

## Coney Island Riegelmann Boardwalk/Beach/Amusement District

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

Coney Island has a rich history and iconography, and while the neighborhood has been in a protracted period of uplift and revitalization, there is a lack of connectivity between various areas within its alluring Amusement District and beyond to the greater Coney Island neighborhood. Presently, there is no accessibility to existing city-wide bicycle paths, historic connections are not prominent and are therefore lost to the revitalization. There is limited public art or shaded seating to enable visitors and residents of all ages to enjoy, meander and experience Coney Island's past, present and future. The important historic role Coney Island has played in the creation of amusements and a wonderland are absent from the various level of recent private and public investment. The Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) grant would help facilitate a necessary dialogue between the various organizations, partners and community stakeholders in Coney Island to envision and plan together in a way that has never been possible before.

### **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.**

Coney Island is a neighborhood of 50,000 year round residents and a transit hub with the D, N, F and Q trains beginning in Coney Island along with four bus lines and, in the next two years, the implementation of NYC Ferry service. The area is presently undergoing unprecedented growth, with thousands of new housing units in development which will also have new commercial space and an influx of population. This development matches more than a decade of investment, both public and private, in the Coney Island Amusement District and immediate surrounding area.

Today, in addition to the tens of thousands of residents, Coney Island is home to immigrant owned small businesses, cultural institutions, as well as major New York City anchors such as the New York Aquarium, MCU Park, the Ford Amphitheater, the Coney Island Riegelmann Boardwalk, Luna Park, and Deno's Wonder Wheel.

## DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

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

Surf Avenue forms the southern boundary of the neighborhood, connecting the Amusement District with the mixed-use nature of its neighboring corridors. The East end of Surf Avenue accommodates the annual surge of five million visitors with a variety of attractions, gift shops, and full-service restaurants. For the DRI, we are focused upon the area which directly mirrors the 2009 rezoning: Surf Avenue from West 8th Street to West 21st Street and all gateway streets that provide linkages to and from Surf to the Boardwalk and to the greater residential neighborhood. This area is inclusive of the Stillwell Avenue transit hub as well as the economic engine for the area.

**2) Past investment, future investment potential. Describe how this DRI area will be able to capitalize on prior private and public investment and catalyze future investments in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas. Describe recent planning efforts that support public and private investment in the proposed DRI area.**

Since 2000, there has been a variety of both public and private investment in Coney Island to spur the economy and ensure that the Amusement District can serve as a beachside destination for years to come. This investment includes the following publicly subsidized projects which amount to over \$1.5 billion dollars in investment:

- \$2.5 Million lighting enhancement to the Parachute Jump
- \$4 Million purchase & restoration of the B&B Carousel
- \$6.5 Million West 10th Street access improvement
- \$60 Million Amphitheater
- \$30 Million construction of Steeplechase Plaza (a 2.2 acre public space)
- \$180 Million in infrastructure improvements
- \$227 Million for New York Aquarium's newest addition: Ocean Wonders: Sharks! and improvements and restoration to the facility after Superstorm Sandy

This investment, which does not account for the millions in private investment has laid the foundation for the DRI to capitalize on investments and build upon them to make Coney Island the most welcoming and beach friendly area in New York City, as it should be.

While this investment on the beachside was intrinsic to revitalizing the area and providing a wide variety of attractions and activities, it has not changed the gateways to the beach, nor has it changed and revitalized the uses that line Surf Avenue to build upon the District or carry the liveliness of the amusements from beyond their property lines to the public spaces. The DRI creates the opportunity to revisit these spaces, optimize their usage by encouraging a sense of place and encourage alternative transportation access while building upon the area's strengths.

**3) 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.**

Alongside the housing growth and other improvements taking place in Coney Island, a variety of these new developments will have commercial space housing new businesses and job opportunities in the community as well as the continued growth of the Coney Island Amusement District. In 2019 alone, the Alliance for Coney Island worked with eight employers to connect local residents to more than 1,000 open positions in the area. These positions add to the hundreds of others in the area and every year the opportunities are increasing.

However, while this growth has been phenomenal, there are many residents in the Coney Island community that are not prepared or positioned to benefit from the current and future growth of Coney Island. Coney Island's unemployment rate remains at 19.1 percent and the median household income of Coney Island is \$24,113 while citywide the median income is more than \$52,000 (Coney Island Commercial District Needs Assessment).

The future growth of Coney Island in tandem with the current development creates the perfect opportunity for the DRI to have a major impact on how people experience Coney Island, as well as ensuring that more individuals are prepared for job opportunities that arise.

**4) 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 Coney Island Amusement District is unlike any other location in New York State, and one could argue, even worldwide. An area rich with history, having shown tremendous resiliency during extended periods of high crime rates and post Superstorm Sandy, with dozens of businesses that have existed for decades and more than five landmarks, it is unmatched in

perseverance, potential and uniqueness. However, the stunning landmarks, beachside landscapes and skylines dotted with rides and amusements do not translate to inviting and livable streets. Coney Island possesses a variety of opportunities for enhancement and development as it is the most heavily trafficked neighborhood of Southern Brooklyn. As a gateway to the birthplace of Amusements, the current streetscape leaves much to be desired. There is limited color, light or engaging aspects to encourage visitors to explore and learn about the current community or the historical elements of the bygone days of Coney Island.

The various stakeholders that would be brought together through the DRI process will help create a strategic plan and a fresh perspective on how the public realm can and should receive investment so that it reflects the engaging and historic area that surrounds it.

**5) 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 that support livability and quality of life in downtown are not currently in place, describe near-term efforts by the municipality to create and implement such policies.**

The 2009 rezoning of Coney Island set the foundation for public and private investments envisioned animated streetscapes with vibrant colors and uses. Much of the vision from the rezoning has become a reality with the amusement industry revitalized, private investment taking place and housing development (both public and private) well underway. All of this growth surrounds or is in close walking distance to the Stillwell Avenue transit hub, making access to transit critical to the growth and success of the area.

One of the prime foci and goals of the Alliance for Coney Island as a nonprofit organization is to advocate for an improved quality of life for residents and businesses. This spans beyond the boundaries proposed for the DRI, and in addition to advocating for such improvements, the Alliance provides supplemental services, markets the area to drive visitorship and attract good businesses as well as produces more than 30 free events annually.

In the Alliance's vision coupled with Coney Island's rezoning vision of year-round development, there is a significant gap and identifiable need to create a more inviting streetscape which directly correlates with an improved quality of life and experience. All residents who commute by public transportation indirectly interact with the Amusement District as it is where the trains

and buses depart from, thus any improvements to the aesthetics and access to these spaces is beneficial to both residents and visitors.

**6) 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. Characterize the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to preparing and implementing a strategic investment plan.**

In 2018, in partnership with the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS), the Alliance conducted a Commercial District Needs Assessment engaging a diverse group of stakeholders including 118 merchants (85% of which are immigrant mom and pop operations run by extended members of a family), and 329 consumers. The Assessment was followed by a Market Analysis study conducted by an independent consultant through a \$2.1 million grant from the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) which identified several areas for corridor improvement including aesthetics, as well as branded signage that would both encourage and increase patronage.

These two recent initiatives conducted by the Alliance, increased the understanding of the needs of Coney Island merchants and began an overdue dialogue about commercial revitalization and economic development. These outreach efforts were the impetus for the Alliance facilitating a forum for like-minded stakeholders to discuss the benefits of a Business Improvement District (BID) for Coney Island. Issues of concern identified for improvement include: commercial district branding and marketing for both Mermaid Avenue and the Amusement District, and public safety, sanitation, beautification, business recruitment, parking and lighting along both corridors. The Alliance has begun to address some of these issues by hiring a Supplemental Sanitation team, collaborating with the local police precinct to address safety issues before they escalate, installing security cameras on two corners to increase safety, and through collaboration with the professional services of two Marketing Design teams, one through SBS and the other through GOSR funds, to develop separate brands for the corridors with a unifying thread - Coney Island is for Everyone.

These initiatives and projects have proven that there is a group of stakeholders from the community that are consistently involved and interested in community planning. The already existing platforms for community members and elected officials ensures that convening stakeholders for dialogue and visioning will be welcomed.

**7) Transformative opportunities. Describe opportunities to build on the strengths described above by providing a list of transformative projects that could 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). Identify potential development opportunities, such as municipally-owned property that may be appropriate for redevelopment. Projects may be public or private, and could address economic development, transportation, housing, and community development needs. It should be recognized that if a DRI award is made to the downtown, the projects identified here, along with any others that may arise during the DRI planning process, will ultimately be vetted by the Local Planning Committee and the State to determine which projects receive DRI grants.**

There are a wide range of projects that can be transformative to Coney Island's public realm as well as critical to creating a pipeline of qualified local residents for jobs available in the area. As a growing Amusement District, revisiting the public realm through a macro lens is critical to fortifying the area's economy for the future. Planning with a variety of stakeholders and connecting Coney Island to bicycle access and bicycle parking is of critical importance, particularly since the Boardwalk is not bicycle friendly during the Summer Season. A comprehensive signage and accessible routes for the public would overcome issues of seniors and visitors encountering bicycles racing past them on the Boardwalk during the summer while encouraging bicycle ridership as an alternative form for travel to and from the area.

In addition, access points to the beach and boardwalk from Surf Avenue and the elevated subway tracks can be enhanced by planning and coordination with the New York City Department of Transportation's (DOT) "Under the El" program which encourages lighting and public art to make such areas pedestrian friendly, safe and inviting. Furthermore, focusing upon these access points and working in collaboration with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) on shaded seating solutions for the Boardwalk or with the NYCDOT on shaded seating for the streets leading to our iconic beach and Boardwalk would create a more welcoming atmosphere for our beachside destination.

Lastly, there are opportunities within some of the new developments to create a workforce training space - currently envisioned as a "workforce cafe" for on the job training in the culinary arts. The realization of this type of facility builds upon several years of visioning by Councilmember Mark Treyger as well as part of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy report led by the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce in 2018. With an on-the-ground culinary training facility, residents could apprentice and learn skills which then could be applied to the hundreds of job opportunities within the Amusement District.

**8) Administrative Capacity. Describe the existing local administrative capacity to manage this planning and implementation initiative, including the ability to oversee contracts for awarded municipal projects using existing staff and resources.**

The Alliance for Coney Island is well-positioned to manage the Downtown Revitalization Initiative funding and planning processes. To date, the Alliance has managed a variety of City Council discretionary funding streams and is currently overseeing a \$2.1 million GOSR grant which is multifaceted with discretionary and capital funding. The GOSR grant has involved a variety of consultant contracts and services, all with the goal of revitalizing Mermaid Avenue. Additionally, the Alliance managed a \$50,000 grant from Empire State Development for a Market Study of Mermaid Avenue.

The Alliance for Coney Island is led by Alexandra Silversmith, who we worked in Coney Island since 2011, and whose prior professional experience includes working at the New York City Economic Development Corporation on a variety of projects including the East New York Industrial Plan.



MATHYLDE FRONTUS  
Assemblymember 46<sup>th</sup> District  
Kings County

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STATE OF NEW YORK  
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MEMBER  
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Asian Legislative Caucus  
Legislative Women's Caucus

May 30, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to support the Alliance for Coney Island's application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant to engage the Coney Island community around planning and capital improvements for their neighborhood. As you are aware, Coney Island has had a long history of neglect and blight and is certainly experiencing a pendulum shift in terms of how services, businesses and government responds to and interacts with the community while planning for a brighter future. To that end, we are grateful for the opportunity to bring a grant of this size into this community which could serve as a transformative force vis-à-vis Coney Island's long-term revitalization. I cannot think of another neighborhood more worthy of this investment. I look forward to working closely with the Alliance for Coney Island and other partners to engage the community so that together this grant can truly be transformative for Coney Island residents and visitors.

Sincerely,

Mathylde Frontus  
Assemblymember, 46<sup>th</sup> District

HAKEEM S. JEFFRIES  
8th DISTRICT, New York  
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May 30, 2019

Downtown Revitalization Initiative  
Regional Economic Development Councils  
633 Third Avenue 36<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10017

To Whom It May Concern:

I write in support of the Alliance for Coney Island's application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant to engage the Coney Island community around planning and capital improvements for the neighborhood. Since 2012, the Alliance for Coney Island (ACI) has provided engaging, high-quality, year-round public programming, and supplemental neighborhood services such as supplemental sanitation and small business support for the Coney Island community. Their work is foundational to achieving the goal of creating a better future for a neighborhood that is home to 50,000 residents, hundreds of businesses and millions of visitors annually.

In recent years, Coney Island has seen substantial growth because of both City and private investment but has yet to reach its fullest potential. The current public spaces need dramatic improvements and lack assets that accommodate and welcome visitors. Tourism to Coney Island is growing annually, with an estimate of over 7 million visitors in 2018. The current streetscape, lack of bicycle connectivity to the rest of Brooklyn, and missing workforce development programs to build skills for residents are all obstacles in the path of Coney Island's revitalization reaching its fullest potential.

To date, there has been limited community planning initiatives at this magnitude, and ACI's vision is to ensure current and future residents, visitors, and Coney Island businesses on the peninsula have an improved quality of life, thriving business environment and good visitor experience, thoughtful planning and investment

As the Representative for the 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, I urge fair and full consideration of the Alliance for Coney Island's Downtown Revitalization Initiative proposal. If funded, I believe that the planning and funds will help empower Coney Island businesses and residents to create a thriving neighborhood that benefits all community members for decades to come. Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

HAKEEM JEFFRIES  
Member of Congress

**CHAIR MAJORITY MEMBER**  
INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY  
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THE SENATE  
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**DIANE J. SAVINO**  
SENATOR, 23<sup>RD</sup> DISTRICT

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May 22, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to support the Alliance for Coney Island's application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant to engage the Coney Island community around planning and capital improvements for their neighborhood. As the Senator representing this neighborhood I have seen firsthand the commitment Alliance for Coney Island (ACI) has to this community and watched their connection to the neighborhood deepen since their incorporation in 2012. The Alliance provides engaging, high-quality, year-round public programming, supplemental neighborhood services such as supplemental sanitation and small business support for the Coney Island community. Their work is fundamental in achieving the the goal of creating a better future for a neighborhood that is home to 50,000 residents, hundreds of businesses and millions of visitors annually.

Coney Island has seen substantial growth in recent years because of both City and private investment but has not yet reached its fullest potential. The current public spaces are in need of dramatic improvements and lack assets that accommodate and welcome visitors. Thoughtful planning and investment from the public realm is crucial in ensuring that current and future residents, tourists, and local businesses have improved quality of life, thriving business environments and good visitor experiences.

Visitorship to Coney Island is growing annually, with an estimate of over 7 million visitors in 2018. The current streetscape, lack of bicycle connectivity to the rest of Brooklyn and missing workforce development programs to build skills for residents are all obstacles in the path of Coney Island's revitalization reaching its fullest potential. To date, there has been limited community planning initiatives at this magnitude, and I believe the possibilities are endless when bringing together stakeholders to thoughtfully brainstorm and implement improvements for the Coney Island area.

Thank you for your thorough consideration of the Alliance for Coney Island's Downtown Revitalization Initiative proposal. If funded, I believe that the planning and funds will help empower Coney Island businesses and residents to create a thriving neighborhood that benefits all community members for decades to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Diane J. Savino', written over a horizontal line.

Diane J. Savino  
NYS Senator, 23<sup>rd</sup> District

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May 22, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to support the Alliance for Coney Island's application for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant to engage the Coney Island community around planning and capital improvements for their neighborhood. The Alliance for Coney Island (ACI) is a valuable community partner in Coney Island and I have witnessed firsthand how their connection to the neighborhood has deepened since their incorporation in 2012. The Alliance provides engaging, high-quality, year-round public programming, supplemental neighborhood services such as supplemental sanitation and small business support for the Coney Island community. The Alliance's work is critical toward achieving our shared goal of creating a better future for a neighborhood that is home to 50,000 residents, hundreds of businesses and millions of visitors annually.

Coney Island has seen substantial growth in recent years because of both City and private investment but has yet to reach its fullest potential. Public spaces are in need of dramatic improvements and lack assets that accommodate and welcome visitors. In order to ensure current and future residents, visitors, and businesses on the peninsula have an improved quality of life, thriving business environment and good visitor experience, thoughtful planning and investment in the public realm is essential.

Visitorship to Coney Island is growing annually, with an estimate of over 7 million visitors in 2018. The current streetscape, lack of bicycle connectivity to the rest of Brooklyn and missing workforce development programs to build skills for residents are all obstacles in the path of Coney Island's revitalization reaching its fullest potential. To date, community planning initiatives at this magnitude have been limited, and I believe the possibilities are endless when bringing together stakeholders to thoughtfully brainstorm and implement improvements for the Coney Island area.

Thank you for your thorough consideration of the Alliance for Coney Island's Downtown Revitalization Initiative proposal. If funded, I believe that the planning and funds will help empower Coney Island businesses and residents to create a thriving neighborhood that benefits all community members for decades to come. I can be reached at [mtreyger@council.nyc.gov](mailto:mtreyger@council.nyc.gov) should you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Treyger".

Mark Treyger  
Council Member, 47<sup>th</sup> District