



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: Hudson Valley

Municipality Name: City of Mount Vernon

Downtown Name: Downtown Mount Vernon

County Name: Westchester County

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

The City of Mount Vernon's (the "City" or "Mount Vernon") inclusive vision, as identified by its citizens, is to execute a comprehensive plan for community growth and economic development that enhances the quality of life for all residents and business owners in the City's downtown. The City is uniquely poised to emerge as a model revitalized community. Characteristics that set the City apart, include:

- Affordability – available land and buildings at highly favorable prices.
- Accessibility – the only municipality in the Mid-Hudson Region to have (3) three Metro North Railroad train stations, as well as close proximity to New York City subways, bus lines and major highways.
- Diversity – a richly talented, educated and multicultural workforce.

All these factors combine to make Mount Vernon a place where investment will pay the greatest dividends in terms of business growth, job creation and community enrichment.

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.

Mount Vernon is 4.4 square miles and has approximately 70,000 culturally diverse residents with origins from over 96 different countries. It is the eighth largest city in New York state. Revitalization of the downtown area is essential to Mount Vernon particularly due to the City's high poverty rate of approximately 16%.

According to the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), the Hudson Valley will have the highest rate of growth (18%) by the year 2045 in the NYMTC Region consisting of New York City,

the Hudson Valley and Long Island. As a result, Downtown Mount Vernon is well poised to become *the* economic engine of the Southern Hudson Valley to accommodate this increased growth with the infusion of a Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) investment. The DRI will further expand Mount Vernon’s application of smart-growth, resiliency, transit-oriented development, environmentally friendly and sustainability principles. These principles are inherent in the fabric of the City and provides the City with its competitive advantage.

Historically, Hudson Valley has had only one major economic engine -- the City of White Plains. The City of White Plains, also known as “The Gateway to Upstate,” provided jobs and housing while serving as *the* economic port for goods and services going from the New York City Region into Upstate New York and further into New England. However, an economic engine for the sub-region located between the City of White Plains and New York City has never existed. Consequently, three inner first ring suburban cities emerged whose economies were semi-dependent on the economy of New York City -- all three of which are located within the Hudson Valley. Namely, Mount Vernon, Yonkers and New Rochelle.



As the United States’ economy transformed from a manufacturing-based economy to a service oriented economy, these first ring inner suburban cities developed independent economies that are no longer dependent on New York City. Accordingly, these three inner first ring suburban cities, along with two very small villages (Pelham and Pelham Manor) all located directly adjacent to the Bronx (NYC), have formed an economically independent sub-region of the Hudson Valley.

This sub-region, called the *Southern Hudson Valley Region*, is characterized by very dense municipalities in terms of both population and compact land use with inherent transit-oriented development and associated infrastructure, all of which support increased population and economic growth. At the heart of the Southern Hudson Valley Region lies Downtown Mount Vernon.

Currently, the Southern Hudson Valley Region does not have an economic engine to support the growing population, housing and employment markets. Polycentric regional development is the only way in which the New York City Metropolitan Area, Hudson Valley Region and New York State can retain its competitive advantage in the current world’s economy. It is also evident through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative that New York State, in conjunction with the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council, is seeking to establish an economic heart for the Southern Hudson Valley Region. Downtown Mount Vernon currently embodies and exhibits as indicated in Figure A everything that is needed to serve as the Southern Hudson Valley Region’s economic heart.

Downtown Mount Vernon offers a variety of attributes that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Unique transportation options found nowhere else in the Southern Hudson Valley Region;
- The City is the only municipality with 3 Metro-North Stations on 2 different lines, is adjacent to 2 New York City subway lines and is surrounded by 6 major highways;
- Office space for commercial growth and business friendly;

- The City has available vacant space at affordable prices to attract back office growth. Additionally, Mount Vernon does not tax business corporations, unincorporated businesses, or banking corporations nor is there a tax on net income or utilities to name just a few;
- Inherent Transit Oriented Design (TOD);
- Currently there are several hundred affordable and market housing units developments being constructed near the 3 Metro-North Stations which will create a critical mass for retail and parkland to be developed within walking distance of these residences.
- Compact nature;
- Walk-ability with a “WalkScore” ranking Mount Vernon fifth among New York State’s 111 largest cities; and
- Bike friendly.

To leverage and maximize these attributes, the City has leveraged and expended countless resources since the early 2000s to: (i) conduct relevant planning studies; (ii) complete a comprehensive plan update; (iii) make public infrastructure and capital improvements; (vi) implement zoning code changes; and (v) engage public/private ventures.

These items seek to restore and revitalize Downtown Mount Vernon in the areas of job creation for the unemployed, underemployed and veterans; revitalize the Central Business District; facilitate the effective improvement of mobility for commuters and goods within Downtown Mount Vernon while providing workforce development for not just the City’s robust, local unskilled labor pool, but also the Region’s. Downtown Mount Vernon is the preeminent location to establish the heart of the Southern Hudson Valley Region’s economic center.

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 Mount Vernon is compact, easily accessible, transit oriented, dense and well defined. Its northern boundary consists of the only park found within Downtown called “Hartley Park.” Mount Vernon Hospital marks the western border of downtown, while the Fulton Avenue Bridge denotes its eastern boundary. Its southern end is a recently rezoned one block industrial zone.

Downtown Mount Vernon constitutes 96 acres (4%) of the City’s total acres. It contains 46 tax parcels with less than 1% of vacant land. Four distinct districts combine to make that which is considered Downtown Mount Vernon.

There is the Central Business District (CBD) which covers 66 acres and approximately 69% of Downtown Mount Vernon. This compact yet dense core hosts a variety of land uses including the County’s third busiest bus terminal and one of Metro-North’s busiest train stations as commuters seek to reach Connecticut and Mid-town Manhattan. This area is also the main entry point for people who are employed

in a light industrial area which lies directly adjacent to Downtown Mount Vernon's CBD. The CBD hosts approximately 8 acres of the most underutilized publicly held land within the City.

Downtown Mount Vernon's CBD was recently expanded to include one additional block of South Fourth Avenue between East Third Street and East Fourth Street. This block of light industrial uses consists of 7 acres and 54 parcels. It is surrounded on three sides by residential uses and because of its locations has lost its competitive edge for industrial use. Accordingly, the City placed an urban renewal zoning overlay upon the block to prevent the further decline of the block and to transform its economic energy.

The "main street" or core of the City's Downtown is a two block stretch along South Fourth Avenue between East First Street and East Third Street. These two blocks consist of 9 acres with a commercial vacancy rate of approximately 18%. These two blocks are home to national name brand stores intermingled with local "mom and pop" style stores. Shoppers throughout the region are attracted to this location for the unique "buys" and shopping experience in which is not found in any other place within the region.

Lastly, Downtown Mount Vernon provides "downtown living" within its two enclaves. There are approximately 29 acres of "apartment style" living whether co-op or apartment in mid-rise structures in the northern enclave. While its southern enclave affords "brownstone style" living in traditional "walk-ups." The southern enclave also hosts many of the City's historic institutional uses such as a Carnegie public library, post office and the tallest office tower in Downtown Mount Vernon.

With all these micro-economies so close together, Downtown Mount Vernon is well poised to accommodate the proposed growth in a manner that will allow it to expand its competitive advantage into the future. Accordingly, the boundaries of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative are coterminous with Downtown Mount Vernon as shown in the map to the left.



Within Downtown Mount Vernon's boundaries are walkable, bikeable, pedestrian friendly, transit-oriented, dense, compact areas that experience all of the high-class challenges that other major cities experience within the United States. One key difference is Mount Vernon experiences these challenges within the 96 acres that comprise its downtown. Accordingly, Downtown Mount Vernon is poised to undertake the role of the economic engine and driver of the Southern Hudson Valley Region.

Its boundaries are located 4 miles from Getty Square/Downtown Yonkers; 2 miles from the Cross-County Mall; 3 miles from Empire City Casino; 19 miles from Midtown Manhattan; approximately 4 miles from Downtown New Rochelle/New Roc City; approximately 11 miles from White Plains; 4 miles from the Shoppes at Pelham Manor (a shopping center along Boston Post Road) and 20 miles from Stamford, Connecticut.

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 Mount Vernon’s ability to serve as the economic heart of the Southern Hudson Valley Region stems from the following demographics:

Downtown Mount Vernon Revitalization Initiative Demographics

| Downtown Area | Total Population | Average Household Income | Annual Household Income Growth | Unemployment Rate (%) | Educational Attainment |
|---------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Mile | 68,505 | \$65,680 | 3% | 11.4% | 25.1% |
| 3 Miles | 398,156 | \$76,424 | 2.3% | 12% | 29.4% |

All numbers are approximates. Source: Mount Vernon Market Demand Study - 2011

In Mount Vernon alone, there are approximately 26,054 households with a retail spending potential of \$16,150 per household/year. This coupled with the 21,564 workers who have \$3,200 per year in spending potential equates to \$475 million in potential retail for the City of Mount Vernon, not including surrounding areas. These figures only grow when the surrounding three-mile radius is included.

Accordingly, there is \$285 million in retail spending in Mount Vernon presently. This affords a 40% opportunity in resident and worker spending not just in the downtown but throughout the entire city. Again, these numbers increase exponentially when looking at the full three-mile radius.

Downtown Mount Vernon has an estimated \$23 million of unmet retail sales potential which translates into 730,000 square feet of addition retail within the Downtown alone. Mount Vernon, including the Downtown, has \$205 million of retail potential which is currently unmet. When Southern Westchester County and the Bronx’s Community Board 12 are added, the total population is 529,315 people in a land area of approximately 60 square miles. Downtown Mount Vernon is centrally located. Indeed, Mount Vernon contains the *only* downtown where one can access the other downtown areas located in the Southern Hudson Valley Region within a 3-mile radius as indicated in “Downtown Mount Vernon Radius” Map.

Mount Vernon has a total daytime population of approximately 60,000 people which includes the downtown area. This is very close to the City’s total population. Approximately 17,000 people commute into the City of Mount Vernon for work which includes the Downtown. Sixty-one percent of Mount Vernon’s total population is between the ages of 20-64, which is considered prime working age. These numbers explode when the population of three-mile radius is considered.

The City of Mount Vernon is built as a transit-oriented developed (TOD) community; accordingly, TOD is inherent in the City's composition. Mount Vernon's mass transit stations, nodes of transit activity and transit transfer points are considered prime locations to develop new commercial, shopping, living, entertainment and cultural facilities for the City. New development around these transit nodes only adds to the City's inherent TOD and encourage both daytime and nighttime activities while encouraging structures designed to emphasize access to and between these developments by walking, biking, bus use, train ridership and other forms of mass transit.

Mount Vernon's density of development, compact pattern of land use, vehicular corridor arrangement (street grid) and plentiful mass transit options allow people, freight, goods and services to move easily around and throughout the City. The City has the basic infrastructure to accommodate and facilitate greater usage for maximization. While motorized



vehicles are currently the dominant mode of transport within the City and its Downtown, the redevelopment goals for enhanced mobility are geared toward reducing the percentage and duration of motorized trips. The City seeks to increase the amount of non-motorized trips (bikes and walking) to improve air quality, the environment and personal health and wellness.

The City is well poised to serve as the economic heart of the Southern Hudson Valley Region because of its transportation access. The Bronx River, Cross County and Hutchinson Parkways traverse Mount Vernon and Interstates 87 and 95 are each less than a mile from the City's borders. The City is also well served by a network of mass transit options that allows every resident in Mount Vernon to be within a ten-minute walk of a bus, subway or train line. Midtown Manhattan, Downtown White Plains and Downtown Stamford, Connecticut are less than a one-half hour trip by rail from Mount Vernon's three Metro-North Railroad Stations. Two (2) New York City subway lines, the #2 and #5 trains, terminate and/or commence within three City blocks of the Mount Vernon/Bronx border. The Westchester County Bee -Line System operates nine bus routes in Mount Vernon that provide bus transit throughout Westchester County and into New York City. The City of Mount Vernon is less than a fifth a mile from the Wakefield, Bronxville and Pelham Metro-North Train Stations.

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.

Downtown Mount Vernon's economic sustainability goals are directly aligned with that of the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council. These goals consist of job creation, job training, business creation, business attraction and business retention. To accomplish these goals, Downtown Mount Vernon has received heavy investment over the past ten years, some of which are still in process while other projects have been completed. The DRI is the last step needed for Downtown Mount Vernon to secure its status as the economic engine of the Southern Hudson Valley Region.

The City was also successful in obtaining a New York State Opportunity Zone which is in the heart of the City's Downtown. In fact, the Opportunity Zone covers approximately 55 percent of the City's Downtown as indicated in the "Downtown Mount Vernon" Map below. The City intends to leverage the Opportunity Zones Program over the next 10 years to attract private capital and has already designated a potential development project. The City is working on a major mixed-income development and this program will be instrumental to incentivize private capital investment. The census tract covers an underserved, low income area we refer to as *Library Square*, where environmental and social justice are required. It is also located within close proximity to the Mount Vernon East Metro North Railroad Station which makes it ripe for TOD.

To solidify this competitive advantage that Downtown Mount Vernon offers, the City has aggressively sought public infrastructure projects to ensure that future development has an attractive arena in which to conduct and grow business, industry and/or commerce. These public infrastructure investments began with \$2.5 million from Westchester County to make pedestrian improvements at Petrillo Plaza (the County's Third busiest bus terminal) in 2006. In 2010, the Metro-North reconstructed the first of its bridge reconstruction projects within the Downtown. The Park Avenue Bridge was rebuilt at a cost \$10.5 million. The Metro-North is currently designing the reconstruction of three other bridges within Downtown. The total investment of these bridges is \$22 million. The City of Mount Vernon invested pedestrian improvements throughout the Downtown including pedestrian signals and crosswalks.

To further reinforce Downtown Mount Vernon's economic stronghold, several planning studies are being completed to facilitate the orderly growth and development of the City's Downtown. The planning studies consist of a parking management workshop that was conducted in 2009 to determine ways to best use the parking infrastructure and facilities which the City owns within Downtown. A market demand study was completed in 2011 and it determined that approximately \$205 million of monetary leakage occurs annually within the City's Downtown due to regional economic market pressure. The study suggests ways to appropriately capture this revenue. The City is currently implementing a planning study of the Mount Vernon East Train Station Area. This \$354,607 in Brownfield Opportunity Area funding allows the City to study the publicly owned land around the train station to determine its highest and best used. The City also received a \$20,000 grant from the Land Economics Foundation (a private foundation) to conduct a planning study of the two-block historic core of the City's Downtown. Mount Vernon also received a \$40,000 grant from the New York State Council on the Arts to complete an arts and cultural master plan.



The study is currently underway and is scheduled to be completed in June 2018. This grant allows the City to understand whether artist lofts and other artist type ventures and businesses can be enhanced and expanded within the City's Downtown. The City also invested \$120,000 to update its comprehensive plan. This endeavor married public opinion and insight through stakeholder meetings, public survey and public meetings with public policy to determine the best way the City should grow overall. A major outcome of the draft comprehensive plan was the need for a downtown plan to ensure orderly development in the City's Downtown – receipt of the DRI would accomplish this goal.

Investment in the City's downtown also includes two public/private partnerships. A private investor invested \$5 million to create an urban renewal plan for the southern portion of Downtown. This public/private partnership allowed for the planning and revitalization of a deteriorating light industrial block to be converted into a viable mixed-use block. The other public/private partnership was the sale of a City owned property to

be converted into a job training center. Another public/private partnership is a \$23 million collaboration to construct mixed use development where underutilized city land contains two separate municipal parking lots and a municipal owned former YMCA building. These planning efforts are indicated in the “Downtown Mount Vernon” Map.

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Downtown Mount Vernon has two supermarkets, both of which have undergone major storefront renovations within the past few years. Additionally, the property owner of a major commercial strip within Downtown has made significant improvements to attract named brand stores such as Popeye’s, Little Caesars Pizza and Rite Aid. The Mount Vernon hospital that is located at the western border was also aesthetically renovated.

The City of Mount Vernon is making significant investments in the technology industry and developing strategic partnerships with tech companies. The current Mayor, Richard Thomas, is the first elected official in the City’s history to live broadcast public meetings. Project Bright Knight, the City’s partnership with Microsoft has led to improved police-community relations with business owners able to work together with law enforcement to provide a safer community. Additionally, the City’s economic development arm is developing a local tech and start-up incubator called “The BeeHive” and the City is in talks with Google, Tesla, Zoox and other prominent tech firms.

To further attract and/or increase the City’s green economy and reduce the City’s carbon footprint, the first market rate high-rise building to be constructed in over 20 years will contain Passive House certification which will achieve a 90% reduction in overall energy consumption of buildings as compared with other similar neighboring structures.

In greater pursuit of and to capitalize on the City’s growing tech industry, the City of Mount Vernon was proud to have Aris Energy Solutions relocate to the City’s Downtown this year. Aris is an industry leader in innovative energy technologies and solutions for a wide range of industries. Aris also adds to the green economy by offering renewable and resilient wind/solar off-grid streetlights and fuel cells. The City seeks to enhance and grow this industry and its supporting industries to increase not only Mount Vernon’s share of the technology market but the State’s share as well.

Another significant investment includes the City’s partnership with New York Power Authority to upgrade and convert its 4,500 plus outdated streetlights with Energy Efficient LED cobra heads utilizing the Smart “CityTouch” Node. The City will become the first and only 100% SmartCity to date once the initiative is completed (expected completion Fall 2018). “CityTouch” will provide full visibility and control of the City’s streetlights from a centralized dashboard allowing the City to securely monitor light points, set schedules, and adjust light levels. The streetlights will also be equipped with sensors to allow the City to capture data regarding parking patterns, noise detection and pedestrian traffic.

These investments make the Southern Hudson Valley Region a more attractive place to live, work and play while retaining its competitive edge in the global economy. These efforts have advanced Downtown Mount Vernon; yet, it still struggles to gain an economic foothold in the market. DRI will remedy this situation.

- 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.

Downtown Mount Vernon has a number of growing and untapped markets which once expanded will produce a greater number of jobs. According to a market demand study conducted in 2011, Downtown Mount Vernon has underdeveloped industry clusters and unexplored markets. These markets translate into jobs. Many of these jobs are currently located within Downtown Mount Vernon; however, the DRI would allow the Downtown to expand the business clusters which the Mid-Hudson Valley Regional Economic Council seeks. It will also satisfy 80% of the City's public survey respondents who stated, "employment opportunities is very important," during the comprehensive plan update.

Mount Vernon, including its Downtown, has over 20,779 public and private sector jobs. Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest sector with nearly 3,400 people working in 150 separate facilities, led by Montefiore Mount Vernon Hospital as the City's major private employer. There are 3,300 jobs within the Private Construction industry of which 210 are Mount Vernon based firms. The Manufacturing Sector has 2,300 jobs in 100 firms and Private Educational Services has 2,000 jobs within 32 institutional sites. Wholesale Trade, Transportation and Warehousing provide 1,450 jobs and Manufacturing and Construction provide 1,200 jobs. Collectively, 42% of Mount Vernon's private sector employment can be considered "goods handling" versus 58% "service providing." The City seeks to grow these industries within Downtown, especially the "service providing" jobs.

Downtown Mount Vernon is further aligned with the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council's goals in that tourism is an untapped and underdeveloped market for employment and support services. Downtown Mount Vernon has many historic resources which the City seeks to preserve to attract tourist into the Downtown. Opening the tourism market will provide jobs that currently do not exist within the Downtown while increasing the number of jobs in the support services and increase the historic structure inventory of the Hudson Valley.

Downtown Mount Vernon is home to an emerging film industry due to its business-friendly policies and diversity of site locations. Many film and television shows are being taped and/or filmed in Downtown Mount Vernon. As the cost of filming in Manhattan becomes more expensive, the television/film industry has found Mount Vernon to be a suitable place to film NYC scenes because of the historic buildings and the downtown urban feel found within Downtown Mount Vernon. In 2016, revenue from film permits increased 91% to over \$200,000. Shows such as but not limited to "Blue Blood," "Orange is the New Black," "7 Seconds," "The Left Overs" have been filmed and continue to be filmed in Downtown Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon is also home to the highly demanded "Haven Studios" which is a 68,000 square foot production facility which brings jobs and other secondary economic investment into the City. Accordingly, the City seeks to deepen its partnership with the film industry to provide internship opportunities for Mount Vernon students as production crews continue to find Downtown Mount Vernon more and more attractive.

Downtown Mount Vernon has over 16,000 people commuting into the municipality for work on a daily basis. Most of these commuters are employed in Downtown Mount Vernon or in a light-industrial area directly adjacent to the Downtown. Accordingly, Mount Vernon’s total daytime population is 56,800 of which most people are found working in the downtown. This economic indicator shows that Downtown Mount Vernon as the Southern Hudson Valley Region’s economic engine has the potential to increase its total daytime population to a point where it surpasses its total population provided that investment continues such as the DRI, private foundations, federal and other regional organizations towards the orderly development of this strategic regional economic stronghold.



A DRI investment will further enhance the City’s relationship with the School District to support demand-based learning for in-school youth, the under and unemployed, Veterans, as well as the difficult to employ and re-entry populations. The School District is committed to contributing to the growth of the lower Hudson Valley economic engine which is Downtown Mount Vernon through the provisions of job training and the prevention of “Brain Drain” which will increase the region’s vibrancy and gross domestic product (“GDP”).

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.

Downtown Mount Vernon is very attractive because of the unique opportunities it provides within the Southern Hudson Valley Region.

Downtown Mount Vernon offers the unique opportunity to totally transform the City’s Downtown because of the 8 acres of highly developable publicly owned land. These 8 acres currently about the transit hub located in the center of Downtown Mount Vernon. The transit hub consists of the Mount Vernon East Metro-North Train Station and Westchester County’s Third Busiest Bus Terminal. The underutilized land requires two governmental (Westchester County and City of Mount Vernon) entities and one quasi-governmental entity (Metro North Railroad) to work together to achieve the highest and best use of the land. All three entities own adjacent contiguous plots of land as indicated in the Publicly Held Land Map. In the Southern Hudson Valley Region, there are very limited opportunities for this type of coordination.

Downtown Mount Vernon also offers the opportunity to create land by covering the Metro-North rail tracks that bisect the City’s downtown. Accordingly, the City is partnering with the NYU Stern School of Business through Stern's Signature Project Program to enlist the MBA students (with Real Estate or Infrastructure experience) to investigate a cost-benefit analysis and a feasibility study of the economic and real estate impacts of covering and developing the space above the Mount Vernon East Metro-North

tracks. Leveraging the space above the rail tracks is a central component of the overall downtown development strategy. The students will provide the findings and recommendations at the end of the fall semester (2018).

As an emerging market, Downtown Mount Vernon offers relatively low rental rates in comparison to other residential markets within the County and the region. This fact is important to note because every DRI funded dollar invested in Mount Vernon will provide the most impactful economic return on investment. This level of residential affordability makes Downtown Mount Vernon attractive to retain millennials, young professionals and/or first responders to live within Mount Vernon. The City works very hard to prevent the continual “Brain Drain”.

Downtown Mount Vernon is very walkable because of its compact and dense size and nature. The many commercial amenities located within Downtown provide patrons with the ability to use a "Park Once" strategy. Mount Vernon has a WalkScore of 76 comparable to Washington, D.C. A study by WalkScore, a national organization devoted to using data to evaluate urban livability standards, found that the average Mount Vernon resident could walk to an average of four separate restaurants, bars, and coffee shops within five minutes. Coupled with this is that every resident within the City of Mount Vernon is within a 7 – 10-minute walk of some form of reliable mass transit whether bus, train and/or subway.

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 City of Mount Vernon has many of the same policies aimed at enhancing the Downtown’s quality of life that can be found in most major cities; however, the following merits mention based on their effectiveness, innovation and the priority the City has assigned to them. The first is called the *Mount Vernon Quality of Life Task Force* (“the Task Force”). The Thomas Administration recently launched this major innovative initiative to focus on attacking “crime and grime.” The Task Force uses the information found in publicly available sets of large data and analytics (i.e., "big data") to evaluate locations in Downtown that represent statistical outliers. These locations receive a significantly higher number of calls for police, fire, and other city agencies. As a result, exorbitant expenses are incurred by the taxpayer. The Task Force travels house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood, and street by street to obtain and report its findings with the overarching objective of changing and improving the environment in order to stop crime and make our community a desirable place to live, work, play, and pray.

The second quality of life mandate is the creation of market rate housing. For decades Mount Vernon has been Westchester County’s “affordable housing program” inasmuch as prior to recent federal intervention, Mount Vernon was the only city in the County where any meaningful affordable housing existed. As a result, Downtown Mount Vernon has suffered from having more than its "Fair Share" of affordable housing. This has led to not having an income mix and diversity in our housing stock thus positioning the City to meet the housing, commercial and retail needs of a wide range of income levels. Accordingly, Downtown Mount Vernon's job to housing ratio is imbalanced in that many residents are paying more than 30% of their annual household income for their housing costs. As a result, higher end commercial and retail anchors believe Downtown Mount Vernon's disposable income levels are too low to support

their business. Mount Vernon seeks to address this issue by giving priority to market rate housing investments.

The third policy objective is to build over the Metro-North rail tracks, as referenced in the City's 1968 adopted Comprehensive Plan. By covering the tracks, the City seeks to increase the amount of buildable land within the Downtown and increase aesthetic appeal through the unification of the physical and visual landscape of the bisected CBD. We also seek to add additional parking facilities on the periphery of the Downtown. The additional parking amenities will encourage and reinforce the City's "park-once strategy" and reduce congestion within the Downtown. Moreover, the City desires to cover the railway cut to create a park, increase local property values, beautify the Downtown, and enhance the sense of community by utilizing the newly created space to host various outdoor civic events such as "Jazz in the Park" or free outdoor music series.

The fourth policy is the updating of the City's comprehensive plan, which began in 2011. This process included public meetings, stakeholder meetings and a public survey; wherein, the City was divided into three planning areas based upon the intensity and level of planning needed for that specific area. Downtown Mount Vernon was identified as a "High Intensity Planning Area" meaning that the City is fostering opportunities for more intensive development and encouraging new growth in terms of markets and industries.

Our fifth policy is to allow for more mixed-use structures within our Downtown to capitalize upon the TOD advantages that the Downtown offers. This requires rezoning Downtown Mount Vernon to allow for use redevelopment to occur. During the public survey, 59% of the respondents recommended that more mixed-use development is warranted thus evidencing local stakeholders support for this policy.

Finally, the City seeks to create a "Downtown Revitalization Plan" to encompass the various redevelopment studies and outcomes from the Mount Vernon East Brownfield Opportunity Area, the South Fourth Avenue/East Third Street Urban Renewal Plan and the South Fourth Avenue Planning Study to benefit our Downtown.

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 City of Mount Vernon seeks to increase public engagement in all aspects of its future planning. The City began this integration of public sentiment with public policy through its Comprehensive Plan Update process. It was through this process in which a 7-member steering committee was established to guide the overall direction of the comprehensive plan process. This steering committee comprised of the Planning Board and Zoning Board Chairs, one member from the City's Architectural Review Board to ensure that land use decision making is aligned with the direction of the comprehensive plan update. Other members were Chamber of Commerce, the Mount Vernon Downtown Merchants Association, business leaders, property owners and other key stakeholders within the community.

The DRI would follow this same process in terms of creating and implementing a strategic investment plan for Downtown Mount Vernon. The stakeholders would be engaged throughout the entire process to ensure that it is the community's plan and public sentiment is a heart of the redevelopment strategy.

As this is the first time in the City's history that the public is engaged in the planning of City's Downtown rejuvenation. To further enhance the public's interest, the City will provide dedicated space on its website as well as create a dedicated webpage devoted to the public engagement and education of the City's planning process. Respondents suggested that Downtown Mount Vernon is an area which required a high degree of planning focus. This was determined through a series of steering committee, stakeholder and public meetings. There was also a public survey which further reinforced that the need for planning emphasizes to be placed on Downtown Mount Vernon. The regional planning entities have provided resources to under gird the economic resurgence of Downtown Mount Vernon. These regional planning resources include the Westchester County Comprehensive Plan, Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan, Mid-Hudson South Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Additionally, the City participates in current regional initiatives such as a Patterns for Progress study called "A Regional Plan for Urban Centers." The City is working with the Metro-North's TOD Unit whose "Mt. Vernon East" Train Station is in the heart of the Southern Hudson Valley Sub-Region. The Regional Plan Association ("RPA") is writing "The Fourth Regional Plan" in which the City is very engaged. The City is highly involved in the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council's "Regional Transportation Plan - 2045". The City is also working with the New York State Department of State to conduct a Brownfield Opportunity Area ("BOA") study around the Mount Vernon East Train Station.

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 City of Mount Vernon is ripe for a DRI investment and ready to create an investment strategy that fosters the orderly development and growth of the Downtown. Currently, the market is dedicating the location, bulk, mass and density of structures and/or sites within Downtown Mount Vernon. This unplanned and uncontrolled development pattern has led to high taxes and unrestrained density in a City where the downtown is economically underperforming, the infrastructure is deteriorated and fiscal resources are limited. The City acknowledges that the housing development market is desperately attempting to enter the Mount Vernon marketplace in particular the City's downtown areas. For this reason alone, the City is ripe for development.

The DRI will allow the City to continue to encourage the housing development market in the City in particular its Downtown while ensuring that the services, commercial amenities, jobs and infrastructure

such as but not limited to parks, sewers and/or mass transit are able to adequately accommodate the population density.

Furthermore, the City of Mount Vernon is constantly approached by developers seeking to construct high rise housing developments leaving a small economic return in terms of the City's tax revenue. Developers consistently desire pilots, any/all publicly owned land at "well-below" market value and any other incentives the City can offer. While the City has pursued some of these offers in the past, it has left the City's coffers in dire straits. The DRI will allow the City particularly its economically underperforming downtown the opportunity to be proactive in terms of the housing development market.

Consequently, the City of Mount Vernon has experienced positive development outcomes which are derived from the City, particularly its Downtown, being so ripe for development. Accordingly, numerous public/private partnerships have emerged. Most of these public/private partnerships resulted in the construction of senior citizen housing so that the City's aging population can "age in-place." There have been many "affordable housing" development projects constructed. Currently, there is a public/partnership; wherein, at least \$5 million has been expended so far to transform an economically underperforming industrial block into a mix-used pedestrian-friendly community with commercial amenities and jobs to support the housing units.

The City has also benefited from such public/partnerships not only from the completion of these projects but also because of the adopted comprehensive zoning that ensued. The City has recently adopted a form-based zoning code centered around one its train stations and a Senior Citizen Housing Overlay Zone which perpetuates the orderly development of senior citizen housing throughout the City. The City has also adopted an Urban Renewal Overlay Zone to compliment an urban renewal plan. Furthermore, the City is currently exploring a mix-used zoning designation along one of its major corridors. The intent behind all of this, is to allow the housing development market to construct projects that will spur other transformative, "as-of-right", contextual development projects in a comprehensive fashion for the orderly growth of the City. As the "Current Planning Initiatives" Map demonstrates the development projects and planning initiatives throughout the City of Mount Vernon.



Accomplishments by the end of Year One

- Revitalization of Underutilized Publicly Held Land;
- Covering the Rail Tracks;
- Establishing Mount Vernon's Downtown as the Economic Heart of the Southern Hudson Valley Region;
- Branding Mount Vernon's Downtown;
- Historic Preservation; and
- Redevelopment of the Former YMCA Site.

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 City of Mount Vernon administrative capacity consists of a team of highly qualified City Officials and staff to manage and provide oversight of concurrent contracts. This team consists of: (i) the Mayor; (ii) two (2) Members of the City Council's Planning Sub-Committee; (iii) the Commissioner of Planning (iv) Department of Public Works Commissioner; (v) Police Commissioner; (vi) Planning Administrator and (vii) the City's Engineer.

The extent of the City of Mount Vernon's administrative capacity to manage these initiatives is demonstrated in the alliance between the City's decision makers (the Mayor and the City Council). The decision makers from a planning and economic development perspective are aligned. They have both indicated and demonstrated a commitment to the orderly development of the City's land use policies, procedures and implementation. The Mayor has appointed a Planning Commissioner and land use board members (Planning Board, Zoning Board and Architectural Review Board Members) whom are abreast of land use policy and its comprehensive implementation. The City Council has affirmed its vow to the City's orderly growth by taking active participation in land use training as well as working closely with the City's land use board to adopt comprehensive zoning and other land use policies.

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

The world economy continues to move in the direction of polycentric regions; wherein, there are multiple centers of economic activity to sustain the economic health. The Southern Hudson Valley Sub-Region is in dire need of a major economic center to link the New York City Metropolitan Region with that of the Hudson Valley Region. Downtown Mount Vernon is well poised to serve as this link because it is centrally located within both regions. As the economy becomes more global, regional economic centers are needed to retain the competitive advantage of both regions.

In understanding current economic trends, there is a heavy reverse commute between the White Plains (Hudson Valley) – Stamford, Connecticut and Mid-Town Manhattan. Accordingly, the Southern Hudson Valley Sub-Region is and serves as the growth of both the New York City Metropolitan Region and the Hudson Valley Region. Downtown Mount Vernon has the infrastructure to support such population growth in a sustainable manner.

The following reports may also be helpful:

- Mount Vernon East BOA Pre-Nomination Study
<http://cmvny.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/MtVernonEastBOAPrenominationStudy-1.pdf>
- Mount Vernon Action Plan
<http://cmvny.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/MtVernonEastBOAPrenominationStudy-2.pdf>
- Downtown Parking Management Plan
<http://cmvny.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Downtown-Parking-Management-Workshop.pdf>
- Citywide Market Demand Study
<http://cmvny.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/MarketingStudyWeb.pdf>
- Comprehensive Plan Update Progress Report
<http://cmvny.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CompPlanStatusReportJan2011.pdf>

*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.

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|------------------|--|
| 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 |
