



Downtown Revitalization Initiative

APPLICATION

Applications for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative will be received by the Regional Councils. Applicant responses for each section should be as complete and succinct as possible. Applications should be submitted as Word documents and must be received by the appropriate Regional Council by 4:00 PM on June 1, 2018 at the email address provided at the end of this application. Application guidance is provided in the *Downtown Revitalization Initiative Guidebook* found on the DRI website at www.ny.gov/dri.

BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: **Mohawk Valley**

Municipality Name: **Village of Cooperstown**

Downtown Name: **Railroad District**

County Name: **Otsego**

Vision for Downtown. Provide a brief statement of the municipality's vision for downtown revitalization.

Link the Railroad District to a thriving Main Street to create a more diverse and larger business area, provide additional housing options for area workers, improve and expand healthcare offerings, and better connectivity.

JUSTIFICATION

Provide an overview of the downtown area nominated for the DRI program, highlighting the area's defining characteristics and the reasons for its selection. Explain why the downtown is ready for Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) investment, and how that investment would serve as a catalyst to bring about revitalization.

➤The Village of Cooperstown's economy is primarily driven by tourism and the health care industry. As a tourist destination, Cooperstown is dependent on its restaurants, retail, and commercial businesses to not only offer a quality downtown experience to visitors, but also to provide jobs for residents and generate the sales tax and parking revenues that partially support critical public services and maintain the Village's Infrastructure. Additionally, to remain sustainable, local businesses must cater to the needs of residents as well as tourists during the entirety of the year, not just the summer months.

During the public engagement process initiated as part of the Comprehensive Plan process, the local community identified the Railroad District as a high priority redevelopment opportunity area. The location was once an industrial hub that bordered the railroad tracks; long-term disinvestment, initiated by a movement away from rail transportation, manufacturing, and industrial agriculture, has led to declining conditions.

For residents, the Railroad District has the potential to promote greater and more diverse business development activity. Vacant or underutilized buildings and open space are ripe for commercial or mixed development. There are additionally opportunities for much needed new housing. And, with Bassett Healthcare already firmly situated in this area, the possibilities for expansion, in any area with ample parking, are significant.

Despite the fact that the Railroad District is located only two blocks away from Main Street’s core, the public engagement process for the Comprehensive Plan found that many visitors were unaware of a second commercial district within the Village. A new hotel in this area, as well as a distillery that offers public tastings and tours, has begun to change this through the investment of private funds. However, the Railroad District remains disconnected from the heart of Main Street. By creating a linkage through physical improvements, redevelopment of existing buildings and new construction, as well as better marketing, the Railroad District will provide new opportunities for visitors as well as locals.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

This section should be filled out with reference to the list of desired attributes for participation in the DRI as set forth in the *Downtown Revitalization Initiative Guidebook*.

1) Boundaries of the proposed DRI area. Detail the boundaries of the targeted neighborhood, keeping in mind that there is no minimum or maximum size, but that the neighborhood should be concentrated and well-defined. Neighborhoods beyond a traditional downtown or central business district are eligible, if they can meet other criteria making them ripe for investment. Attach a map that clearly delineates the area to be included in the downtown revitalization area.

➤The nominated district includes “Upper” Main Street, running east to west, a portion of “Irish Hill” with undeveloped area for new housing, and the land along the railroad tracks running north to south from Main Street to the Village limits. Included in the area are important existing Cooperstown businesses: Bruce Hall Home Center, Bassett Healthcare’s Material Support Facility, Price Chopper, Mirabito, Stewarts, and the new Railroad Inn, Cooperstown Distillery, and CVS. Also included are developable sites including the former International Cheese Plant.



Former Cheese Factory on Grove Street



Vacant lots at Grove/Chestnut/Walnut Streets

2) Description of catchment area. Outline why the proposed DRI area, 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 destination.

➤ Cooperstown functions as the primary downtown for a section of Otsego County stretching from Milford to Springfield, Edmeston to Roseboom. Cooperstown is the county seat for Otsego County, bringing many people from throughout the county to the Village to conduct business, serve on juries, and patronize related professional services provided by lawyers, accountants, and abstract companies. The NYS Department of Motor Vehicles alone brings an average of 650 people to the Otsego County office complex each month. Additionally, the county employs over 200 people who are based in the Village.

Cooperstown also serves as the downtown for the employees and patients of Bassett Healthcare. Bassett currently employs approximately 3,000 individuals year round at its Cooperstown campus. Outpatient visits in 2017 amounted to 276,826. Bassett further provides a 180-bed inpatient facility, and, while difficult to calculate exact numbers, the visiting family and friends of inpatients are yet another audience for downtown Cooperstown. Bassett's patients come in large numbers to its main campus from Oneida, Herkimer, Delaware, Schoharie, and Madison Counties, as well as Otsego County.

Cooperstown's downtown also sees regular use by visitors to its well-known tourist attractions. Visitation at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum brings over a quarter of a million people annually. Just south of the Village, the Cooperstown Dreams Park attracts approximately 100 youth baseball teams per week, with a 13-week season, and a minimum of 11 players and 2 coaches per team. When family members are taken into account, the Dreams Park alone brings approximately 68,000 visitors to Cooperstown, the majority of whom come to downtown Cooperstown at least once during their visit. Add to those numbers 40,000 to 50,000 who descend on Cooperstown for the annual Baseball Hall of Fame induction ceremonies. Depending on the inductees, attendance has risen as high as 75,000.

Cooperstown also benefits from conference attendance at the Otesaga Resort Hotel, from opera-goers who frequent Glimmerglass Festival, from special events including concerts at Brewery Ommegang, and from high school, collegiate, and adult baseball teams that use Doubleday Field.

Finally, Cooperstown is becoming an educational hub with post-graduate professional training occurring not only at Bassett Healthcare but also at a satellite campus of SUNY Oneonta, which features programs in Lake Management and Museum Studies. Nationally recognized educational opportunities infuse the community with 20-somethings during the school year when tourism fades, and all the graduate programs based in Cooperstown have seen significant growth in recent years.

3) Past Investment, future investment potential. Describe how this DRI area will be able to capitalize on prior private and public investment, or catalyze future investments in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas.

➤ Cooperstown is poised to benefit from an infusion of funds for downtown revitalization in the Railroad District. The Village, with the help of state and federal funding has been able to plan and make significant improvements to infrastructure in the adjoining downtown area. The EFC GIGP project allowed for the rebuilding of sidewalks, creation of rain gardens, and other amenities to improve the downtown experience from the eastern anchor of Main Street, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, west through the core of the business district. DEC has recently funded the installation of electric vehicle charging ports at Doubleday Field. An award of FHWA TEP funding will allow for increased pedestrian and bicyclist amenities. The Village will also be upgrading the aged sewer plant to increase capacity and meet more stringent environmental standards. An agreement with MIDETEL of Schoharie County, funded through an ESD award, will soon have Wi-Fi hotspots on Main Street.

The Village has further invested in the creation of a Village Gateway to the south of downtown, which includes a peripheral parking lot serviced by a “trolley” system to bring visitors to the heart of the business district, arts and culture attractions, including not only the Hall of Fame, but also the Fenimore Art Museum and The Farmers’ Museum, and Otsego Lake. This year increased trolley service is being funded through a private award from the Scriven Foundation. In 2017, a new trolley stop was added in the Railroad District to meet increased need.

Finally the Village, working with the Otsego County IDA, has developed a new Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Revitalization Strategy, which was approved in November 2016. This plan identified the Railroad District as a key area in need of improvement. With this in mind last year the Village applied for and received Climate Smart Communities funding through the CFA to right size the culvert on Grove Street, making possible an infrastructure improvement necessary to promote future growth along the railroad corridor.

The Village’s efforts have already begun to pay off. Consistent private investment in Cooperstown can be seen from Bassett Healthcare and the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Additionally, new investment has developed around the “beverage trail,” which centers on Cooperstown, especially the Cooperstown Distillery located on Railroad Avenue. Also in the Railroad District, former industrial and storage buildings have recently been converted to housing, offices, and a hotel using private funding.

Further opportunity exists within the designated area for additional private development. Buildings like the former cheese factory and the Bassett warehouse are ripe for redevelopment to encourage uses more appropriate to the area. Given a need for housing, especially for Bassett Healthcare employees, the Railroad District and adjoining Irish Hill and Linden Avenue offer some of the few places within the Village that can support such growth.



New office complex on Grove Street in former sawmill

4) Recent or impending job growth. Describe how recent or impending job growth within or near the DRI area will attract professionals to an active life in the downtown, support redevelopment, and make growth sustainable in the long-term.

➤ Cooperstown offers a variety of employment offerings, from highly skilled to seasonal entry-level positions. In the professional category, Cooperstown’s workforce includes numerous medical professionals as well as professionals working in the fields of law, accounting, banking, and education. Cooperstown also attracts experts in the arts and culture fields, including museum professionals, musicians and performers, writers, and those working in the music and film industries. An environmental film festival will be in its fifth season this fall.

Cooperstown has also begun to attract commercial artisans, including people working in the food and beverage fields. The advent of the beverage trail has brought people with expertise in brewing and distilling. Cooperstown also boasts an active visual arts community, with the Cooperstown Art Association serving over 1,000 artists.

The tourism industry provides a means for high school and college students to get their start in the workforce during the summer season. New restaurants (Mel’s, Alex’s Bistro, Mt. Fuji, and Back Alley Grill) provide year-round and seasonal positions.

Job growth is limited not by lack of employment opportunities but by lack of housing. Bassett Healthcare is in constant need of nurses, but lack of affordable, year-round, entry-level housing limits the desirability of working in Cooperstown. In the medical field particularly, skilled practitioners have to live in close proximity to the medical campus.

5) Attractiveness of physical environment. Identify the properties or characteristics that the DRI area possesses that contribute, or could contribute if enhanced, to the attractiveness and livability of the downtown for a diverse population of varying ages, income, gender identity, ability, mobility, and cultural background. Consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, varied housing types at different levels of affordability, walkability and bikeability, healthy and affordable food markets, and public parks and gathering spaces.

➤ Cooperstown is a fundamentally attractive and livable community, and it possesses numerous attributes that encourage locals, regional residents, and tourists to frequent it. The Village is often compared to a Norman Rockwell painting or a Christmas card scene. Cooperstown boasts natural beauty: the view of Otsego Lake and the surrounding hillsides from Lakefront Park is stunning. Cooperstown has also embraced the preservation of its historic buildings and landscapes. The entirety of the Village is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and a local ordinance provides for architectural review of exterior architectural changes.

Cooperstown has more than just good looks, though. The Village is a cultural center with arts activities occurring year round. Downtown is anchored by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum and is also home to the Cooperstown Art Association and the Smithy Center for the Arts. The Fenimore Art Museum and The Farmers' Museum are located just outside the Village's boundaries. Musical events, including the Cooperstown Concert Series, Glimmerglass Festival, and concerts at Brewery Ommegang and Doubleday Field cater to all tastes. This summer Pioneer Park, located right on Main Street, will once again become a musical stage, and weekly summer concerts will continue in Lakefront Park.

Events keep Cooperstown lively through the year. The recently renovated upper floor of the historic Village Hall is being used for various community group meetings, presentations, film showings, and art exhibits year round. Special offerings in the fall include a community harvest dinner on Main Street, family activities and beer tastings during Cooptoberfest (also on Main Street), the Pumpkin Glow on the porch of Village Hall, and the Glimmerglass Film Festival, with venues throughout the Village. In December, Santa prepares for the holiday season from his house in Pioneer Park. During February, the Village comes out of hibernation to venture downtown for Winter Carnival, and in the spring activities for Rotary's Spring Fling take place in the Doubleday parking lot. Add to this two major Hall of Fame events, the Hall of Fame Classic over Memorial Day weekend and Induction weekend in July, both featuring happenings on Main Street and in Doubleday Field.

For residents of Cooperstown a wide variety of amenities make Cooperstown an extraordinary place to live. U.S. News and World Report ranked the Cooperstown Junior/Senior High School in the top 10 percent of high schools in New York. As of 2016, 75.6 percent of students passed the New York State Regents Exams across all subjects, a percentage significantly higher than the average of 61.2 percent for New York State. More than half of all Cooperstown students take at least one AP course.

For those interested in a healthy lifestyle, the newly renovated Clark Sports Center offers a wide variety of activities from organized sports and classes, to tennis and squash courts for individual play, to lap swimming, to sports camps for kids. A year-round farmers' market, located in the heart of downtown, provides locally sourced foods. Cooperstown boasts six public parks, including four with lake access. The Village is walkable, and biking is encouraged with "sharrows." Bassett Healthcare's presence in the Village ensures the availability of high-quality, state-of-the-art medical care.

Businesses in the Village benefit from an active Chamber of Commerce. Communications needs are met by private providers. Public transportation includes national service (Trailways), regional service (OPT), and local "trolley" service.

The Railroad District offers an area for future expansion of mixed-use development beyond the heart of Main Street where the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum is located. Once an active transportation corridor with passenger and freight rail service, warehousing, and industrial production facilities, the area along the tracks now boasts some of the few vacant buildings and lots within the Village. Other sites could be redeveloped to further maximize use for housing and service-oriented businesses. The area is fortunate to have a sizable parking lot, in addition to on-street parking, both of which are accessible to the public.

6) Quality of Life policies. 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, comprehensive plans, complete streets plan, transit-oriented development, non-discrimination laws, age-friendly policies, and a downtown management structure. If policies achieving this goal are not currently in place, describe the ability of the municipality to create and implement such policies.

➤The Village of Cooperstown has been active in updating its zoning, tax, and other local laws to foster economic development and downtown revitalization. Recent changes include:

- Adoption of 485-a (residential-commercial urban exemption) and 485-b (commercial, business, industrial real property) tax abatement
- Addition of a Planned Development District to the zoning code
- Redefining of permitted uses in the commercial district (the former railroad corridor) to include multiple family dwellings, mixed occupancy, restaurants, personal service shops, small-scale retail, offices, artist studios, and light manufacturing.
- Addition of mixed use as a permitted use in the business district
- Reduction/elimination of parking requirements for most uses in the business district
- Establishment of opportunities for outdoor dining on the street frontage for restaurants
- Certified Local Government status recognized by the State Historic Preservation Office
- Major revisions to the Sign Law to reduce clutter and aid in the approval process
- Adoption of Complete Streets Resolution
- Adoption of Climate Change Resolution
- Participation in Climate Smart Communities

- Property taxes held in check by identifying other revenue sources and streamlining Village operations
- Revision of tourist accommodation regulations to ensure availability of year-round apartments and other housing options
- Formation of a working group to examine zoning as it relates to the creation of new housing opportunities

7) Public Support. Describe the public participation and engagement process conducted to develop the DRI application, and the support of local leaders and stakeholders for pursuing a vision of downtown revitalization. Describe the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to preparing and implementing a strategic investment plan. Identify an initial local lead for the program that will work with outside experts to convene a DRI Local Planning Committee to oversee the plan.

➤The Village of Cooperstown has actively engaged the local community in recent planning efforts to foster downtown revitalization and economic development generally. Over the past four years, the Village has hosted four well-attended community events (aside from required public hearings) to gauge support for a new Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Revitalization Strategy: a community brainstorming session in October 2014, a charrette to explore the ideas generated also in October 2014, an open house for additional information gathering in June 2015, and another open house to allow for input on a draft vision, goals, and recommendations in April 2016. In addition, working with Elan Planning of Saratoga, tourists were interviewed during the summer of 2014. These activities led to the adoption of a new community-supported Comprehensive Plan in the fall of 2016.

In 2011, the Village of Cooperstown created an Economic Development and Sustainability Committee. The committee serves as the initial local lead for this program.

8) Project List to Demonstrate Readiness: Describe opportunities to build on the strengths described above by providing a list of transformative projects that will be ready for implementation with an infusion of DRI funds within the first one to two years (depending on the scope and complexity of the project) and which may leverage DRI funding with private investment or other funds. Such projects could address economic development, transportation, housing, and community development needs. While such projects should have demonstrated public support, it is recognized that projects will ultimately be vetted by the Local Planning Committee and the State. Explain how most projects proposed for DRI funding demonstrate their readiness for implementation.

➤ The following goals and action items were included in the Village of Cooperstown’s Comprehensive Plan, adopted in fall 2016, and vetted through its approval process. Language in italics is taken directly from the Comprehensive Plan.

HOUSING:

Encourage a mix of year-round housing types in a variety of price ranges, including rental housing options, to meet the needs of a wide range of Village residents, including families, seniors, and the workforce.

- The designated area provides opportunities for new housing development by rehabilitating and expanding existing structures, such as the former cheese factory, and building new in locations on Irish Hill and Linden Avenue. Village zoning allows for the creation of a PDD that would facilitate development other than single-family houses on sizable lots by allowing for higher density. Bassett Healthcare has conducted a housing survey with employees that suggests apartment and townhouse-style housing at reasonable prices is in high demand and that employees would prefer to live closer to work in the Village if such options were available.

HEALTHCARE:

Continue dialog with the Bassett Healthcare Network as it adapts to changing needs in medical education, healthcare, and its physical plant.

- Bassett Healthcare is the major employer in the Village of Cooperstown, and its facilities draw more outpatient visits than the Hall of Fame does museum goers. Bassett's main campus, located on the east side of Cooperstown, was constructed in a residential district (in an era before zoning) and is limited in terms of expansion by the Susquehanna River and residential neighborhoods. Bassett already has a strong presence in the Railroad District as a tenant in office space and the owner of a sizable material support facility (warehouse). As space pressure grows on the main campus, the Railroad District provides opportunity for Bassett's growth within the Village in an area that offers accessibility and ample public parking.

BUSINESS:

Work with property owners and real estate professionals to analyze, improve, and market existing commercial spaces, and promote Cooperstown as a year-round destination and business community.

- *The people who visit Cooperstown spend enough to support downtown Cooperstown's baseball-oriented and baseball-themed businesses, to the extent that the ground-floor businesses are able to generate enough rental income to make it possible for their commercial landlords to sustain the buildings....This formula might work well enough for the property owners – but it does not work well for the overall district or for the community. As many national surveys have concluded, people who visit historic communities like to patronize businesses that are popular with local residents. Heritage visitors like to experience what it is like to live in and be part of a community with historic resources. But Cooperstown's Main Street offers very little to local residents.*
- The Railroad District offers the opportunity to counter this trend by offering commercial space with lower rent. Already, a new hotel and distillery have moved into existing buildings, and CVS recently chose to relocate from Main Street to a new building on Chestnut Street (within the designated DRI area) where parking is more plentiful. The designated area offers opportunities in the form of existing buildings and developable land for year-round businesses that are not focused solely on tourist-oriented, baseball-themed sales.

- To be successful the Village, with its tourism and business partners, will need to invest not only in infrastructure but in promotion. A successful DRI will require investment in changing public perception about what Cooperstown has to offer businesses, residents, and, to a lesser extent, visitors.

CONNECTIVITY:

Work with the County to better develop the County building, property, and parking lots as a link between Main Street and Railroad Avenue.

- *There are several Otsego County properties, including the Courthouse and County Office Building, located along Main Street between the central business district and Railroad Avenue. The Village should partner with the County to identify action steps to establish these properties as a linkage to connect visitors to Main Street to the Railroad Avenue District.*
- Furthermore, county employees provide a target market for businesses, including restaurants, that choose to locate in the designated district.

ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION:

Encourage bicycling on well-maintained roads and walking on well-maintained sidewalks.

- *The Village should explore the feasibility of using the existing rail line as a pedestrian/bicycle corridor to connect the Blue Trolley Lot (located off Route 28 just south of the Village) to the Railroad Avenue District.*
- The creation of housing in the Railroad District will reduce the dependence on automobiles, as the area is within walking distance to work and shopping and is serviced by public transportation.



Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad Tracks

9) Administrative Capacity. Describe the extent of the existing local administrative capacity to manage this initiative, including potential oversight of concurrent contracts once projects are selected for award.

➤The Village of Cooperstown has successfully completed both state-funded and federally-funded projects including the Gateway project (FHWA) and downtown GIGP project (NYS EFC). Currently a TEP project (FHWA), sewer plant upgrades (SAM), Village Hall renovations (NYS ESD), and EV charging installation (NYS DEC) are underway. Teri Barown, Village Administrator, has overseen this past and current work. She is well versed in state and local contract policies and other requirements for state funding, and she has a proven ability to manage multiple contracts simultaneously.

The Village has recently hired a new Superintendent of Public Work, Mitch Hotaling. This new hire, along with a newly promoted Village Treasurer and newly promoted Streets Superintendent, will set the stage for a more robust and enthusiastic staff to move the DRI forward.

The Village Economic Development and Sustainability Committee will form the base for a new Local Planning Committee (LPC) to further direct the project. The efforts of this group, as well as the Steering Committee that directed the crafting of the Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Redevelopment Strategy, demonstrate the willingness of local volunteers to engage in the planning process necessary to complete a project of this scale.

10) Other. Provide any other information that informs the nomination of this downtown for a DRI award.

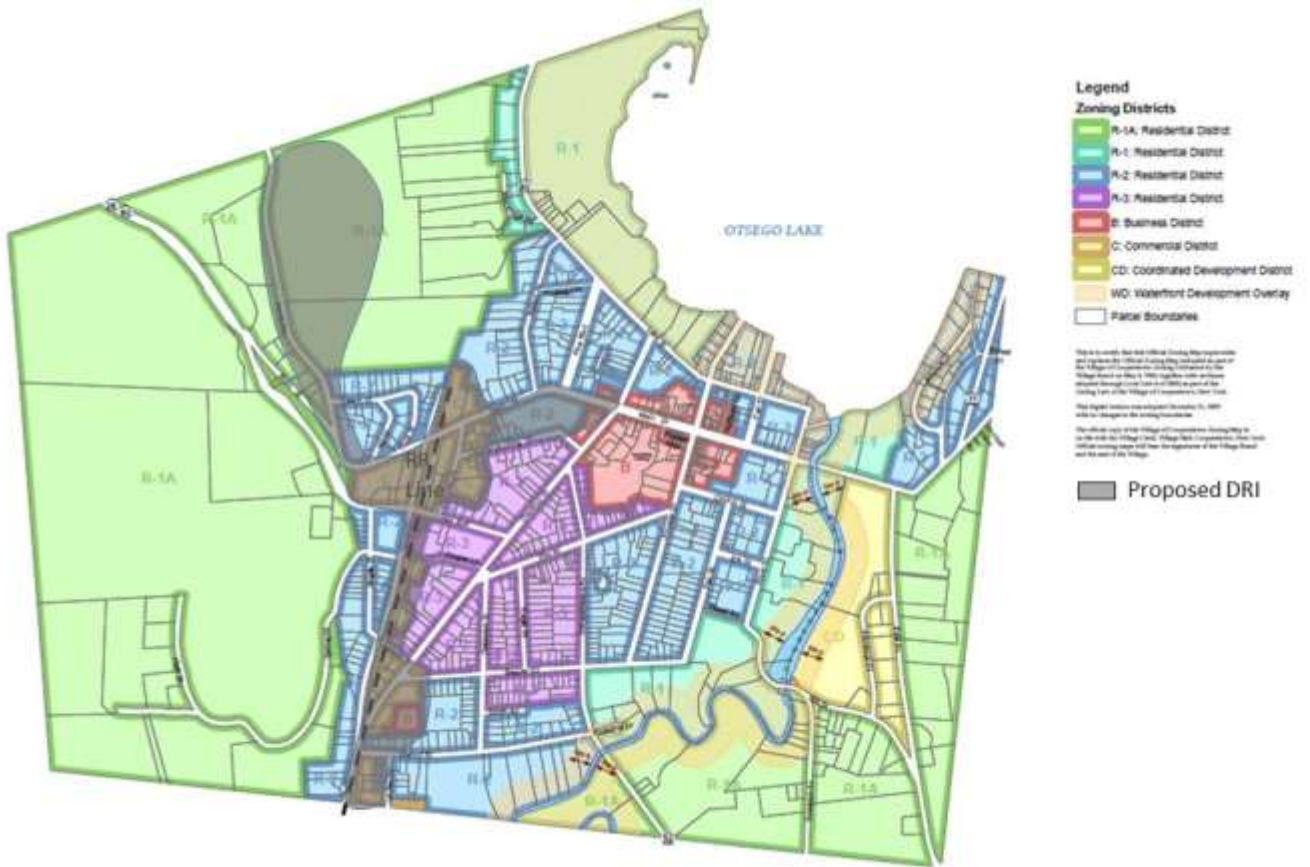
➤Three additional qualifications distinguish Cooperstown in the realm of Downtown Revitalization:

(1) Unlike many upstate communities, Cooperstown receives national and international attention. Cooperstown welcomes tourists from around the nation and around the world. National news media know the Village. Cooperstown will shine a spotlight on this program in a way other communities cannot.

(2) The entire Village of Cooperstown is listed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places. As a result, approved improvements to historic income-producing properties are eligible for a 20-percent federal historic preservation tax credit and a 20-percent state historic preservation tax credit. Owners of historic houses are eligible for New York State Historic Homeowner Tax Credits (20 percent of approved costs). These tax incentives stretch private investment further.

(3) Because SUNY Oneonta has a Cooperstown campus, START UP New York projects can occur in the Village of Cooperstown.

*Don't forget to attach a map that clearly delineates the proposed DRI Area. (See item 1.)



EMAIL SUBMISSION ADDRESSES

Please submit your application as a Word Document to the Regional Council for your region.

Capital Region	NYS-CapitalDist@esd.ny.gov
Central New York	NYS-CentralNY@esd.ny.gov
Finger Lakes	NYS-FingerLakes@esd.ny.gov
Long Island	LIREDC@esd.ny.gov
Mid-Hudson	NYS-MidHudson@esd.ny.gov
Mohawk Valley	NYS-MohawkVal@esd.ny.gov
New York City	NYC-DRI@esd.ny.gov
North Country	NYS-NorthCountry@esd.ny.gov
Southern Tier	NYS-SouthernTier@esd.ny.gov
Western New York	NYS-WNY-REDC@esd.ny.gov
