

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE – LIREDC

Due on Friday, May 20, 2016 to LIREDC@esd.ny.gov

BASIC INFORMATION

Municipality Name: Village of Freeport

Downtown Name: Main Street

County: Nassau

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

Freeport’s most persistent and challenging redevelopment area remaining to be addressed in a continuing long-term effort is the Main Street corridor, which stretches north from the transit hub at the LIRR station for one-mile to the border separating the Village of Freeport from Roosevelt in the Town of Hempstead. This county road is both an historic connector between the State of New York’s two largest and most diverse villages, Hempstead and Freeport, and also a key link to the Nassau Hub, the County’s commercial core. Surrounded by stable neighborhoods, the Main Street corridor has nevertheless declined steadily since the road was widened forty years ago.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

This section should be filled out with reference to the criteria set forth in the DRI Guidelines.

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

The project 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 halfmile radius around it, including the downtown retail center on South Main Street, Henry Street, Church Street and Merrick Road.

North Main Street is part of an important county 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

Attach color map clearly identifying areas within the defined downtown.



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

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. The downtown Freeport area possesses very few large areas of vacant land or public parks

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

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

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)

Leveraged Resources: Public \$2,870,871.00 Private \$3,750,000.00

Prior NYS Funding/REDC Funding: Amount \$220,000.00

Please identify use(s) of prior funding Downtown Development Initiative from ESDC to provide gap financing for key revitalization projects.

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

The Master Plan envisions the development of about 168,000 square feet of new retail and more than 63,000 square feet of new commercial space, which will open up a variety of new employment opportunities in the heart of the village. In addition, the temporary construction jobs that will be created by implementing this plan also will be significant

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

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. The downtown also includes the LIRR station which is Freeport's main transit hub with a ridership of 5,365 passenger trips per day. North Main Street is part of an important county 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.

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

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.

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

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. At the center of the vision was the idea of creating or recreating the project area as a "place:" 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; and so on. 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.

- 8) Other.** Provide any other information you feel would be relevant to help this committee to make an informed decision to nominate this downtown for a DRI award.

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

- 9) Identify.** Current infrastructure challenges or other impediments facing downtown development initiatives.

North Main Street today is the nearly 1.2 mile-long north-south transportation spine that connects the Village to Roosevelt. Currently configured with four lanes, the roadway's speed limit is set at 30 miles per hour, but vehicles using the road typically travel at significantly faster speeds up to 60 mph, establishing an unsafe pedestrian environment. Adding to the poor pedestrian experience is the condition of the streetscape along the road: limited street plantings with only a handful of trees; inconsistent pedestrian crosswalks with wide crossing distances; and bus stops with no bus shelters. The intermittent uses along the roadway, ranging from commercial to industrial to retail, further discourage pedestrian activity

- 10) Describe.** How an existing downtown master plan (if it exists) could coordinate and optimize available resources through a revitalization initiative.

There will be a number of incentives for developers looking to act upon the Master Plan's recommendations. First, the Master Plan serves as a guide to the village as they consider proposals for development in the community. The Master Plan gives the village the advantage of choosing developers open to the recommendations of the Master Plan. Second, because the Master Plan was developed with strong community input, it helps to guide the way to the kind of development that is desired in the area. Following the recommendations of the community-endorsed Master Plan, developers can avoid the community resistance that can often accompany new development.