

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE – LIREDC

Due on Friday, May 20, 2016 to LIREDC@esd.ny.gov

BASIC INFORMATION

Municipality Name: Town of Huntington

Downtown Name: Huntington Station

County: Suffolk

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

The downtown encompasses 119-acres, with Huntington Train Station, serving 5,000 commuters daily, at its center. When built in 1909, the train station was a huge driver of investment and downtown development. 1960s Urban Renewal razed the station's once thriving downtown to add commuter parking. Disinvestment/blight persisted for 50 yrs. In recent decades, the Town enacted policy, adopted plans, invested in the area's infrastructure and developed programs to reverse these conditions. In 2013 the Town partnered with private master developer (Renaissance) and has since engaged thousands of stakeholders, unified support for mixed-use development and re-cultivated investment- all key factors that make Huntington Station ripe for redevelopment.

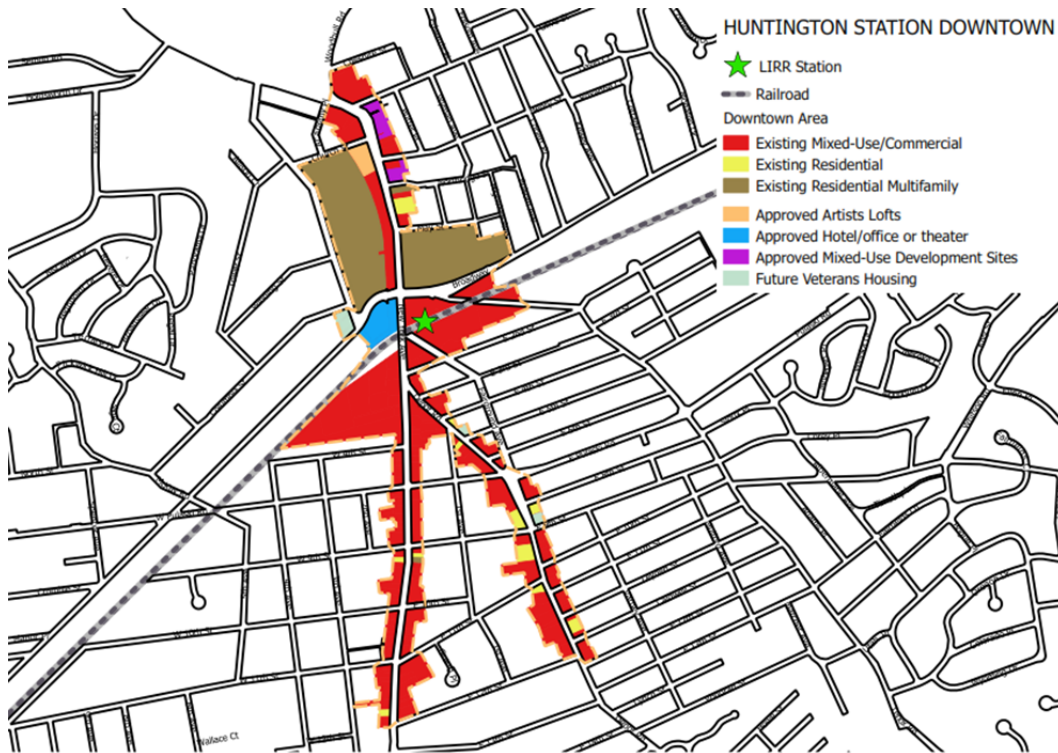
DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

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 downtown boundaries roughly assume the shape of an "h", with the top (northernmost) part of the "h" beginning at Nassau Road/Cheshire (e/s NY Ave) and New York Avenue/Academy Place (w/s NY Ave). The downtown's length runs south on New York Ave to 17th Street. The leg of the "h" shoots out from the intersection of e/s New York Avenue at Depot Road, running in a southeasterly direction on Depot to E. 17th Street. This defined area includes key portions of the Huntington Station Business Improvement District, original Urban Renewal Area and NYS Brownfields Opportunity Area (BOA). This area endured the harshest economic blows following Urban Renewal's razing of the downtown, 2 recessions and dated "anti-railroad development" mindsets.

Attach color map clearly identifying areas within the defined downtown.



- 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. Describe how investments in your downtown could positively impact surrounding communities.

The defined area can support a vibrant, year-round downtown as, 1) it once did, 2) it possesses the highest population (33,029) of any hamlet in the Town (Total Huntington population is 203,264) and 3) it's a heavily travelled pass-by area. Station residents, over the last half century, have advocated for the return of a walkable downtown with vibrant mixed-use buildings that offer neighborhood retail and recreational opportunities. Additionally, 5,000 rail commuters access the area daily as do those from the 303-unit Avalon Bay rental community, 76-unit Country Pointe condo community and those to reside at the recently Town-approved 82-unit mixed-use Renaissance developments and at the 14-unit Columbia Terrace veterans condo development.

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

The figures below total public and private investments made in the downtown since 2004. Public funds were derived from the Town and various grants received from all levels of government. The public \$ funded the start of critical capital infrastructure improvements that have set the stage for private investment. Avalon, Country Pointe, 3 veteran's affordable housing communities (1 public/2 private) and the Renaissance mixed-use projects (Gateway & Northridge) that are nearing shovel ready status have sent a strong message to the community and private sector that the downtown is

finally making a comeback. It is essential this momentum continue and be further capitalized upon to fulfill the larger vision for the downtown's overall development.

Leveraged Resources: Public \$12,336,500 Private \$151,500,000.00

Prior NYS Funding/REDC Funding: Amount \$5,040,000.00

Please identify use(s) of prior funding Land acquisition, capital improvements, planning, engineering & economic studies, affordable housing

- 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.

For every public dollar spent in Huntington Station, 12.5 private dollars have followed. The investment ratio has and will continue to create new jobs in construction, retail and new businesses that are cultivated in the renewed downtown area. A few miles south is the Melville corridor, home to CANON USA, other corporations and banking firms. The Melville corridor employs 42,710 of the Town's 114,915 workers. Also to the south is the Shops at Walt Whitman, a regional shopping mall, and one mile north, downtown Huntington Village. The Town operates a business incubator and job training center next to the station. These nearby job centers all offer a broad range of job opportunities and are connected and served by two public transit systems.

- 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 Town has invested millions in the downtown infrastructure to attract private investment and to promote walkability, aesthetics and patronage of downtown shops. Examples: streetscaping, brick sidewalks, new curbs, decorative streetlights, murals, pedestrian plaza with a public art installation and seating areas, Gateway Community Garden, The Teich House (historic house restoration), rainwater garden, hanging flower baskets and holiday decorations. Station Sports offers family recreation; HS Food Plaza, healthy food. Renaissance mixed-use projects will provide new retail with attainable residential above, artists' lofts, hotel, office, theater and other developments important in any downtown to attract both young and older populations.

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

The Town's Horizons 2020 Master Plan encourages a mix of national, regional and local tenants as well as cultural and entertainment uses, specialty shopping, artists' lofts and other live-work spaces that can act as anchors in downtown hamlet centers, especially older hamlets such as Huntington Station. In 2004 the Town Board enacted the Huntington Station Business Overlay District to promote such uses for its downtown redevelopment. To date the overlay district has helped spur many of these uses, even in the face of the economic downturn post 2007. It has also served to

discourage incompatible uses in the downtown. Transit-oriented and HS Revite projects are also highly encouraged and are fast-tracked through Community Development.

- 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.

Renaissance, the Town and the Town's EDC have built a 2,000-member stakeholder group that includes private property and business owners, local leaders, neighbors among many others. Contact is made via a social media platform (SourcetheStation.com), at in-person meetups and Town EDC meetings. These stakeholders have successfully lobbied the Town for zoning changes, variances, approvals and other actions beneficial to the downtown. Their work, informed by the Huntington Opportunity Resource Center Leadership Council, made up of public & private leaders who address quality of life issues, assures socially, environmentally and economically responsible redevelopment of the downtown. The Town's EDC can facilitate a local DRI planning committee.

- 8) Other.** Provide any other information you feel would be relevant to help this committee to make an informed decision to nominate this downtown for a DRI award.

Huntington Station is ripe and ready for the opportunity to become the next cool downtown on LI. For the first time in 50 yrs all critical elements are in place. For the last 15 years the Town's revitalization has been in the planning stage, with some implementation of public capital improvements through Town and government grants and resulting private investment. The downtown abuts a state road system/ROW, so the state is the missing link and a critical partner needed to advance this plan and vision. With the Town's bi-partisan commitment, much has been accomplished, but this effort, right now, needs a "shot in the arm" to maximize its growing resources and to meet and resolve the challenges that lie ahead in fulfilling its full potential.

- 9) Identify.** Current infrastructure challenges or other impediments facing downtown development initiatives.

The lack of sewers south of the railroad tracks greatly constrains continuing economic development in Huntington Station. NYS cooperation in releasing a handful of state-controlled parking lot sites to downtown redevelopment that will stimulate the tax rolls and realize other untold economic benefits is also needed to rebuild a vibrant downtown. Federal Urban Renewal policy razed a once thriving downtown to build surface parking lots. The time has now come to raze these parking lots and return the heart of a lost downtown to this hamlet. We have a better plan to relocate all commuter parking close to the RR station. With NYS as our next partner, a sustainable fix to addressing a long time economic and social injustice will be possible.

- 10) Describe.** How an existing downtown master plan (if it exists) could coordinate and optimize available resources through a revitalization initiative.

The downtown master plan is the Town-adopted Development Strategy (DS) that engaged all parts of the community in creating the vision, concepts and guidelines for its implementation. That vision includes Town, Town EDC, Town CDA and NYS-owned property to achieve a mixed-use downtown setting that will include commercial, retail, residential, office, hospitality, parks, open space, cultural

and civic uses. The vision of the DS ensures neighborhood safety and reduces crime by placing eyes on the street, promotes pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environments and creates and enhances civic spaces to increase quality of life for Huntington Station residents and visitors. This plan provides a solid jumping off point to maximize State DRI resources.