



## Downtown Revitalization Initiative

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# APPLICATION

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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](http://www.ny.gov/dri).

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### BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: Long Island

Municipality Name: Inc. Village of Rockville Centre

Downtown Name: Rockville Centre

County Name: Nassau County

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

Our vision for our downtown revitalization includes addressing our aging infrastructure to make our downtown not only safer and more "walkable" and "cyclable" but to also make it more environmentally friendly. The majority of our parking lots were built in the 1950's and are in poor condition. Our focus would be on the lots closest to the station plaza. They need to be redesigned to allow for the maximum use of space and correct traffic flow as well as to incorporate the use of green technology such as bioswales to help filter out storm water and charging stations for zero-emission vehicles, encouraging our residents and visitors to utilize other forms of transportation instead of just traditional cars. In addition to upgrading the lots we would also "streetscape them" with trees, flowers, decorative LED lights as well as bicycle racks and lockers to encourage commuters and families to leave their cars at home and ride their bikes. We would also like to make them more attractive so visitors who do come to Rockville Centre are willing to park and walk to their destination instead of circling around trying to find a spot closer which only adds to traffic and pollution.

We want to encourage people to utilize mass transit when visiting Rockville Centre. It's important that the first impression is a strong one and that is why we are also looking to address the Station Plaza. We need the MTA to fix the crumbling infrastructure, and we look forward to working with them on that issue, but we also need to address the area surrounding the station. It's been close to twenty years since the area had been renovated and it needs to be updated. We are looking to renovate: Front Street and South Station Plaza between North Village and Morris Avenues, the pedestrian walkway beneath the elevated rail road tracks from North Village Avenue to Morris Avenue and the plaza where Front Street meets Clinton Avenue. Rockville Centre is a stop on the Long Island Babylon ride and is a

37 minute ride to Penn Station on an express train. Three major bus lines, running as far south as Long Beach and north to Roosevelt Field and from Jamaica, Queens to the west to Freeport to our east. There is also a weekday shuttle from the Rockville Centre Train Station to Mercy Medical Center then continues north to the Hempstead Transit Center. Molloy College also offers shuttle service for its students from its campus on our northern border to the LIRR station. Rockville Centre does have a healthy downtown with regards to businesses here, but if we don't offer a safe environment, people will not come. We realize that much more needs to be done to ensure that our downtown is safe, appealing and environmentally friendly.

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## **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.

Rockville Centre is 3.25 square miles located in southwestern Nassau County, 25 miles from mid-town Manhattan and only a 37 minute express train ride on the LIRR. We have approximately 25,000 residents and our community primarily consists of one family homes although we do have a number of town houses, condominiums and apartments. Incorporated in 1893, Rockville Centre has its own electric and water departments as well as own Police Department. Our Fire Department consists of approximately 330 volunteer members in seven companies that respond to 2,500 calls a year on average. The Village is served by two hospitals, two hotels and numerous medical buildings. Rockville Centre has over 8 churches, 2 synagogues and is home to the headquarters of the Catholic Diocese of Rockville Centre. We have numerous parks and are home to numerous pre-schools, five public elementary schools, one Catholic K-8 school, one public middle school, one public high school and Molloy College.

Rockville Centre has a centralized downtown area and that is visited by thousands of people who eat at one of our many restaurants, watch a movie at our multi-screen movie theater or to shop in one of our boutiques and retail shops. While some may consider Rockville Centre to already be a vibrant downtown, we realize that there is much need for improvement. Within the past ten years, we have added over 400 apartments in the west end of the Village adjacent to multi-family homes which were built in the 60s and 70s under the Urban Renewal Program. This area is close to the LIRR and the downtown business district but much can be improved with regards to walkability. We would like to encourage residents and visitors who come to our downtown to use mass transit, cycle or to park in one of our outlying lots but our aging infrastructure needs to be addressed to allow for a better flow of traffic and safer conditions.

In 2011, Molloy College opened the 550 seat Madison Theatre, offering a variety of programs for all interests and ages. How wonderful would it be for patrons of the theatre to leave their cars at home, take the train to Rockville Centre, have dinner in one of the many restaurants located within blocks of the station, and then return to the station to catch a shuttle bus to Molloy to attend the performance at the theater? After the show, they would take a shuttle bus back to the station where they could

catch their train home or visit another local establishment for an after-theatre meal or dessert before catching their train home.

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## **DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION**

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

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

The area we propose for the project includes the roads South Station Plaza and Front Street between North Park and North Village Avenues, as well as municipal parking fields 2, 2A, 3, 5, 9, 13, 19, and 22.

- 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.

Rockville Centre has a population of approximately 25,000 residents. 68% of residents own their home and 32% rent. The economy of Rockville Centre employs approximately 12,000 people –mainly in the healthcare, educational and finance/insurance fields. The downtown area of Rockville Centre is comprised of retail establishments, restaurants, professional offices and housing. The downtown area runs from Centre Avenue to the west to Oceanside Road to the east and Lincoln Avenue to the south and Hempstead Avenue in the north. There are apartments over the storefronts in the main business district as well as multi-family housing units on the outlying areas. There are two hotels in the Village with 221 total rooms. Rockville Centre is also home to Mercy Medical Center and Molloy College which are both located on our northern border adjacent to the Southern State Parkway and two miles from the downtown area. The Village is also served by South Nassau Communities Hospital which is located in Oceanside on our eastern border. The area we propose is the gateway to Rockville Centre when entering via mass transit as well as those traveling into the downtown from the north.

- 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.

Over the past several years, the Village of Rockville Centre has focused on “Streetscaping” the blocks within our downtown area – including fixing sidewalks, curbs, crosswalks, street furniture, waste receptacles, signage, lighting, and décor such as hanging baskets and trees – making the downtown not only more aesthetically pleasing, but safer as well. We have also addressed the infrastructure below the roads, including the \$4 million dollar improvement project of Maple Avenue, the main Village owned east-west thoroughfare that is one block north of Sunrise Highway. In the past 15 years six multi-family housing complexes with 585 units, were built within a few blocks of the downtown area, including a 55 and over

community as well as town houses, condominiums and rental apartments. There are 2 hotels in town with 221 total rooms. One is located right in the downtown, the other is located on the western border of the Village. Over the past ten years, the Chamber of Commerce has also grown to include more of our retailers and professional services providers and has become more involved in the community and 98% of our 500 storefronts and office space is occupied. Rockville Centre has the housing and the businesses, we just need to ensure that those who come into our downtown area are able to navigate around safely whether they're walking, driving, cycling or utilizing public transportation. Our proposed improvements to our station plaza and surrounding parking lots will welcome visitors and residents to take mass transit, walk or bike into the downtown area from their homes and/or make the prospect of parking a few blocks away a more attractive option.

- 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.

According to the census bureau, from 2015 to 2016 employment in Rockville Centre grew at a rate of 3.86%. From 11,560 employees to 12,006. The most common sectors are healthcare, education, financial fields and professional, scientific and tech services accounting for almost 54% of the growth. Having the housing available that we do, a strong employment profile, many options for recreation, shopping, dining and entertainment, along with high quality healthcare and strong educational institutions including a college with one of the nation's top ranked nursing programs, Rockville Centre has the potential to be highly attractive to professionals but there are ways to improve. Today's professionals want well-lit walkable downtowns, including parking fields and streets, and they want that lighting to be environmentally friendly. They want greener options such as charging stations for their zero-emissions vehicles or places where they can safely store bikes and helmets while they're shopping, dining or enjoying entertainment. Ownership of zero emission vehicles is on the rise. In 2012, 203 zero-emissions vehicles were registered in Nassau County that number increased to 496 in 2015 and the number will only continue to grow especially once charging stations become more common place. Right now, there is only one charging station open to the public and that is located at Mercy Medical Center, 2 miles from the Rockville Centre downtown area.

- 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.

As previously mentioned, the station plaza is a main gateway to Rockville Centre and it needs to be updated making it inviting for people to use mass transit to enter into the village. Also, the municipal parking fields were built in the middle of the last century. The fields need to be overhauled and redesigned to make the most use of the space available as well as utilizing environmentally friendly technology such as adding charging stations and bioswales. The parking fields would also be landscaped making them more inviting and safer to walk through – especially for our residents who live in the west end of our Village where there is a mix of new multi-family housing as well as low-income housing. The Village currently leases space in

one of our municipal parking fields to a Farmer's Market but it is on the eastern border of our Village. Once it's updated, parking field #2 would be an excellent location for the Farmer's market. It would still be easily accessible for those who travel by car but it will be more assessable for those who travel by mass transit as well as our residents who live in the west end, giving our low-income residents better access to the fresh vegetables and other fresh foods a farmer's market offers. By renovating the pedestrian walkway under the elevated tracks from North Village Avenue to Morris Avenue, including better lighting and security cameras, we will make walking a safer and more desirable option. We would install more bicycle racks and bicycle lockers so that cyclists have a place to leave their bikes and helmets while they use the train to commute to work or even if they just want to ride into town to shop, dine and/or go to a movie.

- 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.

By addressing the infrastructure of our outlying parking fields as well as the updating and beautification of our station plaza and pedestrian walkway under the train tracks, we are making our village safer and more enjoyable by making it more walkable and cyclable. Visitors will be more likely to take mass transit if they arrive to a well-lit and updated station plaza and are confident that they can safely walk to their final destination.

- 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.

While there has not been a formal engagement process as of yet, we do listen to the concerns and comments of our residents, visitors and business owners. We hear many comments about the parking in the downtown. While parking studies have shown that the Village does have ample parking, the fields that surround the downtown are under-utilized while cars constantly circle around the heart of the downtown looking for spots and many double park blocking traffic or park illegally thereby blocking crosswalks and views making it very dangerous for pedestrians and drivers alike. Renovating parking fields 2, 2A, 3, 5, 9, 13, 19, and 22, will address the parking issue. Our residents are also more environmentally conscious and by utilizing environmentally friendly technology such as LED lights and charging stations as well as adding bike lockers and racks, we are giving our residents and visitors options other than driving to come visit our downtown. According to the US Census, 25% of Rockville Centre residents take mass transit to work. The population of the Village between the ages of 18-65 is 14,177 25% of that number is 3,544. The Village issues approximately 3,500 passes for commuter lots yearly and on any given standard workday, our commuter lots are full. This tells us two things: 1) the majority of commuters are not utilizing alternative methods of transportation to get to and from the station and 2) the station plaza receives a lot of traffic by commuters, residents and visitors who pass by it through their daily activities. We are confident that our

residents would not only support the proposed renovations but would be actively engaged throughout the planning process.

- 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 projects that would be ready for implementation within the first two years are:

1. **Parking Field 9** The Village has already worked with a firm to redesign parking field 9. With that general design, we would be prepared to renovate that lot, adding parking spaces, easing traffic flow, and encouraging people to visit the active businesses in the area, several of which have rear entrances that are accessible from that lot.
2. **South Station Plaza** We would then address South Station Plaza, the road that runs east to west on the south side of the station. This road sees a lot of traffic, including a tremendous amount of bus activity. In addition to addressing pavement issues that has developed because of the amount of use the roadway gets, we would also add seating and streetscaping to enhance the experience of those traveling by bus, making mass transit a more attractive option.
3. **Front Street** The next step would to address the other side of the station plaza and address Front Street. We would replace broken cross walks, fix some settling issues and repave the road.
4. **Engineering** Hire engineering support to assist with the design of the other lots incorporating features such as pedestrian walkways/crosswalks, LED lighting, charging stations and bioswales into the design. We would also hire engineering support to assist with the design for the heavily traveled pedestrian walkway under the elevated tracks – including LED Lighting, bike lockers and racks,

- 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.

Rockville Centre has a strong history of being capable to manage large projects that were financed through multiple sources. Our bigger projects included the overhaul of Maple Avenue, the renovation of the Lister Park complex on our southern border as well as the construction of the RVC Sports Complex on our northern border. We are currently in the process of working with the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery on the “Living With the Bay” project. We have been the recipient of numerous federal and state grants so we know the process of managing a project from the beginning stages seeing it through to the end. We have also partnered with Molloy College and organizations and businesses within the Village to ensure the success of projects. Rockville Centre is well positioned to manage multiple projects.

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

[Click here to enter text.](#)

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

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## EMAIL SUBMISSION ADDRESSES

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

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

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