

## Downtown Revitalization Initiative

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### Application Template

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Applications for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative will be received by the Regional Councils. Applicant responses for each section should be as complete and succinct as possible. Applications must be received by the New York City Regional Economic Development Council by **4:00 PM on June 14, 2017**. Submit your application as a Word Document to [NYC-DRI@esd.ny.gov](mailto:NYC-DRI@esd.ny.gov).

#### **BASIC INFORMATION**

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: New York City

Municipality Name: Staten Island

Downtown Name: Downtown Staten Island

County: Richmond

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

Downtown Staten Island is experiencing an unprecedented amount of interest from around the region and the world, including substantial public and private investment. As this influx of businesses, residents, visitors, and investors began, our community understood the absolute need for a guiding strategic vision to allow for smart growth. Community-based and civic organizations, elected officials, government agencies, educational institutions, businesses, property owners, and residents have come together in many ways to ensure that all points of view are represented and to ensure an equitable and well-balanced view of the area's future. With its proximity to both the rest of New York City and New Jersey, Downtown Staten Island is poised to become a regional hub. There is a consensus vision of a thriving, mixed-use, mixed-income, multi-cultural waterfront community serving not only as a destination itself, but also as a vibrant connector to the rest of Staten Island, the rest of the City, and the world.

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.

Downtown Staten Island sits on the waterfront on the island's north shore. Since the borough's earliest days, it has been the civic center of Staten Island, housing government offices, courts, and other essential services, along with ancillary businesses. It is also home to the terminal for the iconic Staten Island Ferry, the island's most direct public transit route to Manhattan for commuters and others. With those two major draws, the area is a multi-modal transportation hub. In a borough otherwise somewhat bereft of public transportation options, Downtown Staten Island has bus, rail and water connections that converge there. In addition, it is a fully walkable district.

Radiating out from the civic center, downtown becomes a mix of residential units, including single- and multi-family dwellings, and retail establishments. The area's building stock contains a large proportion of historic and architecturally interesting structures.

In the last half-century, like many downtowns across the country, Downtown Staten Island fell victim to changing lifestyles and evolving technologies that rendered it less vital in its existing form. This led to a general deterioration that has resulted in a 21% storefront vacancy rate in the area today. However, the news is not all grim. In recent years, there has been a revived understanding of the value of the Downtown Staten Island location and all it has to offer. Through public/private partnership, there have been multiple major investments made in the area. Several important new residential buildings are already opened, one with 900 units on the waterfront. The world's largest Ferris wheel is under construction adjacent to the Ferry terminal, as is New York City's only designer outlet shopping mall. Both are scheduled to open in early 2018. These and other substantial projects underway have generated enormous interest in Downtown Staten Island. The key is to leverage this investment and that interest to best benefit the existing community and the influx of new stakeholders, as well as the surrounding area and region.

This is a unique moment in time for a very unique downtown area. There are many ideas and plans in various stages of formulation – from early stages to “shovel-ready” – that will provide for smart growth. A Downtown Revitalization Initiative award will be the catalyst that will allow them to come together and come to fruition and make Downtown Staten Island realize its full potential as a model for an inclusive urban environment, melding its storied history with today's realities and bringing together long-time residents and stakeholders with the new wave.

## **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 primary neighborhoods that make up Downtown Staten Island are New Brighton, St. George, Tompkinsville and Stapleton, which are all continuously connected by Richmond Terrace/Bay Street and waterfront connection. The area runs south along Richmond Terrace starting at Bard Avenue in the vicinity of Snug Harbor and continues onto Bay Street, ending at Broad Street in Stapleton.

- 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.

Downtown Staten Island contains a 2.5 mile, walkable urban corridor along Richmond Terrace and Bay Street. The surrounding neighborhood is demographically and socioeconomically diverse with approximately 25,700 residents. Urby, a new 900-unit waterfront residential site, recently opened, attracting a young professional demographic. In addition, each day a large contingent of day

workers converge on the area, as it is the civic hub of Staten Island. There are also 70,000 visitors riding the Staten Island Ferry daily. Construction of the NY Wheel (world's largest observation wheel) and Empire Outlets (New York City's only designer outlet mall) is already bringing more residents to the area, and the number of visitors is expected to increase dramatically when these attractions open. Lighthouse Point, also currently under construction adjacent to the ferry terminal, will include a new hotel and residential and co-working space that will bring new residents to the area soon. Cultural institutions concentrated in the area (including Snug Harbor Cultural Center and the historic St. George Theatre) also serve as a magnet for visitors.

**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.

Staten Island's Downtown is enjoying a renaissance led by more than \$1 billion dollars in private investment throughout the corridor. Some of the most important projects are:

- Empire Outlets is a public and private investment with funding through New York City, New York State, ESD Capital Grants and private sources. As of 2015, the project has received public funds by way of (2) ESD Capital Grants, the most current being for \$11,000,000. Another was received in Round III for \$3,500,000. NYS Assistance has amounted to \$61,500,000 and NYC Assistance was \$39,250,000. Being a REDC Priority Project, it advances the regional priorities including the creation and retention of jobs with over 1,306 new jobs and 1,267 construction jobs. It will host approximately 100 shops of the finest brands, an extensive array of waterfront food and beverage concepts and a 190-room boutique hotel with rooftop lounge offering unparalleled views of New York City with a projected 4.5 million visitors annually. Empire Outlets is also pursuing a new ecodock/water taxi service to Manhattan.
- The New York Wheel was designated in Round III as a priority project. The project received a \$1.55 million ESD Market NY grant in Round IV of the CFA. The New York Wheel project will create 600 permanent jobs and 350 construction jobs and furthers the region's job growth priority. It is projected to attract 30,000 tourists per day.
- Lighthouse Point received a \$1.5 million grant in Round III of the CFA. Lighthouse Point will consist of three new buildings, and the restoration of four historic buildings that will include retail, restaurants, a hotel and residential units. The anchor tenant, Regus a shared work space provider, signed a 15-year lease and will occupy approximately 30,000 square feet of the nearly 65,000-square-foot space dedicated to retail and office. Additionally there will be over an acre of waterfront public open space to be programmed for outdoor concerts, art exhibits, food festivals, and more. There will also be an approximately 300-space parking garage added to the development. The project is expected to create approximately 226 permanent jobs and over 400 construction jobs. The project includes retail shops, restaurants, 164 room boutique hotel, a movie theater, 96 residential units and the restoration of historic buildings along the St. George Waterfront

- The Department of State (DOS), is investing approximately \$130 million for public infrastructure improvements along the area's waterfront that include roadway upgrades, bicycle lanes, a continuous waterfront esplanade, and the creation of a tidal wetlands cove for the benefit of the local community.
- Pier 1, Staten Island's 775-foot-long public space located south of the Staten Island Ferry terminal and across from the National Lighthouse Museum was recently added to the portfolio of DockNYC, the private company that is under contract with New York City Economic Development Corporation to manage and market berthing sites across the city for a variety of uses, from tug, barge and other maritime operations to recreation, education and culture initiatives. Programming activities include everything from sailboat and historic-vessel cruises to fishing charters, sightseeing tours, and lunch and dinner cruises.
- URBYS Staten Island is currently leasing residential units along the Stapleton Waterfront. URBYS includes approximately 1000 residential units, retail stores and restaurants, indoor structured parking, outdoor pool, urban garden with farmer in residence, communal kitchen with chef in residence, filtered water bottling station, indoor Technogym fitness center and bodega.

Other exciting prospects for the area include:

- Federal funds have been allocated to fully repair the waterfront esplanade which was damaged during Superstorm Sandy.
- The NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) is further leveraging private investment and public dollars by rezoning existing manufacturing sites to expand affordable housing options, providing much needed infrastructure and capitalizing on the existing transportation options within the borough's most transit-rich corridor.
- Jersey Street and Richmond Terrace are poised to become the platform for a future dedicated busway to better serve tourists and commuters.
- A \$1M traffic mitigation fund was established as part of the New York Wheel and Empire Outlets approvals.
- Jersey Street will become the main boulevard to the surrounding user population from the Victory Boulevard corridor to the new North Shore Greenway.
- Pavilion on the Terrace, the last of five Greek revival mansions located in this neighborhood is being restored to its 19<sup>th</sup> century grandeur as a new catering hall overlooking the Kill Van Kull.
- The NYC Dept. of City Planning is reviewing potential rezoning of the New Brighton Corridor to provide new housing and mixed-use opportunities
- Many sites are currently under review for new mixed-use developments to provide a broader range of commercial uses and new housing that aligns with the Mayor's affordable housing initiative.

- Lyons Pool is currently under consideration to construct a new community recreational center
- NYCEDC is currently planning the extension of the Promenade at Lighthouse Point to extend south the length of the waterfront in Downtown Staten Island.
- The Minthorne Street corridor is currently evolving into an eclectic array of commercial uses with businesses such as Flagship Brewery and Daddy-O's BBQ to service the young professional downtown community.
- The Bay Street Corridor is experiencing enormous private investment. There are new senior housing and attendant community facility opportunities, new affordable housing offerings, new retail and hotel facilities being planned.

These projects will bring massive change to Downtown Staten Island. A Downtown Revitalization Initiative award will allow our community to take a holistic approach and take on the projects that will amplify the benefits of all the development and fill in any gaps it leaves in the community.

**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.

- Empire Outlets will generate over **1,306 new jobs** and **1,267 construction jobs**.
- New York Wheel will create **600 permanent jobs** and **350 construction jobs**.
- The Lighthouse Point project is expected to create approximately **226 permanent jobs** and **over 400 construction jobs**.

Over 25% of the population has received a bachelor's degree or higher in the Downtown Staten Island area. The number of college-educated individuals will increase in the area with the activation of the College of Staten Island (CSI) satellite campus. Their focus is to reach commuters and residents in the area that have yet to complete a degree or certificate program.

The CSI Technology Incubator located at 60 Bay Street (across from Lighthouse Point) seeks to build on the growing technology and business community in the North Shore and all around Staten Island. The College of Staten Island is providing significant resources, expertise, and technology to foster local talent in order to stimulate economic development in the downtown area. There are a significant amount of individuals that are involved in technology or engineering on Staten Island as well as local business that seek external resources when looking to grow or build a business. This location is important for its proximity to Lighthouse Point that will house Regus, an office space provider, and the proposed 55 Stuyvesant Tech Center that will provide services through START-UP NY.

Staten Island increased by 32% in private sector employment between 1990 and 2010, compared to only 4% citywide. With thousands of square feet of available commercial office space, Downtown Staten Island can offer businesses an affordable option over many other business districts. Access is readily available to Manhattan, Brooklyn, New Jersey and the rest of

Staten Island. Also, Staten Island's broadband connectivity is the best along the east coast, making it especially attractive to tech companies.

Programs like those listed will provide a pipeline of highly skilled talent as well as opportunities for entrepreneurship and job 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 bikeability, healthy and affordable food markets, and public parks and gathering spaces.

- The Downtown Staten Island area has a rich cultural presence with attractions including the St. George Theatre, Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, the Staten Island Museum, National Lighthouse Museum and Noble Maritime Collections. The North Shore Waterfront Esplanade will connect all of these attractions, along with other open space areas including Tompkinsville Park and Tappen Park.
- The area is seeing a tech community emerge with the proposed 55 Stuyvesant Street Tech Center, College of Staten Island Technology Incubator and Staten Island Makerspace.
- Current and planned mixed-use development (including Lighthouse Point and Urby) as well as the potential for a rezoning of the area by the City will allow for the expansion of mixed-use residential and commercial building and provide an attractive environment for future development and growth.
- A waterfront that runs the entire length of Downtown Staten Island provides breathtaking views of Manhattan and opportunities for fitness and recreation.
- Downtown Staten Island is a multi-modal transportation hub, providing options for people of varying economic and physical ability to travel. In addition, the entire area is walkable.
- A green market regularly operates in season in the district, providing locally sourced healthy food options to residents and visitors.

**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.

Downtown Staten Island is home to several special zoning districts that provide opportunities for housing and commercial development to meet the needs of the existing and future residents, including:

Bay Street Corridor

New Brighton Corridor

Special St. George District

Special Stapleton Waterfront District

The 120 Police Precinct has increased patrol of the downtown area including “Community Policing” where officers remain in the neighborhoods they’re assigned long-term to understand and assess the enforcement needs of the community.

The Staten Island Chamber of Commerce, through funding from the NYC Dept. of Small Business Services, has implemented private street cleaning services along Bay Street in Downtown Staten Island to support and enhance the commercial strip. The Chamber is also in the process of implementing streetscape beautification projects including tree pit guards, landscaping, and storefront improvements.

- 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.

Last year, the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce was commissioned by the NYC Dept. of Small Business Services to conduct a Commercial District Needs Assessment of Downtown Staten Island. It involved an intensive process of data collection and analysis to determine the strengths, challenges, and opportunities in Downtown Staten Island. A major component of the process was local stakeholder and community input. The full final report may be accessed at:

<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/sbs/downloads/pdf/neighborhoods/n360-cdna-bay-st.pdf>

This year, the Chamber was selected by the City to oversee and implement specific projects that will achieve the goals outlined in the report. Among those projects is the development of a local advisory council – what is being called the “Downtown Staten Island Commercial District Working Group” – to provide resources and insight into work to establish a Business Improvement District for the area. This group consists of a comprehensive array of business owners, property owners, community leaders, elected officials, cultural institutions, local economic development organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

With this solid foundation of community engagement, the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce is prepared to work with the DRI team of experts to advance the mission of revitalizing Downtown Staten Island.

- 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 projects will ultimately be vetted by the Local Planning Committee and the State. Explain how the majority of projects proposed for DRI funding demonstrate their readiness for implementation.

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DRI investment would allow for the implementation of identified projects including:

- A dedicated busway planning initiative: Snug Harbor to Ferry Terminal.
- Creation of strategic pedestrian crossings or flyovers at Richmond Terrace to better serve the user population.
- Development of a North Shore Greenway Pilot along the waterfront.
- Establishment of bike rental kiosks at the Ferry Terminal and other key locations in the district to support residents, tourists and local businesses.
- Programming of a Downtown Bicycle Experience, looping bike paths throughout the district.
- Implementing neighborhood branding and marketing initiatives for Downtown Staten Island including community signage, wayfinding, and events promotion.
- Completion of an Urban Planning Initiative to create Hyatt/Stuyvesant Street Retail Corridor with distinctive pedestrian sidewalks with planned upland connections from waterfront, sidewalk café spaces, DOT smart street implementation, and programming of local events.
- Pedestrian and streetscape improvements between Nick LaPorte Place and Central Avenue along Bay Street.
- Opportunities for new public open space planning at the intersection of Victory Boulevard and Central Avenue. The existing parking area, currently functioning in the bed of Central Avenue can be reimagined to accommodate a new public amenity.
- Redesign of Minthorne Street public space into a pedestrian-friendly street mall.
- Tompkinsville Park summer event programming – Green Market Corridor (western portion of Bay Street behind park).
- Creation of community garden at Bay Street/Van Duzer Extension/St. Julian Place.
- Pedestrian streetscape initiative for Bay Street from Hannah Street to Baltic Street.
- Streetscape study to identify alternate parking configurations, traffic patterns and expanded open space planning to accommodate street furniture and sidewalk café locations.
- Collaboration on existing efforts to form a Business Improvement District.
- “Finger Street” Enhancement Initiative to activate all streets perpendicular to Bay Street and the New Stapleton Waterfront at Urby.
- Tappen Park summer event programming and green market.
- Specific improvements to the Stapleton train station, including:
  - Replacement and of existing MTA fencing with updated MTA- approved security fencing, as well as installation of see-thru decorative screening along fencing to provide aesthetically pleasing backdrop to station proper.

- Installation of new tinted concrete sidewalks, pedestrian ramps and approved type bicycle rack at station entrance and a possible curb extension and mid-block raised speed reducer at station entrance to better facilitate bicycle parking and pedestrian safety.
- Installation of non-standard lighting treatment at station entrance with light pole banners promoting cultural exhibits or public or historical events taking place in the community.
- Investigate the viability of providing a translucent understory to the overpass to transform and identify station location and to better light the street and sidewalk at station entrance.
- Establish Ironstate Development (developers of Urby) as a maintenance partner for the maintenance, repair and upkeep of all landscaped areas and non-standard fixtures.
- Installation of new mulched planting beds with evergreen and flowering plant species along sidewalk at station entrance and the cleaning and repainting of all steel and concrete portions of train overpass at Prospect Street.

**9) Administrative Capacity.** Describe the extent of the existing local administrative capacity to manage this initiative, including potential oversight of concurrent contracts.

Led by the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce and supported by the Borough President’s office, there is a rich bedrock of talent, knowledge, and capacity to support and manage this initiative. The Chamber will also leverage the resources of the 3 local colleges: College of Staten Island, Wagner College, and St. John’s University.

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

The Downtown Staten Island area is one of the most culturally diverse regions on Staten Island. It has one of the largest populations of Sri Lankans outside of the territory itself. There are large pockets of Sub-Saharan African communities representing countries such as Liberia, Egypt, Ethiopia and a large amount of the countries along the western Coast of Africa. Other large community groups include West Indian, Arab, and a variety of representation from countries across Europe. This rich, multi-cultural landscape makes for a vibrant, diverse, and exciting environment.

Downtown Staten Island, with its accessibility to Manhattan and all the major new development already taking place, will attract a new demographic to the neighborhood and surrounding areas. Nearly 35% of the Downtown Staten Island area is young people between the ages of 20 – 35. The amount of individuals with a 4-year degree or higher will continue to rise through programming provided by CUNY and the collaboration between colleges on Staten Island for the 30,000 degrees initiative, which aims to increase college graduation rates borough-wide.

Staten Island is in an exciting place with new infrastructure and rezoning opportunities that will attract new jobs and talent, and add to Staten Island’s economic growth.

