The 2021 DRI guidelines allowing joint applications from two contiguous communities with one interconnected downtown area or downtown corridor is especially well suited to downtown Monticello because of a growing partnership between the Village of Monticello and the Town of Thompson that has primarily focused on downtown revitalization. Downtown Monticello is an area largely contained by the Village of Monticello, which is fully encompassed by the Town of Thompson, and includes land solely under the Town’s jurisdiction. This interconnectedness led the Town and Village to partner on a joint Comprehensive Plan in 1999, and to collaborate on a 2017 addendum, the Grow the Gateways strategic plan for the Monticello-Thompson gateway corridor between Exits 104 and 106 on State Route 17. This corridor is not only the heart of the Village and Town, but also a downtown area serving nearly all of rural Sullivan.

Since completing the Grow the Gateways plan, the Town of Thompson and Village of Monticello have worked closely to implement its recommendations. They concurrently adopted gateway area design guidelines; implemented the 485-a tax incentive to stimulate investment in downtown mixed-use buildings; joined forces on tackling problem properties and code enforcement. They also worked together to coordinate, simplify and adopt identical zoning along a choppy municipal boundary at the downtown’s eastern end in order to make their respective development review processes more business-friendly. In 2019 the Town included the Village in its preparation of a Recreation Development Plan, which they are also implementing collaboratively. A joint project to improve DeHyos and Dillon Parks, located in the Village, recently secured a $400,000 grant package grant consisting of funding from Sullivan Renaissance, Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther, and a municipal match. The teamwork evidenced in that application was noted as a reason for selection.

It is in this spirit that the Village of Monticello and the Town of Thompson jointly submit this 2021 DRI application for Downtown Monticello. Both municipalities commit to sharing the DRI award without any pre-determined split between them.

**BASIC INFORMATION**

- REDC Region: Mid-Hudson
- Names of Municipalities: Village of Monticello jointly with the Town of Thompson
- Downtown Name: Downtown Monticello/Broadway Corridor
- County Name: Sullivan County
- Applicant Contact(s) Name and Title: George Nikolados, Mayor, Village of Monticello  
Bill Rieber, Supervisor, Town of Thompson  
Patrice Chester, Deputy Administrator, Town of Thompson
- Applicant Contact(s) Email Address and Secondary Email Address:  
gnikolados@villageofmonticello.com  
supervisor@townofthompson.com  
pchester@townofthompson.com

**VISION FOR DOWNTOWN**

The following Vision Statement is adapted from the Grow the Gateways (GTG) plan mentioned above. The GTG plan featured a robust stakeholder participation process that engaged hundreds of people who live, work, run businesses, or own property in the downtown. It marked the beginning of a Town-Village...
partnership formed to help downtown Monticello benefit from the new Resorts World Casino and Kartrite Waterpark being developed nearby. The Town Supervisor and Village Mayor (then Village Trustee) were both active in the plan’s steering committee, and in the larger implementation group that continued to meet monthly up until the pandemic shutdown. GTG is described further down and referred to throughout this application.

Downtown Monticello will be a destination for people who want a high quality of life in a livable, walkable and affordable rural small town surrounded by the natural beauty of the Catskills. It will attract, and benefit from, the millions of new visitors to nearby world class resorts and attractions and be home to employees of those destinations. A rejuvenated downtown core will feature a traditional walkable streetscape with historic architecture and compatible infill development, hosting a vibrant mix of uses including places of recreation, entertainment, and culture, restaurants, shops, offices, residences, and boutique hotels. The area will offer affordable housing for a variety of income levels and household types in close proximity to good jobs. It will be a place where people can start and grow a business, raise a family, build wealth through homeownership, transcend poverty and social class, and enjoy urban amenities in a rural community with historical ties to the greater New York metro area. The downtown will be safe, clean and well-maintained. It will support the full range of transportation options including driving, walking, cycling and public transit. Public art and place making projects will engage residents and visitors alike, making downtown Monticello a place where people want to be.

JUSTIFICATION

The Village of Monticello has applied on its own for a DRI award in each round since the program’s inception in 2016, making the case that it is both ready for and needs DRI investment to capitalize on the unprecedented opportunity brought by the $1.5 billion Resorts World: Catskills casino development that opened just outside the downtown in 2018. The casino project, along with the associated Kartrite Waterpark and Alder hotel on the resort complex and the nearby YO1 ayurvedic spa, indeed proved game changing for the area. Impacts were noticed right from the start as businesses responded to consumer demand from workers associated with facility construction. New downtown eateries opened, existing ones spruced up and expanded, and blighted motels were renovated to provide temporary housing. In the wake of these anchor resorts, new hospitality uses mushroomed throughout Sullivan County, including a Hampton Inn (now being completed just outside downtown Monticello), the Chatwal Lodge, Callicoon Hills, Inn at Saint Joseph, the multiple hotels, inns and B&B’s of the Foster Supply Hospitality Group, and myriad other small-scale inns, camping and glamping projects. The resurgence of Sullivan County’s hospitality sector expanded the market potentially served by downtown Monticello; but more is required to recover from the long, slow death of the old “borscht belt” hotel industry. DRI investment in downtown Monticello would leverage and support public improvement and placemaking projects that will sustain and build on surrounding development. These efforts will create a vibrant downtown capable of attracting visitors and becoming a viable place for resort employees to relocate; and generating ancillary and diverse business investment.

While Monticello repeatedly sought DRI funding, the Village also pursued other state, federal and private programs, deepen collaborations and partnerships, and implement policies and projects all aimed at spurring downtown redevelopment. Many of these were done jointly with the Town of Thompson as part of the Grow the Gateways plan development and implementation. Their impacts are now being seen and create a downtown that is readier than ever to utilize and benefit from a DRI award:
The Town and Village completed and adopted “business-friendly” code amendments for the eastern section of the downtown (East Broadway) that were in progress at the time of the Village’s 2019 application. The mix of allowable uses in the corridor was expanded to increase opportunities for redevelopment, and 11 Town and Village zoning districts were consolidated into two. Both the Town and Village updated their zoning maps and codes to be identical along East Broadway. This ensures consistent treatment of property development regardless of municipality, eliminates regulatory complexity, and reduces barriers to investment. The zoning updates were also designed to steer small-scale retail and commercial uses to the downtown core (East Broadway Village district) while allowing larger, less compact development at the outer edge in close proximity to its southern gateway of Exit 106 on Route 17 (East Broadway Gateway district).

The Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development attributes the new zoning to its ability to attract Apple Ice Inc. who purchased approximately 80 acres of surplus County property near Exit 106. The company is currently obtaining approvals for an 80,000 sf facility that will bring an estimated $8 million in investment and 40 new jobs. It will also develop the remainder of the property into a light-industrial park with four additional lots and has purchased and occupied a previously vacant building in the downtown core for office use. Design guidelines adopted with the Grow the Gateways plan will ensure attractive and pedestrian-friendly access to the new business park.

A substantial section of downtown Monticello was designated a National Register Historic District in December of 2019, bringing federal historic tax credits as a resource for qualified building rehabilitation projects. The tax credits are now being used by Healthy Kids Daycare in its adaptive reuse of a vacant Jewish War Veterans Memorial Hall. They also helped incentivize RUPCO to partner with the Sullivan County Land Bank Corporation on a Broadway redevelopment project involving two vacant historic buildings on the corners of a single block. One of these, referred to as the Strong Building, was the focus of years of Village efforts to work with property owners on its redevelopment using a HUD HOPE VI grant, without success. In 2020 the Land Bank was able to take site control, stabilize the visually prominent structure, and include it in a three-building mixed-use redevelopment project led by RUPCO and the Kearney Realty and Development Group.

Enabled by a 2015 zoning amendment and funding from a 2017 New York Main Street program grant, sixteen new second- and third-story apartments are now being leased for fall occupancy. This will bring residents above downtown commercial uses for the first time in over 30 years. On the western edge of the downtown, 176 townhomes are now under construction. Originally planned as apartments, Village-responsiveness enabled the developer to pivot to units featuring individual outside entrances that will better allow for social distancing when needed.

In 2019, the Village and Town participated in workshops held by the national Center for Community Progress, funded by a NYS Zombie Program grant, that contributed to a Village of Monticello Problem Properties Remediation Action Plan. The Village also engaged an outside engineering firm (Fusco) to take on and overhaul its Building Department and Code Enforcement functions. Since then, there have been updates and improvements to software, office policies and procedures, fee schedules, forms, reports, board training, and more. As a
result of increased enforcement and efficacy, Village revenue from violations doubled from 2020 to 2021, year to date.

Enhanced downtown code enforcement led some owners of problem properties to dispose of them to new owners committed to their redevelopment. As noted above, the Land Bank was able to acquire the Strong Building from owners who failed to execute their development plans and allowed the building to decline precipitously. The Land Bank was also able to purchase the Broadway Theater from an owner that had been resistant to reasonable offers on the vacant and deteriorating property for more than 20 years. Darren Scott, Upstate East Director of Development for NYS Homes and Community Renewal zeroed in on the potential for the Broadway Theater to serve as a revitalization anchor when he toured downtown Monticello several years ago. The Land Bank is now seeking funding for the project and has applications pending in the 2021 CFA for building stabilization and facility planning.

Additionally, improved downtown code enforcement forced the closure in 2020 of the Heritage Inn Motel, a highly visible problem property adjacent to the County Courthouse. The Heritage Inn had been the subject of many complaints concerning its use as substandard housing. It is now on the market, and prospective redevelopers have also applied for NYS funding through the 2021 CFA.

These activities are working in synergy to create a supportive climate for new downtown Monticello development and redevelopment. Past DRI applications reported them as “potential, planned and in process”. Now, they can be discussed as implemented, ongoing, and generating investment and positive change. But downtown Monticello remains faced with combatting decades of disinvestment and lack of property maintenance, challenging demographics, and limited resources. Private investment is beginning to flow into the vacant land on either end of the downtown (e.g. Apple Ice, Monticello Mews townhomes) but the cost of rehabilitating buildings in the historic core, and restoring the vibrancy of a traditional, walkable downtown environment, necessitates the DRI award. This year, downtown Monticello has catalytic projects primed for implementation, private investment to provide leverage, and a strong partnership for administration. It is truly ready to deliver the transformation intended by the DRI program.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

1) Boundaries of the proposed DRI area.

The proposed DRI area is the entire Broadway corridor in downtown Monticello, which corresponds to the primary study area of the Grow the Gateways Strategic Plan. (See the map at the end of this application.) It includes:

- The West Broadway/Jefferson Street Gateway. This area serves as a major connector between Exit 104 on Route 17 (future I-86) and the Village’s core downtown business district, providing direct access to the Sullivan County Government Center, the Coach USA/Shortline/Move Sullivan bus terminal, and the Ted Stroebele Community Center among other downtown resources. Exit 104 is used by travelers from the New York metro area to access major regional attractions west of the Village such as the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts and the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River and the area has the potential to bring these visitors into the downtown. Two major housing complexes are
planned for this gateway, one of which is now under construction (the 176-townhome Monticello Mews project). A $1.2 million project to construct new sidewalks, address drainage issues, and improve pedestrian safety along Jefferson Street was completed in 2016.

- The traditional core downtown, a 1.2 mile stretch of Broadway between Jefferson Street and Pleasant Street, extending to include the Exit 105 interchange/gateway. The downtown core contains the Downtown Broadway Historic District designated in by the National Register 2019 and is the site of the annual Monticello Bagel Festival. Broadway here is also NYS Route 42, and as such it received a $15 million NYSDOT reconstruction in 2012 that included upgraded sidewalks with ADA compliant ramps, historic lighting, bump outs for traffic calming, and large landscaped islands. The streetscape was further enhanced in 2015 by a newly developed library with adjacent pocket park. The traditional downtown core has long been characterized by a high vacancy rate, but this has begun to change over the past few years.
  - Sidewalk café extensions to downtown restaurants were developed in 2015, with incentive funding provided by Sullivan Renaissance.
  - A New York Main Street Program grant funded façade improvements and upper-level apartment conversions in three buildings, with projects completed in 2020 and 2021.
  - Healthy Kids Daycare opened in 2021, supported by ESD and CDBG funding. A second downtown location has been purchased and is in the permitting process.
  - An internationally shown and collected artist, Bosco Sodi, purchased a long vacant, 1950’s era car dealership building to create a destination gallery and restaurant within its large open space.
  - Seven storefronts were filled in the summer of 2021, bringing a noticeable increase in downtown activity with new ethnic restaurants (e.g. Mediterranean, Puerto Rican, Asian fusion), vintage retail, tattoo parlors, and financial services.

- The East Broadway corridor, which extends for 1.5 miles from the center of downtown at Pleasant Street to Exit 106 on Route 17. Because Exit 106 also serves the casino resort and waterpark, East Broadway connects these major regional attractions with the core Village downtown. It was identified in the Grow the Gateways plan as a redevelopment priority and subsequently became the focus of the zoning improvements described above.
  - East Broadway is County Road 173. A County DPW repaving project scheduled for 2020 was delayed due to the pandemic but will break ground shortly.
  - The Apple Ice facility and business park is located in this section and scheduled for 2022 construction.
  - A chain hotel approved in 2019 has recently applied for water and sewer permits.

It should be noted that the western section of the DRI boundary has been extended to include the Monticello Raceway harness racing facility. While not a typical downtown use, the Raceway has a strong connection with downtown Monticello and its future should be considered as part of DRI planning.

2) Past investment, future investment potential.

The $1.5 billion dollar Resorts World: Catskills entertainment complex, located just a mile from the downtown core on what had once been the Concord Hotel property, remains the most significant
private investment in the area. Since it opened in Spring 2018, the facility expanded to include the Alder hotel and the Kartrite Resort and Indoor Waterpark. A $21 million redevelopment of the famed Monster Golf Course is underway. Nearby, a second redevelopment of an old borscht belt resort, the $90 million YO1 Wellness Center occupying the Kutscher’s Hotel site, opened around the same time.

These large-scale resort projects signaled a change in direction for the area and for all of Sullivan County. In the wake of their development, downtown Monticello and the adjoining commercial area in the Town of Thompson have seen substantial new investment in numerous smaller projects.

The Route 42/Pleasant Street commercial strip area in the Town of Thompson is adjacent to downtown Monticello but separated by it from by the Route 17 Exit 105 interchange. It has had the following upgrades and new developments within the past few years:

- A $10 million Catskills Regional Medical Center (CRMC) Urgent Care Facility (2018)
- $1+ million McDonald’s upgrade (2017)
- Middletown Medical Urgent Care (2019)
- Golden Ridge apartment complex, supported by $5.1 million from New York State Homes & Community Renewal for phase IV, comprised of 81 supportive and workforce apartments (2018)
- Marshall’s Department Store (2021)
- Catskill-Hudson Regional Bank (2021)
- Popeye’s Chicken Franchise (2022)
- Chain hotel (near completion)
- Valero Gas Station upgrades (2022)

Further afield, but just a 5-mile drive from the downtown along Route 17, the Center for Discovery broke ground in July on a new Children’s Specialty Hospital to provide specialized assessment and short-term care for children with complex conditions. Senator Chuck Schumer announced $35 million in federal funding for the project, which is expected to open in 2022 and bring 400 new jobs.

**Within the proposed DRI boundary**, an array of new projects are contributing to the different elements that make up a vibrant downtown:

- **Commercial Projects:**
  - Apple Ice facility and business park – as noted, $8 million and 40 jobs. Four additional sites in the business park, which has excellent transportation access, are now being marketed.
  - Chain hotel approved on East Broadway near Exit 106. Construction date TBD
  - New development approved along Pleasant Street/Route 42 to replace and expand existing retail businesses in need of an upgrade.

- **Housing:**
  - 176 town homes under construction at the Monticello Mews site on West Broadway; occupancy expected in 2022.
  - 16 new affordable apartments above stores on Broadway; as noted, these will be available for fall 2021 occupancy and were developed with support from a $300,000 NYS Main Street Program grant leveraging $600,000 in private investment
16 townhome units completed on Liberty Street in 2021; an additional 16 are in the permitting stage

Building permits were granted by the Village for 12 single family homes in 2021; prior to that, there was only one single family home built in the Village since 2007. Two of these homes are Sullivan County Land Bank projects being built as infill on sites of demolished blighted structures.

In conjunction with RUPCO and the Kearney Realty and Development Group, the Sullivan County Land Bank is planning 75 artist loft-style live-work apartments for the adaptive reuse of the old Monticello Hospital site at 15 High Street and up to 16 apartments in two Broadway buildings at the very center of the downtown. The team is currently applying for Low Income Housing Tax Credits and assembling other funding (including $500,000 HOPE VI, $500,000 EPA, Historic tax Credits) for the estimated $46 million project.

The Land Bank recently received variances needed for a four unit multi-family building on High Street, and is seeking a developer for 2022 construction.

Site plan approvals have been given for nearly 400 additional apartments elsewhere in the downtown. Inquiries are being made regarding a 300-unit development opposite the Raceway.

Daycare:
Healthy Kids Daycare has invested more than $1 million into two new downtown facilities. One opened in 2021 on Liberty Street in Monticello and was the recipient of a 2019 CFA grant. A second location is being developed on Broadway in the downtown core.

Transportation Options:
- In 2019 Sullivan County launched the Move Sullivan transit system connecting downtown Monticello with the County’s other population and employment centers in Liberty and Fallsburg, as well as SUNY Sullivan. Routes and schedules were developed in conjunction with major employers to support commuter use. The pilot program can be adjusted to accommodate the new housing and commercial developments noted above, and is expected to expand.
- NYS DOT has scheduled the reconstruction of Exit 105 on Route 17 for 2023. The interchange connects the traditional downtown Monticello core with the newer shopping center and commercial strip development in the Town of Thompson. Its redesign features sidewalks and bike lanes to facilitate multi-modal connectivity, and incorporates recommendations from the Grow the Gateways plan.
Things to Do (i.e. culture, entertainment, recreation)

- The Ethelbert Crawford Library relocated in the center of the downtown with a new $5 million building and adjacent pocket park in 2015. This summer it was inaugurated with a series of outdoor concerts and performances.
- The artist Bosco Sodi, mentioned above, is investing more than $1.6 million into his Casa Wabi destination art gallery and restaurant (including acquisition), with a 2022 expected opening. This does not include potential NYS funding requested through the 2021 CFA.
- The Sullivan County Land Bank purchased the Broadway Theater project for $250,000, invested $30,000 in stabilization, and is seeking an operator along with funds for rehabilitation. The wresting of site control from an owner who would not invest in the property is a significant step forward in saving and reactivating this local landmark. The theater building includes two storefronts that may be adapted for commercial use or as exhibit space.
- Sullivan County is planning to move the Sullivan County Museum from its current location in Hurleyville and is prioritizing downtown Monticello as a future home. The street and basement levels of the historic Strong building are being considered, and the museum may become part of the three-building mixed use Broadway redevelopment project cited elsewhere.
- The Village and Town will undertake a $400,000 renovation of sport courts, trails, restrooms and other facilities at DeHoyos Park, in the western end of the proposed DRI district in 2022. The Monticello Rotary Club is also investing in the park, with plans to replace a pavilion. As noted earlier, these projects have received funding from Sullivan Renaissance and NYS Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther.
- A vacant school building in the downtown core was reactivated in 2019 as the St. John Street School Community Hub by the Monticello Central School District, Sullivan Allies Leading Together (SALT) and Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan with funding from NYS Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther’s office. Until the pandemic shutdown, the HUB offered programs for teens and seniors through a partnership with more than a dozen organizations.
- Investments have been made by small businesses into filling downtown storefronts with retail, food, and service uses.
- Sullivan County completed a feasibility study in 2020 for build out of the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail. Both the Town of Thompson and Village of Monticello are participating in a newly formed Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Alliance to implement the project, which includes a spur line running south from Monticello to Port Jervis. An on-road alignment is planned to connect the spur with the main line. Federal funding has been applied for the Monticello section through the US DOT RAISE program, and an application to the EDA Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation program is being developed.

Civic Investment/Infrastructure:

- $35 million in federal and state grants and loans for Village water and wastewater improvements have been implemented over the past decade.
- As mentioned earlier, Sullivan County DPW will be repaving the East Broadway section of downtown in 2021-22.
- Sullivan County completed a new $95 million jail outside the downtown and intends to demolish the old jail behind the County courthouse for new development. In the interim the jail has attracted interest as a filming location. A court expansion project is planned.
- Sullivan County has established an LDC to create a public broadband network and will be piloting it with two new towers, one at each end of the downtown.
- The Village of Monticello has been working with Sullivan Renaissance and the County on plans to overhaul a worn out municipal parking lot into the “North Street Commons,” a public space that will accommodate parking and civic activities. The redesigned lot, inspired by a placemaking charrette led by the Project for Public Spaces, will include flexspace with a stage for public performances and festivals, basketball and bocce courts, a playground, and a perimeter track with exercise stations. Bosco Sodi has committed to providing public art. Connectivity is an important element of the design, as the site is bounded by the Sullivan County Government Center, Ted Stroebele Community Center, Literacy Center, senior housing, the two Healthy Kids daycare sites, Broadway Theater, and a mix of Broadway retail, restaurant and service businesses as well as vacant storefronts. Currently, the barren and broken condition of the lot deters pedestrian access between these uses. A DRI would allow for the completion of this transformative project that will give the western end of Broadway a much needed public square, generate vibrancy, and attract investment to activate vacant downtown space. Applications for project funding were made through the 2021 CFA.

3) Recent or impending job growth.

Prior to the pandemic shutdown, the Resorts World: Catskills, YO1, and CRMC projects brought more than 3,300 full and part time positions to the area immediately outside the downtown. To
put the significance of these jobs in context, consider that the 2020 US Census population for the Village of Monticello is 7,173.

Additional jobs have been created from the growth described above, and are diverse in skill and income levels. They include food service and hospitality, heath care, manufacturing, administration, first and second tier supervisors, information technology, marketing and sales, medical and legal professionals, small business operators, and arts management. The influx of new development has also generated construction jobs and brought new construction-related businesses to the downtown. Countywide, job growth was 12.3% from July 2020 to July 2021.

4) **Attractiveness of physical environment.**

Downtown Monticello possesses many characteristics that embody our vision of being a highly **LIVABLE, WALKABLE** and **AFFORDABLE** community:

**LIVABLE:** Downtown Monticello has good bones. Its main street of Broadway is an archetype of small town America -- flanked by two and three story buildings mostly dating to the 19th century that give the downtown architectural diversity and character. The streetscape was completely transformed by the 2012 NYSDOT reconstruction of Broadway/Rt. 42 that included new landscaping, lighting, sidewalks, crosswalks, signalized intersections, and water/sewer infrastructure.

Monticello is a diverse community, with a broad mix of ethnicities and culture seldom found in a rural environment. This is readily seen in the array of cuisines available in downtown restaurants that include Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Mexican, Italian, Pizza, Greek, Kosher, Southern/Soul Food and American. While supporting the population, these eateries provide ethnic, local and unique food experiences that are an increasingly strong draw for area visitors. Natural/organic markets and ethnic bakeries complement the mix of restaurants and cafes; one of these hosts weekly live music events that attract singer-songwriters from the local region. A weekly seasonal farmer’s market appeals to both higher income earners looking for fresh food from nearby farms as well as lower income people utilizing WIC and SNAP subsidies.

Since its relocation and expansion in 2015, the Ethelbert B. Crawford Library has grown into downtown Monticello’s primary cultural facility, offering programming for young children and families, teens, and adults, as well as special-interest populations. Nesin Cultural Arts, housed in the St. John Church downtown, provides education in the visual and performing arts along with concerts combining local performers with visiting professionals. It launched the Sullivan County Chamber Orchestra a few years ago.

Over the next few years, more cultural offerings will come to the downtown as the Bosco Sodi/Casa Wabi Gallery, Broadway Theater, and Sullivan County Museum projects described above are implemented. The Sullivan County Land Bank has engaged existing arts organizations throughout the county in planning for the theater, including Nesin, the Hurleyville Performing Arts Center, Delaware Valley Arts Alliance, Catskill Art Society, Forestburgh Playhouse, NACL, Delaware Valley Opera and the Farmhouse Project. The theater is envisioned as a place where these entities can share content and bring their diverse offerings to downtown audiences. Recreational opportunities exist at DeHoyos and Dillon Parks in the western end of the corridor, and the Bailey Commons park created in 2020 by participants in the County’s summer youth
employment program on undevelopable wooded lots owned by the Land Bank. Plans for expanding options in the core include the North Street Commons and Sullivan O&W Rail Trail projects.

**WALKABLE:** National walkability expert Mark Fenton praised downtown Monticello’s compact, walkable development pattern. The US Census reports that 7.4% of village residents walk to work; the downtown contains housing, goods, services, dining, healthcare, entertainment, education and recreation all within walking distance. Multi-modal/transit is available the Shortline/Coach USA bus terminal, which also hosts the new Move Sullivan County-run service.

Particular walkability features cited by Fenton include the sidewalks on Broadway which were designed according to “complete streets” principles, and the pocket parks and alleyways connecting Broadway businesses with municipal parking lots behind them. The North Street Commons project will bring much needed improvements to this network, and DRI funding would be helpful in extending its approach to other lots and alleys.

On the western section of the downtown, over a mile of new sidewalks were installed along Jefferson Street in 2016. Sidewalk upgrades on East Broadway will be part of the reconstruction project scheduled for this fall. As noted, the Exit 105 interchange reconstruction planned for 2023 will provide continuous pedestrian and bicycle access from downtown Monticello over the highway to the Thompson commercial corridor.

**AFFORDABLE:** A significant asset of downtown Monticello has been its affordability. Upstate migration during the pandemic heated the housing market throughout the Hudson Valley and Catskills, and Sullivan County is no exception. Inventory dried up and median home prices rose 47%. But Monticello prices increased less than half as much, by just 21.5%. With a median sales price around $170,000 the area remains a strong option for middle-income earners looking for first-time homebuyer opportunities. Downtown housing includes market rate apartments, town houses, and traditional one and two-family homes on landscaped lots, as well as income-eligible affordable units and senior-restricted housing.

Downtown Monticello is also an affordable place for small business start-ups due to the availability of commercial space and a supportive economic development team providing access to training, funding, design, employee recruitment and more. Zoning changes to allow downtown residential, along with the 485-a tax incentive and availability of historic tax credits, have created opportunities to develop affordable mixed-use space.

5) **Quality of Life policies.**

GTG plan implementation was coordinated by a broad coalition of organizations that brought the Village and Town into collaboration with Sullivan County government, the Sullivan County IDA, Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development, Sullivan Renaissance, Granite Associates, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Sullivan County Land Bank Corporation, the Monticello School District, and the Monticello Chamber of Commerce. The Justification section of this application provides examples of key policy and procedural changes made over the past few years, along with the results that are starting to be seen. In addition to the gateway corridor design guidelines, downtown historic district, 485-a tax incentive, streamlined and coordinated East Broadway zoning, and enhanced code enforcement, the Village of Monticello adopted a Complete Streets policy and installed benches and bike racks with assistance from Cornell Cooperative Extension.
6) Public support.

Many initiatives described in this application originated through the extensive public engagement activities conducted for the GTG plan. These included interviews, a business community breakfast sponsored by the Sullivan County Partnership, focus groups, public meetings, a day-long open house at the Crawford Library, a community survey, and social media. Hundreds participated, estimated at 3-5% of the Village population. Additional, and more recent, public engagement on downtown projects took place through the Town’s Recreation Development Plan and Land Bank planning for the Bailey Commons park. The North Street Commons placemaking project grew out of a Sullivan Renaissance commissioned charrette conducted by Project for Public Spaces. The concept was tested in 2019 with a pop-up event that turned the parking lot into a “sprinkler beach” for a hot August afternoon, and where participants were invited to comment on what they’d like to see there.

Specifically for this DRI application, the Town and Village, with assistance from Sullivan Renaissance, the County, and Chamber of Commerce, solicited input at the 2021 Monticello Bagel Festival on August 8th. A festival-goer friendly poll gave three colored pom-poms to people to place in jars backed by displays of project types – Fill Vacant Storefronts, Improve Parking and Circulation, New Housing, Recreational Opportunities and Public Art. Paper and giant post-it pads were also on hand to solicit ideas and comments. Color coded distribution allowed responses to be sorted by age, with seniors prioritizing vacant storefronts over the keen interest expressed by younger people in having more things to do. Differences in the totals were not large, however, and housing joined these two categories to clearly outrank public art installations and parking.

A deeper dive into potential projects was taken at a September 9th virtual public meeting on the DRI. In an online poll, participants were asked to rank six projects on a scale of 1-10. Similar to the festival results, those involving recreation and culture, housing, and storefronts evoked the strongest support. The overall level of interest is reflected in the order in which transformative opportunities are presented in the table below.

7) Transformative opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOWNTOWN MONTICELLO DRI PROJECTS:</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Project Lead(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project/Initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROADWAY THEATRE *</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of Existing Downtown Buildings (downtown anchor)</td>
<td>Sullivan County Land Bank/Theater Operator TBD</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of long vacant 500-seat theatre flanked by two storefronts at 498 Broadway.</td>
<td>$1.5-2M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROADWAY REDEVELOPMENT with Monticello Manor</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of Existing Downtown Buildings</td>
<td>Kearny Realty &amp; Development Group/RUPCO/Sullivan</td>
<td>The project bundles redevelopment of two historic buildings at 430 Broadway and 414 Broadway to create mixed use development with adaptive reuse of an</td>
<td>$46M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8) Administrative Capacity.

This DRI application for downtown Monticello is being submitted under the third mayor the Village has had since DRI Round I, but continuity is provided by the involvement of Mayor George Nikolados throughout as a Village Trustee. Mayor Nikolados joined the Village Board in 2016, serving as Deputy Mayor from 2018 until his election as Mayor in September 2020. He participated as the Village’s designee on the steering committee for the Grow the Gateways plan and its implementation committee, where he forged strong working relationships with Town of Thompson officials and the other governmental, quasi-governmental and civic organizations collaborating on
downtown/gateway area improvement. He has been an instrumental member of the Sullivan County Land Bank board since its inception in 2017, facilitating the transfer of Village-owned foreclosures and taking a lead in the problem properties remediation plan. Since becoming Mayor, he’s overseen the dramatic improvements to the Village’s Building Department and code enforcement activities, and has been directly supportive of the significant new development projects in the Village, working with Apple Ice, Monticello Mews and Bosco Sodi. As owner of the iconic Miss Monticello diner since 2000, Mayor Nikolados is a deeply vested stakeholder in the downtown’s revitalization and a central figure in the local business community. As a new father, he is committed to improving the Village as a place to maintain roots and raise a family.

Both Thompson Town Supervisor William Rieber and Deputy Administrator Patrice Chester have, been engaged with the joint Town/Village Grow the Gateways project along with Mayor Nikolados. They hosted the monthly implementation committee meetings at the Town Hall and coordinated with the Village on action items beyond those discussed above, such as rebranding and marketing. Ms. Chester has been part of a subcommittee to pursue recommendations for improvements to be implemented in the public right-of-way, such as proposals for public art in the Exit 106 traffic circle.

Supervisor Rieber has been in his position since 2013 and has had a downtown based realty business in Monticello for the past fifty years. Blight elimination has been a signature of his administration; since he took office the Town demolished more than 120 vacant and abandoned structures. Under his leadership, the Town has reduced taxes for six years in a row. Ms. Chester joined the Town in her position in 2016 after a career in commercial lending and serving the Town as chair of its Planning Board. Together they manage an annual budget in excess of $22 million.

The Town of Thompson recently supported the Village in its successful application to Sullivan Renaissance’s municipal impact grant program for funding to improve DeHoyos Park, specifically joining the project in order to administer the $400,000 award. It provided the same support in the Village’s 2021 CFA application seeking funds to implement the North Street Commons project, and is joining this DRI application with the same intent.

Each of the past DRI applications for Monticello emphasized the support provided to the Village by a team of partner organizations including Sullivan County Government and Sullivan Renaissance. The Town, Village, County, Renaissance, Chamber, Partnership, Land Bank and others continue to work together on initiatives to revitalize downtown Monticello and are ready to form the core of a DRI Local Planning Committee. All have shared in the development of the programs and projects discussed throughout this document and look forward to taking that work to a new, transformative level with a DRI award.

9) Other.

The Village of Monticello remains severely distressed with a poverty rate of 33%, a median income of $26,376 and a population that is nearly three quarters made up of people of color. The downtown is beginning to attract new development, particularly at its outer edges where vacant land is available. But the years of disinvestment remain a barrier to rehabilitation of properties in the historic downtown core. A DRI award is needed to support a cluster of such projects that would not only preserve the valuable, traditional fabric of the downtown, but create a critical mass of destination arts, culture and recreation activities. The private sector is bringing jobs and housing; DRI investment will bring vitality and joy.
Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
Monticello 2021 DRI Application