting public transit stops, as well as enhanced pedestrian and bike access.

DRI funding will significantly jumpstart the implementation of Beacon’s vision and will provide a model of sustainable and equitable revitalization for other small cities.

As a former industrial Hudson River community, Beacon struggled through the 1960s into the late 1990s with shuttered storefronts, closed factories, economic stagnation, local job loss, suburban flight, increased urban poverty, and destruction of numerous historic Main Street and other properties during “urban renewal” efforts. Over the past twenty years, the City has made a long and steady effort to revitalize its Main Street and local economy, which was greatly facilitated in 2003 by the establishment of Dia: Beacon, a world-class museum of contemporary art that is one of the most highly visited tourism sites in the Mid-Hudson Region.

Beacon's recent successes in revitalizing its Main Street and vacant industrial properties has been facilitated by an influx of artists, entrepreneurs, professionals, and others attracted by the quaint "small-town" quality of the City along with the much less expensive cost of living compared to the New York City (NYC) metropolitan area. The City's convenient location on one of Metro-North Railroad's last stops on the Hudson Line also made it easily accessible for those maintaining personal and professional ties to NYC while enjoying the quality of life offered by a smaller waterfront community. The new art galleries, specialty shops, restaurants, bars, and cafes along the City's more than one-mile Main Street corridor have made Beacon a featured destination for tens of thousands of annual visitors and further built upon the City's economic revitalization efforts over the past decades. BeaconArts, a nonprofit organization formed in 2002 to support and advocate for the growing arts community, now counts 200 artists and 95 arts-related businesses among its membership today, which would have been difficult to envision several decades ago.

The ongoing economic revitalization, property redevelopment, and increase in tourism have provided many positive results, including new job opportunities, increased property and sales tax generation, renovation of long-neglected properties, and creation of vibrant local businesses. These trends have also resulted in challenges from the City's success such as rapidly increasing costs for housing and commercial spaces, displacement of long-term residents, traffic and parking issues along Main Street, and a shrinking number of properties along Main Street that can be developed or redeveloped. As it now wrangles with its own success, the City is developing strategies that will help it face these challenges through thoughtful and well-planned infill development along Main Street, including on City-owned parking lots and other underutilized properties.

Over the past few years, City planners and the *Main Street Access Committee* have sketched out a conceptual vision for Main Street to ensure the next phase of Beacon's revitalization fully incorporates social equity concerns, affordable housing, sustainability, smart growth principles, urban design best practices, and enhancement of quality of life for residents. These concepts are the basis for this DRI application, which will help the City to move forward the transformation of underutilized lots into mixed-use developments with public park spaces and enhanced infrastructure for non-motorized transportation alternatives and public transit. The City envisions leveraging its acres of asphalt surfaced parking lots into opportunities for new affordable housing units, vibrant storefronts, more efficient vehicle parking, and enhanced park amenities, all of which were included in the City's updated 2017 Comprehensive Plan with input from community-based organizations and civic associations, business leaders, residents, and other key stakeholders.

JUSTIFICATION

The City's revitalization has largely concentrated on the Main Street core, and many properties along this historic thoroughfare have been renovated or redeveloped over the past decades. As the desirability of properties in this corridor increases, the City is considering creative alternatives to boost new affordable housing creation, commercial development, and increased density along this walkable and transit-friendly street. Beacon is striving to remain a community where people from all income levels and backgrounds can afford to Live, Work, and Play. Developing a model of sustainable Main Street development is critical to this goal.

The DRI target area contains a variety of public and private uses, including government, residential, health services, a public library, non-profit organizations, art galleries, offices, restaurants, grocers, pharmacies, and entertainment venues. It encompasses the heart of the city's Central Business District and Opportunity Zone, connecting existing and planned centers of place and investment initiatives intended to provide a seamless quality of life and connectivity throughout Beacon.

The most significant indicator of Beacon’s potential over the last decade has been the steady growth of businesses along Main Street. Today, Beacon’s Main Street is busy year-round and boasts more than 200 establishments lining the corridor. This is in stark contrast to the lackluster commercial activity that occurred less than a decade before when Main Street would be busy seasonally on certain weekends. This dramatic shift is the result of important initiatives, including the restoration of sidewalks, infrastructure improvements, and expansion of the City’s Historic District and Landmark Overlay zone.

The City, nevertheless, remains in a state of transition, as rapid demographic changes lead to a concern that some residents are being “left behind” as Beacon changes. For example, the median price for a single-family home of approximately 1,700 sq. ft. is \$440,000. The Executive Director of the Pattern for Progress Center for Housing Solutions & Community Initiatives notes a household needs to make \$138,000 annually to buy a home at that price and stay within the “affordable” range. As a result, City leadership, in concert with the larger community, supports the critical need for additional affordable housing units, particularly along Main Street where new residents could support local businesses and take advantage of the bus transit service and walkable streetscapes in and around Main Street. As Beacon has little available land for new development, concentrating new development along Main Street can help to meet housing demand and the need for new commercial spaces in a walkable and transit friendly core area.

Beacon recognizes that it must balance future downtown development with a smart and equitable plan for guiding the creation of mixed-use and mixed-income housing in and around the downtown corridor. Specifically, the City Hall parcel, which marks the west end of the zone, is in a *Potential Environmental Justice Area* (PEJA) and both City Hall and the County Center parcels are within a census tract which is identified by New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) as a *Housing Opportunity Census Tract*. New housing developments along the Main Street Corridor may also be eligible for HCR’s *Workforce Opportunity* funding. In addition, the proposed DRI target area encompasses one of the City’s two Opportunity Zones which seeks to incentivize direct private investment in these designated areas. DRI funding has the potential to usher in a future of green economic growth across the entirety of Beacon in a manner which addresses the many socioeconomic and quality of life issues of all current and future residents. Beacon’s scenic beauty, strong administrative leadership, history of community involvement and support, and prime location, defines its ability to become a major hub in the Mid-Hudson Valley and a model for the region.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

1. Boundaries of the Proposed DRI Area

The DRI target area comprises the Main Street corridor stretching approximately 1 mile from NYS Route 9D to the Fishkill Creek. The DRI target area acts as a regional destination within the Hudson Valley. Given its ease of access, the area is consistently able to attract a regional customer base. This advantage is driven by existing transportation infrastructure which includes a major highway, the Beacon Metro-North Train Station, and the twin-span, Newburgh-Beacon Bridge (I-84), which serves approximately 67,696 vehicles daily (pre pandemic). The City is also served by the Newburgh-Beacon Commuter Ferry and Dutchess County Loop bus service, and the City’s compact size has helped make it one of the most walkable communities in the region.

The Main Street corridor traverses three distinct sections/neighborhoods that reflect the changing character of the City itself. These include: 1) lower Main Street, which is the west end historic district between Route 9D and Digger Phelps Court; 2) central Main Street, which continues east to Route 52 (Fishkill Avenue); and 3) upper Main Street, which is the east end historic district from Route 52 to East Main Street at the Fishkill Creek.

The proposed project area encapsulates roughly 180 acres or 6% of the City’s total land area and is most crucial for the provision of future growth. Specifically, the catchment area has been chosen because it includes an array of essential public services while maintaining the capacity and infrastructure to accommodate additional resources. Despite hosting many thriving businesses and new housing, the zone is dotted with underutilized parcels which have been targeted for redevelopment. Without the improvements and enhancements envisioned by City planners, the Main Street corridor will continue to lack uniformity, and recent improvements would potentially lose value and the city its momentum.



Thoughtful development of the target district ensures that Beacon will further become a walkable community with easy and more frequent connection to the Metro-North Rail station and bus transit serving both residents and visitors. Most importantly, this initiative incorporates and connects Beacon’s diverse neighborhoods (including two Beacon Housing Authority properties located to the south of the zone) to the commercial center and northside educational and recreational facilities by establishing a “*Bicycle Boulevard*” to schools and parks.

In order to support Beacon’s core, the City seeks to maximize the use of and financially leverage its publicly owned parking lots, by replacing street level asphalt spaces with mixed-use housing and tiered parking structures that would incorporate green technology with such features as a rooftop solar panels and a public park. The DRI concept also includes establishing direct transportation links to the many popular shops, galleries, and restaurants on Main Street and designing and implementing pedestrian and bicyclist accessibility improvements. This level of accessibility and connectivity is essential as Beacon embraces its

regional identity as a community where everyone can seek to live, work and play. Overall, the City's focus is to utilize the DRI target area as the catalyst for increased, shared prosperity and sustainable future development.

The prime redevelopment areas in the central section of Main Street are largely based on the mid-century, auto-oriented model that will be transformed by reimagining parking lots, enabling more diversified and affordable housing opportunities, creating new pedestrian and bicycle pathways, purposefully redeveloping underutilized properties, and attracting new employers who are leaders in the technology and healthcare sectors. Every one of these improvements is essential to ensuring the quality of life for residents and visitors alike as Beacon continues to grow, and to stimulate continued economic development in the downtown. Together, these policies are aimed at managing growth in a sustainable way, avoiding displacement, and revitalizing Beacon's Main Street model.

2. Past investment, future investment potential.

In recent years, Beacon has become a model for transit-connected redevelopment and the adaptive reuse of vacant structures. Strategic, comprehensive, and balanced investment in Beacon has resulted in new housing, infrastructure improvements, transit-oriented solutions, strong historic preservation protections, and a diverse variety of new businesses. In 2004, Metro-North Railroad completed a \$20M modernization of the Beacon Rail Station and added substantial parking, serving more than 2,000 rail customers daily. The new station features beautifully landscaped walkways and drop-off points, well-lit stairs, and adjoining road improvements. Additionally, the 2005 launch of New York Waterways Newburgh-Beacon Ferry service created a new Hudson River public transportation link between Newburgh and Beacon.

Proactive and responsive leadership has allowed Beacon to benefit from substantial public and private investment. Since 2013, Beacon has received more than \$2M in CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) and Dutchess County MIG (Municipal Investment Grant) funding for drainage and sewer improvements, recreation facilities, sidewalk improvements, and road reconstruction. Furthermore, the City has received several significant infrastructure improvement grants, including NYS Department of Conservation's \$17M wastewater treatment grant that will allow the city to support the expansion of commercial and residential development. These and other ongoing infrastructure investments have adequately anticipated and prepared for private investment and additional growth in the City.

Over the past two decades, Beacon's vacant and abandoned storefronts, factories and industrial sites, once eyesores and clear symbols of economic distress, have been converted into loft apartments and new shops along Main Street. This eclectic collection of shops, galleries, and restaurants boost the local economy, drawing visitors from throughout the region. Much of the investment along Main Street has involved the renovation of existing structures which in turn preserves the charm, character, and aesthetic of the historic Main Street district. Since 2013, the Beacon Planning Board has approved 88,246 square feet of commercial space construction and 961 new housing units. In 2020, proposed new construction reached \$49.9M.

In recent years more than a dozen significant commercial and residential developments have been planned, completed, or approved in the DRI Target Area and or Beacon's Opportunity Zone, including:

- The *Lofts at Beacon*, a conversion of several former textile mill buildings, adding 143 live/work studio apartments on Front Street between Route 52 and Fishkill Creek.
- The Roundhouse complex in the heart of the east end of Beacon's business district which includes a restaurant, hotel, events center, and 78 units creek-side.
- Highland Meadows, with 68 affordable apartments for older adults.

- *1 East Main Street*, restoration of a former factory building into 19 dwelling units and 5,750 sf of ground floor commercial space.
- Renovation of the Beacon Theater on Main Street, including 29 apartments, a 200-seat theater, and two commercial storefronts.
- Three other new multi-story, mixed-use buildings along Main Street, collectively containing 60 apartments and over 22,000 sf of commercial storefronts.
- The Edgewater project, 307 residential units within close walking distance to Metro North.
- West End Lofts (residential) with 72 affordable units and 25 market-rate units.
- Redevelopment of a former manufacturing building into Industrial Arts Brewing, Café Spice, Inc. food production and entertainment facility.
- Redevelopment of a former highway garage into 20,000 sf of high-tech space and 8 residential units.

The City is seeking to mobilize and spark additional new investment. The 2017 Comprehensive Plan incorporates strong community input and advocates for continued revitalization within the heart of the central business district, strengthened by multi-modal transportation improvements to fully connect Main Street from all directions. The updated Comprehensive Plan was informed by various other studies and reports, including traffic safety studies, zoning studies, open space inventories, environmental conservation plans, and water and sewer capacity studies. The resulting vision for downtown represents a collective understanding of how private, commercial, and civic interests can be melded to the benefit of the entire City. The guiding elements envision the following for the Beacon Main Street corridor:

- Series of public parks every 3-4 blocks along Main Street with bus stops, shelters, visitor kiosks, and framed by infill buildings;
- Mixed-use buildings to spur economic activity around the parks and to share public construction costs;
- Job creation and affordable housing creation, primarily by transforming unproductive parking lots into robust mixed-use activity centers;
- Construction of new parking structures with rooftop parks or solar panels and mixed-use liner buildings;
- Main Street transit shuttles on regular 15-minute intervals, connecting to the Train Station/Riverfront;
- Green infrastructure, roof gardens, and tree cover to absorb rainwater and reduce urban heat effects;
- Bicycle boulevards, linking north-south neighborhoods to schools, parks, and Main Street destinations.

The conceptual proposals call for “creating an environment that improves access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and users of all abilities and ages.” Beacon seeks to enhance and more efficiently utilize several city-owned lots along Main Street. The City also wishes to ensure that all populations can benefit from the revitalization of Main Street and are able to continue to live, work and play in Beacon. To this end, the City will seek to partner with qualified housing developers to increase new, energy-efficient, affordable and market rate housing opportunities in the HOP and PEJA eligible census tracts within the corridor. Further, it seeks to enhance downtown connectivity from the Metro North, deploy green infrastructure and calm vehicular traffic along Main Street. These measures will result in a safer, highly sustainable, walkable downtown with direct access to public facilities, schools, healthcare, commercial businesses, and recreational facilities.

3. Recent or impending job growth.

Much of Beacon’s recent rise to prosperity in the last two decades can be traced to the economic impact of Dia: Beacon. This modern art mecca is estimated to contribute approximately \$12,460,337 annually (pre pandemic) to the local economy while resulting in 168 direct and indirect jobs. With further investment focused on making this, and other sites in Beacon, more accessible by adding additional bus service along with new walking and bike access, it is anticipated that there will be both an increase in economic impact

from Dia: Beacon, and the commensurate need for additional jobs. Recently, DocuWare, a German document handling firm, decided to relocate its headquarters to a redeveloped formerly City-owned brownfield in Beacon, bringing with it 87 new, well-paying jobs. The location will serve as the company's US headquarters and will feature eight housing units and 20,000 sf of commercial space.

Beacon's long-term focus has been on increasing job opportunities while also increasing the availability of retail goods and services for City residents—the second most important issue residents cited in public outreach sessions (preceded by the affordability of housing) in the development process of Beacon's Comprehensive Plan. This community focus remains embedded within the redevelopment proposals for various parcels of City-owned land within the DRI target area. On the whole, Beacon is committed to fostering the continued development of a balanced local economy that provides good jobs and encourages the establishment of more businesses in order to reduce the municipal tax burden on homeowners.

The City's Central Business District, running the length of Main Street, consists of approximately 30 acres and 185 properties. Since 2010, job gains among workers 25 years or older were highest among those with 1-4 years of college (43.6%), followed by workers with a bachelor's degree or higher education (25.7%), workers with less than a high school education (16.2%), and those with a high school education (14.5%). These demographic trends among recent hires suggest that the Beacon's population is becoming more educated, better paid, and increasingly oriented toward a service and professional economy.

As of 2019, the most common jobs held by residents of Beacon (by number of employees) are: Office & Administrative Support (804 people), Management (699 people), and Sales & Related (588 people). Concurrently, the median household income was \$71,193, up from \$63,284 in 2010. These statistics, along with the cost of housing, highlight the fact that Beacon has become in large part, a "commuter city" reliant on a strong, well-established transportation system to support the daily sojourn of residents to and from Manhattan. To complement this dynamic, Beacon now seeks to attract small to midsize businesses to the central business district so that residents can find employment opportunities in their hometown. The daily mean travel time to work for Beaconites is 37.9 minutes, 10% higher than the statewide average.

Beacon is favored with an eclectic group of entrepreneurs and artists who have enhanced the character of Main Street, which in turn attracts other newcomers and visitors to the area. According to the most recent Census data, there were 1,406 businesses operating in Beacon; of those, 573 were women-owned and 376 were minority-owned. These include restaurants, galleries, clothing stores, specialty groceries, bodegas, and technical service storefront spaces.

The City has enjoyed a thriving retail and hospitality center, but the impact of COVID-19 has revealed this sector's vulnerability. The City recognizes that while these jobs are important, supporting a diversity of employment is also critical. Beacon is committed to offering residents closer access to job opportunities which fall within their professional experience. This focus will promote local job creation and help increase the number of residents who work in Beacon and no longer need to commute by vehicle. According to the most recent Census statistics, only 20% of Beacon's employed residents work in Beacon, and only 51% work in Dutchess County. In addition, more than 80% commute by car, while just 8% take public transportation.

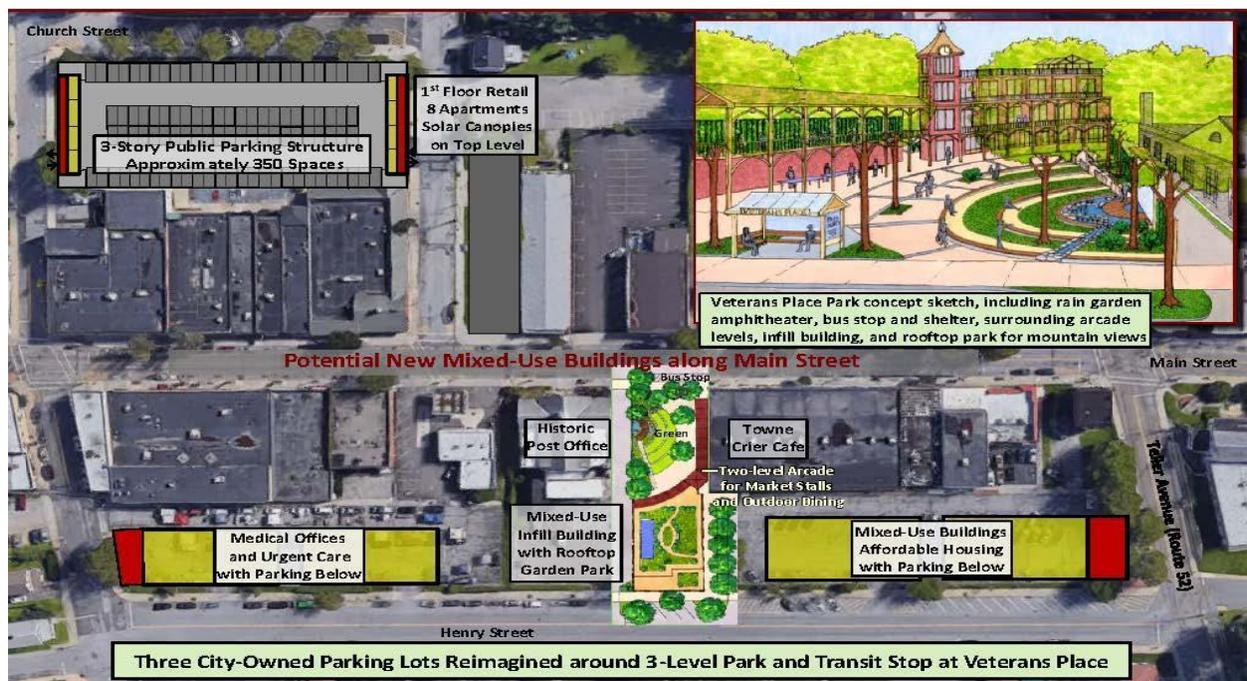
Beacon's DRI Investment would focus on improving areas of the central business district in a variety of ways to reduce these disparities by increasing the availability of commercial space at proposed mixed-use buildings. To reach its smart growth goals, Beacon will continue to make efforts to ensure the availability of a

diversified employment base that meets the skills and experience of its residents, fosters redevelopment, and renders growth sustainable in the long-term. With the support of DRI funding, Beacon will be equipped to welcome new types of industry and jobs with higher wages and salaries.

4. Quality of life.

The City of Beacon is an open and welcoming community. Beacon enjoys a diverse population of African American, Latinx, Asian, and LGBTQ+ residents and business owners. Named one of the *Cooldest Small Towns in America* (by BudgetTravel.com) and one of *The 30 Most Beautiful Main Streets Across America* (ArchitecturalDigest.com) in 2018, it is clear Beacon has positioned itself as a welcoming and inclusive community, which is highly evident in the character of the Main Street DRI area.

The City champions quality-of-life initiatives that promote environmental justice (Beacon has two large, designated EJ areas), food security, health equity, racial and gender equality, economic justice, and environmental protection. The City is actively supporting policies that are reflective of these values. Other Quality of Life initiatives undertaken by the City include: development of hiking and biking trails and public park facilities; investment in expanded recreational and afterschool programs by the City; support for its vibrant weekly Farmers' Market, which operates year-round on Sundays on the Main Street corridor; operation with the County of a free "Loop" Main Street shuttle bus; support for local business through a COVID outdoor dining program; multiple environmental initiatives, including conversion of streetlights to LED and development of a 2MW solar farm on the former landfill site; support for community nutrition programs, including green youth programs that raise food for low-income residents; and proactive efforts to encourage COVID vaccinations for all residents. Beacon's Comprehensive Plan includes zoning and policy changes that have led to an expansion of low to moderate income housing and workforce housing within the DRI area.



The City has instituted several policies that serve to protect the quality of life in the target DRI area and throughout the community. One such policy, the Complete Streets Initiative, encourages the development of

streets that provide safe, comfortable, and convenient access for all modes of transportation, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders. Walking and bicycling access between the waterfront and Main Street has been an issue for a long time. The proposed improvements will help Beacon residents access the train station and waterfront more easily and safely by foot and on bike. The improvements will also encourage more visitors to take the Free Loop bus service, walk, or bike up to Main Street from the train station. Implementation of these proposed DRI improvements will promote connectivity to Beacon's commercial core. Along Main Street, Complete Street projects will include adding new sidewalks with bump outs, striping new crosswalks, enhancing ADA accommodations, and improving lighting.

The implementation of new zoning regulations along Main Street has furthered the Comprehensive Plan's goals to allow for sufficient density that supports a transit-oriented community focused on residents, workers, and visitors who seek the convenience of transportation facilities in a walkable community framework. Through its zoning and other policies, the City has focused upon:

- Maintaining a variety of housing opportunities that are accessible to a wide range of income levels;
- Preserving the existing density and settlement pattern of established neighborhoods;
- Encouraging housing development at relatively greater densities within and adjacent to the central business district;
- Encouraging development of vacant and underutilized former industrial sites for residential use; and,
- Ensuring continued racial, ethnic, age, and economic diversity of the population through encouraging a wide range of housing choices.

This commitment to housing diversity is supported by the City's Affordable-Workforce Housing law. The law provides below-market-rate housing with first priority to volunteer emergency responders, City and school employees, and local residents. Households earning between 70% and 80% of the Dutchess County area median income (AMI) are eligible to rent units. As additional market-rate housing comes online, residents continue to express fear of displacement and worries over affordability. To address this issue, the City Council revised its inclusionary zoning policy in 2017, requiring new developments of ten units or more to include at least 10% of the units be affordable. The City also partnered with housing developers to redevelop a City-owned property into affordable and market rate housing.

The City currently owns 11 underutilized asphalt public parking lots within the DRI target area, identified as Priority Redevelopment areas. Six sites are envisioned to include new public green spaces (urban pocket parks) that will be combined with new transit stops and infill buildings. Long term, the City's ambitious plans include the development of at least five mixed-use and workforce housing buildings that will infuse vitality and economic activity to the benefit of the target area and the larger community. In addition, the proposed plan contemplates the introduction of new bus stops/shelters every 3-4 blocks along Main Street.

Beacon's land area is characterized by a mixture of large flat areas and low rolling hills in between the Hudson River and Hudson Highland mountains. The higher elevations along the business corridor offer scenic ridgeline views, and there are few significant areas of steep slopes, especially as one approaches the Metro-North Station. These slopes are important elements within the City viewshed. Consequently, building heights are limited within certain areas to protect established upland views. The City's Comprehensive Plan calls for the preservation of environmentally, historically, and culturally significant buildings, landscapes, and neighborhoods that contribute to Beacon's overall character. The preservation of the City's open space and viewshed is a key goal, and any future development must align with these physical factors and natural gifts.

Beacon is a highly walkable community, offering public transportation options connecting residents to work, shopping, recreational and community facilities. However, Beacon's targeted DRI area needs a variety of further improvements that promote economic vitality and civic participation within the business core. The Comprehensive Plan visioning survey found that Beacon residents placed a high value on walkability and safety. This was perceived to be of particular benefit to Beacon's low-moderate income population. Improved connectivity will increase the walkability and bike-ability of the downtown and ensure access to food, educational facilities, health facilities, public parks and gathering spaces.

5. Supportive local policies.

The City of Beacon has multiple policies in place that protect and enhance residents' quality of life. As previously mentioned, the City adopted a Complete Streets Policy in December 2016. This policy encourages the development of streets that provide safe, comfortable, and convenient access for all modes of transportation, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders and is ADA-compliant to ensure that the community's transportation infrastructure is reorganized in a manner that protects residents and informs current and future development.

The City of Beacon is a certified Climate Smart Community (one of seven NYS communities attaining Silver Level) and has been certified as a Tree City by the Arbor Foundation for over 23 years. Recognizing that climate change continues to be an existential threat to our collective future, and more imminently to riverfront cities, Beacon has taken the initiative to reach out to residents and stakeholders to create a Sustainability and Climate Resilience Vision plan to address and plan for this looming crisis.

The City, in partnership with Local Governments for Sustainability, developed greenhouse gas emissions inventories for both community and municipal operations. The inventories are part of ongoing sustainability efforts and an important step as Beacon fulfills its responsibilities as a NYS-Certified Climate Smart Community. The emissions inventory has informed planning for energy savings and emissions reductions by setting the baseline from which the City can measure progress towards sustainability goals and targets. In the past several years, the City has established a "Green Fleet" policy to reduce carbon emissions from its vehicles and committed to purchase or produce 100% renewable electricity for all City facilities.

6. Public support.

The public participation and engagement process conducted to gather community input for the City's DRI Initiative and the support of local leaders and stakeholders for pursuing a vision of downtown revitalization were established eighteen months ago. In advance of this DRI funding request, Beacon convened a group of stakeholders (The Main Street Access Committee) to lead the public visioning process. The Committee is comprised of City staff, representatives of community-based organizations and civic associations, business leaders, residents, and other key stakeholders. All are committed to and supportive of pursuing the DRI visioning process. The recommendations to come out of that visioning process will address issues of downtown revitalization aligned with environmental sustainability, economic development, affordable housing, improved infrastructure, and enhanced public facilities.

Due to COVID restrictions, the Main Street Access Committee meetings were held virtually. On August 30, 2021, the City held a public comment session to present the DRI concepts developed. Residents expressed concerns about what they perceived to be the displacement of low to moderate income residents, the lack of

affordable housing, and the need for the City to establish a residential preference for any new affordable housing development. Comments included the suggestion that a permanent place be established for a Farmers' Market, which occurred earlier in 2021. One resident pointed out that the average local housing cost was 123% of the FHA-conforming loan limit and as such, the absence of FHA financing further impacted the ability of the average Beacon resident to purchase a home. Others mentioned the need for a housing study and/or concerns about the effects of gentrification in pricing out Beacon residents.

The conceptual proposals in this application are largely based on the 2017 Comprehensive Plan update, which had extensive levels of public outreach through Steering Committee meetings, two hands-on public workshops attended by over 220 residents and business owners, and additional City Council public hearings. The City's updated Comprehensive Plan addresses existing conditions and identifies the needs of the community to guide appropriate and sustainable land development in and around the DRI focus area. The Comprehensive Plan represents not only a product of much time and effort, but also the beginning of a process which involves continued review and changes to regulations, and procedures within the City. Because the Comprehensive Plan was informed by a variety of previous planning efforts and relied heavily on public input/participation, it helped to clarify that residents are in favor of economic development goals that will preserve and enhance Main Street vitality. Previous workshop participants stated they were generally proud of Main Street as the civic center of the City, specifically noting the prevalence of locally-owned shops and restaurants as important attributes. To maintain an open dialogue with residents and business owners, the City will continue to collaborate with various local organizations advocating for and representing the needs and interests of a diverse constituency of stakeholders, including residents, commuters, business owners, parents, seniors, and artists. Local collaborating organizations include: Beacon Arts, Sustainable Beacon, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Beacon Public Schools and Beacon Housing Authority.

Beacon's greatest resource is its people. The City is fortunate to have a dedicated corps of engaged residents who serve on various committees, including: Main Street Access, Recreation, Tree Advisory, Greenway Trail, Conservation Advisory, Human Rights, and Traffic Safety. There is a vibrant grassroots movement made up of residents who advance key goals, such as recreation improvement or food security programs. For example, volunteers were responsible for raising funds for the design and building of Wee Play Children's Park in 2007 and Wee Play Woods in 2018 (in conjunction with the City's Parks and Recreation Department). Residents have been instrumental in the siting of gardens at each of the four elementary schools and a garden planted in 2019 at the middle school. Residents help tend these gardens and educate children about the nutritional value of the fresh vegetables they grow and take home. Residents of Beacon volunteer their time and treasure creating organizations that address food insecurity; those organizations include Beacon Mutual Aid, Fairground, I AM Beacon, and Beacon's many food pantries and soup kitchens.

Should Beacon be fortunate enough to be awarded DRI funding, it will rely heavily on the residents of the community to participate in the planning process. Beacon intends to conduct outreach by posting to the City website and social media pages and communications through local media and community organizations. A concerted effort will be made to engage the residents of all senior and family affordable housing developments to increase civic engagement among those least likely to participate. Outreach materials will be welcoming and publicly posted. In addition, Spanish language announcements will be distributed.

7. Transformative opportunities and readiness

Beacon seeks to leverage unproductive, publicly owned, underutilized parcels to provide model sustainable growth solutions to problems that face many communities in the Mid-Hudson Region. These projects will specifically aim to solve pressing issues such as:

- How to connect visitors of all ability levels to a means of transportation safely and efficiently from the riverfront and Beacon Train Station up the hill to the businesses along Main Street;
- How to make Main Street easily accessible along its full length, now that the historic trolleys are gone, and it is too long for convenient walking;
- How to create a network of urban parks and green infrastructure in a City Center that has been overwhelmed by cars, parking lots, and heat island effects;
- How to repopulate Main Street with permanent residents and employees to support the businesses through up and down economic cycles; and,
- How to publicly initiate private infill, affordable housing, and job creation projects without demolition and displacement.

In consideration of the foregoing challenges, the City has identified several strategic projects to transform Main Street. These initiatives, which could be implemented relatively quickly, fall into critical categories that support quality of life and facilitate the continued transformation of Beacon’s struggling Main Street into a thriving urban center that offers a rich abundance of housing choices, employment, recreational amenities, and transportation opportunities, and that is welcoming to all. Beacon’s DRI proposal focuses on providing improved access to public schools and healthcare facilities, the creation of mixed-use housing, job growth, the creation of placemaking public meeting facilities, and attracting new public and private investment in service of all residents. This transformation can only be accomplished by strengthening the downtown core. The City looks forward to exploring these opportunities during the DRI planning process. Proposed opportunities ready for implementation within the next two years include:

Housing and Commercial space: Beacon intends to ensure that future developments, especially along Main Street, offer a mix of affordable and market rate units strategically located to support economic growth. As part of this DRI Proposal, the City has identified three priority redevelopment areas that are focused in areas where underutilized properties owned by the City or county currently exist. The City, together with the *Main Street Access Committee* has identified Veterans Place as a critical opportunity for the redevelopment of Main St. The proposed project calls for the:

- The development of Veterans’ Place located on central Main Street at the Post Office, including the construction of a three-story mixed-use infill building to feature a Maker Space facility, rooftop garden park, and a new eco-friendly public green plaza park with new transit stop.

Estimated Cost: \$1.74 Million for the park and transit enhancements
Sources:(1) State or federal grants for new eco-friendly park connected to transit stop while leveraging private funds.
(2) Sale or long-term lease of southern street section for new 3-story building.
(3) Building rooftop park café/bar concession.
(4) Towne Crier Café use of arcade space for outdoor dining.
(5) Business Improvement District for surrounding properties.

Additional park projects at City Hall and the County Center are estimated to cost \$2.25 million and \$1.2 million, and the City is proposing three other smaller Main Street parks as part of the transit system. Parking

structures could cost up to \$25,000 per space. As part of the City's commitment, the publicly owned parking lots in the three prime redevelopment areas alone have an estimated land value of \$2.4 million.

Beacon has not yet selected an affordable housing developer partner, pending release of an RFP. The City has been approached by a number of qualified affordable and market rate housing developers that have expressed their readiness to partner with the City while adhering to the City's design standards.

Healthcare: Despite a considerable demand for affordable primary care services in Beacon, many residents experience significant financial barriers that constrain access to care. UDS Mapper data indicates that 20.03% of adults in this community have delayed or not sought care due to high cost, a strong contrast to the statewide rate of 13.45% for this measure. The elevated percentage of adults postponing and/or foregoing needed care in Beacon is indicative of the limited primary care capacity that currently exists in this community, especially with respect to services that are accessible for the city's low-income population. In addition, the socio-economic and demographic characteristics displayed in Beacon (19.6% of the population relies on Medicaid, 9.97% on Medicare) reveal populations that are at high risk for numerous health problems and marked health disparities. To mitigate this problem, Beacon plans to:

- Work with Sun River Health, Beacon's federally qualified health center, to develop and locate a new or expanded medical arts and urgent care facility within the priority area of redevelopment along Main Street, so that residents have easy access to affordable, immediate healthcare; and,
- Support public outreach from local medical institutions and consider public service messaging to ensure that residents are aware of public health issues.

Sustainability: Beacon aims to become one of the most sustainable and green communities in the state. This will include a range of initiatives to reduce the City's greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impacts. Since 2009, Beacon has been a certified Climate Smart Community and last year was one of only seven NYS communities to earn the Silver Certification. DRI area projects aimed at supporting sustainability include:

- Construction of green spaces, green roofs, and innovative stormwater infrastructure throughout the downtown to reduce the environmental impacts from Main Street.
- Green street improvements to increase the City's urban canopy.
- Water and sewer improvements that will enhance the efficiency of both systems and provide for the long-term sustainability of Beacon's water supply.
- A pilot project that utilizes an autonomous shuttle that residents and visitors can use to travel to and from centers of place.
- Installation of additional Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations.
- Installation of photovoltaic panels on the City's Highway Garage (proposed).

Transportation: Beacon recognizes that coordinating individual functions will provide both greater efficiency in the community and drive revenue growth. As such, the City would like to move forward with several transportation projects that will improve connectivity and reduce congestion. In short, the City of Beacon seeks to create a seamless transportation experience for all different types of users throughout the downtown, focusing on transit, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements. Projects include:

- Shuttle Service: The City may consider an automated, driverless shuttle system which can provide local transportation for residents and visitors as they move throughout the downtown corridor. Beacon's Main Street, more than a mile in length and an additional ½ -mile up a steep hill from the Train Station, is in need of designated stops that are pleasant places to sit, stay, and wait for a ride, in order to increase year-round ridership. These shuttle stops will be co-located with pocket parks (less than a third of an acre) that feature

compact sitting areas, greenery, and signage that clearly identifies the shuttle's route, schedule, and visitor information about things to do in the immediate vicinity.

- **Parking Improvements:** Beacon is interested in constructing a multi-tier parking structure to ease parking issues in the downtown and support commercial growth in the City's core. A parking structure adjacent to affordable housing units will help to reduce vehicle use overall and allow for the reuse of existing surface lots and more efficient use of the City's valuable land. The City seeks to reorganize surface level asphalt parking lots in a way that would increase the yield of parking spaces, incorporate design standards, institute green measures, and allow for new commercial development, especially within Beacon's Opportunity Zone.
- **Complete Streets Improvements:** Beacon plans to make a number of pedestrian, safety, traffic calming, lighting and ADA improvements along main corridors and in the center of the downtown. Specifically, pedestrian and bicycle improvements will be made from Hammond Field and Memorial Park to South Avenue Park, using North Cedar Street as a connecting bicycle boulevard. This route is well used by students from Beacon High School and Rombout Middle School as they cross through the downtown. The proposed improvements will serve to protect their safety, along a corridor which includes the Howland Public Library, and a host of other important public facilities to two Housing Authority facilities.

Administrative Capacity.

The City has made an impressive recovery in recent years in part due to an effective government structure and professional leadership. The City's strong financial management was lauded in 2019 by the NYS Office of State Comptroller Local Government and School Accountability for its outstanding Capital Planning and Asset Management. Hosted by the Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, Beacon was the singular example used to illustrate how municipalities should seek to develop internal systems in support of the municipality's shared collective vision (Comp. Plan, etc.), collection of asset information, long term financial planning, and capital investment. For the sixth consecutive year, Moody's Investors Service rated the City's 2021 credit profile as "Aa2," the third highest credit rating that the agency assigns to fixed income securities. This rating permits the City to float bonds at low rates to cover the cost of capital projects, though the rating agency noted that Beacon has elevated debt levels that may prevent future major investments absent outside assistance or funding.

In the last 30 years, the City has benefited from stable long-term management with only four mayors and four City administrators. The City's dedicated professional staff has always done more with less. There are just 12 department heads and 110 employees to serve a population of over 14,000 residents. As the local economy and Beacon's tax base have grown, the City's capacity to implement infrastructure and quality of life projects has continued to grow. The City aggressively pursues millions of dollars in grant funding each year to supplement budgetary needs and enable critical projects. Most importantly, the City of Beacon is ready for DRI implementation, as demonstrated by the completion of its 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update and 2018 Central Main Street rezoning, which have outlined specific ways to improve the targeted DRI Area.

Additional plans and studies that support the City's application include: City Center Parking Analysis (2014), Complete Streets Policy (2016), Affordable-Workforce Housing Law (2017 rev.), Historic Preservation Law (2018 rev.), Comprehensive Water Supply Plan (2018), Main Street Safety Assessment Report (2019), Natural Resources Inventory (2020), designation of additional Main Street Historic Landmark buildings (2021), and water and wastewater management studies. This impressive track record, and the completion of these

planning initiatives in the last 5 years have positioned Beacon to be a uniquely prepared potential DRI project recipient. Beacon’s capable management team has shown an ability to take on complex tasks, work closely with the public and private partners and achieve collective objectives in a cost-efficient manner.

8. Other.

The proposed initiatives embedded within this DRI Application will address deficiencies that the City of Beacon has initially identified as critical to the transformation of the target DRI area. Specifically, this proposal focuses upon a combination of economic development, transportation, housing, quality of life, and community development needs considered integral to the long-term sustainability of the Main Street business district and health of the community. The anticipated resulting projects will have demonstrated public support and strong stakeholder buy-in, and they will be carefully vetted by the Local Planning Committee and the State in accordance with all relevant laws and policies and best practices.

During the Revolutionary War, Beacon (as its name implies) stood watch over the critical Hudson Valley on behalf of General George Washington, whose army camped safely across the Hudson River in Newburgh and in the Town of Fishkill just to the east. (It is believed that Mount Beacon is the mountain range featured on the seal of New York State.) Today, Beacon strives to be a symbol lighting the way for other struggling communities throughout the Hudson Valley and New York State as they seek to revitalize previously distressed urban areas into more sustainable, equitable, economically diverse, and vibrant community centers. A DRI award here will spark great things for Beacon and the Mid-Hudson Region.



DRI Electric Vehicle Charging Station Addendum

City of Beacon 2021 Downtown Revitalization Initiative

- REDC Region: Mid-Hudson
- Municipality Name: City of Beacon
- Downtown Name: Main Street Corridor
- County Name: Dutchess
- Applicant Contact(s) Name and Title: Christopher White, City Administrator; Lee Kyriacou, Mayor
- Applicant Contact(s) Email Address and Secondary Email Address: cwhite@beaconny.gov
mayor@beaconny.gov

Addendum: Opportunities for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

The City of Beacon wishes to express its interest in installing an additional Electric vehicle fast charging station within the proposed DRI boundary. The City currently has 2 dual port Chargepoint charging stations on the west end of town and is in the process of installing 2 more Chargepoint dual port stations on the east end of town.

The City would be interested in exploring an additional EV charging station at the lower-bound lot (requiring 3 parking spaces with 22'x16' additional space within the property line) to be sited on City owned property, location to be determined during the planning process.