BASIC INFORMATION
Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: New York City
Municipality Name: Office of the President, Borough of Queens
Downtown Name: Downtown Far Rockaway Commercial District & Transit Hub
County: Queens

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

After decades of challenges, Downtown Far Rockaway’s future is looking brighter than ever. With a host of public and private investments in various planning and development projects, that include transportation, infrastructure, housing, public spaces, streetscapes, commercial and retail expansion, Far Rockaway is poised to become the next urban transportation hub desired by people of all walks of life… “Welcome to Far Rockaway, A Great Place to Discover”.

Our vision for Downtown Far Rockaway is to reconnect it to its unique natural assets such as Rockaway Beach & Boardwalk, O’Donohue Park and Jamaica Bay; expanding our Beach 20th Street corridor to include a Medical Row that accentuates the growing number of health care facilities and practices complimenting St. John’s Episcopal Hospital to the North; and revitalize the Far Rockaway Long Island Railroad Station into a Transit Orientated Development (TOD) hub incorporating station upgrades, new businesses, and streetscape improvements along the Central Avenue corridor.

Justification. Provide an overview of the downtown, 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.

Historical Perspective
In its heyday, Downtown Far Rockaway was known as “The Village” featuring pristine shops, movie theatres, restaurants, a bank, newspapers and court house that drew shoppers, visitors from Long Island, Brooklyn, Manhattan and mainland Queens.

The A-Train and Long Island Railroad met in Downtown Far Rockaway where the present day Far Rockaway Shopping Center is located.

In addition to being the only land-based entry point (878 Highway) into the Rockaways, Downtown Far Rockaway is also referred to as “The Gateway”, connecting people via cars, buses, train, commuter rail and dollar vans to other destination points such as the rest of the peninsula, Nassau County, southern
Brooklyn and Jamaica. Downtown Far Rockaway also represents the only areas in the Rockaways that is outside of the 100-year flood zone and is less likely to be decimated during natural disasters such as Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

Physical Characteristics
Rich in history and architecture erected at the turn of the 20th century, includes:

- **Trinity Chapel**, also known as St. John's Church and Beth-El Temple, is a historic Episcopal Church at 1874 Mott Avenue in Far Rockaway, Queens. It was built in 1858 to the design of noted architect Richard Upjohn. It is a frame Gothic Frame style chapel on a brick foundation with steeply pitched roof and sided in wood shingles. Atop the roof is a wooden belfry with steeply pitched pyramidal roof. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

- **Far Rockaway Post Office** - Built in 1935, the Far Rockaway Post Office is one of six post offices in New York State designed by architect Eric Kebbon. It is a two-story brick building with limestone trim and a low granite base in the Colonial Revival style. Its main facade features a centrally placed polygonal shaped frontispiece with a rounded dome inspired by Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello. It also has a grand entrance vestibule. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

- **Smith Building** - The Smith Building is located on the northeast corner of Mott and Central Avenues, the two most prominent avenues in the neighborhood. The building dates to 1931 and is one of Downtown Far Rockaway’s most distinguished buildings.

- **NYC 101st Police Precinct Building** - Built in the 1920’s with an Italian Renaissance Style.

- **Far Rockaway Bank Building** - Located on the Central Avenue, it is a wedge shaped marble Greek Revival building went up in 1912. The building is wedge-shaped to accommodate the former route of the Long Island Rail Road, which adjoined its left side until the mid-1950s.

In spite of it’s rich history, Far Rockaway fell on hard times through decades of disinvestment. Today, with an influx of public and private capital is opening the door to revitalize Far Rockaway as the commercial and transportation hub of the peninsula. The stage is set to make Far Rockaway a strong neighborhood for beach goers and home to local residents with all the components that make a strong neighborhood.

**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 DRI program description.

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 concentrated 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. Attach a map that clearly delineates the downtown neighborhood.

The **Downtown Far Rockaway Commercial District & Transit Hub (Study Area)** is located in the eastern area of the Queens Community Board 14. The Boundaries of the Downtown Far Rockaway
Commercial-Retail District (District) includes a 22 block area that is bounded to the south by Cornaga Avenue; Beach 22nd Street, Beach Channel Drive and Redfern Avenue to the west and northwest; Gateway Boulevard to the Southeast; and Central Avenue and Nameoke Avenue to the east and northeast.

Figure 1: Map of Downtown Far Rockaway

2. **Catchment area.** 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 destination.

As the Rockaways most densely populated area (58,000 persons) and the largest concentration of businesses (250+) amongst the three (3) main commercial districts located in Queens Community Board 14 (Far Rockaway, Rockaway Beach Boulevard and Beach 116th Street) the **Study Area** has sufficient population density to support and justify NYS Downtown Revitalization Investment designation.

As the main transportation hub of the Rockaways, Downtown Far Rockaway is known as the **Gateway to the Rockaways**, connecting thousands of daily commuters and over 8,500 area workers via A-train; Q22, Q113, Q114, QM 17 Express, N31, N32 and N33 buses, and LIRR commuter rail from Long Island to other parts of New York City. In addition to providing basic neighborhood services – food & beverage, clothing, household goods, and professional services, Downtown Far Rockaway also has identified health and medical care services as a rapidly growing business and employment sector with over 40 established health and medical care practices anchored by the Rockaways only hospital and largest employer, St. John’s Episcopal Hospital. Slightly beyond the northern border of the **Study Area** is Rockaway Beach & Boardwalk, and O’Donohue Park, that extends from Beach 9th to Beach 32nd Streets. O’Donohue Park attractions rock climbing, walking
trails, roller skating rink, children’s playground basketball courts, baseball field, a year-round concession/restaurant and an outdoor band shell that attracts local residents and visitors year-round.

The *Study Area* can be defined as a neighborhood retail district that supports several established residential areas, most notably Bayswater, Deerfield and Edgemere, and several large housing developments – Gateway, Redfern and Wavecrest. Both the residential areas and rental housing developments are within walking distance of Downtown or a short train or bus ride away. A Market-Retail Analysis completed by JGSC Group in 2014 revealed the following information based on a one-mile radius of Downtown Far Rockaway:

**Socio-Economic**
- Population (one-mile radius): 58,099
- Households (one-mile radius): 18,909
- Density (residents per square mile): 18,502
- Median Household Income: $38,425
- Median Age: 32.5 years
- Population Annual Growth Rate: 0.61%

**Mass Transit Utilization**
- MTA A-Train Mott Avenue daily ridership: 2,651 riders per day
- LIRR Far Rockaway Terminal: 5,320 riders per day
- Q22 Bus Line: 7,369 riders per day
- Queens 114 Bus Line: 11,745 riders per day
- Nassau County N31, 32, 33 Bus lines – no ridership data available

**Vehicle Traffic**
- Beach Channel Drive & Mott Avenue: 21,000 cars per day
- Seagirt Boulevard – 17,000 cars per day
- Central Avenue & Mott Avenue: 13,000 cars per day

**Business and Employment**
- Total number of business (any type): 1,516
- Total number of employees: 14,615

Nearly 60,000 people live within a one-mile radius of Downtown Far Rockaway that translates into a population density of 18,500 people per square mile – which is 50% higher than the density of all of Queens. While median household income is less than that of the Borough, as a neighborhood retail district it makes up for it in volume what they lack in per/household spending. Our residents are also young-the median age is 32.5, which is 5 years younger that the average for Queens. This is in part due to the higher percentage of young families with children in living in Far Rockaway than there are in the Borough of Queens, or in all of NYC.

The JGSC Group Market-Retail Analysis also revealed that the *Study Area* doesn’t have enough retail stores or restaurants to satisfy local current demand (within a one-mile radius) in several categories: clothing ($16.9M); general merchandise ($16.3M); and restaurants ($5M). The overall unmet need or “leakage” for a one-mile radius surrounding downtown Far Rockaway was a reported $91M.
3. **Past Investment, future investment potential.** Describe how this downtown will be able to capitalize on prior or catalyze future private and public investment in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas.

Downtown Far Rockaway has attracted over $200M in public funding which is already beginning to catalyze private investment. In 2016 Downtown Far Rockaway began implementation of community-driven plan that includes new infrastructure, streetscapes, new and improved roadways, affordable housing and public spaces. In 2016, Queens Borough President Melinda Katz announced the investment of $28M for the development of a new state-of-the does the internationally acclaimed Snohetta Architectural Design firm design Queens Public Library Far Rockaway Branch.

To compliment the aforementioned capital improvements, several capital improvement projects have been completed in the area:

- **Mott Avenue/Far Rockaway A Train Station** – part of a **$117M** MTA capital improvement project completed in 2012 that included upgrades to the train platform and the installation of two elevators to make the station ADA compliant. A new dome enclosure was added, the platform canopy roof membrane was replaced and the canopy deck framing and support columns were freshly painted, glass artwork was installed in conjunction with the MTA’s Arts for Transit program and new security cameras.

- **Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program** – a public-private joint venture project that was recently completed in 2017. The program included matching grants totaling **$180,000** from NYC Small Business Services and NYC Economic Development Corporation, and $300,000 from property and business owners for storefront façade repairs, new awning, signage, accent lighting, mesh security gates, window treatments and exterior doors to improve the curb appeal of 18 businesses.

- **Beach 20th Street Pedestrian Plaza** – a **$1.6M** capital improvement project completed in 2015 that connects pedestrians, bus and subway commuters from Beach 22nd and Beach 21st Streets to Beach 20th Street, one of three major corridors within the District. Renovations included raising the entire plaza to street level, new sewer line and plumbing, lighting, benches, planting areas, drinking fountain and moveable outdoor furniture.

4. **Recent or impending 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.

While the overall NYC unemployment rate has decreased to its current level of 4.4% (as of December 2016), the latest reported unemployment rate for Far Rockaway based on available zip code (11691) is 13.38% according to Zip Atlas. The absence of large-scale urban renewal development projects such as the Edgemere Urban Renewal or Arverne Urban Renewal projects occurring closer to Downtown Far Rockaway, larger scale employment opportunities have contributed to Far Rockaway’s higher unemployment rate. A second contributing factor is the lack of a trained and job ready local force. RDRC is one of several locally based CBO’s now focusing on training and certification programs that will lead to higher paying, entry level jobs in hospitality/customer service, health care, construction trades, security, and technology fields. Similarly, other local organizations such as the Jewish Coordinating Council of the Rockaway Peninsula, Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation, CAMBA, SBS Workforce One, Business Outreach Center, Upward
Bound, and New York Career Training School are engaged in job training and placement services that will underscore the need to prepare local residents for the number of temporary jobs created in the construction trades; and permanent jobs targeting the hospitality/customer service; property management (maintenance and administration); and social services (daycare; arts & culture; recreation; and youth, adult and senior programs) programs generated by the planned new housing, community and commercial space created by the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Plan.

The proposal for revitalizing downtown Far Rockaway will bring additional density to attract the investment that this community has been seeking since the 1980’s. It is expected that over 500 jobs will be generated by new developments plus many more construction jobs. New Proposals will bring online approximately 244,000 SF commercial and 90,000 SF community facility space through the Downtown core, as well as new mixed-use, mixed-income developments with the potential for over 1,800 new units of housing.

Leveraging its proximity to Nassau County and public transportation access to Brooklyn, Jamaica and Manhattan mixed with its natural assets like the a natural beach coastline, 4.7 miles of boardwalk, coastal parks, and Jamaica Bay, Downtown Far Rockaway is poised to attract professionals to an active life in Downtown that will support redevelopment and demonstrate a positive trajectory toward long-term, realistic and sustainable growth.

5. **Attractiveness of physical environment.** Identify the properties or characteristics that the downtown 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 bike ability, healthy and affordable food markets, and public parks and gathering spaces.

Current plans for Downtown Far Rockaway will significantly enhance the attractiveness of the areas’ physical environment through: modernization of zoning; affordable and mixed-use housing; improved transportation; streetscape and public spaces; economic development initiatives; and by investing in community services, artistic and cultural programs.

i. **Land Use and Zoning** – Unlocking the development potential of Downtown Far Rockaway to create a vibrant mix of commercial and resident uses, including mixed-income housing. The proposed zoning will:

- Focus on development and density close to the commercial core and mass transit resources
- Guide new development to blend into the existing neighborhood fabric, preserving our historic Village Center
- Require commercial ground floor uses along major corridors to rejuvenate our streetscape
- Develop a parking strategy that meets the area’s needs while also promoting a walkable and vibrant streetscape
- Utilizes City and State resources to activate underutilized, privately-owned property in the area

ii. **Housing** - Identify opportunities for new mixed-income housing that include a range of income levels and preserves existing affordable housing to reflect the needs of Rockaway residents that:
Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Application Template

• Pursue creative opportunities to develop permanently affordable housing on City-owned land as exhibited the recent RFP for the Beach 21st Street
• Explore the use of zoning amendments to provide permanently affordable housing on privately-owned properties
• Encourage private developers to collaborate with the Downtown Far Rockaway community to ensure that all new developments meet the community’s needs and priorities
• Preserve existing affordable housing and conduct outreach to property owners to promote all available financing programs
• Makes it easier for residents to understand, prepare for, and complete the affordable housing application process

iii. Transportation and Public Space – Plan for improving transportation infrastructure, transit resources and transformation of public spaces with new connections and open plazas that:

• Reinforce Mott Avenue as a Village “main street” by expanding sidewalks, adding trees, and installing new lighting
• Build a new public plaza between Beach 21st and Beach 22nd Streets, and expand public space with a new gateway at the corner of Mott and Central Avenues
• Install district-wide amenities such as benches, wayfinding signage, and sidewalk plantings;
• Upgrade stormwater infrastructure, including new storm sewers and catch basins, to reduce street flooding
• Identify short-and-long term transportation improvements, including improved pedestrian crossings, signal timing, transit connections, and reorganization of bus and commuter van operations to increase efficiency and convenience for users.

iv. Economic Development - Strengthen existing commercial corridors and small businesses, attracting a broad mix of retail offerings and improving connections to jobs, workforce training, and education by:

• Strengthening the retail mix that includes sit-down restaurants, entertainment venues, meeting space, hotels and other commercial uses
• Exploring partnerships to attract quality employers to Downtown Far Rockaway and improve access to opportunities at JFK Airport while increasing access to local residents to workforce training programs for in-demand occupations
• Connecting local entrepreneurs and businesses to services that can assist them start, grow or expand a business, navigate government regulations, and enhance the resiliency of their operations
• Improving connections to broadband network and expand access to free public wi-fi.

v. Community Services and Culture - Expand and build upon community services and cultural assets to improve the quality of life for residents and attract commuters and visitors by:

• Providing resources to support the growth and capacity of community based organizations
• Improving and upgrading community services, including the new Far Rockaway Branch of the Queens Public Library and the Sorrentino Recreation Center
• Working with community based organizations to develop multi-generational programming for public spaces that serves the diverse interests of the community
Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Application Template

- Supporting cultural and arts organizations while exploring ways to expand the cultural programming in the 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 plans, 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.

Existing zoning has not changed in 55 years (since 1961) and it no longer provides the tools for Downtown Far Rockaway’s beneficial growth and vitality. The result is outdated zoning that doesn’t reflect what an active, vibrant downtown should be; and doesn’t reflect how retail gets developed in today’s market. Under the new zoning, retailers will be concentrated on the ground floors within the downtown core; there will be a mix of uses, including housing that allows for a more vibrant downtown.

Implementation of the community-driven plan will significantly enhance the attractiveness of the areas physical environment; deliver on much needed affordable, improved transportation, streetscapes and public spaces. The comprehensive strategy will spur economic development initiatives that will tie into an exciting community fabric.

The proposed zoning upgrade to R-6, with an attendant increase in parking requirements, anticipates a more densely populated Far Rockaway, reinforcing the Downtown’s mixed-use future, as specified in the Plan. Supporting the Plan’s proposed re-zoning request is based on a nationwide trend in recent years that has moved away from suburbanization, and towards livable cities, especially downtowns that include an ample number of leisure-related spending choices. This means not only that there will be more residents locally, but also that they will be residents that expect more of public amenities.

7. Support for the local vision. Describe the public participation and engagement process conducted to support 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 local DRI Planning Committee to oversee the plan.

In late 2015, NYC Councilman Donovan Richards, Jr., convened a meeting of local community based organizations; business, community and civic groups, tenant association, faith-based institutions; and representatives to discuss what actions could be undertaken to revitalize Downtown Far Rockaway based on local knowledge and interaction with our respective constituents. From this meeting the Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group was formed and charged with working collectively with City agencies to develop the framework for creation of the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Plan.

The recent renaissance of Downtown Far Rockaway, partnered with the investments made by local community stakeholders and leaders, has assembled a broad spectrum of community support that includes: the Far Rockaway-Arverne Coalition (101st Community Precinct Community Council, Action Center, AIDS Center of Queens County, CAMBA, Child Care Center of NY, Church of God In Christ Academy, North Shore-Long Island Jewish Hospital, Ocean Bay Community Development...
8. Readiness: Describe opportunities to build on the strengths described above, including a range 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 the Local Planning Committee and the State will ultimately vet projects. Explain how the majority of projects proposed for DRI funding demonstrate their readiness for implementation.

STRENGTHEN CONNECTS BETWEEN DOWNTOWN FAR ROCKAWAY AND SURROUNDING DESTINATION POINTS

Connect Downtown Far Rockaway via Trolley Service that provides stops in Bayswater, LIRR Far Rockaway Station, Mott Avenue Subway Station, Seagirt Boulevard – Beach 17th Street entrance to O’Donohue Park, Boardwalk and Beach areas, Beach 30th Street Subway Station, Beach 32nd Street Water Ferry Service Shuttle.
STRENGTHEN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DOWNTOWN FAR ROCKAWAY TO THE SOUTH ALONG THE BEACH 20TH STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR FROM NEW HAVEN AVENUE TO SEAGIRT BOULEVARD BY:

- Creating a Medical Row centered around the Rockaway’s only hospital and largest public sector employer, St. John’s Episcopal Hospital
- Promoting the over 40 medical and health care practices – eye care, dental, pediatrics, dialysis, and specialty practices that serve the local community.
- Connecting Downtown Far Rockaway with natural assets that many other downtowns cannot replicate – our boardwalk, beach and beachfront park areas.
- Adding streetscapes, improving roadways and transportation connections.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE FAR ROCKAWAY LIRR COMMUTER STATION

The existing facility is poorly maintained and isolated, and disconnected from Downtown Far Rockaway. Proposed upgrades would include:

- New station house with enclosed seating area, restaurant and news stand
- Retail shops or booths
- Extending station platform area canopy
- Upgraded PA system
- Re-surfacing of parking areas
- Wayfinding signage at station and along Nameoke Place to Central Avenue and Redfern Avenue
- Canopied Far Rockaway Trolley Stop
9. Administrative Capacity. Describe the extent of the existing local administrative capacity to manage this initiative, including potential oversight of concurrent contracts.

About RDRC
Established as a 501(c)(3) corporation in 1978, Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation (RDRC) is headquartered on the eastern section of the Rockaway peninsula known as Far Rockaway. However, the majority of programs and services RDRC has traditionally offered extend to all thirteen (13) neighborhoods that comprise the Rockaway peninsula. RDRC is committed to developing stronger, more resilient Rockaways that is rooted in our mission statement, “to promote the revitalization of the Rockaways economic base and neighborhoods, and to secure an improved quality of life for its residents.” Our programs and services focus on workforce development, youth development, and housing and credit counseling, small business assistance, commercial revitalization and real estate development.

Organizational Capacity
An eleven member Board of Directors that includes community leaders, business owners and local residents governs RDRC. RDRC has seventeen (17) full-time staff persons divided between three (3) departments: Business & Professional Services; Education and Employment & Career Development Services; and Commercial Revitalization & Real Estate Development. During the summer months, RDRC staff increases to 30 persons to manage its largest program, the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) that provides paid summer employment to over 1,300 youth annually.

Commercial Revitalization & Real Estate Development
Merchant Organizing
RDRC has organized a group of local merchants into the Rockaway East Merchants Association (REMA) to address many of the safety, sanitation and parking concerns that have impeded the
economic growth of downtown Far Rockaway. Second, to participate in the planned commercial revitalization activities that will impact the entire downtown shopping district.

**Business Attraction**
RDRC works with local realtors and property owners to attract new businesses into our downtown district. To promote our district, RDRC has developed a business attraction tool kit that includes pertinent market retail data, attends business trade shows and is a member of the Queens Chamber Commerce and the JFK Chamber of Commerce.

**Storefront Improvement Program**
The Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program Round was established with the NYC Small Business Services to assist local businesses improve their storefronts as a strategy to attract more consumers into the district as well as attract new businesses into the district. The grant provided a 75% match up to $10,000 per storefront to help local businesses and property owners complete their storefront renovation projects.

**Beach 20th Street Pedestrian Plaza**
In 2015 the NYC Economic Development Corporation and RDRC completed a $1.65M capital project located in downtown Far Rockaway – the Beach 20th Street Pedestrian Plaza. The Plaza provides the community with seasonal events and activities coordinated by RDRC – concerts, merchant fairs, food court, games, exercise and a holiday tree lighting ceremony.

**RDRC Renaissance Center Office Building**
The Renaissance Center Office Building is located at 21-17 Mott Avenue in Far Rockaway, Queens. It is a five story building constructed in the 1930’s and purchased by Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation in 2001. The total building square footage is slightly less than 9,000 square feet. RDRC’s goal is to fully renovate the building and re-locate from its present location at 1920 Mott Avenue. The renovation of the Renaissance Center will enable RDRC to:

- Locate an anchor tenant into 1,200 square feet of ground floor space that will also create new employment opportunities for local residents.
- Assist start-up business opportunities by creating a business incubator in conjunction with the Small Business Development Center at York College.
- Increase community access to technology and technology-based learning with a state-of-art Learning Lab funded by Time Warner Cable Company and CISCO Training Academy.
- Provide free community space for meetings, workshops, and employment and homebuyer fairs.

**Community Collaborations, Partnerships & Affiliations**
The Far Rockaway/Arverne Nonprofit Coalition has worked since its formation in 2010 on the development and empowerment of Rockaway youth as well as strengthening the Rockaway nonprofit network—work that has included piloting a community needs survey; sharing resources and partnering in service-delivery; engaging in leadership development; launching three youth-led community summits; taking an active leadership role in the local Participatory Budgeting process among other advocacy efforts; and so much more. The Far Rockaway/Arverne Nonprofit Coalition is comprised of 14+ nonprofits and community-based organizations committed to the development of youth in the Rockaways, particularly the Far Rockaway/Arverne neighborhoods. Member organizations include: 101st Community Precinct Community Council; Action Center; AIDS Center of Queens County; CAMBA; Child Care Center of NY; Church of God In Christ Academy; North
Shore-Long Island Jewish Hospital; Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation; PAL of NYC; Queens Public Library; Rockaway Waterfront Alliance; and Safe Space.

The Downtown Far Rockaway Revitalization Working Group was organized in November 2015 by NYC Councilman Donovan Richards, Jr. to develop a set of goals and recommendations to support the revitalization of downtown Far Rockaway. Working Group efforts translated into the basic framework for a $91M capital investment to improve infrastructure, mixed-use housing development, transportation upgrades/redesign, new streetscapes, and increased access to community services. Working Group members include: Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation, Jewish Community Council of the Rockaway Peninsula, Rockaway East Merchants Association, Far Rockaway Branch/Queens Library, Redfern Houses Tenant Association, Church of the Nazarene, St. John’s Episcopal Hospital, NAACP Far Rockaway Branch; and the Rockaway Youth Task Force.

Community Partners
RDRC has a number of strategic community partnerships focused on workforce development, health care, mental health, social services with: St. John’s Episcopal Hospital; The Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center; Peninsula Preparatory Academy Charter School; Peninsula Center for Extended Care and Rehabilitation; Bishop Charles Waldo MacLean Episcopal Nursing Home; New York Career Training School; Rockaway Youth Task Force; Ready Rockaway; Central Avenue Assisted Living Center; New Horizons Counseling Services; Jewish Coordinating Council of the Rockaway Peninsula; Dress for Success; and Visiting Nurses Services of New York City.

Arts & Culture Institution Partners
Black Spectrum Theatre, Rockaway Artists Alliance, Flushing Town Hall and Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning.

Local & State Government Partners
NYC Department of Youth & Community Development; NYC Department of Small Business Services; NYC Economic Development Corporation; NYC Department of Transportation; NYC Department of Parks & Recreation; NYC Department of Probation; NYS Office of Homes & Community Renewal; NYS Department of Labor; NYS Small Business Development Centers; the Governor’s Office for Storm Recovery; and Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Business Partnerships & Affiliations
Rockaway East Merchants Associations (REMA); JFK Chamber of Commerce; Queens Chamber of Commerce; and Neighborhood Preservation Coalition of New York State; and National Retail Federation.

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

The NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative would greatly benefit from the existing planning work and collaborations that have been established through the creation of a Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Plan Working Group that includes the following key stakeholders: NYC Councilman Donovan Richards, Jr.; NYS Senator James Sanders, Jr.; Assemblywoman Michele Titus; Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer-Amato; Community Board 14; Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation; St. John’s Episcopal Hospital; Rockaway East Merchants Association; Queens Borough Public Library; Community Church of the Nazarene; Jewish Community Council of
the Rockaway Peninsula; First Church of God; Rockaway Youth Task Force; Redfern Houses Tenant Association; Rockaway Waterfront Alliance; and NAACP – Far Rockaway Branch.

As a result of the efforts of the Working Group in collaboration with the City’s lead agency, NYC Economic Development Corporation, a total of four (4) community engagement meetings were held that resulted in input from over 100 community residents. The Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group established the following five (5) goals for the redevelopment of Downtown Far Rockaway:

1) Re-establish Downtown Far Rockaway as the commercial and transportation hub of the peninsula.

2) Reposition the area as a mixed-use retail and residential district and encourage new mixed-income housing.

3) Activate sidewalks and streets with pedestrian walkways, amenities, and public open spaces.

4) Improve the quality of life for our residents through access to community services, education, and quality jobs.

5) Build the capacity of community organizations and support local businesses.

Other Projects that will enhance a Downtown Revitalization Investment include:

Downtown Far Rockaway Public Wi-Fi Project
Project Purpose - to make vulnerable, geographically isolated areas such as Far Rockaway more resilient by installing a wireless mesh communication system utilizing a series of wireless routers and rooftop antennas installed in businesses and larger commercial properties located in Downtown Far Rockaway.

Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program
Project Purpose - to revitalize downtown Far Rockaway storefronts with new signage, awnings, accent lighting and mesh security gates to improve the character and curb appeal of local businesses, revitalize worn and damaged building facades, allow longstanding businesses to stay competitive and keep with neighborhood change, and create a stronger, safer neighborhood that attracts local residents.