



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: Long Island

Municipality Name: Town of Hempstead

Downtown Name: Baldwin

County Name: Nassau County

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

Downtown Baldwin, centered on Grand Avenue, is the commercial backbone of the predominantly residential hamlet within the Town of Hempstead, with many opportunity areas centered around existing landmarks, economic centers and the Baldwin LIRR station. However, the length and discontinuity of this downtown commercial corridor has impacted economic vitality. It is the applicant's belief that, with targeted investments that build upon recent planning initiatives and investments, Downtown Baldwin will thrive as a vibrant center of activity and a local economic driver, generating needed jobs, quality living spaces, and increased tax revenues.

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 Baldwin community totals a combined area of approximately 4.7 miles and has a population of more than 32,000. This Community, which is located on the south shore of Long Island within the Town of Hempstead, Nassau County, New York, is close-knit and ethnically-diverse.

The downtown and commercial corridor in Baldwin consists of a variety of uses, including retail, commercial, institutional, and public recreation, which are generally clustered in the vicinity of the Long Island Rail Road Station (LIRR) and along Grand Avenue, the hamlet's major thoroughfare. The Community consists of a mix of residential neighborhoods with different architectural styles and a waterfront that contains a rich history of original and renovated cottages. Although the resources to encourage a viable and healthy downtown and commercial corridor are available, the economic health and resiliency of coastal communities such as Baldwin

have been affected by unprecedented severe weather events. Furthermore, a long discontinuous downtown and commercial corridor has impacted economic vitality. The Baldwin community has long recognized its assets and envisions Baldwin as a collection of vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, commercial and downtown nodes, with an active, compact, multi-modal LIRR station area at the center of the hamlet. This vision also incorporates a productive mix of land uses and innovative green infrastructure components to create a place where residents, commuters and visitors want to shop, dine, and recreate.

The Downtown Revitalization Plans for Baldwin build on existing local initiatives in order to implement key projects to revitalize the Grand Avenue downtown and commercial corridor in Baldwin and to address the need for greater resiliency in the face of changing economic markets, changing demographics and potential future severe weather events and natural disasters.

Ultimately, this DRI investment in Baldwin will serve as a catalyst toward implementation of the key projects that are ripe for implementation, which, once set in motion, will result in better economic and physical resiliency in the community, and will help revitalize the downtown and commercial corridors in Baldwin as interactive places that promote well-being and pride for the people who live, work and play there.

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.

Downtown Baldwin is an approximately three quarter-mile mixed-use corridor running along Grand Avenue from Merrick Road to Lincoln Avenue. The map that follows this application depicts the boundaries of the corridor. Grand Avenue, which runs north-south, intersects several important east-west thoroughfares including Merrick Road and Sunrise Highway, and extends to the north and south of the Baldwin Long Island Railroad (LIRR) station. This downtown and commercial corridor in Baldwin consists of a variety of land uses, including retail, commercial, institutional and residential. Given its location near the LIRR station and intersection with important east-west roadways, the Downtown Baldwin corridor is truly the gateway to Baldwin, providing the primary access to and from the area.

- 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.

Downtown Baldwin is the primary downtown destination for residents in the hamlets of Baldwin and Baldwin Harbor (what most community members refer to together as "Baldwin"). Baldwin totals a combined area of approximately 4.7 miles, with a population of more than 32,000 providing a strong consumer base for the

downtown. Baldwin's population has steadily increased over the past fifteen years, outpacing the rate of population growth in the Town of Hempstead and Nassau County. Baldwin residents are an increasingly diverse and engaged, close-knit community, and while the majority of residents are those of parenting age and their children, our millennial and the elderly populations are increasing as a proportion of the community, adding to the diversity of interests and needs to be served by our downtown.

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.

An investment in Downtown Baldwin would capitalize and build upon several recent and ongoing projects and planning initiatives, including:

- *A NYS Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR)-funded Baldwin Downtown and Commercial Corridor Resiliency (DCCR) Study, titled Next Stop: Resilient Baldwin, which outlines implementable strategies to foster economic investment, provide housing options, increase pedestrian amenities and enhance public spaces in Downtown Baldwin;*
- *A public-private partnership supported by RESTORE NY funding to develop a mixed-use retail/office/residential development within the Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Area, located along the corridor, for which a developer has been designated. This project is highlighted as a project for potential DRI funding below;*
- *Public investments including a new library and improved fire station access within Baldwin Downtown that has spurred private investment across the street from these properties, as well as Nassau County DPW park upgrades to Silver Lake Park just outside the corridor; and*
- *Completion of a phased Complete Streets plan for the corridor, titled the Grand Avenue Complete Streets Traffic Study, by the Nassau County Department of Public Works. Funding components of this plan is also highlighted below as a project for potential DRI funding.*

Further investment through DRI funding will build on past successes and identified infrastructure and economic development strategies, leveraging private investment in identified developable properties and incorporating proposed policies from recent corridor studies.

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.

As part of the DCCR Next Stop: Resilient Baldwin study, in 2017, a comprehensive market analysis was conducted for Baldwin and the surrounding area. Findings of the market analysis showed that "Baldwin is fundamentally well positioned to absorb new real estate development," with untapped demand for living in Baldwin and positive economic indicators such as steady population growth and declines in retail vacancies in Downtown Baldwin. Short housing absorption times of under two months indicate a high demand for housing in the area, and based on community engagement efforts undertaken as part of the study, increasing opportunities for multifamily development and walkable mixed-use Transit Oriented Development are high priorities for our community. Residents also want to see more diverse retail and restaurants developed in Downtown Baldwin.

Baldwin's good schools with a diverse student population, increasing demographic diversity, and proximity to Long Island beaches and to the LIRR station make the area a desirable place to live. Recent and planned LIRR station improvements are spurring more development interest in the area. However, more workers commute out of Baldwin for employment than in. The comprehensive market analysis indicated that in addition to retail development potential, Baldwin also has the potential to attract niche high tech or incubator space, particularly near its LIRR station. Building on existing opportunities for job growth with the help of DRI investment will further amplify Baldwin's existing attributes to attract new professionals to the area and better serve existing Baldwin residents.

A copy of the Baldwin Market Opportunities analysis can be accessed here:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57977f931b631b286ea33f21/t/5941507d9de4bb03b08390cf/1497452675352/Market+Opportunities+Analysis+20170526.pdf>

- 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.

One of the main amenities that Downtown Baldwin offers is its proximity to the Baldwin LIRR station and easy connection to New York City and the region. Baldwin has witnessed transformations in other transit-rich towns across Long Island, and we believe, with the right investment and policies, Baldwin is ripe for a similar transformation.

In addition to the location, there are several characteristics that contribute to the area's livability, including large well-maintained sidewalks, wide streets (which would accommodate bike lanes), proximity to the waterfront and ocean beaches as well as public parks, and a mix of residential and commercial building typologies, including a multi-family development and existing mixed-use buildings with ground floor retail. In addition, several architectural resources along Grand Avenue, including the Sunrise National Bank building and the Koch building, add a historic aesthetic to segments of Downtown Baldwin. The Koch building is a Federalist Revival commercial building current designated as eligible on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Baldwin residents make up a diverse and welcoming community that has become increasingly diverse in terms of racial, ethnic and age composition over the past 15 years. As mentioned, the majority of residents are those of parenting age and their children, as Baldwin is primarily a family-oriented community. However, the percentage of millennials and elderly populations has increased over time. In addition, the proportion of Black or African American, and Hispanic residents has been increasing steadily since 2000. These demographic shifts indicate that Baldwin is already a community that welcomes and is valued for its diverse population. Future investment in transit oriented development, implementation of complete streets and increasing diversity of housing options will further enhance Baldwin's attractive qualities.

- 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 Town of Hempstead is committed to the progressive policies that will enhance livability and increase the vibrancy of Downtown Baldwin. The GOSR-funded Baldwin Downtown and Commercial Corridor Resiliency (DCCR) Study (<http://www.baldwindccrstudy.com>) evaluated strategies that would help address storm resiliency, foster economic investment, expand housing options, increase mobility throughout the community, and enhance public spaces. The DCCR Study incorporated innovative public outreach tools and techniques, land use and economic planning, and principles of smart growth, including transit oriented development (TOD), placemaking, Complete Streets, and green infrastructure.

In 2013, the Nassau County Legislature enacted a Complete Streets Law, ensuring consideration of all roadway users in the planning and design of new and renovated thoroughfares. In order to identify Complete Streets and traffic calming measures that will provide a safer pedestrian environment, improve circulation and serve as a catalyst for economic development and revitalization in downtown Baldwin, the Nassau County Department of Public Works undertook the Grand Avenue Complete Streets Traffic Study (<https://apps.nassaucountyny.gov/Planning/docs/NCDPW%20Baldwin%20Grand%20Ave%20Complete%20Streets%20Study%20Final%20Report%20May%202016.pdf>). Funding for this study was provided by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

The Baldwin Complete Streets Study identifies needs and opportunities and recommends specific improvement measures to implement complete streets and traffic calming measures, enhancing traffic operations and safety along the corridor for all users. The Grand Avenue Complete Streets Traffic Study proposes road diets for various segments along Grand Avenue, north and south of Sunrise Highway, allowing for multi-modal transportation, reducing car speeds, and enhancing pedestrian safety near the LIRR station. In addition, the DCCR Study sets forth a four-pronged approach to increasing economic and physical resilience in Baldwin, including transit-oriented development, continuation of the complete streets policies, green infrastructure, and weather-related resiliency efforts which will ready the Baldwin area for future growth and sustainability.

The Town of Hempstead and Nassau County have clearly examined the Downtown Baldwin corridor and, with considerable community input, long-range goals have been established and the necessary policies have been put in place to achieve the revitalization goals for Baldwin. Under the direction of the Town of Hempstead Department of Planning and Economic Development (DPED) a Blight Study and Urban Renewal Plan have been completed for Downtown Baldwin. Rezoning for Downtown Baldwin and NY State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) are nearly complete for major project components.

- 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 Town of Hempstead has already received overwhelming support for the Baldwin Downtown Revitalization Initiative from the public, local leaders, and stakeholders, including Town Supervisor Laura A. Gillen, Councilwoman Erin King Sweeney, and County Legislator Debra Mule, who have advocated for a strategic initiative to diversify and invigorate the Grand Avenue corridor. The Baldwin Civic Association, which serves and advocates for the residents of Baldwin, has also promoted this initiative, supporting the goal to bring new vitality to the downtown. In addition, the GOSR-funded DCCR Study employed a collaborative and innovative outreach process to the public and local stakeholders to promote public input and lay the groundwork for a community-supported revitalization plan for the area.

The DCCR Study planning process has actively engaged community stakeholders, local organizations and municipal agencies, laying the groundwork for future engagement through the DRI. Feedback was gained through small group meetings and two large, interactive open house workshops. The Baldwin community was and is active and engaged in furthering the future vision for Baldwin, and the public participation component of the DCCR Study helped to shape the recommendations presented in its Final Plan. Drawing from past successful outreach efforts, a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was developed that defined outreach goals; identified all appropriate stakeholder and community groups; set forth a set of engagement techniques; proposed an outreach schedule that provided for pro-active, timely, and relevant feedback and review; and provided an evaluation process that assessed the success of outreach efforts on a continuous basis, allowing for mid-term changes. The PIP was also published and posted to the project website.

In close coordination with NCDPW, the Baldwin DCCR Study website was created. The website provided the study information, including goals and objectives, timeline, history of the NYRCR program, and scope of work; announcements about upcoming public meetings; presentation materials from, and summaries of, public meetings; all public documents, including the PIP; schedule information and updates; and contact information and the ability to leave comments. The website was updated on a regular basis to stay fresh and provide the public with the latest reports, summaries, and announcements in a timely manner. Options for viewing materials in Spanish were provided, as well as the ability for those with limited vision capabilities to view a simplified version of the Baldwin DCCR Study webpage that stressed text and downplayed colorful graphics. For the Complete Streets Study, a robust outreach program was undertaken to present project information and obtain input from the community and key stakeholders.

In sum, numerous public information and outreach meetings, and focus group meetings with key stakeholders, have been conducted. The Town of Hempstead and the Baldwin community believe the public outreach processes already conducted as part of previous studies provide tried and tested best practices for the DRI public outreach process that will help build a highly effective outreach strategy.

In addition, there is broad support for the revitalization of Downtown Baldwin. Neighborhood support, participation and engagement have included: Baldwin Civic Association; Baldwin Chamber of Commerce; Baldwin School District; Town of Hempstead Department of Planning and Economic Development; Nassau

County DPW; NYS Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery; MTA/LIRR; and other stakeholders. The Grand Avenue Complete Streets Traffic Study also included the New York State Department of Transportation – Region 10 (NYSDOT) as well as representatives from Nassau County DPW.

The Town of Hempstead Department of Planning and Economic Development would act as the local lead for the program and liaise with outside experts.

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 transformative projects are ready for implementation or have a short timeframe for implementation and would be catalyzed by an infusion of DRI funds:

- 1. Construction of a mixed-use development within the Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Area. This project by Basser Kaufman and the Engel Burman Group, the designated developer, involves a vibrant mixed-use development with 35,000 square feet of ground floor retail, 35,000 square feet of office and/or medical space, and upper floors capable of accommodating 200 students or 100 multi-family units. This development will replace existing buildings within a retail center that suffers from deteriorating conditions and high turnover and vacancy rates, conditions that have inhibited the growth of the surrounding neighborhood and larger Downtown Baldwin commercial corridor. The mixed-use development concept is the result of a comprehensive planning process that started with a blight study for the Grand Avenue – Baldwin area, amended in 2017, and an Urban Renewal Plan revised in March 2014 and currently being updated to reflect the new site plan and proposal for the site. This project will leverage over \$40 million in private investment, capitalize on publicly-owned land within the Urban Renewal Area, and build on funding received through the RESTORE NY program to ensure that the development maximizes community amenities and revitalization benefits. The project is ready for implementation; new zoning has been drafted for the Urban Renewal Area and SEQR review is nearly complete. DRI funds would be utilized towards several projects associated with this development:
 - a. Site preparation of the Town-owned parking facility to ready the site for development.*
 - b. Streetscape and public infrastructure improvements to ensure that the new mixed-use development interfaces with surrounding land uses and provides adequate pedestrian amenities that align with the planned complete street improvements (described below).**
- 2. Promote transit oriented development near the Baldwin LIRR station. A prominent recommendation of the Baldwin DCCR Study was the creation of a TOD Zoning Overlay District for the area surrounding the station. The TOD Zoning Overlay would promote increased density as well as mixed residential and*

commercial development not currently permitted as-of-right. The DCCR Study also conducted a Fiscal Impact Analysis for several proposed development concepts, finding that higher density development and construction of commuter amenities such as a parking deck would have a positive fiscal impact on the Town. Funding would be used to supplement capital costs associated with TOD development, including promotion of public-private development partnerships, to ensure that community amenities are incorporated into future TOD development.

- 3. Traffic calming and pedestrian streetscape enhancements and amenities planned along the Grand Avenue Corridor. Funding will be used to implement improvements that will complement the Complete Streets project by Nassau County DPW along Grand Avenue in Downtown Baldwin. The Complete Streets project will be carried out over the next several years, and will include provisions to reduce lanes to slow traffic and reduce crossing distances, and to install new high visibility crosswalks. The proposed road diet would create space for installation of bike lanes along Grand Avenue. DRI funding would further enhance walkability in the area through the provision of pedestrian amenities including trash receptacles, decorative street lamps and wayfinding signage.*
- 4. Green Infrastructure. The DCCR Study recommends implementation of green infrastructure measures along the Grand Avenue corridor, including grass or turf medians, installing permeable pavers on curb extensions, street tree replacement, and installation of stormwater planters at new development sites. The DCCR Study has laid the groundwork for this project through cost estimates, location recommendations, and identification of responsible parties. DRI funding would be put directly towards implementation of this proposed project.*
- 5. Complement planned MTA Station upgrades. DRI funding would be used to construct improvements associated with the LIRR station, including*
 - a. enhanced bus shelters to promote multi-modal transfers,*
 - b. beautification of Town commuter parking lots, and*
 - c. installation of bike storage lockers.*

The Baldwin DCCR Study has already laid the groundwork for this project implementation through cost estimates and identification of responsible parties. MTA planned upgrades, as announced by Governor Andrew Cuomo during his January 10, 2017 State of the State proposal, may include new facilities, WiFi charging stations, public art, new platform waiting areas and improved signage. Together, these improvements will promote safety for LIRR commuters and visitors to Baldwin to further spur private development interest in the area.

The Town of Hempstead also recognizes that while the projects above have been identified through extensive public outreach as part of previous planning efforts, the Downtown Revitalization Initiative planning process may reveal other projects of high priority. The Town of Hempstead and Baldwin community are excited and ready to implement any other projects that might be identified and deemed to be important and impactful to the revitalization efforts of Downtown Baldwin.

6. **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 Town of Hempstead's Department of Planning and Economic Development (DPED) extensive experience in administering large-scale, federal and state funded projects. DPED has a proven track record in coordinating complex projects requiring permits and approvals at the town, county and state levels. The Town of Hempstead's DPED receives approximately \$4,000,000 to \$5,000,000 a year in CDBG funding. In addition, it has successfully pursued and acquired significant HOME and AHC grants for its Affordable Home Program which has built over 200 affordable homes throughout the Town. DPED's Commercial Rehabilitation Division has completed over 150 facades, building improvement and streetscape projects. DPED's Residential Rehabilitation Division has completed over 200 home renovations. Furthermore, DPED has contracts in place with planners, architects and engineers so that projects can be quickly and professionally completed.

DPED has the resources necessary to oversee concurrent contracts once projects are selected for award. All in all, DPED has an experienced staff of 31 people, substantial monetary resources and the willingness and ability to bring to fruition these beneficial projects for the Town's residents. While DPED will manage this initiative, the Town of Hempstead has substantial additional resources available within other Town offices and departments including the Hempstead Town Supervisor, Building Department, Highway Department, and other Town resources as needed.

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

As detailed in the application, Downtown Baldwin has been the focus of several Town and County studies or initiatives, and it is our intent to fully leverage and build on the existing studies and community-backed recommendations with downtown revitalization funding. The Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Area was studied extensively, with the goals of eliminating blighting conditions and generating economic activity. In 2013, Nassau County published an Infill Redevelopment Feasibility Report, highlighting Baldwin as a priority area for sustainable growth and transit-oriented development. With this funding, we hope to finally fulfill that designation. In addition, the Baldwin DCCR Study, supported by Disaster Relief funding, has provided a comprehensive assessment and policy recommendations for achieving economic and physical resiliency along the Downtown Baldwin, creating a roadmap for future investments.



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
