

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE – DOWNTOWN TEMPLATE
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BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: Mid-Hudson

Municipality Name: Town of Carmel

Downtown Name: Hamlet of Mahopac

County: Putnam

Downtown Description - Provide an overview of the downtown and summarize the rationale behind nominating this downtown for a Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) award):

The downtown area of the Hamlet of Mahopac within the Town of Carmel consists of the Route 6 Corridor from Harlem Crossing Rd. to Baldwin Place Rd. The area has been the target of more than 60 years of uncoordinated residential and commercial expansion but has established an ‘ad hoc’ downtown core area. The purpose of this request is to provide the supporting infrastructure to enhance the Corridor’s development into a walkable, sustainable village. The private sector has initiated the movement in this direction; the Town seeks to inform the process and support a partnership that can bring the various projects to a cohesive reality.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

This section should be filled out with reference to the criteria set forth in the DRI Guidelines.

- 1) Boundaries of the Downtown Neighborhood.** Detail the boundaries of the targeted neighborhood, keeping in mind that there is no minimum or maximum size, but that the neighborhood should be compact and well-defined. Core neighborhoods beyond a traditional downtown or central business district are eligible, if they can meet other criteria making them ripe for investment.

The nominated area is the Route 6 Corridor in the traditionally commercially dense area of the Hamlet of Mahopac. It compromises a walkable 2.75 mile length of Route 6, from Harlem Crossing Rd. to Baldwin Place Rd. The targeted neighborhood offers many existing and proposed opportunities for dense mixed-use development, and is bounded on one side by a middle income housing development and on the other by NYState-owned Lake Mahopac.

- 2) **Size.** Outline why the downtown, or its catchment area, is of a size sufficient to support a vibrant, year-round downtown, with consideration of whether there is a sizeable existing, or increasing, population within easy reach for whom this would be the primary downtown.

Since World War II, there has been a natural evolution of mixed used development in this area of the Town of Carmel. Hilltop Manor, Putnam County's only conference facility, has drawn visitors to the immediate area for many years, supporting local restaurant and recreation activities. To date, the immediate area also sustains approximately 356 residences. In the past few years, local developers have approached the Town for the addition of supporting infrastructure, as plans for a revitalized conference facility, a microbrewery, a hotel and an additional 300 residential units are making their way through the Town's Planning Department. The development marketplace has effectively identified this area for its marketable characteristics. The Town and the local IDA are working to create functional partnerships with this private sector initiative, and are advocating design concepts and measures that will support the hamlet's sustainability.

- 3) **Past Investments & Future Investment Potential.** Describe how this downtown will be able to capitalize on prior, and catalyze future, private and public investment in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas.

The need for this funding partnership with New York State has been spurred by 60 years of increasing development investment in the residential, commercial and recreational assets in the corridor, and encouraged by proposed development currently in front of the Town's Planning Board. The Town is looking to concentrate a sizable public infrastructure investment in the immediate corridor, exponentially augmenting its evolution as a dense, walkable, mixed-use community in the Town of Carmel. Building on an existing federal grant for sidewalk construction along Route 6, the Town plans to extend sewer and water infrastructure down the 2.75 mile stretch of the corridor. Additionally, street lighting, ADA-accessible curbing, bicycle lanes, signalized crosswalks and dedicated turn lanes are being designed to optimize the hamlet's mixed-used development potential.

The need for this increased public infrastructure has emerged, not only from the local planning process, but from the NYC's DEP requirements for increasing sustainable infrastructure in the NY City watershed. As the Route 6 corridor has developed in the Hamlet of Mahopac, businesses and residents have relied upon the use of septic systems. Many are now reaching the end of their useful lives and the potential impacts of failing septic systems upon NYC's drinking water infrastructure is an acute regional issue.

To sum up, past private and public investments in the Route 6 corridor area, matched with proposed public and private investment in doubling its size as a 'village' community, will create both commercially and environmentally sustainable growth for the Town of Carmel's dense Mahopac area.

- 4) **Job Growth.** Describe how recent or impending job growth within, or in close proximity to, the downtown will attract professionals to an active life in the downtown, support redevelopment, and make growth sustainable in the long-term.

Anticipating a five-year rollout of both infrastructure and proposed mixed-use development, the project would bring a very substantial range of engineering and construction employment to Putnam County. The result, a visitor-based economic and dense residential

zone next to Lake Mahopac, should triple the extant retail, restaurant and hospitality industry employment within a two-mile radius of the Route 6 Corridor. Replacement of failing septic systems with conventional sewer lines, which can be extended from their current terminus at one end of the corridor, permits environmentally safe commercial growth in the DEP's watershed.

- 5) Attractiveness of the Downtown.** Identify the properties or characteristics the downtown possesses that contribute or could contribute, if enhanced, to the attractiveness and livability of the downtown. Consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, housing at different levels of affordability and type, healthy and affordable food markets, walkability and bikeability, and public parks and gathering spaces.

Currently, the corridor sustains:

- 1) A 356-unit housing complex,
- 2) Hilltop Manor, Putnam County's only conference facility,
- 3) Lake Mahopac, a New York State Park,
- 4) The Harlem Valley Rail Trail, which abuts one end of the corridor,
- 5) Shuttle-bus service to the Croton Falls MetroNorth train station,
- 6) Westchester 'B' line and Putnam Transit System minibus service,
- 7) Waterfront recreational access to Lake Mahopac.

The Town's desire is to create a partnership of resources and design perspectives that tie the hamlet into an energy efficient, developable, sustainable pedestrian-friendly village community.

- 6) Policies to Enhance Quality of Life.** Articulate the policies in place that increase the livability and quality of life of the downtown. Examples include the use of local land banks, modern zoning codes, complete streets plans, or transit-oriented development. If policies achieving this goal are not currently in place, describe the ability of the municipality to create and implement such policies.

The primary policy the Town is engaging with this plan is the need to develop a denser, pedestrian community in the Hamlet of Mahopac. While it has often been considered a fairly typical bedroom community for New York City, Carmel is working to provide a broader range of housing opportunities. Smaller residences and a denser and walkable community are what is appealing to the baby-boom population as they age. Carmel is making the effort to retain lifelong residents by expanding its residential options.

A core commercial 'village' center, within easy (and safe) pedestrian walking distance of existing and proposed residential development will reduce the need for car travel by Town residents, saving on carbon footprint. Traffic redesign, along with pedestrian amenities such as new, expanded and ADA-compliant sidewalks, increased lighting, sidewalks and parking facilities (away from the Route 6 sidewalks) will improve the hamlet's safety and visual appeal. This, in turn, attracts small retailers and restaurants who serve the community through employment and the provision of much-needed goods and services.

The extension of sewer and water infrastructure actively supports the increase of this 'village' mixed-use development by expanding the capacity of these two key services. Additionally, the sewer infrastructure eliminates the area's dependence upon septic system technology, which is both an environmental hazard in the NYC Watershed as well as an impediment to growth.

- 7) **Local Support.** Set forth the local and community support that exists for the revitalization of this downtown and the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to building and implementing a strategic investment plan. Identify an initial local lead for the program that will work with outside experts to convene a local DRI Planning Committee to oversee the plan.

The local partnership that supports the development and implementation of this plan for the Hamlet of Mahopac includes:

The Town of Carmel
The local Chambers of Commerce
Putnam County Planning
Putnam County IDA
Putnam County Economic Development Corporation
NYC Department of Environmental Protection

- 8) **Other.** Provide any other information that informed the nomination of this downtown for a DRI award.

Again, this initiative is being taken in response to the development initiatives being actively pursued by the private sector within the Town of Carmel. The public response to those initiatives is to shape the process and to support the development of a sustainable community through:

- 1) local planning,
- 2) the application of Smart Growth principles,
- 3) the development of supporting and connecting infrastructure,
- 4) the implementation of sustainable technologies in an environmentally-sensitive area,
- 5) the creation of an attractive mixed-use village community in the Hamlet of Mahopac.