

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE – DOWNTOWN TEMPLATE
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BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: Mid-Hudson

Municipality Name: Village of Wappingers Falls

Downtown Name: Wappinger Falls Waterfront District

County: Dutchess

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

Situated around the majestic Wappinger Falls and Lake is the Village of Wappingers Falls' Waterfront District. This walkable urban core has begun a comprehensive revitalization complete with new drinking and waste water infrastructure, pedestrian improvements, building renovation, and streetscape improvements. The district has been federally recognized as a historical district since 1984 and has a character and charm that uniquely distinguishes it from neighboring urban municipalities. Several unique structures include a former industrial complex, a 2.5MW hydroelectric facility, a 1868 stone bridge perched above a 70 ft deep gorge, and scenic views of the Wappinger Lake. The Village of Wappingers Falls is very investment-worthy. With opportunities for development, low cost of living, and unique natural resources – Wappingers Falls provides a diverse and culturally rich community with a broad appeal to millennials and skilled workers.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION



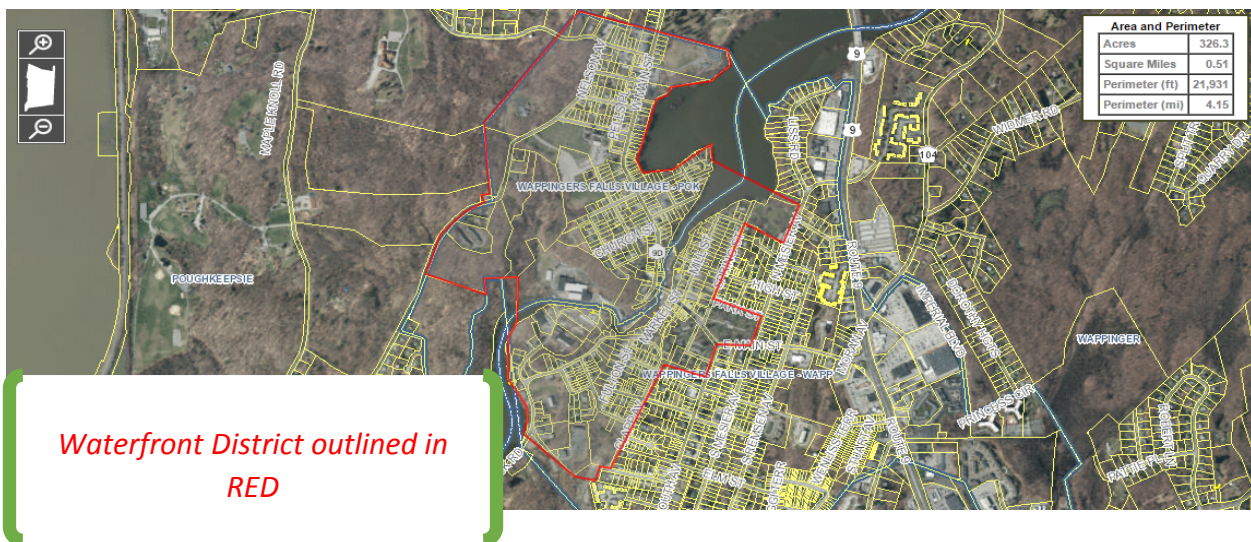
- 1) Boundaries of the Downtown Neighborhood.** Detail the boundaries of the targeted neighborhood, keeping in mind that there is no minimum or maximum size, but that the neighborhood should be compact and well-defined. Core neighborhoods beyond a traditional downtown or central business district are eligible, if they can meet other criteria making them ripe for investment.

The Village’s Waterfront District is compact and truly unique, having a total area of 326 acres. This new district expands the traditional Central Business District by including the vast majority of Village waterfront and reaches out to include properties ripe for development and adaptive reuse. This expanded overlay was designed to maximize the potential for complete livability upgrades focused on conjoining the live, work, and play categories outlined by the MHREDC.

Beneath the cascading Wappinger Waterfall sits an industrial hub which straddles the winding Lower Wappinger Creek as it descends to the Hudson River. Historic industrial buildings at this location have been repurposed into waterfront business incubation space which includes the largest fabric design library in the world. Visited frequently by Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren and other notable Empire State design companies – this facility has been globally recognized for its unparalleled collection of patterns and templates. In addition to this industrial park, there is nearly 50 acres of developable property throughout this district; poised to bring about a new wave of job creation and innovation to the Mid-Hudson Valley.

Furthermore, the district includes residential neighborhoods north of the traditional Village downtown. These lakefront neighborhoods provide new opportunities for first floor commercial operations due to provisions set forth in the 2014 Zoning Code which seeks to build off this area’s traffic volume and proximity to existing downtown amenities. Adaptive reuse of residential structures into mixed-use properties within these neighborhoods would effectively expand the commercial hub of the Village and promote a live/work/play atmosphere.

The 2014 zoning code designated much of this Waterfront District as either “Village Commercial” or “Village Mixed.” These zoning changes were inspired by a 2014 Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (NYS DOS) to allow home businesses, promote mixed use development, and facilitate the investment that is traditionally hampered by the complexities of urban, infill development.



- 2) Size.** Outline why the downtown, or its catchment area, is of a size sufficient to support a vibrant, year-round downtown, with consideration of whether there is a sizeable existing, or increasing, population within easy reach for whom this would be the primary downtown.

The 1.1 square mile Village of Wappingers Falls is the population center of Dutchess County. Within a 15 minute drive of the Waterfront District sits over 133,904 New Yorkers. The immediate neighbors of the Village, Wappinger and Poughkeepsie, comprise a quarter of Dutchess County's total population alone. The Village is bisected by Route 9D, with its 12,000 cars per day, and Route 9's 44,000 cars per day. The Village is 7 miles north of Interstate I-84 and just over 1 mile from the Metro North New Hamburg Station. The Village's proximity to Metro North's New Hamburg Station makes it easily reachable from New York City and the addition of two new urban-waterfront parks with boating and recreation components will surely create a seasonal surge in tourism. In terms of population trends, the Village has grown 17% since the 2000 census and continues to grow, having added hundreds of residential units in the past 5 years alone.

Building off of its historical role as a welcoming "melting-pot" community, the Village has grown to include the highest per capita amount of Latino residents in Dutchess County. The Village's success at attracting diverse ethnic groups has also made it a hot spot for Eastern European and Chinese immigrants – as well as Ecuadorian and Mexican immigrants. These new residents are attracted to the Village's compact and walkable atmosphere. Due to its relatively small size, the Village offers a combination of urban attributes with the home-town feel of a small upstate village. Even though it is the 2nd most densely populated municipality in Dutchess County, every acre of developed space is matched by an acre of open space within a half a mile.

The Village has been in discussions with over a dozen investors who are interested in building new housing developments ranging from 7 to 125 units each. In total, the Village has identified multiple projects which would add an estimated 250-300 new residential units. With a shortage of rental property in Dutchess County identified in the 2006-2016 County Planning and Development Housing Analysis – these residential developments are projected to fill their vacancies shortly after their construction. The Village gains an economy of scale and green efficiency through the consolidation of people and infrastructure in one central location. Village Infrastructure has been routinely upgraded over the last decade to ensure population growth is not met with a decline in municipal services. These improvements are highlighted by a new Water Treatment Plant, a sewer treatment plan which has benefited from aeration upgrades to improve its capacity by 50%, and brand new water and sewer distribution infrastructure throughout the entire Waterfront District. These improvements have prepared the Village to greatly expand its population and the number of businesses able to operate within the Waterfront District.

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

On over 2 dozen occasions the Village has demonstrated that it can properly administer county, state, and federal funding. Projects which receive funding have always been completed and have provided real livability improvements, quality plans and reports, and have moved the Village along in terms of its desired revitalization. Funds have always been leveraged with private money and local in-kind support in an effort to multiply the magnitude of their benefit to the residents and business owners of Wappingers Falls. In 2014, the Village's Industrial Park was designated as a Priority Project for the MHREDC and \$800,000 was granted for the installation of a new gravity force main and sewer connectivity for this highly developable property. This Priority Project joined a number of other ongoing efforts geared toward the revitalization of Wappingers Falls. This revitalization was kicked off in with the completion of a number of comprehensive planning documents in the early 2000's. These plans were co-sponsored with funding from New York State Department of State, New York State Department of Transportation, Dutchess County Planning and Development, and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. With a clear vision for revitalization laid out in these planning documents, the Village has led Dutchess County municipalities in capital spending per acre. In total, \$31.2 million of public spending has been matched with \$65.8 million dollars of private investment over the past decade within Wappingers Falls. For every dollar of public funding spent, the Village attracted \$2.11 of private investment; thus proving the Village's ability to spend efficiently and productively. The capital projects funded through this nearly \$100 million include: Historical Trails, new urban parkland, waterfront recreation facilities, pedestrian improvements, a new and state of the art water treatment facility, 240 KW solar facility, building renovation, sewer capacity upgrades, municipal office consolidation, streetscape renovations, and \$14.8 million in new waste water and drinking water distribution. Funding for these projects was successfully acquired, administered, and expended from the following agencies:

Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, New York Education Department, Dutchess County Planning and Development, Hudson River Institute, Hudson Valley Greenway, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, New York State Parks, Empire State Development Corporation, New York, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Environmental Facilities Corporation, New York State Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Village's strategy, moving forward, is to continue to develop and execute comprehensive planning documents which prioritize infrastructure and livability upgrades which support future economic and population growth. The Village intends to develop on its anchor attractions while stimulating the development of vacant lots in its compact downtown. With unique assets like the Grinnell Library, County Players Theater, and Wappingers Falls Hydroelectric Facility the Village has the potential and proven ability to attract pedestrians and contribute to economic growth.

- 4) Job Growth.** Describe how recent or impending job growth within, or in close proximity to, the downtown will attract professionals to an active life in the downtown, support redevelopment, and make growth sustainable in the long-term.

In its heyday, this downtown employed thousands of New Yorkers and produced sizable contributions to the working class culture of New York State. The Village of Wappingers Falls has seen its population grow by 17% since the 2000 census. This population growth has subsequently resulted in an increase demand for employment opportunities. The Market Street Industrial Park and the Route 9 Corridor house the Village's largest employers. The Center for Physical Therapy and several other expanding businesses offer the promise of improved employment opportunities in the coming months.

Market Street Industrial Park is equipped with business incubation space to promote the cultivation of locally-owned small businesses. Currently, there are over 30 businesses which are headquartered at the site. This entity has the ability to expand its incubation space across the Wappinger Creek to a recently remediated superfund site. This property has been the recipient of \$800,000 of Mid Hudson Regional Economic Development Council funding for infrastructure improvements which will promote the shovel-readiness of this site. In 2016, the Village was awarded a \$200,000 from a federal Brownfield Assessment grant through the Environmental Protection Agency. This funding will allow for this site and 9 others throughout the Village to get phase II environmental testing done to improve development readiness and usher in future job creators. These assessed sites will benefit from this EPA funding and the Village's Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study by qualifying for Brownfield Cleanup Tax Credits. The Village has a strong record of successfully implementing the recommendations of our New York State funded plans and strategies.

Connected to the Waterfront District via East Main Street is the Route 9 Corridor. This commercial corridor boasts \$83,804,800 in commercial real estate, in an area of just over a quarter of a square mile. This corridor is an example of how Wappingers Falls can cultivate a successful commercial district which employs hundreds of residents.

In the northernmost part of the Waterfront District sits The Center for Physical Therapy which is one of the district's largest employers. "The Center" is looking to expand into a campus-style medical center capable of employing more residents and serving the entire region with more advanced physical therapy resources. This facility would seek to tap regional colleges and universities to open up internship programs in an effort to keep graduates local.

These compact and densely populated commercial districts are centrally located and have seen success as Route 9 continues to grow into Dutchess County's main north-south corridor. The Village's Waterfront District is unique in that it links Route 9D, Route 9, Metro North Railroad, and the Hudson Valley Greenway Land & Water Trails together. This unparalleled connectivity enables the Village to appeal to a wide segment of the Hudson Valley.

- 5) Attractiveness of the Downtown.** Identify the properties or characteristics the downtown possesses that contribute or could contribute, if enhanced, to the attractiveness and livability of the downtown. Consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, housing at different levels of affordability and type, healthy and affordable food markets, walkability and bikeability, and public parks and gathering spaces.

The Village's Waterfront District is highly walkable and features scenic views of the Wappinger Lake and Falls. The two largest pedestrian generators are the historic County Players Theater and the Grinnell Library, the 6th oldest in the state. County Players alone brings 11,000 visitors into the Village, per year. With funding from New York State Department of Transportation, the Village is spending nearly \$1 million on pedestrian improvements that include new cross walks, lighting, curbing, and auto-traffic calming measures. This investment in pedestrian improvements is in an effort to improve multi-modal transit throughout this walkable community. With low rent and an affordable cost of living, the Village of Wappingers Falls provides residents with an array of housing options, rich cultural diversity, and an appealing atmosphere for millennials and skilled workers.

The Village's Waterfront District boasts a number of locally-owned Main Street businesses which provide unique services, products, and dining experiences to Village residents and visitors. The Village has seen an impressive resurgence in terms of its food culture and is the proud home of half a dozen restaurants with culinary trained chefs and staff. The Village's proximity to the Culinary Institute of America makes it the landing spot for many CIA graduates. Over the last 2 years, almost half a dozen new chefs have opened new restaurants within the Waterfront District, all of which have seen remarkable success. This demonstrates a level of attractiveness to recent local college graduates, both as business owners and employees – as well as patrons. The Village also attracts commercial entities embracing the move toward locally sourced food and drinks as well as ethnic specialty restaurants. The Waterfront District includes a homemade ice cream creamery, a Craft Brewery, and the offices of the local Obercreek Farm and Cidery.

In 2016, the Village's nightlife and bar scene began its own revival with the creation of a waterfront wine bar on Market Street and a craft beer tavern on East Main Street. With the County Players increasing the frequency of their theater productions, thousands of pedestrians will be entering the Village annually to attend plays, eat dinner, and go out for drinks. These new amenities and developments are geared toward attracting a millennial population to live, work, and play in the Village of Wappingers Falls.

In terms of public space, the Village already has 4 urban parks within this walkable and bikeable district – proving that recreational opportunities are abundant. One very unique aspect of this District is its mixture of a tidal estuary, waterfalls, a lake, and a creek. The parks include the Village's green and historical center, a ball park complex with access to the Wappinger Lake, a soccer and football field, and a yet-to-be-named waterfront park along the Lower Wappinger Creek which is being completed with support from NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and equipped with a community boathouse. This boathouse will serve as a community education center, in addition to hosting a commercial kayaking operation.

The Village sees regular use of these parks from local residents and visitors from New York City who come up on the Metro North Railroad. The New Hamburg Train Station (1.1 miles from the Waterfront District) is only 83 minutes from New York City. The Wappinger Greenway Trail also connects the Waterfront District to 160 acres of Scenic Hudson and Audubon Society nature preserves.

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

The Village Board has been impressively progressive throughout the past 10 years, having dedicated tremendous resources to promoting transit oriented, mixed-use, and diverse development through modernized policy. The Village has completed nearly a dozen comprehensive planning documents since 2000 and has utilized these plans to complete widespread policy implements. These documents address a number of topics including **Transportation** (Transportation Plan 2001); **Infrastructure** (Capital Plan 2009, Capital Infrastructure Plans 2010, 2015); **Natural Resource Protection** (Natural Resource Management Plan 2000, Tree Inventory Report and Management Plan 2015, Wappinger Creek 9 Element Plan in process); **Economic Development** (Comprehensive Plan 2001, Quality Community Plan 2008, West Main Street Revitalization Plan 2008, Action Plan 2009, Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy 2011, Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study in process).

In 2014, the Village Zoning Code was updated, using recommendations made in the 2011 Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy. The new form-based zoning code specifically allows for more home businesses, promotes mixed use development, and is geared toward facilitating the new investments traditionally hampered by the complexities of urban infill development. In 2015, the Village began work on a \$370,000 Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study (funded by NYS DOS) which will seek to improve the utilization of underdeveloped or undeveloped properties in the Village. This plan will look specifically at developing vacant industrial properties with job creators, providing solutions which help incentivize infill development, and develop a plan to better utilize one of the Village's more unique assets, the hydroelectric plant in the center of this Waterfront District. If nominated as a BOA, developers in the Village will receive additional tax abatement through the Brownfield Cleanup Program if building on a contaminated lot. In 2016, the Village was awarded an EPA Community-Wide Brownfield Assessment Grant which will identify and test for containments on the majority of sites suspected of contamination. These two grants in partnership with each other will effectively enable the Village to provide unparalleled tax relief to developers interested in building on vacant property throughout Wappingers Falls. In May of 2016, the Village Board unanimously moved to support legislation (A2384A and S7702) in the New York State Senate and Assembly which allows for partial tax abatement for mixed-use development in Village Centers over a 20 year period. This tax relief will help catalyze development otherwise shown to be cost prohibited due to regulations of building on zero lot lines within a federally designated historical district which borders a state highway.

The Village has also been progressive in its attempt to improve energy efficiency and reduce its carbon footprint. In 2015, Wappingers Falls took a Climate Smart Communities Pledge to support sustainable practices and in 2016 the Board voted to participate in the Solarize Initiative. All Village-owned property was retrofitted with LED lighting, the Water Treatment Facility began receiving all of its power from the one acre solar array located on-site, and a NY PRIZE Feasibility Study was completed on a microgrid concept which included 50% renewable energy sources. A commitment to transit oriented development and multi-modal transit methods has also put the Village at the forefront of the environmental movement. Housing developments have been constructed with proximity to Metro North Railroad's New Hamburg Station. Greenway Trails have been improved throughout the Waterfront District and pedestrian improvements have been made to promote an enjoyable walking experience through this Waterfront District.

- 7) Local Support.** Set forth the local and community support that exists for the revitalization of this downtown and the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to building and implementing a strategic investment plan. Identify an initial local lead for the program that will work with outside experts to convene a local DRI Planning Committee to oversee the plan.

The Village has identified, through public survey, discussion with planning consultants, and public meetings, that the four target areas of development through this initiative are: Market Street Industrial Park, County Players Theater's proposed expansion into a concert venue, Infill development along West and East Main Street, and the improved utilization of the hydroelectric power plant at the base of the Wappinger Falls.

The Village of Wappingers Falls Board of Trustees voted unanimously in favor of this application to the Downtown Revitalization Initiative for planning and capital improvements to the Waterfront District. The Village Board has overseen \$31.2 million dollars in public projects over the last 10 years. This \$31.2 million dollars has been matched with \$65.8 million in private investment during the same time period. This progressive group of public servants has the stability and experience needed to ensure this project is carried out promptly and completely. The Village will enter this planning initiative with over a dozen projects already identified and with interested private developers already at the table to leverage the state's investment into the immediate private sector development of job creating entities and quality of life improvements.

The County Players Theater, a non-profit, and major pedestrian generator in the Village has voted unanimously in support of this project. So too has the Grinnell Public Library District which manages the 6th oldest library in New York State, located within the Waterfront District. The Wappingers Falls Business and Professional Association and the Wappingers Falls Historical Society have both vocalized their support for this application. These groups will be essential in gathering public support, as they have done for the past several decades. The Business and Professional Association, specifically, has worked hard to incentivize development of vacant properties, complete façade upgrades throughout commercial corridors, and to attract more private investment from local developers and investors. The Wappinger Creek Watershed Intermunicipal Council has supported this district's natural resource protection while Wappinger Greenway Committee President Joe Ennesser has backed the Village's submission to the Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

The owners of Market Street Industrial Park have also put their support into this application. This entity has successfully incubated over 30 businesses at their location and is looking to expand into the vacant Dutchess Bleachery in a capacity which would enable them to provide more space for business incubation. Adjacent to this Industrial Park is the Wappingers Falls Hydroelectric Facility. The owners of this facility have been supporters of the Village's revitalization and most recently have been partners with the Village on the 2015 New York Prize Feasibility Study.

One of the Village's largest employers is The Center for Physical Therapy. Owner Chris Campili has expressed the desire to expand his existing 3 building operation into a larger medical campus. He is a firm supporter of this DRI application and an eager participant in the Village's revitalization.

The Local Lead for Wappingers Falls' DRI Program would be Mayor Matt Alexander. Mayor Alexander served 4 years on the Village Planning Board from 2002-2006, a year as Village Trustee (2006), and has served as Mayor since 2007 – being elected to 5 consecutive terms and earning both Democratic and Republican nominations. The Mayor has experience in the private sector as a CPA and a CFO for several publicly traded companies. This capital finance and planning background has proven to be a tremendous asset for the Village.

- 8) **Other.** Provide any other information that informed the nomination of this downtown for a DRI award.

Strategic Partnerships and Vision for Revitalization –

The Village of Wappingers Falls has long sought a comprehensive economic revitalization anchored around three specific sectors: **Jobs, Sustainable Energy, and Housing.**

The following entities have been identified in an effort to demonstrate the Village's ability to leverage DRI funds with private investment.

The Sustainable Energy Funding Program (SEFP) has taken an interest in maximizing the hydroelectricity generated in the core of this Waterfront District as a resource to reduce electric costs. In an effort to do so, this non-profit group has begun an initial feasibility study to determine the best method of increasing the energy output of this facility. SEFP seeks to incentivize workforce housing and business creation in the Village by offering these competitive electric rates.

SEFP has had preliminary meetings with the Hydroelectric Facility's owner Harry Turbush, who has been a strong ally and strategic partner in the Village's NY PRIZE Microgrid Project. Harry's vision for modernizing the facility offers promise that Wappingers Falls can lead New York in revolutionizing the energy status-quo.

The largest industrial operation in the Village of Wappingers Falls is the Market Street Industrial Park (MSIP). MSIP is owned and operated by brothers Robert and Jack Feddigan. The Feddigans have had success in remediating and restoring the Hudson Wire Mill in Ossining and have successfully incubated over 30 businesses at their site in Wappingers Falls. These experienced developers have an interest in constructing incubation space and various other commercial properties throughout the Village's Waterfront District.

As previously mentioned, Chris Campili of The Center for Physical Therapy is planning a large expansion of his current operation. The vision is a medical campus at the northern entryway of the Village which would tap local colleges and universities for internships and employment opportunities. The Center for Physical Therapy already is a large employer of local residents. This expansion would create more employment opportunity and would offer skilled jobs to those graduating from local universities – a surefire method of preventing youth flight to other regions.

This combination of strategic allies, comprehensive planning, identified projects, and capable local leaders prove that Wappingers Falls is ready and able to partner with the MHREDC to usher in a complete economic revitalization. Furthermore, we feel we are perfectly suited to be a replicable model of urban revitalization. We welcome the opportunity to have the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council take us through this process with the insight and the funding to make real change a possibility.

LINK TO VILLAGE PLANNING DOCUMENTS: <http://www.wappingersfallsny.gov/planning-documents>