

Town of Riverhead 2018 Downtown Revitalization Initiative



Supervisor Laura Jens-Smith





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 Riverhead

Downtown Name: Downtown Riverhead

County Name: Suffolk County

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

Vibrant Historic Downtown Riverhead has the potential to become a compact, walkable, dynamic neighborhood oriented along the Peconic River and would serve as the gateway to the North and South Forks of Long Island. Riverhead is the county seat and is located a short drive from Long Island Wine Country, many agritourism destinations, Tanger Outlet Center, amazing beaches and parks, Splish Spash Water Park, Calverton Enterprise Industrial Park and Brookhaven National Laboratory. Historic Downtown’s diverse assets include: regional arts and culture, destination retail, historic architecture, tourism and hotels, Suffolk County courts, college and county center, proximity to Peconic Bay Medical Center, multimodal transportation and targeted regional job growth.

A diverse community welcoming of all ages, races and demographics creates a strong sense of place poised to become an international destination. A business district with dense zoning and compact, distinct boundaries combined with state-of-the-art sewer/gas infrastructure and new federal *Opportunity Zone* designation will generate investment into housing, hotels, unique shopping experiences, office/business and restaurants, while the Peconic River provides unmatched natural beauty for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as boaters and paddlers.

With an evolving demographic shift in the regional population, it is envisioned that Downtown Riverhead has the potential to become a walkable, compact and convenient live-work-play experience. If awarded, DRI funding will assure a holistic approach to implementing revitalization plans and focus on the following themes:

- Establish a unified downtown brand centered on a revitalized Peconic River waterfront;
- Incentivize development and redevelopment of underutilized, blighted properties;



- Address social and environmental justice needs through meaningful engagement with the diverse local community and community based organizations;
- Spur business investment, visitation and economic activity; and
- Complete roadway, pedestrian, environmental, public space and recreational improvements.

As a result of the tremendous assets and infrastructure already in place, Downtown Riverhead can become a new recreational and cultural hub on Long Island’s East End, providing a central location for workers, families and visitors to live, work and play. Transformative change in the downtown from a place known for blight, crime and disinvestment to a place of economic, cultural and recreational opportunity will be shaped by revitalization plans established by the Town of Riverhead through years of intergovernmental cooperation and intensive community engagement efforts.

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.

Downtown Riverhead is comprised of a compact, diverse, mixed use commercial/residential neighborhood that is the gateway to Long Island’s East End tourist region. The downtown contains a concentration of commercial and residential uses, and is in close proximity to other regional employment, tourism and commercial centers. The most unique feature of the downtown – and its most underutilized asset – is the Peconic River, which is part of the Peconic Estuary, a designated Estuary of National Significance by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Although Riverhead is the county seat of Suffolk County, the central business district has suffered from years of decline, disinvestment, crime, and blight, causing a high vacancy rate approaching 40%. The downtown does not share in the relative prosperity of other East End communities and, in fact, residents and businesses struggle to make ends meet in a region where the cost of living is among the highest in the country. Downtown Riverhead is a historic, urbanized neighborhood. According to the 2010 US Census, the population as reflected in the Riverhead hamlet CDP is 13,924. This area, which contains both East Main Street and Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Areas has a poverty rate of 15.5% and a MHI of \$50,611 or 58% of Suffolk County median. 30% of the population is over age 55. 17.6% of the population is Black. 25.3% of the population is Hispanic. The East Main Street census block, which comprises a portion of the Riverhead hamlet CDP (Group 4, Census Tract 1698) has a poverty rate of 25.07% with a median household income (MHI) of \$40,160, less than 46% of the Suffolk County median. Additionally, the Hispanic and Latino population has grown exponentially since the 2010 Census because of Riverhead’s agricultural base and affordability, giving this community one of the largest influxes of migrant workers and immigrants in the U.S.

The northern portion of downtown contains a mix of cultural, commercial, office, residential and institutional uses. The northwest portion includes offices, the public library, a historical museum, single family residences, small retail,



and institutional uses such as the Suffolk County Court and parking for the railroad and courts. The northeast portion is predominantly developed with residential uses and the downtown area includes restaurants, retail, offices, workforce and affordable apartments, the Suffolk County Community College Culinary Center, as well as attractions such as Riverfront Park, Grangebel Park, Long Island Aquarium and Suffolk Theater. The surrounding land uses include the Long Island Rail Road, Polish Town Civic Association’s event pavilion, a Railroad Museum, Roanoke Avenue Elementary School, Riverhead Fire Department, the Polish Town business district, including restaurants, and residential homes.

The Town of Riverhead has spent years attempting to spark revitalization efforts and has completed many plans that analyze the specific problems and potential of Downtown Riverhead. For a variety of reasons, including the lack of funding and professional assistance required for implementation, the goals of these previous plans have not yet been fully realized. However, these revitalization plans, dating back 25 years, combined with DRI funding would provide a solid foundation with which to finally move forward to allow Downtown Riverhead to realize its full potential as a national and international destination. Town of Riverhead revitalization plans include:

- 1) *Town of Riverhead East Main Street Urban Renewal Area Plan* (1993); <http://www.townofriverheadny.gov/docview.aspx?docid=48559>
- 2) *The Analysis of the Opportunity for the Revitalization of the Main Street Corridor* (1993); <http://www.townofriverheadny.gov/docview.aspx?docid=48562>
- 3) *The Vision Plan for Downtown Riverhead* (1995) <http://www.townofriverheadny.gov/docview.aspx?docid=48529>;
- 4) *Town of Riverhead Urban Renewal Plan Railroad Street Corridor* (1997); <http://www.townofriverheadny.gov/docview.aspx?docid=48560>
- 5) *The Revitalization Strategy for Downtown Riverhead* (2000); <http://www.townofriverheadny.gov/docview.aspx?docid=48528>
- 6) *Town of Riverhead Comprehensive Plan* (2003) <https://www.townofriverheadny.gov/pview.aspx?id=18809&catID=118>
- 7) *Town of Riverhead East Main Street Urban Renewal Area Plan* (2008 update) <https://riverhead.municipalcms.com/files/documents/E.Main.Street.Renewal.Plan.pdf>; and
- 8) *Peconic River/Route 25 Corridor Step II Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study (BOA)* (2016) <http://riverhead.municipalcms.com/files/documents/RiverheadStepIIFinalBOANominationApril2016.pdf>
- 9) *Peconic River/Route 25 Corridor Step II Brownfield Opportunity Area Creative Placemaking Supplement* (2016) <http://www.townofriverheadny.gov/docview.aspx?docid=48558>

The 2016 BOA identified four potential brownfield sites in the downtown area, including one strategic site whose redevelopment would be anticipated to have significance and catalyze redevelopment and revitalization in the surrounding areas. The study also identified numerous vacant and/or underutilized sites whose development would provide benefit to the area. Lastly, but perhaps most significantly, the census tract which includes Downtown Riverhead was recently designated as a federal *Opportunity Zone*, confirming its status as an area ripe for new



investment. The Calverton census tract which contains the Town’s Enterprise Park at Calverton (EPCAL) was also designated as an *Opportunity Zone*. Riverhead was the only Town in Suffolk County to receive two *Opportunity Zone* designations. Both of these *Opportunity Zone* designations will serve as significant catalysts to economic redevelopment and promote private investment to the downtown area and the entire Long Island region.

Although Riverhead’s downtown has seen the beginnings of a new vibrancy in recent years with the revitalization of its riverfront, new mixed use commercial and affordable and workforce residential developments, construction of a world class aquarium and Hyatt Conference Center and Hotel, the reopening of the Suffolk Theater, a healthy arts council, the new Preston House Hotel and restaurant, as well as numerous popular restaurants and businesses, there are still obstacles to overcome. In addition to persistent poverty, challenges identified by the Town of Riverhead BOA study include:

- a high rate of commercial vacancies (38%) and abandoned properties;
- need for improved pedestrian environment, including better public access and views to the Peconic River;
- parking issues;
- Peconic River/Estuary water quality;
- need for wayfinding signage at gateways and throughout the downtown area; and
- the need to overcome a negative image with a rebranding effort.



Canoeing and kayaking are among the popular recreational activities along the river.

A significant number of local businesses, particularly restaurants, have become economically unsustainable and have closed. The Riverhead BOA study found that the area has not yet been revitalized in a way that captures a greater share of the visitors that come to the region to create a critical mass of economic activity. For



example, the Tanger Outlet Center draws upwards of 12 million visitors annually, yet only a fraction of those shoppers visit downtown shops and restaurants.

DRI would serve as a catalyst to economic redevelopment as a result of project readiness, previous plans, active and ongoing community engagement / involvement, the project area's nomination as an *Opportunity Zone*, as well as the distinct characteristics of Downtown Riverhead. These include the unique geography, specifically its focus around the Peconic River, historic structures and inter-governmental support. Furthermore, the historic central business district is supported by strong and consistent community and municipal efforts to realize revitalization plans.

To realize revitalization goals, the Town of Riverhead recognizes that a holistic approach is needed to overcome remaining barriers to transformative change.

Should DRI funding be approved, the following investments have been identified as critical for catalyzing and incentivizing development. These investments are directly supported by the Brownfield Opportunity Area plans, Riverhead Comprehensive Plan, and other revitalization studies. They are also supported by prior investments by Riverhead Town, Suffolk County, New York State, federal sources and private equity as detailed in this application.

1. **Establish a “Town Square”** to provide a public gathering space, pedestrian connectivity and open vistas from Main Street to the riverfront to reorient the pedestrian focus from the traditional Main Street to the Peconic Riverwalk, a unique attribute. This public gathering/event/performance space could be flanked with smaller retail spaces for artisans and specialty retailers with office and/or artist housing above, all of which will improve pedestrian access to Riverhead's existing Riverwalk and downtown parklands. This will recreate downtown as a family recreational and shopping destination. Form based zoning would be implemented to create this new downtown focal point allowing better “use” flexibility for potential investors, as well as design standards that contribute to way finding, communicate Downtown's historical authenticity and establish a strong sense of place. Potentially, uses such as an amphitheater, interactive fountain area or skating rink could be built on the southerly end of the Town Square to provide additional public spaces and entertainment possibilities. Improvement of the rear facades of those buildings with southern exposure to the river and the creation of a pedestrian pathway along those renovated facades could further increase foot traffic to businesses in the downtown and improve the regional economy. The concept of a town square, scenic vistas and increased public riverfront access has been proposed in every planning study beginning with the 1993 East Main Street Urban Renewal Plan.
2. **Establish new pedestrian pathways and unified signage themes** in the downtown core along the Peconic River for beautification, branding, to drive foot traffic to the waterfront and to direct the public to available parking. This will include a prominent network of pedestrian pathways along the south side of Riverhead's Main Street to activate the waterfront and along the north side of Main Street to provide clear, safe and attractive access to public parking. Create and support development of Complete Streets and walkable linkages to multimodal transportation (LIRR in Riverhead, Suffolk County bus). Streetscaping should include expansion of the existing lightening / signage strategy, as well as traffic calming patterns for beautification and pedestrian safety.



3. **Support continued partnerships with arts, cultural and community organizations** for community events at the waterfront. This will help to build a new brand and create a strong sense of place. Partnerships with the East End Arts Council, Business Improvement District Management Association, Suffolk Theater, and Vail Leavitt Music Hall will be leveraged. Existing events such as the summer Alive on 25 Street Festival (which drew 7,000 visitors four times for the previous three summers) offering live performances and other family oriented activities, cardboard boat and crew races at the waterfront, the annual Snapper Derby that has been held on the riverfront for more than 20 years, public art installations, such as the annual Community Mosaic Street Painting Festival and the new “Reflexions: Festival of Light” will serve as models for future programs and partnerships.



Annual Cardboard Boat Races



Annual Snapper Derby. 2018 will be the 21st Annual Event.





The 22nd Annual Community Mosaic Street Painting Festival was held Memorial Day Weekend

The Riverhead Country Fair celebrates Riverhead’s long agricultural heritage. The 43rd Annual Riverhead Country Fair will take place in Downtown Riverhead on October 9. One of the largest festivals in all of New York State, the event draws thousands of people downtown each year to view the entries to the agricultural and baked goods competitions, shop at the wide variety of vendors and enjoy the family-friendly carnival rides. The roots of the fair go back all the way to the 1840s, when the Riverhead Agricultural Society hosted the annual county fair. In addition, many of the local churches and religious institutions provide family friendly entertainment and a regular basis.



4. **Provide for extensive, continued community outreach and engagement** activities around health, environmental, cultural and civic projects to address environmental and social justice needs. Partnerships with community organizations will be leveraged to extend the impact of ongoing outreach initiatives. The recently created Downtown Revitalization Committee will be particularly active and engaged to provide regular input from residents, the business leaders and community organizations.

5. **Implement intermodal transportation and parking improvements** to increase capacity, improve traffic flow and determine how to best address parking needs at full buildout. This may include a parking structure or improved connections between the central business district and the nearby Long Island Rail Road station. Shuttles services from the railroad station parking lot and downtown should be considered. Concepts for improving traffic flow, transportation options and services, as well as the need for additional parking have been analyzed in every planning study since at least the 1993 East Main Street Urban Renewal Plan. The design of these solutions will include Complete Streets planning concepts in order to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and users of public transportation, including the Long Island Rail Road and Suffolk County buses. Complete Streets concepts are imperative to be sure users can cross the street to patronize businesses and travel to work.



The 43rd Annual Riverhead Country Fair Will Bring Thousands to Downtown Riverhead This Fall

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.

Historic Downtown Riverhead, oriented along the Peconic River, is bounded by Court Street bridge (to the County Center/Riverhead Library and Suffolk County Historical Society, the Long Island Rail Road Station, Cornell Cooperative Extension, LIRR station, elementary/middle/ high school all walkable) and ends where LIRR intersects NYS Route 25 (Riverhead Town Hall, Long Island Aquarium/Hyatt Hotel, Suffolk Theater, Suffolk Community Culinary Institute, East End Arts all located on NYS Route 25). Located 75 miles east of New York City, Downtown Riverhead is part of a NYS designated Brownfield Opportunity Area and encompasses a Business Improvement District, two Urban Renewal Areas, a Historic District, a parking district, a sewer district, as well as a transportation hub with Suffolk County Bus, Hampton Jitney bus company and Long Island Rail Road. Downtown Riverhead is characterized by urbanized development and high vacancy rates, though recent revitalization investments in several housing and commercial developments are evident of the vast potential for economic redevelopment and revitalization.

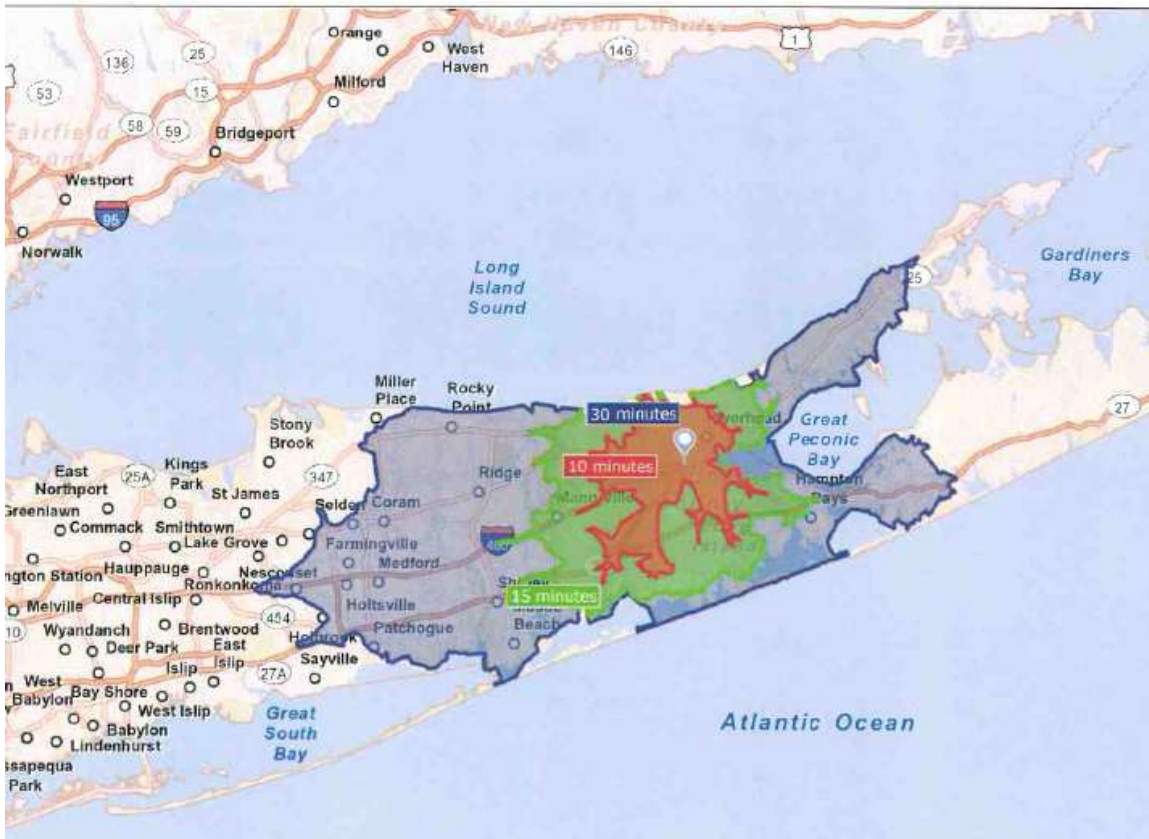


Boundaries of Downtown Riverhead



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.

Centrally located and commutable to all of Nassau and Suffolk counties, Downtown Riverhead is the Suffolk County Seat, and a business, banking and retail center. Unmatched natural resources create the potential for an international tourist destination (Atlantic Ocean, LI Sound and Peconic Bay beaches all within 15 minutes of Downtown Riverhead). A lively agricultural community in and around Riverhead provides a world class sustainable Agritourism industry (wineries, breweries, distilleries, pick your own, farm to table, sport fishing, aquaculture). The Long Island Aquarium, the Hyatt Place Hotel, East End Arts, Suffolk Theater and large government/institutional employers Peconic Bay Medical Center and the Suffolk County Court Complex/County Center/Culinary Community College anchor a year round economy. Downtown Riverhead was recently nominated for designation as a federal *Opportunity Zone*, further indicative of the potential for revitalization and private investment in the project area.



Downtown Riverhead catchment area.



Downtown Riverhead is in easy reach of all of the surrounding region and much of the eastern United States. The nearby Riverside traffic circle is a hub for all major arterial roadways serving the East End. Quite literally, all East End roads lead to Riverhead.

Due to its geographic and historic centrality, the downtown's catchment area encompasses the entire East End, with a total resident population of 133,721 (Southampton 56,790, Southold 21,968, East Hampton 21,457 and Riverhead 33,506). This does not include the summer and fall tourism population surge, which exponentially increases visitation. There are 51,142 residents and 21,251 housing units within a five mile radius of the downtown, including the downtown area itself (2015 Census Estimate).

Proposed development has the potential to significantly revitalize the central business district. In the Riverhead DC-1 Zoning District, in the downtown core, the build out for residential units is 500 units. The Riverhead BOA study indicates that buildout in this zone is 1,059,575 SF.

Current planned development in Downtown Riverhead includes:

- 203-213 E. Main St. – three retail spaces of 910 sq. ft., 1,000 sq. ft., and 1,532 sq. ft.
- Two new breweries: Mustache and Long Beard, located in the recently renovated old Second Street Riverhead Fire House.
- Howell House – a historic home restoration located next to the new Preston House restaurant and boutique hotel which will become a luxury spa.
- Redevelopment of the former Sears Department Store property into a five-story, 170-unit apartment complex that would include a mix of affordable and market-rate rentals.

Projects under construction in Downtown Riverhead:

- Peconic Crossing: 45 workforce and affordable apartment units, focused on attracting artists Georgia Green Ventures –118 workforce and affordable apartments, 5,000 SF retail, and 6,000 SF restaurant

Recently completed projects in Downtown Riverhead:

- Preston House, a historic home restoration which includes a 20 room boutique hotel and 200 seat restaurant in the historic district
- Summerwind Square: 52 workforce apartments
- Woolworth building: 18 workforce apartments

Additionally, the Main Street area is developing into a destination for restaurants and breweries, including Crooked Ladder, Diggers, Perabell, Jerry and the Mermaid, Shadees Jamaican Restaurant, Turkaz, Mazi, Blue Duck Bakery, Sweetart Yogurt, Ralph's Italian Ices, Farmer's Kitchen, and more as well as the Long Island Aquarium, Hyatt Place Hotel and Suffolk Theater, a meticulously restored Art Deco era theatre. The Town is hoping to attract additional specialty retail and restaurants to complement the existing base. Continued revitalization north of the Peconic River is critical to support success of these existing business enterprises.

Due to numerous revitalization plans over the last 25 years, ample sewer capacity and a healthy, engaged community stakeholder network, this downtown is likely the only remaining location on the East End that can



accommodate the density of development and mix of housing options needed to address regional demand. It will provide housing, jobs and recreation opportunities for all segments of the population, from young workers, families and seniors.

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.

Past investments in Downtown Riverhead include:

- Long Island Aquarium Expansion - New mixed use hotel project (\$2.4 Million NYS Empire State Development Corporation award towards the aquarium and Hyatt Place Hotel);
- Summerwind Square - 52 unit mixed use next generation housing development to replace three abandoned and vacant parcels/buildings (Suffolk County subsidy of approx. \$2M);
- 1 East Main Street – over \$1M renovation to highly visible, anchor gateway property at the heart of the Downtown Business District (corner of East Main Street and Peconic Avenue);
- 10 Peconic Avenue – over \$1M renovation to formerly vacant building on Peconic Avenue to create community event space and 10 live/work unit artist units above;
- Approximately 770 municipally owned parking spaces walkable to downtown;
- Coordination with newly formed East End Tourism Alliance between North and South Fork;
- \$750,000 Habitat Restoration (fish passage) NYS DEC Peconic Estuary Program;
- \$2.2 Million Peconic River Walk improvement;
- Suffolk County Downtown Revitalization Grant for Peconic Avenue Crosswalk (\$85,000) to connect Peconic River Walk to Grangebel Park;
- Several New York Main Street Grants totaling 1.15 million (2004-\$200,000, 2009-\$200,000, 2010-\$500,000 and 2012-\$250,000).
- Grangebel Park improvements: \$1.1M in 2008, \$300,000 in 2013 and \$135,000 in 2016;
- Suffolk County Downtown Revitalization Grant for Information Kiosks (\$85,000);
- Suffolk County Downtown Revitalization Grant for Grangebel Park Comfort Station Upgrade (\$30,852);
- Suffolk County Downtown Revitalization Grant for East End Arts Council Site Improvements (\$180,000);
- Suffolk County Downtown Revitalization Grant for wayfinding signage (\$65,000);
- Suffolk County Downtown Revitalization Grants for LED lighting upgrades (\$ 175,000);
- Downtown Historic District designation;
- 2009 Downtown Historic Guidelines/Bulk Study (NYS Department of State Quality Communities grant project);
- Multi-million NYS Parks/Community Preservation Fund acquisitions to create Green space;
- 2008 Town of Riverhead East Main Street Urban Renewal Plan Update and GEIS (\$850,000); and
- New York Metropolitan Planning Council Parking Management Workshop and Summary;
- New York State Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Parking Plan 2017 (\$11,000);



- Restore New York 2016 (\$500,000);
- Federal *Opportunity Zone* designation;

These important and substantial past investments and development incentives, together with DRI investment will serve as a spring board for future investments in Downtown Riverhead, fulfilling the promises outlined in the plethora of revitalization studies and the many years of planning and community pursuit of downtown revitalization. In addition, the planned developments for Riverside, located in adjacent Southampton Town, per their Riverside Revitalization Action Plan (RRAP), will support and be supported by the revitalization of Downtown Riverhead.

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.

Current/recent job growth: Proximal employment hubs include Calverton Enterprise Industrial Park, also recently designated as an *Opportunity Zone*, currently experiencing a reinvigoration of high tech/aerospace industries, with the arrival of Luminati Aerospace and the impending sale of 600 additional industrially zoned acres just minutes from downtown. Additional jobs are at Brookhaven National Lab, the Stony Brook University Business Incubator at Calverton (<https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/1-calverton/>), Gabreski Airport Business Park (a 440,000 SF business and technology center 15 minutes away), Peconic Bay Medical Center, Southampton Hospital, Suffolk County Center municipal complex, Suffolk Community College, the New York State Court complex, Southampton, Riverhead and Hampton Bays School Districts, municipal facilities operated by Town of Southampton and Town of Riverhead, and the expanding SUNY Stony Brook campus in Southampton offering programs in fine arts, marine research, health care and more. Located less than two miles from Downtown Riverhead, Northwell Health’s Peconic Bay Medical Center started a major expansion last July of its Critical Care Tower. The centerpiece of the new \$60-million Critical Care Tower is a comprehensive cardiac care center.

Retail, hospitality, agritourism and small business opportunities abound with demographics showing the region as a destination for tourism and retail. Retail destinations proximal to downtown support thousands of jobs but their presence is a double edged sword. Tanger Outlets, located minutes from downtown, attracts more than 12 million visitors a year. The Route 58 commercial corridor, also minutes north of downtown, drives substantial regional traffic to its many “big box” stores. However, this commercial corridor has negatively impacted the downtown by drawing visitation away. The downtown’s challenge is now to reinvent itself as a recreational and cultural hub for culturally and economically diverse residents, shoppers, families and visitors who will want to enjoy the waterfront parkland, attend community events, and patronize smaller mom and pop stores and restaurants. Downtown Riverhead and the surrounding community provides a wide range of affordable, healthy and culturally diverse dining options. Private homes and accessory apartments along the riverfront area also have the potential opportunity to establish a bed and breakfast industry in the downtown business district.



Impending growth identified by Riverhead Brownfield Opportunity Area study:

An analysis of market demand in the Riverhead portion of the downtown determined that by 2020, a projected increase in households by 343 will result in an additional \$17,152,831 available to be spent within the downtown, which would support approximately 60,334 SF of retail and commercial space. Many of the previous planning studies recommended energy efficient projects to promote green jobs and economic development.

- 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.

The downtown is oriented around one of the most bucolic and environmentally sensitive national estuaries. The Peconic River provides four miles of waterfront and nearly 1,000 acres of preserved property.

Riverhead’s Grangebel Park, located in the downtown core, has received over \$1,000,000 in federal funding for the replacement of bulkheading, installation of lighting and pedestrian walkways, landscaping and other amenities to improve safety, utilization of the park and opportunities for public to access the waterfront both on their own as as part of community events. The park also contains a fish ladder to promote habitat connectivity, which helps to drive visitation by local enviromental groups and education programs.

While Grangebel Park is a significant amenity for the downtown, the Peconic River continues to be vastly underutilized due to blighted neighborhood conditions and lack of access. Downtown Riverhead also features a lengthy boardwalk along the Peconic River and includes picnic tables and benches. The accessibility of public parks and riverfront access is enhanced by its accessibility to a multimodal transportation network that includes motorists, bus and train users, pedestrians and bicyclists. The physical beauty of downtown, notably Suffolk County’s longest river, is further enhanced by the accessibility of ethnic, cultural, religious and healthcare amenities within the immediate proximity.





Grangebel Park overlooking new Peconic Crossing, 45-unit affordable apartment with artist residences and gallery



Views of Grangebel Park, including fish ladder.

Between Downtown Riverhead, Polish Town and the Route 58 Business Corridor there are a host of affordable, healthy, (including locally farmed produce and wines, Farm to Table) and culturally diverse (Polish, Jamaican, Turkish, Greek, Italian, Mexican, Chinese, traditional Southeastern soul food) dining options. Additionally, there



is an opportunity to establish a bed and breakfast industry in private homes and accessory apartments along the waterfront area.

- 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.

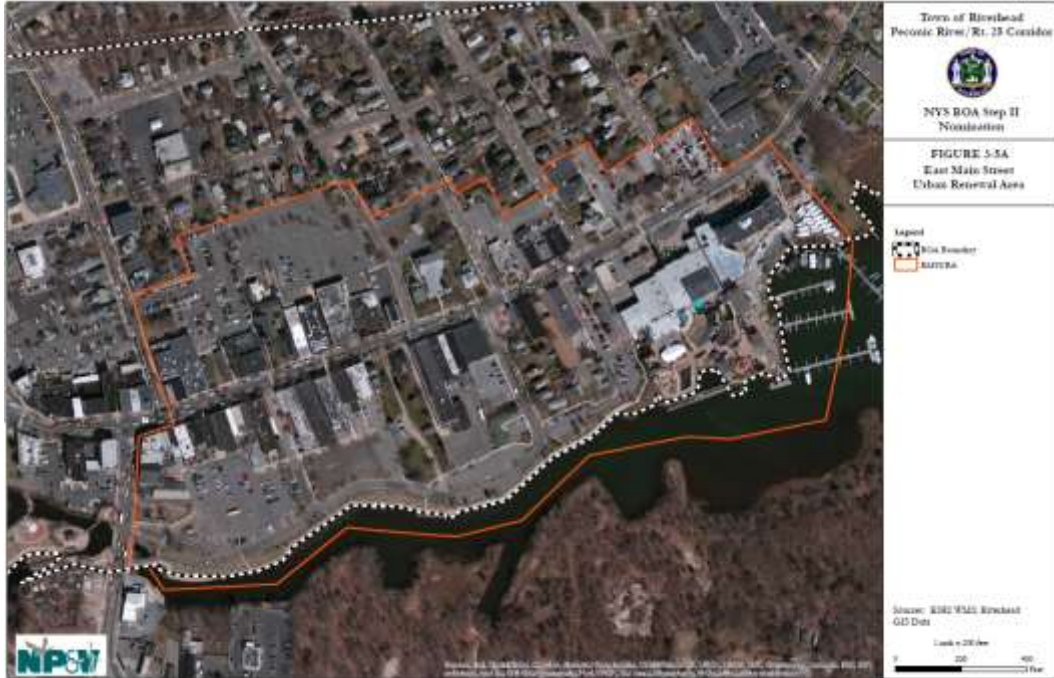


Agritourism is a significant draw from as far away as New York City and beyond.

Downtown revitalization plans and policies in Riverhead

The downtown area is part of a formally designated Urban Renewal Area (the East Main Street Urban Renewal Area, or EMSURA), a New York State Empire Zone, one of Long Island’s few “Low-Income Communities” and the subject of numerous revitalization studies undertaken by the Town of Riverhead. The Town of Riverhead Industrial Development Agency targets the area for tax incentives to attract private investment. The common denominator of all these designations is a low-income area plagued with deterioration and blight, and needing the investment of private dollars in addition to the constant injection of public dollars. It is the intent of the urban renewal plan to promote a mix of uses that foster a balance between residential, commercial, cultural, and tourist accommodations; reduce vacancy and blight; provide connectivity within the EMSURA; and incorporate the natural amenities of the area, including the waterfront.





The East Main Street Urban Renewal Area has been extensively studied over the last 25 years and is a key part of revitalization efforts



Way Finding Signs and Creative Placemaking locations throughout Downtown Riverhead have been proposed to make it easier to navigate downtown attractions and improve the overall visitor experience



Downtown revitalization plans prepared by Town of Riverhead include:

- *The Analysis of the Opportunity for the Revitalization of the Main Street Corridor* (1993)
- *The Vision Plan for Downtown Riverhead* (1995)
- *Town of Riverhead Urban Renewal Plan Railroad Street Corridor* (1997)
- *Town of Riverhead Comprehensive Plan* (2003)
- *Revitalization Strategy for Downtown Riverhead* (2003)
- *The Town of Riverhead East Main Street Urban Renewal Area Plan* (1993, update 2008)
- *Peconic River/Route 25 Corridor Step II Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study* (2016)

Riverhead's downtown contains a Business Improvement District, Parking District, and Sewer District. In addition, a community garden, surrounded by a family play area and children's play ground, on West Main Street promotes awareness of healthy eating and can be replicated elsewhere in the downtown.

Riverhead Town is actively pursuing implementation of Smart Growth high density zoning in its portion of downtown and provides parking district, sewer and gas service. These efforts have resulted in 85 new workforce rentals in the past 5 years. Approximately 173 additional units are in various stages of approval. Town leadership encourages public private partnerships through collaboration with Suffolk County, New York State and the federal government to fund millions of dollars in support of planning, workforce housing/supportive infrastructure, historic restoration, tourism, recreation, public spaces, pedestrian, bicycle and waterfront access along with free and low cost public entertainment. Recent largescale development projects, such as Summerwind and the Riverhead Lofts, made attempts at significantly increasing energy efficiency.

The Riverhead Comprehensive Plan (2003) articulates a vision for building on Downtown Riverhead's historic character and waterfront location. The many policies contained in this plan that promote quality of life including the following:

- *Policy 6.6A: Promote specialty food markets and restaurants.*
Specifically, pursue an indoor public market or specialty supermarket on the north side of Main Street. Pursue specialty or ethnic food markets. Encourage outdoor dining.
- *Policy 6.6B: Promote stores and restaurants oriented to children and families.*
- *Policy 6.6C: Promote antique stores and other specialty retail shops.*
- *Policy 6.6D: Promote music stores and develop music programs for both adults and children*



- *Policy 6.6E: Preserve eclectic specialty stores and convenience shopping.*
- *Policy 6.6F: Support the development and growth of downtown attractions and foster development of the arts.*
- *Policy 6.6G: Encourage coordinated marketing and programming for downtown destinations, in order to promote longer visits.*
- *Policy 6.7D: Preserve and enhance pedestrian and view corridors between Main Street and the Peconic River.* Some parts of the waterfront are difficult to see from West Main Street, because trees, undergrowth, and buildings block the views. As properties are procured for park expansion, the Town should redesign the enlarged park to create and preserve view corridors and pedestrian connections from Main Street. In the center of downtown, alleyways and streets provide views of the water and access to the parking lots behind Main Street, but some do not lead all the way down to the waterfront. Landscaping, walkways, and lighting should be redesigned so that there are safe, direct, and visible connections between the waterfront and Main Street. River "identifiers" or beacons (i.e., banners, public artwork) could be placed along the waterfront to call attention to the water's edge.
- *Policy 6.7E: Limit polluted runoff from draining into the Peconic River.*
- *Policy 6.8A: Encourage ground-floor retail along Main Street, with apartments and offices on the upper floors.*
- *Policy 6.9A: Work with the Business Improvement District to make housing available to visual and performance artists in the downtown area, and provide incentives for landlords to lease space to artists.*
- *Policy 6.10A: Identify historically significant sites and buildings, and implement historic preservation regulations as part of the zoning code update.*
- *Policy 6.12B: Build pedestrian walkways between Main Street and the waterfront.*

The 2016 Town of Riverhead Peconic River/Route 25 Corridor Brownfield Opportunity Area Step II Nomination Study recognized that potential flooding would be exacerbated by climate change and suggested the use of Leadership and Energy Design (LEED) practices be implemented in the design of new, green, construction projects.



Vacant and abandoned property remediation initiatives

In 2016, Riverhead Town received a \$100,000 grant funding through the NYS Attorney General to support targeted efforts to prevent and remediate vacant and abandoned properties. Due to the concentration of blight and vacancy, the majority of these investments are being directed to the downtown area in the form of code enforcement actions, property investigation, and community outreach.

Riverhead is proud of its culturally, ethnically and economically diverse population. To that end, the Riverhead Anti-Bias Task was created in the early 1990s and remains an active force to promote and encourage diversity and tolerance for all residents and visitors. The Anti-Bias Task Force to assists the Town in identifying issues related to prejudice or bias, provide recommendations to the Town Board to combat bias and improve social conditions, provide proactive means to eradicate oppression and support an anti-bias curriculum for the establishment of social justice. (<http://riverhead.municipalcms.com/docview.aspx?docid=42862>)

Riverhead also recently merged the Senior Citizens Services Department with the Recreation Department to create a combined Inter-Generational Services Department.

(<http://www.riverheadrecreation.net/intergenerational.html>)

- 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.

Ongoing community involvement and public support has been the hallmark of Riverhead's downtown revitalization efforts throughout the years. Beginning with the Town's first *Revitalization Strategy for Downtown Riverhead* in 2000 through its *Peconic River/Route 25 Corridor Step II Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study* (2016) and continuing presently, Riverhead's stakeholders have and continue to be actively involved in developing and implementing its revitalization strategies and efforts by actively participating in these plans and studies as well as being directly involved in committees and associations that are specifically designed to further these revitalization efforts. Each of the planning documents that has been completed and listed in Question 6 above involved downtown stakeholders including business owners, property owners and residents and credit is given to them in those documents to which links have been provided. In fact, the recent *Peconic River/Route 25 Corridor Step II Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study* (2016) incorporated an extensive Community Survey that included 812 responses. The Community Survey analysis included perceptions of shopping downtown, as well as wants and needs of tourists, residents and businesses.



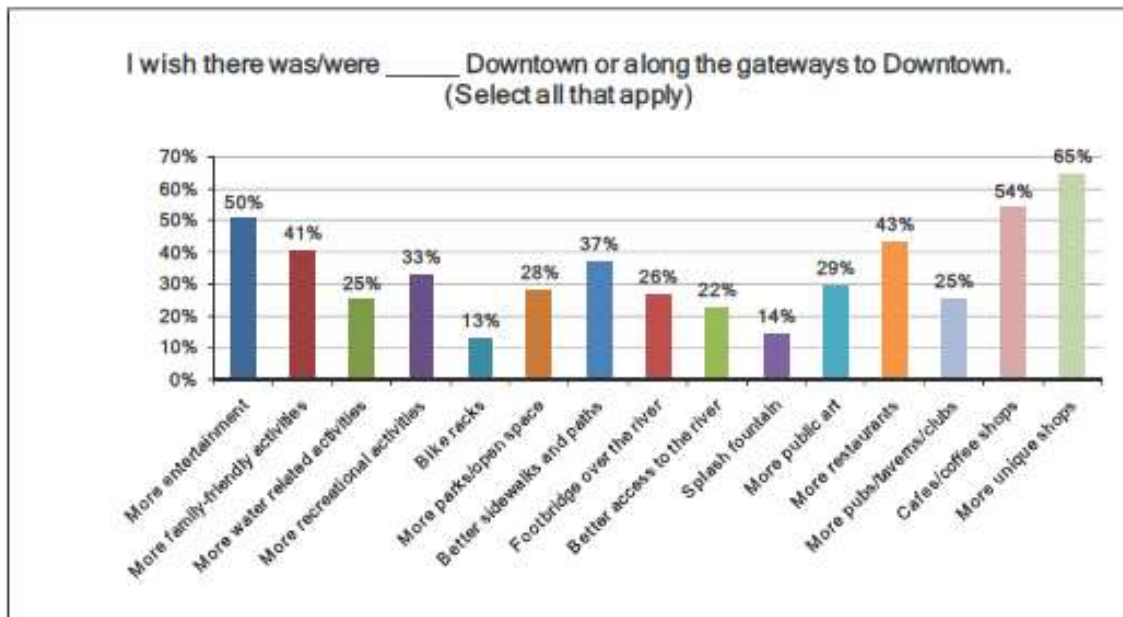


Figure 6. Desires for Downtown Riverhead.

700 people of 812 responses received in the 2016 BOA Community Survey Expressed What They Want to see Downtown



Figure 7. Common words used in comments about what respondents wish there was in Downtown Riverhead.

- Activities and entertainment: 19%
 - Movie theater: 12%
- Safety: 17%
- Shopping: 9%
 - Grocery or food store: 4%
 - Trader Joe's: 4%
- Restaurants and dining: 6%
- Cleanliness: 4%
- River access and activities: 4%

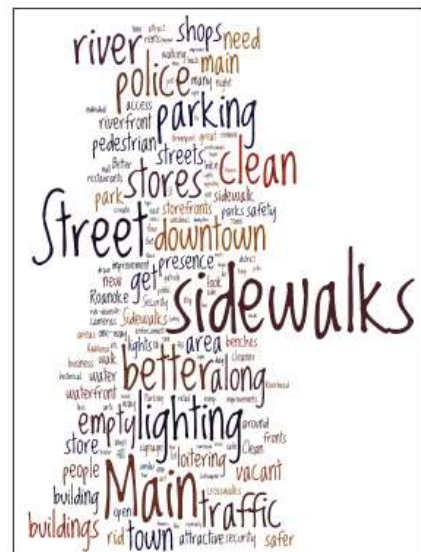


Figure 14. Words appearing in respondents' ideas for improvements they would like to see in Riverhead.

Some ideas for changes the public would like to see as part of downtown revitalization as identified in the 2016 BOA Community Survey

Riverhead also has several public groups that provide ongoing input and support to downtown revitalization efforts. The Town of Riverhead Business Improvement District was created in 1967 as a special taxing district



government by the Town Board to foster the Town’s long standing support for its downtown. The BID is guided by the Riverhead Business Improvement District Management Association (BIDMA) that provides advice to the Town Board in its ongoing revitalization efforts (<http://riverheadbid.com>). BIDMA is actively involved in all aspects of bettering the downtown and is comprised of Town Board appointees which, based upon Town resolutions, must include business owners, property owners and residents. In addition to the many revitalization efforts the BIDMA supports, it has created and runs the *Alive on 25* event which is held on Main Street four times each summer and draws up to 7000 visitors to the downtown. BIDMA has also been actively involved in efforts to minimize blight and signs of vacancy in the downtown. In addition, a spin-off Downtown Beautification Committee was created by the BIDMA which committee plans and coordinates property clean ups, places and maintains flowers downtown. BIDMA’s fundraising efforts provide critical “match” funding for several important downtown grant opportunities (Suffolk County Downtown Revitalization grants, PSEG Downtown Revitalization grants, etc.). Riverhead Townscape is another not for profit organization established by involved citizens to beautify our downtown with gorgeous spring and summer flower baskets on lamp posts (<http://riverheadtownscape.com/site>). Downtown Riverhead also has an active Parking District Committee comprised of property and business owners within the Parking District. The Parking District is another special taxing district with boundaries similar to the BID and is actively engaging in working to find parking solutions and foster acquisition and maintenance of parking in the district. The Parking District Committee also pledges matching funds for grant opportunities including a recent CFA strategic planning grant received for downtown in 2017. Additionally, Supervisor Laura Jens-Smith and Councilwoman Catherine Kent have spearheaded a new Downtown Revitalization Committee for the purpose of examining and exchanging ideas and recommending solutions, including but not limited to, possible economic and land use restructuring and recruitment of new business or design improvements, capitalizing on existing assets, and solutions to existing issues/problems, to be used as a framework for the development of a comprehensive and long term revitalization strategy for the Downtown Area. Members of this committee include a representative from the Chamber of Commerce (www.riverheadchamber.com/) (purpose includes advancement of Downtown, a representative from East End Arts (not for profit committed to community enrichment through the arts and education); a representative from BID or BIDMA; an individual with experience/expertise in Marketing/Graphics; an individual with experience/expertise in Recreation/Open Space; an individual with experience/expertise with Construction/Construction Industry; an individual with experience/expertise in Banking/Finance; an individual with experience/expertise with operation of a business located within the Downtown Business area; an individual with experience/expertise in local business which impacts/affects Downtown Area; individual with experience/expertise with Engineering/Planning; an individual with experience/expertise with our Senior Community; an individual with experience/expertise regarding our Youth Community. The Committee has a regular meeting schedule and has provided ongoing feedback during the preparation of this application.

- 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 proposed DRI investments will be shovel ready within 1-2 years. Prior investments by the Town of Riverhead, New York State, Suffolk County, federal agencies and private equity have positioned the downtown to immediately pursue the transformative projects that are needed to catalyze revitalization. Required zoning is in place, generic SEQRA environmental impact statements are completed and all necessary infrastructure is ready to accommodate DRI funding enabling it to have an immediate impact. Each of the below transformative projects has been identified in the Town’s many revitalization plans, all of which were created with the extensive community involvement of business leaders, residents and other key stakeholders.

- **Establish a downtown public focal point, create new pedestrian pathways and unified signage themes** in the downtown core to connect Main Street to the Peconic River for beautification and to drive foot traffic to the waterfront. This includes a prominent network of pedestrian pathways at the south side of Riverhead’s Main Street to further activate the waterfront and the establishment of a “Town Square” as a main connection point between Main Street and the Peconic River, using form based zoning to create flexibility in uses while respecting the importance of historically sensitive design. The Riverhead BOA calls for these improvements. A DRI implementation strategy for these plans could assist in coordinating public and private financing and spur additional investment by Suffolk County and New York State grant funding sources. A revitalized, river-oriented Downtown Riverhead will result in significant economic redevelopment, including generation of taxes and substantial job creation, while improving the quality of life for residents of Riverhead and the Long Island region.
- **Support continued partnerships with arts, cultural and community organizations** for events at the waterfront. Existing partnerships with organizations such as East End Arts Council, Vail Leavitt Music Hall, Suffolk Theatre (a historic and meticulously restored Art Deco theatre), Business Improvement District, Townscape and other community organizations will contribute to activation of the waterfront. DRI investments will help to position the downtown and the partner organizations to market and attract additional support for program development from various sources, including contributed income and grant funding through New York State Council on the Arts. Projects would be driven by the Local Planning Committee. An installation currently planned for Grangebel Park, “Reflexions: A Festival of Lights” can be used as a model for future public art projects to promote a revitalized waterfront. As released in the June 2017 Americans for the Arts National Study, nonprofit arts and cultural activities are a significant economic driver in communities – a growth industry that supports jobs, generates government revenue, and is a cornerstone of tourism. <http://artsconsulting.com/arts-insights/the-economic-impact-of-americas-nonprofit-arts-and-culture-industry/>
- **Implement parking and multimodal transportation improvements** to increase parking capacity and improve traffic flow. The Town of Riverhead BOA study calls for these improvements, shown on the map below, that will involve coordination with the Riverhead Parking District. The Town of Riverhead





Historic Suffolk Theater

- **Implement water quality improvement projects** as identified by the Riverhead BOA study and Riverhead Comprehensive Plan. In addition, NYS Environmental Protection fund and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation programs may be available to leverage DRI investment.



Artist murals provide a colorful demonstration of Riverhead's cultural diversity.





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 Riverhead Community Development Department will be the lead for Town of Riverhead. Community Development is responsible for nearly all grants awarded to the Town of Riverhead. It currently administers over \$16.5 million in open grants with an additional \$8-15 million in grant applications pending throughout the year. Grants are sourced from federal, state, county, nonprofit and private funders. Community Development Department staff is highly trained in technicalities of the funding sources such as DOT, HUD, labor laws, payroll documentation, permitting, bidding, subrecipient reporting, MWBE and other requirements.

Community Development Director Dawn Thomas will provide supervisory oversight of the DRI initiative on behalf of the Town of Riverhead. Ms. Thomas is an attorney with more than 27 years of municipal experience focusing on land use, comprehensive planning, transactional real estate matters and code enforcement. Having served as Town Attorney for 11 years she was directly involved with the implementation of the Town's 2003 Comprehensive Plan and redevelopment of EPCAL. She has extensive familiarity with all aspects of



government including zoning, planning and inter-municipal matters that will be necessary to ensure success of this program. She also served as a member of the Riverhead Industrial Development Agency from 2012-2016.

Assistant Community Development Project Supervisor Joseph Maiorana will work with Ms. Thomas in handling Riverhead's day-to-day administration. He has worked for the Town of Riverhead Community Development Department since October 1994. Among the many grants that he has obtained and administered, he was responsible for the administration of \$200,000 New York Main Street project that was awarded in 2004, the \$200,000 Main Street project that was awarded in 2009, the \$500,000 Main Street project that was awarded in 2010, and the \$250,000 Main Street Grant in 2012, which was just recently completed.

Furthermore, the new administration lead by Supervisor Laura Jens-Smith has made the completion of Downtown Riverhead's renaissance and revitalization a top priority. In fact, the Riverhead Town Board recently unanimously established a Downtown Revitalization Committee, made up of a diverse cross-section of the local community, to further advise and provide a public voice to all downtown revitalization efforts.

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

There is likely no other place more ready to immediately undertake decisive action to create an active, desirable downtown with a strong sense of place than historic Downtown Riverhead. Downtown Riverhead's extensive preparation for revitalization includes many years of planning and revitalization studies, creation of necessary sewer and water infrastructure, deep community involvement, as well as promotion of arts and cultural development. The recreational and shopping opportunities oriented along the Peconic River will facilitate and enhance economic revitalization for the benefit of the Long Island region. The opportunity provided through the DRI would significantly catalyze and synthesize all of these accomplishments to enable downtown to take the next necessary steps to realize its potential as a regional tourist and shopping destination, as well as an amazing place to live, work and play for the Long Island region's diverse population. With infrastructure in place and historic attractions, such as the 1893 Vail Leavitt Music Hall and the art deco Suffolk Theater, Downtown Riverhead has a perfect combination of modern amenities and old-fashioned charm. Riverhead is ready to take the next, necessary steps.

In addition to public support garnered through many years of participation in the revitalization planning process, this application has strong and diverse support, as indicated in the attached letters of support from: Congressman Lee Zeldin, NYS Senator Kenneth LaValle, NYS Assemblyman Anthony Palumbo, Suffolk County Legislator Al Krupski, the Riverhead Business Improvement District, the Riverhead Chamber of Commerce, the East End Tourism Alliance, the East End Arts Council, the Long Island Aquarium, Vision Long Island, the Hyatt Place Hotel, The Riverhead Free Library, Georgica Green Ventures, LLC and the Butterfly Effect Project.



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

EMAIL SUBMISSION ADDRESSES

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

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



