



## **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE – CREDC**

The Capital Region Economic Development Council (CREDC) is accepting applications from qualified applicants for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI).

Please refer to the attached Downtown Revitalization Initiative Guide for further information on the DRI program.

Each applicant must complete this application and include the requested Appendices.

Applicant responses for each section should be as complete and succinct as possible.

Applications must be **received** by Empire State Development’s Capital Region Office **by 4:00 p.m. on June 1, 2016.**

Applications are to be submitted by email to [Heidi.Pasos@esd.ny.gov](mailto:Heidi.Pasos@esd.ny.gov). Files should be named in the following format: “Downtown\_Municipality\_Date”.

If you have questions about the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, contact the ESD Capital Region Office at (518) 270-1130.

### **BASIC INFORMATION**

**Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region:** Capital Region

**Municipality Name:** Village of Castleton-on-Hudson

**Downtown Name:** Main Street

**County:** Rensselaer

**Point of Contact:** Robert Schmidt

**Title:** Mayor

**Phone:** 518-764-0802

**Email:** bschmidt0802@gmail.com

**Downtown Description:** Provide an overview of the downtown and summarize the rationale behind nominating this downtown for a DRI award:

**Why nominate the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson for the DRI award?** The Village of Castleton-on-Hudson and its riverfront Main Street are not well-known in the Capital District. Upon learning that the Village’s charms are a short hop from downtown Albany, just south on Route 9J, folks are incredulous. Castleton-on-Hudson is blessed by geography, it is home to a fine elementary school that is part of an excellent school district, its streets are lined with Craftsman houses, and Main Street is a little city of tall buildings and Victorian homes.



**What has kept this magnificent place a secret?** There are other stories of Castleton-on-Hudson too, long-ago tales of ice houses, brickworks and factories, plus urban legends about the pre-1970s glory days of hotels, car dealerships and Main Street's Brick Row. Unfortunately, downtown in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has come to mean vacant, torn down and derelict buildings, few businesses, and no access to the Hudson River.

**Why are there competing narratives about this locale?** While it is true that all of upstate New York's 19<sup>th</sup> Century industrial villages on the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers suffered economic decline in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, many have been able to take advantage of opportunities to rebound. Castleton-on-Hudson has not been in this group, capitalizing on the Village's many assets. Instead, it has developed a culture that is resigned to the inevitable decline of the community. Leaders have been powerless to counter this dystopian view, have been unable to provide a positive vision, and have been satisfied to tread water, or to lose only a little ground over time.

**What makes 2016 any different?** In October 2014, Stewart's closed. It had been on Main Street for 40 years before it left the Village. This was the wake-up call that catalyzed a social movement, culminating 18 months later in March 2016 with the election of Robert Schmidt as Mayor and Gina Giuliano as Trustee. Both have years of experience as professionals, hold advanced degrees and bring with them enormous enthusiasm. They were elected on an ambitious platform of gaining access to the Hudson River via a pedestrian overpass at Scott Avenue and North Main Street, revitalizing the downtown area, and changing the culture of the community.

**What happened after the election?** In the eight weeks since the new Board was sworn in, the cultural shift has started. A Facebook page was created with the goal of promoting the Village, and already has 483 followers (the number increases every day). Volunteers have emerged, proposing a bouquet of ideas that are already being implemented. Current activities include the construction of a Community Garden on North Main Street, a Farmers and Artisans Market downtown every other Friday starting June 3, initial clean-up of Schermerhorn Park, and flowers were planted on Main Street by seventh graders from Maple Hill Middle School. Local business and individuals have made donations of time, money and goods. "I want to help" is now more commonly heard than "where's Castleton?" or "nothing ever changes."

**So what makes up the vision besides culture change?** Too often something like the Amtrak train, which thunders behind Main Street a dozen times per day and is the reason railroad tracks cut off the Village from the Hudson River, is focused on solely as a negative, rather than as a resource to be celebrated. Castleton-on-Hudson is, or could be, a story board about transportation: Boats, kayaks, barges, water taxis, automobiles, bicycles, walking, and who doesn't love a train? The old railroad station is still extant (albeit much modified). It is right near the location of the future pedestrian overpass. Main Street's vacant storefronts are a blank canvas; the possibilities are endless: Railroad history in the past and modern travel now? River commerce over the years?

**Are there more specifics about this utopia?** The highest priority is gaining access to the Hudson River for all Village residents and visitors, not just for those lucky enough to own cars and boats. A pedestrian overpass was promised by the New York State Department of Transportation in 1994, but due to failures within both NYS DOT and the Village, was never delivered. Constructing the overpass would immediately trigger activity downtown, and spark the market to do what it does best: Encourage private economic growth. The buzz about the overpass has already begun to create interest in Main Street among investors.



**Is there more to the plan besides river access?** Main Street needs a facelift, and possibly more than that in terms of infrastructure upgrades. New sidewalks and putting wires underground would be a good start. There are two historic buildings owned by the Village that are worthy of rehabilitation and listing on the State Register of Historic Places (85 South Main Street, the Village Hall, and 2 Green Avenue, the old jail). The Village owns a ¾ acre piece of land with a sandy beach in the Hudson River that will become accessible once there is a pedestrian overpass; a park should be built there, with a dock. Private landowners of nearby Cow and Campbell Islands have expressed interest in allowing public access; since using grade-level crossings is not desirable, docks should be constructed on those two islands as well, allowing for water travel between the three sites and beyond. The Village also owns 12 acres that is called Schermerhorn Park (“the Brickyard”) that has been closed to the public since 2000. This could be reopened and would provide hiking, as well as the possibility of hosting festivals and fairs. “Taste of New York” events are a possibility for both Schermerhorn Park and the Farmers and Artisans Market on Main Street. With its proximity to the Schodack Island State Park, the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson could become a regional attraction and tourist destination for outdoor recreation.

**Is there the potential for job growth in the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson?** Thanks to the Start-Up NY initiative, the old Hamilton Printing site on Cow Island is in the process of being sold to Healthy Brands Collective of Norwalk, Connecticut, which will be bringing up to 80 new jobs to the Village. A new store at the old Main Street Stewart’s location is on the verge of opening; several employees will be needed at “The Store.” The Farmers and Artisans Market, which will commence this summer on Main Street, has the potential to draw artists and craftsmen to permanently locate downtown, providing opportunities for job growth. Tourism that will be generated by the emphasis on outdoor recreation and the Hudson River will lead to hiring in the exciting new businesses that will open to cater to visitors and locals alike. The Village’s largest employer, Riverside Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing, could expand due to a shortage of beds in nearby Columbia County. Another location, where the former Fort Orange Paper Company once was, should be exploited as a center for employment.

**Why does this small village deserve to be awarded the 10 million dollar DRI?** Every community that applies for the DRI is worthy in its own unique way. But it is unlikely there is another besides Castleton-on-Hudson for which 10 million dollars would change the landscape forever. In 1970, the New York State Department of Transportation demolished the Village’s North Main Street Brick Row to widen Route 9J. In 1994, the New York State Department of Transportation closed the only public access to the Hudson River that existed in the Village. In 2016, New York State has the chance to remedy these injustices and make a dramatic impact on the future of the Village and the region by awarding Castleton-on-Hudson the 10 million dollar DRI.

**What is the rationale for this nomination?** The time is now for the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson.

### **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 boundaries of the downtown neighborhood are North Main Street to the Village line, South Main Street to the Village line, First Street, Second Street, lower Stimpson Avenue (west of Second street), lower Green Avenue (west of Second Street), lower Scott Avenue (west of First Street), lower Seaman Avenue (west of First Street). The entire Village of Castleton-on-Hudson is .8 square miles, and the downtown stretch of North and South Main Streets, from the northern Village border to the southern Village border, is a distance of .8 of a mile in length. The most densely built part of Main Street, from Scott to Stimpson Avenues on South Main Street, is a distance of .3 of a mile.

- 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.

In the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (1995), Castleton-on-Hudson is described as “a compact urban setting with a mixture of residential types, businesses, industries and community facilities” (p. II-3). It is the closest downtown for residents of the Towns of Schodack and Stuyvesant, as well as for parts of the Town of East Greenbush, the Hayes Road area in particular. An estimate of the proportion of East Greenbush’s population that lives closer to Castleton-on-Hudson than Rensselaer is 25 percent. East Greenbush is a town that has seen population increases in recent decades.

Considering the Village’s proximity to downtown Albany (10 miles), its geographical location on the Hudson River, its significance to both indigenous and Colonial history, and that its downtown is urban surrounded by pristine rural rather than suburban sprawl, it has the potential to routinely draw visitors from all over the Capital Region and Hudson Valley, and to be (at least) a regional tourist destination. The urban feel and naturally beautiful surroundings mean it also has the potential to be a highly desirable location for year-round residents. In fact, the community’s undeniable charms mean people who visit often want to move to the Village, regardless of the obvious challenges of the downtown business districts.

The population of the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson is stable, and has not changed much over the years. A recent solution to water supply problems has resulted in the Village being able, once again, to issue new water permits, and so new construction is now possible. Contractors are increasingly seeking permits so they can build, and growth in population is anticipated.

The current Village population: 1,473; the population of the hamlet of Schodack Landing: 923; the population of the Town of Schodack, minus the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson and the hamlet of Schodack Landing:  $12,794 - 1,473 - 923 = 10,398$ ; the population of the Town of Stuyvesant: 2,027; the population of the Town of East Greenbush: 16,473 (2010, US Census). A quarter of East Greenbush’s population is 3,618. So the total catchment area for the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson’s Main Street is 18,439 ( $1,473 + 923 + 10,398 + 2,027 + 3,618$ ). This is of a sufficient size to support a vibrant year-round downtown.

- 3) **Past Investments (past Five (5) years) & 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. Please use the chart to total Past Investments and provide a narrative further describing the investments and future potential.



<b>Leveraged Resources:</b>	Public: \$0	Private: \$1,000
<b>Prior NYS Funding/REDC Funding:</b>	Amount: \$266,000 (Does not include \$1.5M for State park campsites)	Amount: \$0
<b>Please identify use(s) of prior funding:</b>	\$7,500 for sanitary sewer system inflow and infiltration study \$1,000 for Community Garden & Farmers & Artisans Market \$250,000 could not be spent due to no access to park \$8,500 for Village Hall elevator / air conditioning / security has not been spent	

In 2003, the Village received an \$8,500 Legislative member item, administered by NYS Department of State to make the Village Hall ADA compliant. It was determined that it was not enough money for an elevator, and so eventually, it was revised to cover air conditioning and lighting upgrades instead, but it still went unspent. It is about to expire, and currently, using the funds for a security system for the Village Clerk’s office is being explored.

In 2010, the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson received a \$250,000 commitment from the NYS Strategic Investment Program for a Village Park. Unfortunately, since the Village did not have access to the park property, the money could not be used, so it has not yet been received; if these fund are still available, they would be the source for creating the new Village Park on the Hudson River.

In 2015, the Village received \$7,500 from NYS DEC for a sanitary sewer system inflow and infiltration study. The funds were used to pay Barton & Loguidice DPC. \$3,750 was the cash match, and \$3,750 was an in-kind match. This is an initial step in seeking funding to upgrade the Village infrastructure.

New York State has invested 1.5 million dollars over the past few years in developing 60 campsites at Schodack Island State Park that recently opened. The Village is seeking to leverage this investment in the town and generate growth downtown. New businesses, a vibrant street, the pedestrian overpass and Village Park will draw visitors from the campsites to Main Street.

Since April 2016, the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson has received a donation of seeds worth approximately \$400 from High Mowing Organic Seeds for a community garden; Becker’s Nursery in East Greenbush discounted plants for beautifying Main Street; private citizens have donated \$100 for banners for the Castleton-on-Hudson Community Garden and Castleton-on-Hudson Farmers and Artisans Market; and approximately \$200 has been donated for Facebook advertising to promote the Village. Additionally, volunteers have donated time and talent to many new projects, and every day a new offer is received; most recently, Brad Rose Landscaping has offered to donate toward beautifying the Village and the Community Garden and graphic artist Ben Karis-Nix has donated design services for the Farmers and Artisans Market. For its part, the Village has committed \$5,000 for the Community Garden and Farmers and Artisans Market.

Two new private investors are currently active on Main Street, one at 1 South Main Street (the former Stewart’s) and the other at two properties, 2 North Main Street & 12 South Main Street. 1 South Main Street will become “The Store;” 2 North Main Street houses a new business (a

photography studio) and 12 South Main Street is a residential building with the potential for retail on the first floor.

- 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.

There are two existing large employers and a few small businesses located within the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson. A third large employer is preparing to move to the Village and is in the process of closing on their property. There is also a large industrial site in need of remediation that could house a fourth large employer. Opportunities for expansion, growth and increased retention are certainly possible if employers were able to draw from a larger pool of appropriately trained professionals. One of the benefits of having a more welcoming and serviceable downtown is to draw and retain professionals who are needed for the developing business climate.

The proposed DRI plan will also bring about additional jobs by providing new opportunities to encourage tourism and recreation. Additional shopping, dining out and retail on Main Street will provide more incentives for entrepreneurial activity and job creation.

**Riverside Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing**, located at 90 North Main Street, is currently the largest employer in the Village. It is an 80 bed skilled nursing facility that is available for short-term rehabilitation stays as well as long-term care and is generally fully occupied. The facility is under new ownership and is now operated as a proprietary facility. It features many amenities including semi-private and private rooms, pet therapy and restaurant-style dining. The CMS rated Riverside Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing with three stars to take into account that more staffing may be needed at nursing homes that have sicker residents than others.

The numbers below indicate the average number of hours worked by licensed staff each day per resident. This information was calculated by comparing the number of hours worked by the staff of Riverside Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing against the number of residents during the two-week period prior to federal inspection. (Staffing types such as clerical, housekeeping and administrative positions are not included)

Staffing Hours Per Resident » Riverside Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing

	<b>CNA</b>	<b>LPN</b>	<b>RN</b>	<b>Licensed Staffing</b>	<b>Total Nursing Staffing</b>
<b>Reported Hours</b>	<b>2:35</b>	<b>1:05</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1:35</b>	<b>4:10</b>
National	2:28	51	51	1:41	4:09
New York	2:22	53	44	1:37	3:59
Rensselaer County, NY	2:36	1:01	40	1:41	4:18

The staffing ratios above demonstrate that at least 65 FTE licensed nursing staff is required along with non-professional staff, administrative staff, maintenance and executive staff. The facility website is continuously recruiting for new entry-level and para-professional staff and offers training as needed along with a full benefit package. Workforce turnover could be reduced by offering a more inviting place to live in close proximity to where employees work.

When considering the possibility for growth and expansion, it is necessary to examine skilled nursing home bed availability at the county level. According to the NYS Department of Health nursing home needs assessment, additional growth in Rensselaer County is limited because the county is considered “over-bedded” by 219 beds. Generally, beds are concentrated in the northern and central regions of the county (ie, Troy). By contrast, the county just south of Schodack Landing, Columbia County is “under-bedded” by 52 beds. There is unmet need in Columbia County which is a likely factor contributing to the high occupancy rate at Riverside. Other expansion opportunities for the facility include operating additional home care services out of Riverside. Home care is a growing trend to reduce costs and keep people in the community longer.

**Castleton Elementary School** is a K-5 school that is part of the Schodack Central School System and is located in the Village. In terms of job creation, expansion is contingent upon increasing enrollment. There are well over 60 staff who currently work at the school as teachers, administrators and in support roles.

**Castleton Kids** is a very successful after school program operated at the elementary school under the umbrella of the Village. The program provides a positive learning environment for children from the conclusion of the school day to the end of the work day. Castleton Kids employs 28 staff between both the school year and summer programs.

**Healthy Brands Collective** from Connecticut has contracted to purchase IBT Hamilton property for an undisclosed sum. It was initially listed on the market for \$1.3M. The plant is located at the northern border of the Village on North Main Street. The plant has been vacant since the book printer closed in 2015. Hamilton employed 160 workers when producing at maximum capacity. Healthy Brands plans to renovate the existing 100,000-square-foot building and build another 40,000-square-foot building. The Village has been in close contact with the owners and they are ready to close on the sale of the property.

Health Brands Collective product lines include Cell-nique drinks, sold in stores such as Whole Foods and Wegmans; Yumnuts, Living Harvest Tempt, Cherrybrook Kitchen, European Gourmet, Bites of Bliss, High Country Kombucha, Funky Monkey and Lisa's Kitchen organic frozen vegetables.

Capitalizing on the growing trend for healthy and organic foods, this is an innovative business with tremendous growth potential. Healthy Brands Collective is working with Rensselaer County and NYS to acquire Excelsior tax breaks. They will also participate in the Start-Up NY program through Hudson Valley Community College. On 11/20/15, the president of HVCC submitted an amendment to the SUNY Chancellor to add Hamilton Printing to the Start-Up NY campus plan.

Healthy Brands Collective had \$13 million in annual revenue as of 2013; the company previously planned on going public but is still privately held. The initial phase of the operation is estimated to provide 80 new jobs at the facility.

**The Fort Orange Paper Company** plant shut down in 2000. In 2012, Castleton Paperboard LLC, an affiliate of MiniMill Technologies of Syracuse, planned to purchase the mill from Rensselaer County for \$600,000. MiniMill is a global company with operations in India that focuses on the packaging and tissue manufacturing industries. The plan was to raze the existing factory and construct a new



mill on the 102 acres for \$250M. Anticipated grant funds did not materialize and the sale fell through.

Preliminary cleanup was to occur under New York State's Brownfield Cleanup Program, a redevelopment program that oversees the cleanup of sites deemed contaminated by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Estimates at the time stated that construction of a new recycling plant would create 400 to 500 jobs for about 18 months. The new factory would then employ 80 to 100 factory workers and managers. Rensselaer County planners and officials are still actively shopping the site for a new buyer.

**Castleton Energy Center** is a 67-megawatt gas-fired power plant on Route 9J at the Village line on property adjacent to Fort Orange. Castleton Energy Center was originally built as a cogeneration power plant that provided steam for Fort Orange. The power plant is now owned by an investment fund managed by a Minnesota private equity firm called Wayzata Investment Partners. The availability of steam makes the former Fort Orange site attractive to new business. The facility continues to operate and employs a staff of approximately 13.

**The Store** is a new small grocery store that will be located at the site of the former Stewart's Shop at the southeast corner of Scott and Main. The plan is to provide basic access to healthy foods and fresh vegetables in an upscale environment. They will be serving the everyday needs of residents beyond the traditional convenience store and will also have additional items to service the needs of campers staying at Schodack Island State Park. It is unclear what the eventual staff complement will be when the store opens in July 2016, but there will be some hiring.

**Olivia & Grace Photography** is a new photography studio located in a grand old bank building at the northeast corner of Scott and Main. They are in the process of opening a retail shop and gallery in the building.

**Castleton-on-Hudson Farmers and Artisans Market** is a new open air market that will start on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and be open on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays of the month with an increase to weekly events as the vendor base grows. This is an opportunity for incubator businesses to grow and mature and eventually secure retail space on Main Street. They are also applying to become a "Taste of NY Market" through NYS Agriculture and Markets. It is essential to obtain that status to be able to accept EBT payments for produce as well as have access to the over 4,000-record vendor database and NYS A&G marketing and promotions. The organizers are seeking suitable retail space on Main Street for an artists' consignment shop.

**Schodack Island State Park Campsites** opened at the beginning of the 2016 spring season. According to John Lowe, Director, many weekends are fully-booked. That means up to 60 new families every week and weekend throughout the summer months camp at the park. Castleton-on-Hudson is one mile from the entrance to the park and three miles from the boat launch at the park. This regular influx of new people provides entrepreneurial opportunities for the Village. A recent study (2009) on park economic activity estimated the average overnight visitor spends \$35 per person per visit locally.





- 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.

The Main Street area of the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson is a compact downtown that is easily walkable. It offers stunning views of the Hudson River; a charming Village Hall that also houses the Castleton Public Library; a post office; Prins Agency Insurance, Grant's Auto Repair; and The Village Inn, a friendly local pub. There are multi-family houses, upscale apartments in three of the buildings, as well as inexpensive flats located in other buildings, some of which are in need of rehabilitation.

There are many vacant storefronts that could house new businesses, and some vacant lots that could be used for parking and/or future construction. The Anchor Food Pantry, located at the Riverside Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing at the north end of the Village, and Schermerhorn Park, at the south end of the Village, are Main Street's two bookends.

Up the hill from Main Street are streets lined with beautiful, economical Craftsman bungalow, foursquare, temple and shotgun houses dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Village is home to two churches, one Roman Catholic on Stimpson Avenue and one Lutheran on Green Avenue, and the outstanding Castleton K-5 Elementary School on Scott Avenue. Castleton Kids offers well-regarded after school and summer programs, both Boy and Girl Scouts troops are active in the Village, and the volunteer fire company has healthy membership. There are two peaceful and picturesque cemeteries where people and dogs often walk, Mountain View on Scott Avenue, and Sacred Heart on Catholic Way (Stimpson Avenue).

Across from the Castleton Fire Company on lower Green Avenue, the Village owns a historic building in the DRI area that once served as a jail. It is much in need of renovation, but it could be used eventually as a museum or other public space. Starting this summer, the Castleton-on-Hudson Community Garden and Castleton-on-Hudson Farmers and Artisans Market will be located on Main Street.

The Store, located at the former Stewart's Shop, is slated to open this summer, returning much-needed groceries to Main Street. The Store will sell fresh produce as well as convenience items, and will stock camping supplies. Having a kayak rental booth is under consideration, in anticipation of the pedestrian overpass at North Main Street and Scott Avenue. This will allow downtown residents, those who live "up the hill" and visitors to stroll to the Village Park on the Hudson River.

The entire Village is served by both Time Warner Cable and Verizon broadband internet, and cell service from Verizon is stable, with few or no dead spots.

- 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.

Schermerhorn Park is part of the Rensselaer Land Trust.

NYS DOT has created plans for the Scott Avenue and North Main Street pedestrian overpass.

In 1995, the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson and Town of Schodack adopted a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. It is still in full force, but the membership has lapsed, so currently a committee is being reconstituted to update the LWRP, with one goal being to seek a planning grant for this purpose under the CFA.

The Village has a Downtown Historic District, with special zoning laws pertaining to Main Street appearance and development. One law that was passed in recent years prohibits converting Main Street storefronts into apartments.

Over the years, various efforts at planning have been attempted, and reports have been written. “A Village Walk” (1977) documents the history of many structures on Main Street. In 2000, “The Land and the River” was presented to the Federal Coordinating Committee of the Hudson River. Most recently, in 2015, an addendum was written to the Comprehensive Plan (2005), and at that same time a survey about Main Street was piloted (n = 34).

One piece of the new Mayor’s and new Trustee’s campaign platform was to create a downtown Business Improvement District. This is an agenda item that will be pursued by the Board of Trustees in the coming weeks.

- 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.

This list of supporters grows every day:

Judith Breselor, Rensselaer County Legislature District Four - Towns of Sand Lake, Schodack, and Nassau

Jeanne Casatelli, Landowner, Southern portion of Campbell Island

Mark Castiglione, AICP, Acting Executive Director, [Hudson River Valley Greenway](#)

Suzanne Cecala, Volunteer Organizer, Communications, Castleton-on-Hudson Community Garden

Scott Dobson, Owner, The Store, 1 South Main Street

Dennis Dowds, Supervisor, Town of Schodack

Rachel Kerner, Co-owner, Olivia & Grace Photography, 2 North Main Street; Co-chair, Castleton-on-Hudson Farmers and Artisans Market

Andrew M. Klein, Owner, 2 North Main Street; Managing Member, Castleton Office Center LLC

Jan Posnanski, Owner, The Village Inn, 100 South Main Street

Donna Ratner, Co-owner Healthy Brands Collective

Tricia Scorsone, Co-owner, Scarnato’s Ristorante, 133 Scott Avenue

Alexander A. Shannon, Vice Chairman, Rensselaer County Legislature District Four - Towns of Sand Lake, Schodack, and Nassau

Linda von der Heide, Principal Planner, Rensselaer County Economic Development & Planning

Leads:

Robert Schmidt, Mayor, Village of Castleton-on-Hudson

Gina Giuliano, Trustee, Village of Castleton-on-Hudson

**8) Challenges.** Identify current challenges or other impediments facing downtown development initiatives.

**Access to the Hudson River:** Main Street faces one hurdle that, if remedied, would clear the way for market forces to transform this quaint but crumbling Village into a vibrant center for recreation and tourism. There is no public access to the Hudson River in the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson, despite the Hudson being "navigable-in-law." According to the NYS DEC, the public right of navigation is rooted in English common law and has been recognized by New York courts for more than 200 years. Train tracks run along the Hudson River and cut off the Village from its namesake.

In a 1994 order, Administrative Law Judge Bernard Heller wrote, "Castleton will acquire a parcel of land which is separated from the main area of Castleton by the Conrail tracks; to reach that property it is now necessary to transverse the Scott Avenue crossing. The property, formerly used for commercial purposes, is now vacant. And will be purchased by Castleton with the financial assistance of the Department. The land will be made into a park for which Castleton residents will have access by means of a pedestrian underpass. When this project is completed, a permanent barricade will be erected to close the Scott Avenue crossing."

Throughout the rest of the 1990s and into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Village and NYS DOT discussed various alternatives for safe, ADA compliant Hudson River access. In 2009, NYS DOT determined that the best option was not an underpass, but instead the alternative of a pedestrian overpass. The Village Board of Trustees "reluctantly" declined the proposal in September 2010, but continued to unsuccessfully negotiate with NYS DOT. Recently, with the election of a new Mayor and a new Trustee, there has been a change in leadership in the Village, and the new board members were elected on a platform that included the pedestrian overpass as the centerpiece. The three incumbent Trustees were not on the Village Board in 2010 when the pedestrian overpass was declined. NYS DOT estimates the cost for the pedestrian overpass to be three million dollars, but now insists the agency has no funds for the project.

Some at NYS DOT assert that Village residents do have access to the river, due to the existence of the Schodack Island State Park and the Castleton Boat Club. However, while the park entrance on Route 9J may be one mile south of the Village, access to the river at the State Park is three miles away from the Village, and it is not walkable. It is also not free. Within the Village, the Boat Club is a private entity with an off-limits grade-level crossing, and does not allow public access to the river; in fact, no trespassing signs are prominently displayed at the entrance to their property. In truth, Castletonians who do not own a boat or a car do not have any access to the river.

For 22 years the Village has been denied legal access, but there is no right of way, fence or train tracks that can overcome the lure of the river. People cross North Main Street routinely and often, climb through the fence, walk over the tracks, and go to the river to fish or to sit and contemplate the vista. This is a dangerous situation that could be ended by constructing a pedestrian overpass at North Main Street and Scott Avenue.



**No Public Transportation:** In May 2009, the Capital District Transportation Authority discontinued Bus Route #34 Albany/Castleton, which operated weekdays, stopping in the Village once in the morning, and once in the evening, and consolidated it with Route #32, Hampton Manor. In May 2012, Route #32, which also traveled to and from the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson weekdays, stopping in the Village once in the morning, and once in the evening, was eliminated. In May 2014, CDTA discontinued Route #814 Castleton Shopping Shuttle. Route #814 made two round-trips on Wednesdays between the Village, Downtown Albany, Schodack and East Greenbush. At present, there is no public transportation in the Village.

The taxi fare for a one-way trip from Castleton-on-Hudson to Rensselaer is \$40. This is a significant impediment, not just in the Village or Town, but in all of rural and suburban Rensselaer County, and its impact was acutely felt when Stewart's closed and Main Street residents who did not drive were left without an option for buying groceries. (The soon to open store in the former Stewart's is eagerly awaited.) A creative idea a local individual who lives on Main Street and holds a commercial driver's license has recently proposed as a partial solution is for the Village to purchase a van and he would volunteer during his free time to be the driver.

**Infrastructure and Curb Appeal:** Village infrastructure presents two major challenges: 1) developing a plan for replacing old and obsolete systems and 2) funding to cover the costs. Regarding age, a recent excavation revealed water valves and fittings that are currently operational dating back to 1894. The water system, wastewater system and storm drains in many places in the Village are old and obsolete. As roadwork projects are planned and completed (one at a time), pipes are replaced while construction is ongoing. This increases the project costs when replacing a road or making more minor repairs, but absent grant funding, it is the only affordable way to make improvements over time. As an example, the Village plans on chip-sealing Van Buran Avenue this year. NYS-financed chip-sealed roads should not be replaced for 10 years; so, in this case, given the age and the condition of the pipes under the road, the Village will replace and upgrade water and wastewater services prior to applying new chip-seal to road surfaces.

The challenge with the current water and wastewater systems is that the Village is serving a far larger geographic area than simply what is within the Village boundaries. Services extend into Schodack, includes Castle Ridge and moves along the Maple Hill Road corridor of development. The prior administration used bond financing to build a new water tank and also increased the water supply by contracting with East Greenbush. Today, the Village can approve additional water permits which will encourage development in the Village catchment area.

While the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson can safely encourage new development, protecting the public and improving the appearance of Main Street by removing derelict buildings is also important. The loss of old buildings is tragic; however, in the case of a few structures on Main Street, the decay has gone too far to make saving them possible. Demolition costs may be re-levied and added to the property tax bill. This is the case for three abandoned buildings on Main Street. The county has two of the buildings in their possession and has decided to act on them because one of the new Village investors has put a bid on the soon to be cleared property.

An upgrade in water, wastewater and storm water systems may be needed in the DRI area. New sidewalks, underground electrical wires, and attention to the facades of the buildings on Main Street would make the DRI area more attractive. To avoid the loss of additional buildings on Main Street, some building owners need to be encouraged to sell to other interested parties who are more willing to invest in the properties. With new circumstances in the Village, including the culture change that has already started to take place, market forces have become a factor in sparking this to happen.

- 9) **Other.** Provide **WEB LINKS** to any other relevant information. For example: plans, reports, news articles etc.

**The Village of Castleton-on-Hudson DRI & CFA Website:**

<https://sites.google.com/site/castletononhudsondricfa/>

**Letters of Support:** <https://sites.google.com/site/castletononhudsondricfa/contact-us>

**The Pedestrian Overpass:** <https://app.box.com/s/00lqddtx09nv4tzkoai5vi1sotkapkf>

**Plans (including LWRP):** <https://app.box.com/s/w6x0fd0awfwdh07ghrrp77b5y4rolzvx>

**The Village of Castleton-on-Hudson “Official” Website:** <http://www.castleton-on-hudson.org/>

**The Village of Castleton-on-Hudson Facebook Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/villageofcastletononhudson/>

**Castleton-on-Hudson Farmers and Artisans Market:** <https://www.facebook.com/COHFAM/?fref=ts>

**The Castletonian:** <http://www.castleton-on-hudson.org/index.php/community/village-news/2016-editions>

**Rensselaer Land Trust:** <http://www.renstrust.org/publications/natural-areas-book>

**Schodack Island State Park:** <http://nysparks.com/parks/146/details.aspx>

**Castleton Public Library:** <http://www.castletonpubliclibrary.org/>

**Castleton Elementary School:** <http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us/elementary/>

**Castleton Kids:** <http://www.castletonkids.com/home.html>

**Riverside Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing:** <http://riversidecenterrehab.com/>

**Healthy Brands Collective:** <http://healthybrandsco.com/>

**The Store:** <https://www.facebook.com/thestorecastleton/?fref=ts>

#### **News Articles**

#### **Former Fort Orange Paper Site**

Castleton Paperboard to purchase former Fort Orange Paper Co. (Albany Business Review, 24 March 2014):



<http://www.bizjournals.com/albany/news/2014/03/24/casleton-paperboard-to-purchase-former-fort-orange.html>

Interim Remedial Cleanup Action to Begin at Brownfield Site (NYS DEC, October 2013):

<http://www.castleton-on-hudson.org/index.php/document-center/community/239-fort-orange-cleanup-fact-sheet/file>

Former Fort Orange paper mill may be redeveloped (The Record, 22 October 2013):

<http://www.troyrecord.com/business/20131022/former-fort-orange-paper-mill-may-be-redeveloped>

### **Former Hamilton Printing Site**

Connecticut super food firm eyes move to Castleton (Times Union, 26 January 2016):

<http://blog.timesunion.com/business/healthy-food-company-moving-to-castleton-on-hudson/72380/>

Connecticut super food company looking at Castleton site (Times Union, 26 January 2016):

<http://www.timesunion.com/business/article/Connecticut-super-food-company-looking-at-6785606.php#item-38491>

### **Closing of Stewart's**

Castleton residents fight to keep their Stewart's open (Times Union, 16 October 2014):

<http://www.timesunion.com/business/article/Castleton-residents-fight-to-keep-their-Stewart-s-5827914.php>

Residents rally around closing Castleton Stewart's (WTEN, 21 October 2014):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFRUBo50k3I>

Churchill: More than just a store set to close in Castleton (Times Union, 24 October 2014):

<http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Churchill-More-than-just-a-store-set-to-close-in-5841350.php>

Efforts continue to save closing Stewart's (WTEN, 24 October 2014):

<http://news10.com/2014/10/24/efforts-continue-to-save-closing-stewarts/>

Castleton Stewart's supporters rally Friday (Times Union, 24 October 2016):

<http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Castleton-Stewart-s-supporters-rally-Friday-5845555.php>

Residents Are Disappointed About The Castleton Stewarts Closing (WGNA, 24 October 2016):

<http://wgna.com/residents-are-disappointed-about-the-castleton-stewarts-closing/?trackback=tsmclip>

Protesters in Castleton, NY gathered Friday night to picket the *closing* of the *Stewart's* shop they've known for 40 years (WNYT, 25 October 2016):

<https://www.facebook.com/NewsChannel13/posts/10152568151865318>

Castleton Stewart's Supporters Rally Friday (The Schodack Scene, 26 October 2014)



<http://thescene-thescene.blogspot.com/2014/10/castleton-stewarts-supporters-rally.html>

Stewart's Shop bids farewell to Castleton (The Record, 26 October 2014):

<http://www.troyrecord.com/general-news/20141026/stewarts-shop-bids-farewell-to-castleton>

1 year after sale, former Castleton Stewart's site still vacant (Times Union, 3 October 2015):

<http://www.timesunion.com/tuplus-local/article/1-year-after-sale-former-Castleton-Stewart-s-6548119.php>

#### **Schodack Island State Park Campsites**

63 new campsites to open at Schodack Island State Park in Spring 2015 (The Record, 24 May 2014):

<http://www.troyrecord.com/lifestyle/20140524/63-new-campsites-to-open-at-schodack-island-state-park-in-spring-2015>

Schodack Island State Park to get more campsites (Times Union, 22 May 2014):

<http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Schodack-Island-State-Park-to-get-more-campsites-5497673.php>

#### **Elimination of Bus Route**

CDTA May Service Changes Now In Effect (25 April 2014)

<https://www.cdta.org/news/too-big/7941>

**\*\*Please complete Appendix A-C on pages 4-6 (below)\*\***

#### **Appendix A: Executive Summary (not to exceed 3 pages).**

The Village of Castleton-on-Hudson in southwest Rensselaer County is seeking to be awarded the 2016 Downtown Revitalization Initiative for the Capital Region. The Village's many assets – a breathtaking view of the majestic Hudson River; a short 10 mile drive to downtown Albany; a history brimming with legends straight from the late State historian Louis Jones' pen; a school district that is a source of pride; parks or potential parks throughout the Village and nearby; and a compact urban business district along the river – leave visitors wondering how this gem has gone undiscovered by much of the outside world.

Castleton-on-Hudson has experienced gradual but steady decline for the past fifty years. It is still made up of a vibrant population that cares about the community, but there is an almost fatalistic attitude among many residents, who seem to believe the decay of Main Street is irrevocable, the exit of young people is inevitable, and that it was Castletonians' own fault that Stewart's locked its doors and said goodbye.

The barriers that prevent a rebirth of this charming little river enclave are daunting. First there is the love/hate relationship with the train. Amtrak runs along the Hudson River shoreline behind Main Street, and in 1994, NYS DOT closed the public grade level crossing at Scott Avenue and North Main



Street. The promised pedestrian overpass was never built, and so the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson has had no legal public access to the Hudson River for 22 years.

Next, there has been no direct CDTA bus route to the Village since 2009, no daily public transportation to the Village since 2012, and no bus on any day at any time since 2014. A taxi to Rensselaer costs \$40 for a one-way trip.

Third, two major employers, Fort Orange Paper and Hamilton Printing have gone out of business, and in 2014, Stewart's left after 40 years on Main Street. Many storefronts sit vacant, a reminder of bustling days of the past. Couple this with the lack of public transportation, and Castleton-on-Hudson residents who do not drive are left with few options for food or employment.

Finally, the Village of less than 1,500 residents needs to invest in infrastructure updating, as many pipes in the street date back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Main Street also needs a facelift, to bring out the charm of its Victorian architecture. A few years ago National Grid installed a hideous transformer in the middle of the Green Avenue and South Main Street intersection; it is as if Castleton-on-Hudson is irrelevant. This unsightly transformer and all the electrical wiring on Main Street should be moved underground.

As part of Main Street renovations, the Village Hall and old former jail building should be restored, and both should be listed on the State Register of Historic Places. The Village Hall already houses the public library, and ADA compliance as well as a truly historic approach to remodeling are desirable. The Village-owned jail could be used as a museum or other public space.

There are glimmers on the horizon of good things to come for the Village. A new mayor and new trustee were elected in March who have made a commitment to bring positive change to Main Street. New investors are showing interest in downtown, and a business called The Store will soon open in the old Stewart's location. Talented volunteers have come forward, expressing a desire to help. Largely due to their efforts and enthusiasm, a Community Garden is being built and a Farmers and Artisans Market will be held twice per month this summer.

Bright news in the employment arena is that Healthy Brands Collective of Norwalk, Connecticut is in negotiation to purchase the old Hamilton Printing site on the Village's north edge. This will bring up to 80 new jobs to Castleton-on-Hudson. Capitalizing on the growing trend for healthy and organic foods, this is an innovative business with tremendous growth potential. Another potential sector for job growth is the Village's largest employer, Riverside Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing. Something to explore is whether the facility could be encouraged to expand due to a shortage of beds in nearby Columbia County.

The cornerstone of the new Board members' campaign was to secure the funds for the pedestrian overpass at Scott Avenue and North Main Street that has been promised but not delivered to the Village by NYS DOT. Once built, the walkway would give deserved access to the Hudson River to Main Street and all Village residents, and it would attract visitors who would patronize businesses in the downtown area. Coupled with Schermerhorn Park, Cow Island, Campbell Island, and Schodack Island State Park, the new Village Park will be a magnet to Main Street. The Village of Castleton-on-Hudson will be known as the land of parks and a destination for outdoor recreation.



Combined with the excellent school district, beautiful location, and existing community groups, the increase in job opportunities, housing, places to shop and other amenities will make Castleton-on-Hudson an attractive place to live. It will no longer be the Capital District's best kept secret.

The list of supporters for the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson's DRI application is growing, and includes elected officials, business and property owners, volunteers, and others who are interested in the Hudson River and its historic shoreline communities. Among the individuals who have committed their support are Donna Ratner, owner of Healthy Foods Collective (which is in the process of purchasing the Hamilton Printing site on Cow Island) and Andrew Klein, a new investor on Main Street.

The Village of Castleton-on-Hudson is very likely the smallest abode among the DRI applicants. It is an easy place to overlook and leave behind. An award of 10 million dollars would change everything for Main Street, the Village generally, and the area of southwestern Rensselaer / northwestern Columbia Counties. It would fund so much more than the dearly-desired overpass; it would go a long way towards erasing past wrongs and accomplishing every item on the Village's wish list. The time is now for the future to be brighter in the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson.

**Appendix B: Map of location indicating specific boundaries (color, clearly identify boundaries, surrounding communities, census tract boundaries, key features, etc.).**

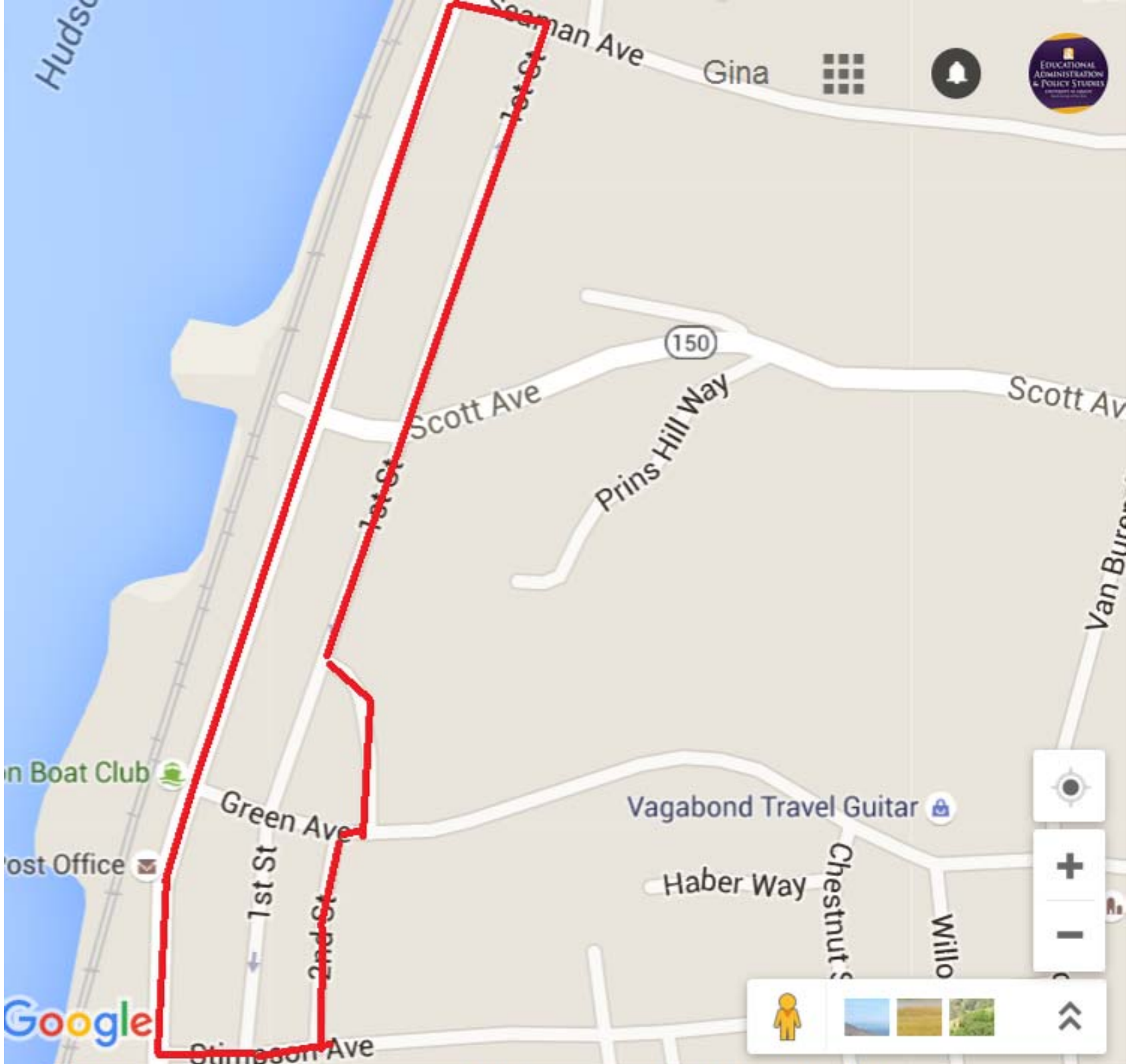
Maps of area:

<https://app.box.com/s/kOp8n3dl2j3z1oiqoopduk5o2vupwce9>

**Appendix C: Current photos of the downtown area. Please clearly label each photo.**

Photos of Main Street:

<https://app.box.com/s/e9i985acok22k8urjc658thfq34urm26>



Hudson

Seaman Ave

Gina



150

Scott Ave

Prins Hill Way

Scott Ave

Van Buren

Boat Club

Post Office

Green Ave

Vagabond Travel Guitar

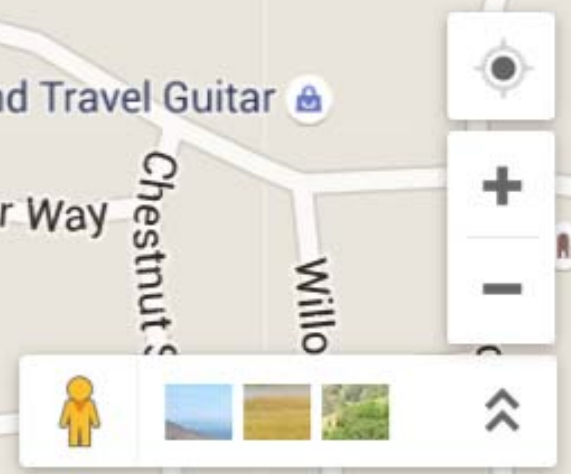
Haber Way

Chestnut

Willo

Google

Stimpson Ave





Staats Is Rd

Bear Island

Public Land  
72 ac 3000'  
on river

Campbell Island

Bethlehem  
Town Park  
& Launch

Private land  
open to public

8

Beaver Dam Rd

87

144

Van Derzee Rd

Dunmore Rd

Lyons Rd

Papscanee  
Creek

Hamilton

Cow Island

Village  
Plant

Western Rd

Poplar Island

Popular Island

Ft Orange

Village Park

Main St N  
1st St

150

Boltwood Ave

Seaman Ave

Castleton-On-Hudson

9J

Castleton Boat Club

© 2016 Google

Green Ave

Scott Ave

1407 ft



1995

Imagery Date: 7/15/2015

42°32'18.06" N 73°45'27.18" W elev

1 ft eye alt 6158 ft

