

2021 DRI Application Basic Information

REDC Region: Mid-Hudson

Municipality Name: Town and Village of Liberty

Downtown Name: Downtown Historic District

County Name: Sullivan

Applicant Contacts: Frank DeMayo, Town Supervisor and Ron Stabak, Village Mayor

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Vision for Downtown

Situated in the heart of Sullivan County's natural beauty, Liberty is a proudly diverse community at the hub of a vibrant arts, leisure, and outdoor living culture. We have a proud history of restoring the health and happiness of countless visitors. We will look fondly on our past and embrace our future by supporting resurgent tourism and recreational opportunities, developing superior housing and human services, and welcoming sustainable light industrial growth for a new generation of area residents, entrepreneurs, and visitors.

We will accomplish this vision by building on the assets that have attracted visitors to the Town and Village of Liberty for nearly two centuries: fresh air, open spaces, and an opportunity to make a quick escape from the hustle and bustle of New York City. New resorts and amenities in and around Liberty have created jobs, attracted visitors and second home owners, and have contributed to an appealing quality of life for permanent residents and commercial investors. We also will build on the energy created by Sullivan County's vibrant performing arts scene, ranging from the Village's intimate

venues and newly restored Liberty Theater to one of the best outdoor concert forums in the country, Bethel Woods Center for the Arts. Farm-to-table dining options multiply each year across our County, along with artisanal food and beverage makers and an incredibly diverse range of restaurants along Liberty's Main Street-Mill Street Corridor. Altogether, Liberty's downtown and immediate vicinity offer galleries, museums, special events, golf courses, cycling and hiking trails and other leisure activities, making it the ideal "base camp" for enjoying the Catskills and Upper Delaware.

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Vision for Downtown (continued)

The Liberty Downtown Historic District will also capitalize on walkable streets and a range of housing options. Family-owned small businesses and innovative schools add to the features stimulating Liberty's rebirth and round out the assets that retain homegrown talent and will entice a new generation of homeowners.

Welcoming to hard workers and revelers alike, the Town and Village of Liberty will connect the blossoming hamlets of Sullivan County to the many visitors and future residents who yearn for the simple pleasures of clean air, open roads, and starlit nights.



Justification

Above all, Liberty merits DRI investment because it is a community with a powerful history in the early stages of reinvention and rebirth.

People throughout New York State and beyond have an emotional connection to Liberty as the heart of the Catskills in the era portrayed by such popular media as “Dirty Dancing” and more recently, “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel.” This connection is deepest in people who grew up here and who are now putting their money where their heart is and investing in new retail, entertainment, recreation and housing. **Liberty believes in Liberty.** A DRI award would leverage locally generated funds to bring about the community renaissance that will be celebrated by many who have had a past connection with the area as well as the new generations discovering the area's assets for the first time.

Liberty is ready for DRI investment because New Yorkers are moving to the Catskills.

Evidence suggests Sullivan County's economy is benefitting from migration out of New York City and the surrounding metropolitan areas. After years of decline, Sullivan County registered slight but steady population increases in 2016, 2017, and 2018. These gains recorded in the American Community Survey were confirmed by the 2020 census. Liberty is already leading the Mid-Hudson on this front — its school district is one of only three out of the 34 school districts in the mid-Hudson region that experienced an increase in student population between 2008 and 2018.

With inventory limited everywhere, new housing is needed to support population growth. Liberty already has multi-family housing projects underway. 73 beautiful new apartments opened in 2020 on Chestnut Street, and the Sullivan County Land Bank (SCLB) is actively stabilizing single-family neighborhoods by removing blight and bringing in new owners to renovate aging housing stock. Since it was established in 2017, SCLB has acquired 61 properties, demolished 25 blighted houses, and sold nine properties in Sullivan County. Nevertheless, tight real estate markets following a mass emigration from New York City to the Hudson Valley demand that the DRI include support for upper-story residential projects and other forms of affordable housing to support a growing community.

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Justification (continued)

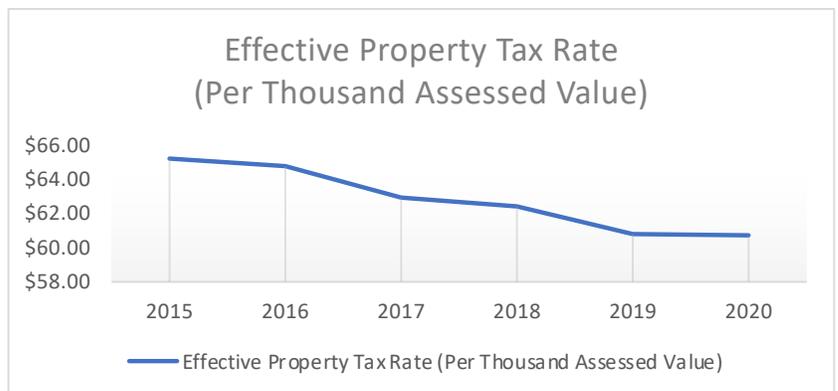
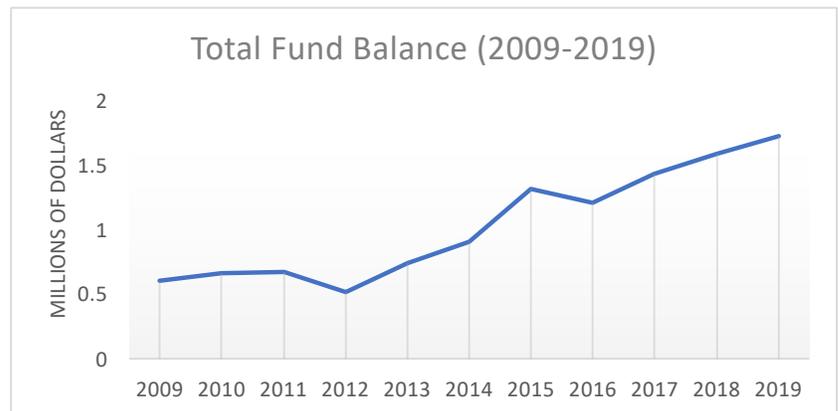
Liberty is ready for DRI investment because a consortium of local investors committed to Liberty’s revitalization are working together to build a brighter future.

Projects already in motion include a \$4.5 million restoration of the downtown theater and its adjoining storefronts, and a massive reutilization of the Sullivan County Golf and Country Club on the outskirts of the Village. These major projects are only the tip of the iceberg – there are 236 open building permits across the Village of Liberty.

Small businesses are coming back to the downtown, including cafés, restaurants, bodegas, a pet care facility, laundromat, barber and beauty shops – all of which have opened in the last three years. At the larger end of the development spectrum, all buildings on the site of the Borscht Belt-era Grossinger’s Hotel have been demolished and brownfield cleanup of the site is complete, clearing the way for new development projects. On another approach to the Village, the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development is working with property owners and County, Town and Village governments along the Old Route 17 corridor to create shovel ready sites for light industrial projects.

Liberty is ready for DRI investment because a disciplined fiscal approach has stabilized the Village’s financial standing and equipped Liberty to carry out a complete DRI program.

The closure of the Borscht Belt era hotels did not just impact the private sector economy in Liberty. The collapse of the hotel industry also resulted in a massive contraction of the tax base in the Catskills, consuming fund balances and severely eroding municipal government services in the Town and Village. Fortunately, superior fiscal stewardship and our nascent recovery now have Liberty in a position to successfully implement a Downtown Revitalization Initiative investment. As the charts depict, over the last ten years, the Village has restored its fund balance to a much more secure position and effective tax rates have declined slowly but steadily over the last five years. These accomplishments were slowed but not reversed by the pandemic, and the hot real estate market in Sullivan County suggests our financial standing will continue to improve.



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Downtown Identification - Boundaries of the Proposed DRI Area



The target area consists of the Downtown Historic District and Mill Street corridor immediately to the south of downtown.

The central artery (North Main St. – Mill St) is highly walkable, with a roundabout dividing the two areas approximately halfway through. The corridor is also fully accessible via the Move Sullivan public transit system. The O&W rail trail forms the southwest boundary of the downtown area. The Downtown Historic District features a mix of dense residential and commercially-zoned properties, while the Mill Street Corridor tilts toward commercial and light industry. The Downtown Historic District is surrounded mostly by residential property, while Mill Street connects to other commercial properties along State Routes 17, 52 and 55.

Past Investment, Future Investment Potential

Liberty has been the focus of a series of planning efforts aimed at building on the renewed popularity of the Catskills region to spark local redevelopment:

- The Town of Liberty updated the Land Use and Zoning portion of its Comprehensive Plan in 2016. In 2018 code changes were implemented to make the Town more business-friendly, including **streamlining of development reviews** and making its code available online through eCode;
- Pattern for Progress completed a **Revitalization Plan and Blight Study** for the Village in 2017;

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Past Investment, Future Investment Potential (continued)

- The Town and Village have both invested significantly in improvements to water and sewer infrastructure in recent years. Future plans include a recently approved plan to completely renovate the Town's wastewater treatment plant in the hamlet of Swan Lake. With the support of a matching grant from Empire State Development, a \$37,000 feasibility study is underway to bring wastewater capacity to the hamlet of Parksville.
- The Town and Village of Liberty conducted a joint review of the previous decade's planning recommendations for downtown Liberty in 2018 and held a workshop with all board members and the public to identify key action items. Subsequent to the workshop, committees were formed to pursue implementation in five areas: beautification and clean up, code enforcement, new welcome and way finding signage, creating a "smart downtown," and sidewalk upgrades.
- The Sullivan County Partnership has engaged the Town and Village of Liberty, along with neighboring Thompson, in the creation of a **redevelopment plan for the industrial corridor** passing through those communities along Old Route 17. Phase I identified key redevelopment sites, conceptual buildout plans, and development opportunities and constraints. Phase II is underway and will make these sites shovel ready, including a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) prepared in cooperation with relevant property owners.
- The Sullivan County Government Divisions of Planning and Public Safety Climate Risk worked closely with the Town and Village of Liberty in the **Seacoast (C-RISE) planning pilot** in 2020. This effort received technological and consultant support from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Hazard mitigation planning assistance was also provided by the University of Albany to pilot a GIS-based data inventory tool to be used statewide.



Recent Investment: More than \$34,877,600 invested since 2016

- **Downtown Gateways:** Immediately adjacent to Route 17, more than \$6 million was invested to prepare the former Grossinger's Resort brownfield site for new development. Approximately 450,000sq. ft. of blighted hotel buildings were demolished, along with excavation and off-site disposal of 10,000 tons of soil. DEC declared the cleanup complete in December 2019. Nearby, both Sullivan BOCES and the Sullivan County Visitors Association relocated their operations to the former Sullivan's Department store complex, an exceptional reuse of 16,500sq. ft. of vacant retail space.
- **Downtown Anchor:** The historic Liberty Theater, built in 1924, is a 30,000 square foot two-story building located in the heart of Liberty's downtown business district. Following several code violations and years of inaction by a prior developer, the property was acquired by Davidson Sullivan Realty, LLC (DSR) in 2017. After a lengthy contract

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Past Investment, Future Investment Potential (continued)

process and SHPO review, construction on the theatre began in late 2019. The \$4.5 million project is progressing with a mix of public and private funding, including a \$1 million grant from Restore NY. In spite of COVID-related supply delays, the building's roof and custom-designed windows were restored during the pandemic, paving the way for interior remodeling. When reopened in 2023, the 900-seat facility will host both live performances and feature films. In addition to the theater space, the building includes five storefronts on the first floor and about a dozen second floor offices. Ground floor commercial space is expected to open in 2022.

- **Broadband:** Through a combination of grants and direct taxpayer investment, County government has invested \$10,500,000 to build towers and modernize the 911 communication system. By combining this effort with the establishment of a Local Development Corporation (LDC) in August 2020 to ensure equitable development of additional capacity, Sullivan County is bringing broadband service to residents and business across our mostly rural county. Taking advantage of existing infrastructure, including the construction of a tower at the County's solar farm at the Human Services Complex in the Town of Liberty will enable reliable service for all Town and Village residents as the LDC's network comes online.

- **Commercial Development:** Small businesses are the lifeblood of any downtown and Liberty's storefronts have been filling up with businesses that both serve the local community and attract area visitors. New restaurants and café offerings are expanding – some of these got their start through entrepreneurial training classes offered by the County, and have received financing through the County's Main Street Revolving Loan Fund. The pace of applications to the Village for new business offerings are accelerating and include a robust mix of retail and services from barber shops to doggy daycare. In the beginning of 2020, the largest downtown grocery store completed a significant makeover, and after years of renting their space and taking steps to expand, a family-owned Latin American-focused grocery store purchased their space outright in August 2021. Between the two downtown grocery stores, a new laundromat with upstairs apartments were built in 2020. Just outside the proposed DRI area is the newly created non-profit Catskills Food Hub which in barely three years of operation is supporting 36 local agricultural producers and generating more than \$850,000 in annual revenue.

- **New Housing:** A 73-apartment complex was recently completed on Chestnut Street, within walking distance of downtown shops and services. [Need investment projection] The Sullivan County Land Bank (SCLB) was formed in 2017, with Liberty as a priority target. SCLB has been working with the Village on plans to fight blight through demolition and vacant lot improvements, new home construction, and residential and commercial rehabs. As of the end of 2019, SCLB has invested \$600,000 in the Village of Liberty. These funds have resulted in 13 demolitions, two renovations, and one disposition. SCLB projects in the Village include the restoration of single-family homes into owner-occupied residences, development of new affordable homes built to Enterprise Green Community standards on the site of an abandoned subdivision, and the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of a beautifully historic Spanish colonial-style mansion that once housed the extended family of a local oil executive.

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Past Investment, Future Investment Potential (continued)

- Culture & Recreation:** The Liberty Library completed a \$2 million renovation and expansion project in August 2020 that nearly doubled its square footage, providing more space for events and technology. In addition to the Liberty Theater project, Liberty has seen the opening of The Downtown Barn live music and event venue and the expansion of the Liberty Museum and Arts Center, which added a new gallery building. 90.5FM WJFF, public radio for the Catskills, recently broke ground on a new broadcast facility in the Town of Liberty. The Liberty Community Development Corporation's signature public-private project prior to the pandemic was a \$200,000 skate park in the heart of downtown. On the private investment side, the Liberty Heights indoor trampoline park opened in 2019 just outside downtown. Liberty's two brightest gems, Hanofee and Walnut Mountain Parks have also received substantial recent investments including a \$250,000 grant from Sullivan Renaissance for the construction of a community pavilion at Walnut Mountain Park which will be utilized for community and private events and possibly a larger and extended season farmers' market. Liberty's exceptionally active Rotary Club recently embarked on a major renovation of the Hanofee Park pavilion.



- Hospitality Investments:** Foster Supply Hospitality (FSH), a locally grown company behind much of the recent revitalization of western Sullivan County, whose farm-to-table restaurants and Catskills-chic accommodations have received numerous accolades in such national media as *Esquire*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *NY Times Style Magazine* and others, has begun expanding into Liberty. FSH's restoration of the Piccolo Paese restaurant gave a much beloved local landmark a makeover capable of attracting a new, young clientele while retaining those loyal to it for decades. FSH has also purchased the Sullivan County Country Club, breathing new life into another local landmark while preparing the property for bigger and better opportunities in the near future.

- Healthcare Access:** Unlike many rural counties, Sullivan County is the home to several exceptional health care facilities, including the Center for Discovery, an international leader in supporting persons with developmental disabilities. The Town of Liberty is the long-time host of Sullivan County's largest mental health clinic and long-term care facility. The Village of Liberty hosts the Achieve adult rehab facility and added the multi-million-dollar Ahava urgent care center in December 2019 which brought medical services back to the Village that had been lost since local hospitals consolidated in 1977.

- Public Infrastructure Investments:** Sullivan County has invested in new public transit linking Liberty with major employers, healthcare institutions, and destination retail in Monticello, Hurleyville, and Fallsburg. After a successful launch in 2019, the system expanded in 2020 and now covers Liberty's entire downtown historic district. In 2019 Liberty completed the first phase rollout of new wayfinding signage. The Village of Liberty also recently converted all of its street lights to more efficient LEDs.

- Light Industrial Expansion:** In late 2019, Ideal Snacks of Middletown and Liberty was acquired by PepsiCo/Frito-Lay as part of efforts to healthier snack options to the company's portfolio. PepsiCo is delivering on its stated

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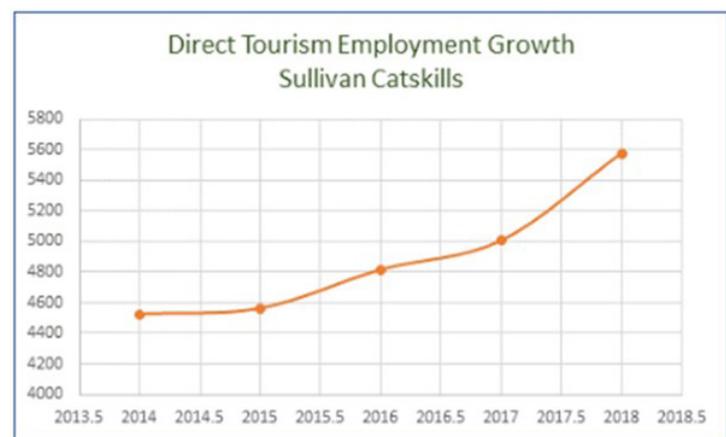
plan to expand both Middletown and Liberty facilities, including more than doubling the workforce from 350 to 750 over the course of the expansion plan. To date, Frito-Lay has invested, \$2.5 million into the Liberty plant and intends to invest \$15 million over the next five years.

Projects Under Review or Ready to Move Forward (more than \$45,000,000 committed)

- Water/Sewer Infrastructure:** The Village of Liberty has embarked on a \$12 million wastewater processing upgrade. The project, currently in the design phase, will double current processing capacity, providing a potentially significant source of revenue for the Village by the summer of 2022. The Town has initiated wastewater capacity expansion funded by an \$18million, 0% interest loan. The Swan Lake project is expected to complete in fall 2023.
- Tourism Destinations and Housing:** FSH is building on its successful initial venture in Liberty and its affiliate company, Western Sullivan Properties LLC, has acquired Liberty's Sullivan County Golf and Country Club and plans to enhance the facility by adding a swimming pool, tennis courts and a health club, plus 21 single-family condominium units, a 150-room resort hotel and glamping-style tent sites. Within the past five years, Foster Supply has successfully opened four country inns and six restaurants in Sullivan County.
- Commercial Development:** In addition to retail, restaurants, nightlife and galleries, downtown also hosts Liberty Elementary School, a library, places of worship, grocery stores, a seasonal farmers market, health care facilities, professional offices, government administration, and a senior and community center. The mix is comprehensive with perhaps the exception of something Governor Hochul has noted as a hallmark of a successful downtown – the presence of a local craft brewery. This will be remedied as the owner of the Bridge and Tunnel Brewery in Queens prepares to open a new location on Lake Street in Spring 2022. The major downtown grocery store, fresh off its recent renovations, is embarking on an expansion that will add a gas station and car wash.

Recent or Impending Job Growth

Sullivan County's had a 17.1% increase in jobs from August 2018-2019, the best rate in all of New York State. After a massive impact to our tourism-supported businesses, the labor force quickly bounced back from the pandemic. Sullivan County's unemployment rate dropped back down to 5.2% by July 2021.



Sullivan County entered the pandemic riding a sustained period of leading job growth among all New York State counties, reaching 17.1% from August 2018 to August 2019. The county unemployment rate was 3.7% in 2019, its

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lowest rate since 1990. Most of these jobs came from the opening of the Resorts World Catskills casino, Kartrite Water Park, YO1 Wellness Center, and significant retail investment, all a convenient commute from Liberty via Route 17. Sullivan County's hospitality sector will continue to grow in the coming years with projects that include the FSH reimagining of the Sullivan County Golf and Country Club discussed above, additional FSH projects in Kenoza Lake on the western side of the County, a Fairfield Inn in Monticello, the Chatwal Lodge in Bethel, and Eldred Preserve. The healthcare sector is expanding as well, with the Center for Discovery's new specialty children's hospital in Rock Hill.

Liberty has a traditional role as a residential community and commercial center for those working throughout Sullivan County. Sitting at the junction of two County Roads (52 and 55) and State Route 17, and anchoring the northern end of the Move Sullivan public transportation system, provides a variety of commuting options for the new jobs created in the core of the county.

Attractiveness of Physical Environment

Liberty is a compact, walkable village in close proximity to destination recreational resources that combines small town charm with urban diversity and culture.

Downtown Liberty is a National Register Historic District featuring a jewel box Victorian town hall along with several architecturally distinguished churches. The diverse range of commercial buildings includes iconic storefronts evoking the downtown's mid-century heyday, along with two and three-story mixed-use buildings from the late 19th and early 20th century. The two-lane Main Street is pedestrian-scaled and dotted with a number of well-landscaped pocket parks and gardens. Alleyways and pedestrian mews connect Main Street to a network of small municipal parking lots. Remnants of Liberty's origins as an agricultural community, the Downtown Barn and the Mauer Barn have been recently renovated, one as performance space and the other a gallery. They contribute to a burgeoning arts and culture scene that also includes the Liberty Museum and Arts Center and the Liberty Theater restoration project.

Liberty is home to a diverse population that is reflected in its downtown retail and restaurants. Specialty groceries complement a growing restaurant row that offers a wide array of cuisines not typically available in a rural setting including Thai, Indian, Polish, and Salvadoran. According to walkscore.com, Liberty's downtown has a WalkScore of 72, making it a "very walkable" place in which "most errands can be accomplished on foot."



Surrounding Liberty's Main Street is a network of walkable streets with a variety of housing options at a range of price points; though all values are modest within the context of the Hudson Valley. While single and multi-family homes dominate, there are also apartment complexes, and income-restricted and senior housing units.

A major part of Liberty's appeal is its proximity to the southern Catskills. Hiking in the Catskill Forest Preserve is a short drive away. Walnut Mountain Park lies just outside downtown and offers a wilderness experience with

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Attractiveness of Physical Environment (continued)

13 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, along with stunning views. An ADA-accessible interpretive nature trail was recently completed, and the developed area of the park provides facilities for active recreation including sports fields, a playground, and a disc golf course. On the other side of downtown is Hanofee Park which provides a pristine lakeside setting with trails, ballfield, basketball, tennis and the town pool. The Sullivan O&W Rail Trail runs through Liberty with ongoing efforts to both improve and connect it to other existing segments of the rail trail in neighboring hamlets. In the downtown itself, the Liberty CDC completed a skate park in 2017, creating an amenity for teens and families; another factor in attracting visitors.

Liberty's physical environment is enhanced each season by intensive beautification efforts involving both municipalities, local volunteers, business owners, and civic organizations in maintaining public spaces and blanketing Main Street in flowers. These efforts have been supported and recognized by Sullivan Renaissance, a Liberty-based beautification and community development initiative of the Gerry Foundation. For several years, Liberty has succeeded in securing and administering grants to care for public spaces and build a healthier community. In 2018 the Town and Village were jointly awarded top prize in the organization's municipal award competition by judges from outside the county with experience in horticulture, planning, and historic preservation.

Quality of Life Policies

- Roadmap to Better Health:** Sullivan County has suffered through poor health outcomes since the end of the Golden Age of Borscht Belt hotels. In 2021, County Division of Health and Family Services established a complete and collaborative plan to address public health challenges with a set of projects focused on the key challenges facing the County's health. The projects focus on easing access to health care, enhancing community resources (childcare, housing, education), and encouraging healthier behavior. Roadmap projects complement the work of the Sullivan County Substance Use Task Force, which has substantially ramped up efforts to end the crisis of opioid misuse.



- Public Transportation:** In 2019, Sullivan County Government inaugurated the Move Sullivan public bus service. Liberty is well-served by Move Sullivan with stops downtown, at the Shop-Rite shopping plaza and County human services complex. The bus service provides transportation from these stops and others to the County's largest employers and government services. Successful first year operations and a demonstrated need in the community drove the County to expand the service throughout the downtown historic district in 2020.

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Quality of Life Policies (continued)

- The Liberty Central School District Community Schools Initiative:** Our school district partners closely with the Boys and Girls Club of Walkill to provide afterschool activities for all of our children. Programs are resuming this October after the COVID pandemic forced a hiatus. Boys and Girls Club activities are paired with PTA events and English as a New Language classes for our growing population of immigrant parents to further unite our diverse community.
- Complete Streets Policies:** Working with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County, Liberty Town and Village have adopted Complete Streets Policies and are implementing complete streets improvements. These include pedestrian benches, enhanced crosswalks, and bike racks in key areas
- Small Business Support:** Liberty’s downtown businesses have benefitted from a number of policies and programs created to support new Main Street Businesses. Sullivan County Planning’s Revolving Loan Fund Program has provided Town and Village small businesses with access to \$360,000 in capital, generating more than 15 jobs and \$1.15 million in sales since 2015.

Public Support

Beginning in January 2020, dozens of interested residents, government officials, and local business owners met to begin developing a shared vision for a stronger downtown. Although these efforts necessarily slowed during the COVID-19 pandemic, they resumed in earnest with the call for Round 5 DRI applications. In all, five public planning sessions were held to assist in preparing this application.

- Community Unity Events:** On August 29, Liberty residents gathered for an end-of-summer Unity Festival to celebrate the diversity of our community. The Unite for Liberty project team hosted a table at the event to gather public input. 63 citizens put in their ranked-choice votes and voiced their priorities on added culture and recreational programs, storefront revitalization and new housing opportunities.



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Public Support (continued)

- Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association:** Based in Liberty and serving the entire County, the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association is leading our economic resurgence with spot-on marketing and business development strategies. New data shows that the Sullivan Catskills are experiencing a substantial year over year increase in visitor numbers and new job growth. The 2019 Oxford Tourism Economics survey revealed that the Sullivan Catskills ranked highest in New York State for tourism growth at 12.2%, significantly outpacing the next highest growth rate in the Bronx at 8.3%. This growth delivers exceptional value to local taxpayers and prospective residents who, without tourism, would have to spend an additional \$2407 annually to maintain the same government services. In total, tourism generated more than \$35,700,000 to the County.
- Gerry Foundation (Sullivan Renaissance, Sullivan 180, Liberty Networking Group):** Now in their 20th year of operation, Sullivan Renaissance is a beautification and community develop initiative of the Gerry Foundation which builds community pride and healthy, active communities through community partnerships and grassroots volunteerism. Through competitive grants, Sullivan Renaissance offers funding, technical assistance and other resources to communities across Sullivan County. Sullivan 180 was created to turn around the health and wellness of Sullivan County. Sullivan 180's mission is to build a healthy, vibrant Sullivan County where everyone has a sense of purpose, connection to family and community and access to fresh foods and an active lifestyle. Clean sweep events...
- Parkville Priorities:** Outside of downtown, Town government has partnered with local residents and the Pattern for Progress's Community ReBuilders program to kick start projects on Main Street of the hamlet of Parkville. Two properties are currently active in the Restore New York program as part of this effort. One owner is building "Catskill Mountain Kids" – a day camp to promote green energy and one is renovating a Main Street home as a gallery and retail space. According to the Town's Confidential Secretary Nick Rusin, "We're benefiting from learning how to organize our community, write grant applications and conduct surveys. The number-one lesson so far is knowing where to find legitimate sources of data and create a visual interpretation of what's going on in the community. That's paramount when you're writing grants to secure funding for municipal projects."

Transformative Opportunities

• Create a More Inviting Downtown with Fresh Facades, Pedestrian Paths, and Climate-Resilient Features.

Plans on the shelf since 2005 would “daylight” a creek running parallel to Main Street. Daylighting the creek would add tremendous visual appeal, reduce risks of property damage due to flooding, and make the entire downtown historic district more pedestrian friendly. Wayfinding signage, additional energy-efficient LED lighting, and landscaping are also part of the plan.

The daylighting plan along with proposals that complement the Liberty Theater project by upgrading and the existing municipal parking areas and alleys will increase pedestrian access, enhance the experience, and reduce vehicular congestion. These lots also provide opportunities to place electric vehicle charging stations in the Downtown Historic District.

Finally, the establishment of a \$600,000 revolving loan and grant fund to support façade and signage improvements would provide a much-needed catalyst to update any properties struggling to obtain interest from new investors.



• Support Community Strengthening Projects Along the Major Downtown Arteries.

Coming out of the pandemic, two of our community’s greatest needs; workforce housing and additional childcare. Along the Lake Street Corridor, Healthy Kids Programs of New York recently purchased the original Cablevision corporate headquarters on Lake Street for mixed use as a daycare center, office space, and affordable housing. Healthy Kids is applying for a \$500,000 grant through the New York



Main Street Project with the Town of Liberty as lead agency and applicant. This project coupled with the nearly-complete redevelopment of a vacant building into the new headquarters of the Bridge and Tunnel brewery across the street will encourage further revitalization on Lake Street.

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Transformative Opportunities (continued)

Along Chestnut Street (Route 52), the Sullivan County Land Bank owns the beautifully historic, Spanish Colonial-styled Yeager Mansion with a goal of redeveloping the property as a community center. DRI investment in the restoration of the property would allow a variety of cultural organizations and interested and capable human service agencies to establish programs that benefit all walks of life in the community in an inspiring space.

Finally, as Frito-Lay expands its operations along the Mill Street corridor, an opportunity exists to improve and expand workforce housing at the nearby Lincoln Motel, similar to Ulster County's recently initiated project in the Town of Ulster. A DRI partnership with Frito-Lay will provide an opportunity to provide employees hired during upcoming expansion efforts with quality housing and potentially on-site daycare.

- **Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Extensions & Enhancements:**

A feasibility study has been completed to extend the 2.5 miles of developed Sullivan O&W Rail Trail that runs through Liberty. Extending the trail to connect downtown Liberty with other Sullivan County destinations will allow for excursion length trips that will bring visitors, spending and investment into Liberty's downtown. This project has a development structure in place, intermunicipal agreements for operations and maintenance, and a management and marketing plan. The O&W Rail Trail has also benefitted from a \$400,000 "Golden Feather" grant from Sullivan Renaissance and Congressman Antonio Delgado (NY-19) announced additional \$1.1 million in federal funding. DRI assistance to ongoing efforts would help connect 30 miles of continuous rail trail running through Sullivan County from Livingston Manor all the way to Mountandale. Liberty's downtown will be a central destination and base camp for users of the trail.



The O&W Rail Trail has also benefitted from a \$400,000 "Golden Feather" grant from Sullivan Renaissance and Congressman Antonio Delgado (NY-19) announced additional \$1.1 million in federal funding. DRI assistance to ongoing efforts would help connect 30 miles of continuous rail trail running through Sullivan County from Livingston Manor all the way to Mountandale. Liberty's downtown will be a central destination and base camp for users of the trail.

- **Water and Wastewater Modernization:** Both Liberty Town and Village have several water and wastewater projects developed, on the shelf, and in various stages of implementation. DRI investment will enable the water and sewer projects that surround downtown to come to fruition, ensuring quality service to the revitalized downtown historic district, enhancing environmental quality, and enabling key downtown gateway projects at the Sullivan County Country Club and former Grossinger's resort to move forward.

Government Capacity: Although the Village of Liberty has spent several years close to the constitutional tax limit, the most recent Village audit was celebrated for its evidence of positive fiscal management. Effective tax rates have decreased in each of the last five years. The Town and Liberty Central School district have also held the line on taxes in recent years without adverse impacts to services or fund balances. Town and Village justice courts have been combined and there is extensive collaboration on the purchasing and use of highway department equipment and resources.

Town and Village planning, grant writing, and code enforcement efforts are well supported by the Sullivan County Government's Division of Planning. Through sound fiscal practices and continuous reform, County Government is

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Transformative Opportunities (continued)

expanding services to residents while holding property taxes below NYS-mandated tax caps. The County Government's Social Services complex in Liberty provides a strong base of professional employees who are dedicated to serving the community.

Economic Development Agencies: Unite for Liberty is actively supported by economic development agencies in Liberty and Sullivan County. These agencies include the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development, Visitors Association, Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Agency, Childcare Council, and Land Bank.

In particular, the Sullivan IDA's primary goal is to promote economic welfare, recreation opportunities, prevent unemployment and economic deterioration, ensure the prosperity of Sullivan County's inhabitants, and promote tourism and trade. Among its many projects, the IDA has supported the Catskills Food Hub, upgrades at the Ideal Snacks and Nonni's Biscotti production facilities, environmental remediation of the Grossinger's Resort, and expansions of other businesses in Liberty.

Sullivan County Housing Task Force: In the summer of 2020, the Sullivan County Department of Family Services assumed leadership of the challenge of ending homelessness and improving access to affordable housing by unifying ten different community partner agencies. With organizational and planning support from OTDA, the Housing Task Force has reduced homelessness in Sullivan County to historic lows and is assisting clients of the partner agencies with finding emergency housing, permanent supportive housing, and subsidized housing. The Housing Task Force will ensure DRI-supported housing investments provide opportunities to those most in need and will aid in revitalizing downtown businesses.

The Housing Task Force is directly supported by the Sullivan County Land Bank whose mission is to strengthen neighborhoods by mitigating blight and strategic property acquisition to create vibrant neighborhoods, increase homeownership, stimulate economic growth and support community development by returning properties to productive use.

Closing

The Village and Town of Liberty along with many devoted public, private and non-profit community partners are capable and UNITED in our readiness and desire to capitalize on Sullivan County's recent gains and ensure our growth is sustained for many years to come. DRI funding will provide the catalyst that ensures the "Base Camp" for the Catskills and Delaware River is able to achieve our ambitious, yet attainable vision for an affordable, climate-smart, and welcoming destination for homeowners, business investors, and visitors alike. A bright future is coming over the horizon. Your support is most welcome at this exciting moment!

