

Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Application Template

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 Long Island Regional Economic Development Council by **4:00 PM on June 14, 2017**. Submit your application as a Word Document to LIREDC@esd.ny.gov.

BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: Long Island

Municipality Name: Incorporated Village of Freeport

Downtown Name: Main Street

County: Nassau

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

The Village of Freeport looks to capitalize on the Village's LIRR station by encouraging Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). TOD generally consists of a mix of housing, shops, restaurants, offices, civic buildings and open space in a compact, pedestrian-friendly environment within walking distance of a train station, and that supports both community character and transit ridership. At the center of this vision is the idea of creating or recreating the downtown a "place:" a place to live; a place to work; a place to walk; a place to eat; a place to shop; a place to read; a place to catch a movie; a place to bowl; a place to listen to music; a place to lay in the sun; and so on.

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.

In 2015, the Village of Freeport was singled out as one of the coolest towns in America by The travel website Matador Network. It placed the village in the No. 7 spot on its list of the 20 coolest towns in the United States, which it defines as places that have "their own economic/local heart," "cool natural features" and "a global citizenry. It further stated that some of the things that make a town cool included walkable downtown areas, nearby outdoor recreation and cultural diversity.

Village of Freeport is the second highest populated village in New York State and one of the most diverse communities in Nassau County. It is located along the south shore of Nassau County on Long Island and occupies 4.6 square miles. The Village has a directly elected mayor and a Board of Trustees. As an incorporated village, Freeport has its own municipal electric and water utilities, police force, emergency management team, and fire department. The Village prides itself on its self-sufficiency, quality of life, and long history of water-oriented activities.

Downtown Freeport already possesses many of the assets necessary to become a regional center on Long Island. These include: 1). Connections to major roadways and public transit: As the implementation unfolds,

new attractions in downtown Freeport will be easily accessible to individuals throughout the region. 2) Access to beaches and waterways: With new businesses and restaurants, Freeport's downtown will increasingly capture the recreational time and dollars of individuals venturing to Jones Beach and the Nautical Mile. 3). A rich history and commitment to arts and culture: Freeport's cultural history, ongoing commitment to the arts and current arts organizations and institution are invaluable resources for positioning Freeport as an arts hub.

North Main Street is part of an important road that connects the heart of Freeport to the Village of Hempstead, and thus links the South Shore to the economic center of the Nassau Hub. This County-owned road has a traffic volume of 22,200 cars per day along its busiest stretch in the area. Sunrise Highway and Merrick Road are the major east-west routes through the Village of Freeport. The New York State-owned Sunrise Highway has a daily traffic volume of 54,200 cars per day, while Merrick Road moves 22,800 cars per day along its busiest stretch through the downtown area

Freeport's Downtown is situated on the LIRR Babylon Branch, which runs along the south shore of Nassau and western Suffolk Counties. With its connection to the LIRR, the station area is Freeport's main transit hub with a ridership of 5,365 passenger trips per day. Freeport is served by six different Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA)/Long Island Bus routes: the N4, N19, N40, N41, N43, and seasonally the N88 (May through September), each of which stops at the LIRR station. Bus service is available from the station running north along North Main Street and Jones Beach. In particular the N40 and N41 bus lines are critical in providing north-south mass transportation

The Village of Freeport has a rich arts and cultural scene, facilitated by several local arts organizations. These include the Long Island Arts Council at Freeport. Founded in 1974 through seed money from the Village of Freeport and Freeport Public Schools, the Council has provided artistic programs and services to Freeport and the rest of the Long Island community for over 25 years. Over the past several decades, it has grown to include dozens of affiliate organizations and individuals practicing and promoting the arts across Long Island

Freeport is home to the Freeport Recreation Center, which features an enclosed, year-round ice skating rink; an indoor pool; an outdoor Olympic-size pool; an outdoor diving tank; an outdoor children's pool; handball courts; sauna; steam room; fully equipped workout gyms; basketball courts; and snack bars serving hot and cold foods. The Center also offers evening adult classes and hosts a pre-school program, camp programs, and a senior center. The Recreation Center provides recreational opportunities not only to Freeport residents, but also to the surrounding communities.

The Village's downtown is ready for Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) investment. The Village has a clear vision and comprehensive strategy in place. An all-inclusive Master Plan has been developed. Design plans for infrastructure improvements have been completed. New housing and commercial space is being developed. DRI funding would provide the resources to complete the revitalization of the business district which would lead to transforming the Main Street corridor into a vibrant community

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.

Freeport's Downtown consists of a variety of business and residential types. Uses include office space, retail space, educational facilities, industrial facilities, religious institutions, mixed use structures, single and multi-family. The area includes the entire length of North Main Street from Freeport's northern border at Roosevelt to its terminus at Sunrise Highway. The project also encompasses the LIRR station and the half-mile radius around it, including the downtown retail center on South Main Street, Henry Street, Church Street and Merrick Road. North Main Street links the South Shore to the economic center of the Nassau Hub and has a traffic volume of 22,000 cars per day. The Downtown area has ample street and municipal lot parking. In the vicinity of the LIRR station area, there are approximately 2,000 available parking spaces

- 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.

The area directly around Freeport's downtown is made up primarily of commercial and community service uses. Residential areas form a ring around and extend out from the downtown, with commercial and community services dotting the residential areas on the downtown's periphery. Commercial and community service uses also extend north along the North Main Street Corridor. Freeport's downtown is significantly more developed for commercial uses than its neighbor Baldwin to the east and Merrick to the West. With an average of 9,531 people per square mile, the overall density of Freeport is significantly higher than that of Nassau County as a whole, with 4,650. Freeport's downtown combines a concentrated mix of commercial activity, residential neighborhoods and good transit access, both by rail and bus. 16,000 residents live within a half mile from the Long Island Train Station which provides an easy 45 minute commute to Manhattan and a fast 20 minute bus ride to Jones Beach State Park.

- 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.

The Freeport Downtown Revitalization Project applies public and private sector resources to the rehabilitation and upgrade of traditional Main Street commercial structures, the construction of new mixed-use developments in keeping with the scale and character of this historic regional downtown, and associated roadway, streetscape and parking and park improvements. It fulfills both a local and national economic development objective in providing the conditions necessary for sustained private sector investment and business activity in our traditional downtown (identified as a regional center in the Nassau County Master Plan) With additional resources, the Village can complete the revitalization of our downtown and attract future private investment.

Recent improvements have been made to the downtown, including the reconstruction of South Main Street and streetscape additions including brick pavers, trees and other landscaping were installed. Additionally, a private developer invested \$4 million in the recent construction of the Main Street Mews on South Main Street. The Mews is an apartment building designed to attract artists to downtown Freeport. Each apartment is divided into living and work areas on at least two floors.

In April of this year, The Village and Nassau County began a \$3.9 million streetscape project on North Main Street stretching from Freeport's northern border at Roosevelt to its terminus at Sunrise Highway. The project will include new sidewalks, decorative light poles with LED lighting, new benches, waste receptacles, landscaping and pedestrian bump-outs at intersections.

Freeport Plaza West consists of the crumbling Meadowbrook Bank Savings Building and a green triangle of cleared space to its east. Given its location along Sunrise Highway and adjacency to the LIRR station, this location will serve as an important area for commercial, retail and residential uses. The Village of Freeport is presently in contract to sell the six story office building on Freeport Plaza West to developers. The area is to be transformed into a regional, mixed-use center with residential, commercial and retail uses. The project consists of a \$60 million plan to redevelop the site into 250 rental apartments and at least 15,000 square feet of ground level commercial space. These improvements will serve to pump the dividends of its success northward along North Main Street as well as southward towards the existing village center around South Main Street. Revitalization here will serve to bridge what has traditionally been a divide between the northern and southern sections of Freeport and help to facilitate a connected, highly functioning 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.

Freeport has a job growth projection of 30.4% for the next 10 years. The development of Freeport Plaza West helps create a downtown that supports a vibrant mix of uses within proximity of the LIRR Station and MTA bus services. The newly constructed housing will attract residents. Revitalization the North Main Street Corridor will make it a destination for retail, entertainment and restaurants.

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.

As New York State's second largest village located along a busy commuter rail line with an abundance of room to grow, the Village of Freeport is an important "center" in the New York Metropolitan Region. As noted previously, Freeport's Downtown has easy connections to major roadways and is walkable to public transit, easy access to waterfront activities including beaches and has a rich history and commitment to arts and culture.. A variety of business types are present in Freeport's downtown. Uses include office space,

retail space, educational facilities, industrial facilities, religious institutions, mixed use structures, single and multi-family residential housing

- 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 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.

Policies aimed at creating a better quality of life include streetscape improvements, including street trees, street furniture, attractive lighting, and sinking the utility cables, traffic-calming, facade improvements to existing buildings, conversion of parking fields in the Core Station Area into other uses such as a village green and zoning changes.

- 6) 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.

The Master Plan reflects a community-driven process that has involved the residents of Freeport since the project's inception. In addition to large, open public meetings, a smaller project Steering Committee was established in the early stages of the visioning process to gain even greater insight into community needs and desires. The Steering Committee was comprised of a diverse selection of residents, business and property owners, civic and religious institutions and Village and County staff and has guided the project team on an ongoing basis. Steering Committee members played a very active role in project development and outreach, and they also provided valuable feedback to every step of the project, representing the interests of the greater community. To help the Project Team with technical matters, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was also developed and met twice in the project's early phases and continues to serve in an advisory capacity throughout the project. The TAC included representatives from the following agencies and departments:

- Village Community Development Agency
- Village Department of Public Works
- Village Engineer
- Village Building Department
- Village Police Department
- Village Fire Department
- Nassau County Planning Department

Project Kickoff was held on August 18, 2009. Freeport's Mayor was joined by the Nassau County Executive, County Legislators and a representative from Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy's office, to publicly launch the project with the project team.

Introductory Public Workshop was held on September 15, 2009. Following a month of data gathering, analysis and initial stakeholder outreach, the first public workshop was held at Village Hall to introduce the

project, the project team and timeline as well as to solicit initial input from Freeport residents on topics related to redevelopment

A Discovery Workshop was held on October 14, 2009. The catalog of information gathered to date was presented to Freeport residents, including stakeholders and property owners, at Bethel AME Church for discussion and to help direct the issues to be covered in the weeklong charrette

The Charrette was held on October 26-30, 2009. During the week, the Project Team, the Village Community Development Agency (CDA), other Village staff, County and State agencies and a wide range of community members participated in shaping the Master Plan and its various details. Each day featured a technical presentation on subjects such as transit-oriented development, transportation and mobility, landscape, architecture, and form-based coding. On three of the evenings, a progress presentation was provided for public review and comment as well as internal, technical critique among the consultant team. In addition to input gathered during these forums, the plan also benefitted from private meetings held during the day with various stakeholders. These meetings included discussions with local property owners, developers and clergy members. On the final evening, a formal presentation was provided to the community to familiarize everyone with the emerging plan and program accompanied by a less formal gallery review and discussion. Over 200 participants attended the Charrette throughout the week at the Village Recreation Center

The DRAFT Master Plan Presentation was held on January 28, 2010. A public presentation of the major concepts of the Master Plan was presented to a gathering of over 150 people at the Perfecting Faith Church. It was a final opportunity for residents to weigh in on the Plan and make necessary clarifications before its completion and review by the Village.

The Final Review of DRAFT Master Plan was held on April 2010. Following the presentation of the Master Plan Concepts in January, a written report was prepared and sent to all members of the Steering Committee for their review. The Project Team collected all comments and recommendations from the Committee and incorporated them into the Final Master Plan.

Throughout the public process of developing the Master Plan for Main Street, a unified vision grew out of the hours of discussion, brainstorming and illustrating. The overwhelming desire of the residents expressed during the process was to take what is now largely an absence of place and to turn it into something that has an identity. The Village of Freeport will undertake the primary role of coordinating the implementation of the Plan. Action will include securing public and private investments

- 7) 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.

The Village of Freeport has completed plans for the North Main Street Road Improvement project and the Streetscape project. New decorative trash receptacles and trees were installed this past spring. Construction of the road will begin later this year. The project will improve the aesthetics of the street and pedestrian

connections to the LIRR and MTA bus service. With additional funding, the Village would be able to expand the project and make additional improvements.

Nassau County has secured \$2.3 million from the federal Region Transportation Improvement Plan, which will be used to rebuild nine traffic signals on Main Street, from the intersection of Church Street north to the village border. The work will not only replace the traffic lights and crosswalk signals, but will also install fiber optic communication lines, add traffic surveillance cameras, improve drainage and add pedestrian "bump-outs" on corners, which make street crossings safer for pedestrians. Work is expected to begin next year.

The Village of Freeport has a facade improvement program that leverages federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding with state and foundation grants and private investment to substantially improve commercial buildings. The program offers matching grants directly to targeted retail businesses for capital improvements. At the present time there is no funding available, however, with DRI funding available, the program can target businesses along North Main Street. The program will improve the aesthetics of the business district and attract new businesses and private investment.

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

Municipal Contact -Nora E. Sudars, Grants Administrator Ms. Sudars currently works for the Village of Freeport Public Works Department as the Grants Administrator. She has held this position since 1998. Prior to working for this department, she served as Village Clerk for the Village in addition to Freeport Community Development Agency Coordinator. She is also the contract administer for all public works projects. Ms. Sudars will have contract administration and reporting responsibilities for this project.

Fiscal Contact -, Ismaela Hernandez, Treasurer Ms. Hernandez was appointed by the Village Board of Trustees on April 5, 2010. As Village Treasurer, Ms. Hernandez oversees a \$69,500,000 annual municipal budget. In addition to the budgets for the Village, she also oversees the Water and Electric utilities budgets.

Engineer/Project Manager -Robert Fisenne, P.E., Supt. of Public Works and Village Engineer. After graduating from Rochester Institute of Technology in 1990, Mr. Fisenne worked for consulting engineer firms in the private sector. In March of 1995, Mr. Fisenne received his professional engineer's license. He has been employed by the Village of Freeport since 1996. Mr. Fisenne will handle the construction management of the project.

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

The Village of Freeport has been committed to the revitalization of the community since the 1990's. Preliminary concepts for revitalization of Freeport's Downtown first grew out of the Village's participation in Regional Plan Association's 2006 Regional Design Institute which were further developed at the 2006 National Endowment for the Arts' Mayors Institute on City Design. The purpose of the Master Plan was to define a clear vision and policy direction for the future of the Village of Freeport's North Main Street Corridor and LIRR station area. The Master Plan grows out of both prior and ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life for all Freeport residents and to create a safe and pleasant place in which to live. The late 1990's started a ten-year effort to rebuild the community "from the ground up" which led to electric and water utility expansion and modernization, parks and recreation improvements, road elevations and reconstructions, and downtown parking improvements. In 1998, the village saw the rebuilding of the one

mile stretch of Woodcleft Avenue (“The Nautical Mile”) and reconstruction efforts continued northward along Guy Lombardo Avenue to the Freeport Plaza Urban Renewal Area and encompassed the heart of Freeport’s traditional downtown within 1/4 mile of the Long Island Rail Road station.

*Don’t forget to attach a map that clearly delineates the downtown neighborhood. (See item 1.)

Existing Zoning

