

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE – LIREDC

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

BASIC INFORMATION

Municipality Name: Town of Hempstead

Downtown Name: Baldwin

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):

Downtown Baldwin, centered on Grand Avenue, is the commercial backbone of the predominantly residential hamlet within the Town of Hempstead (TOH). In its current state however, Downtown Baldwin suffers from deteriorating and underutilized properties, commercial and residential vacancies, and high business turnover, which impedes potential economic development opportunities and inhibits the sound growth and development of the area. It is the applicant's belief that, with targeted investments that build upon recent initiatives, Downtown Baldwin will thrive as a vibrant center of activity and a local economic driver, generating needed jobs, quality living spaces, and increased tax revenues.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

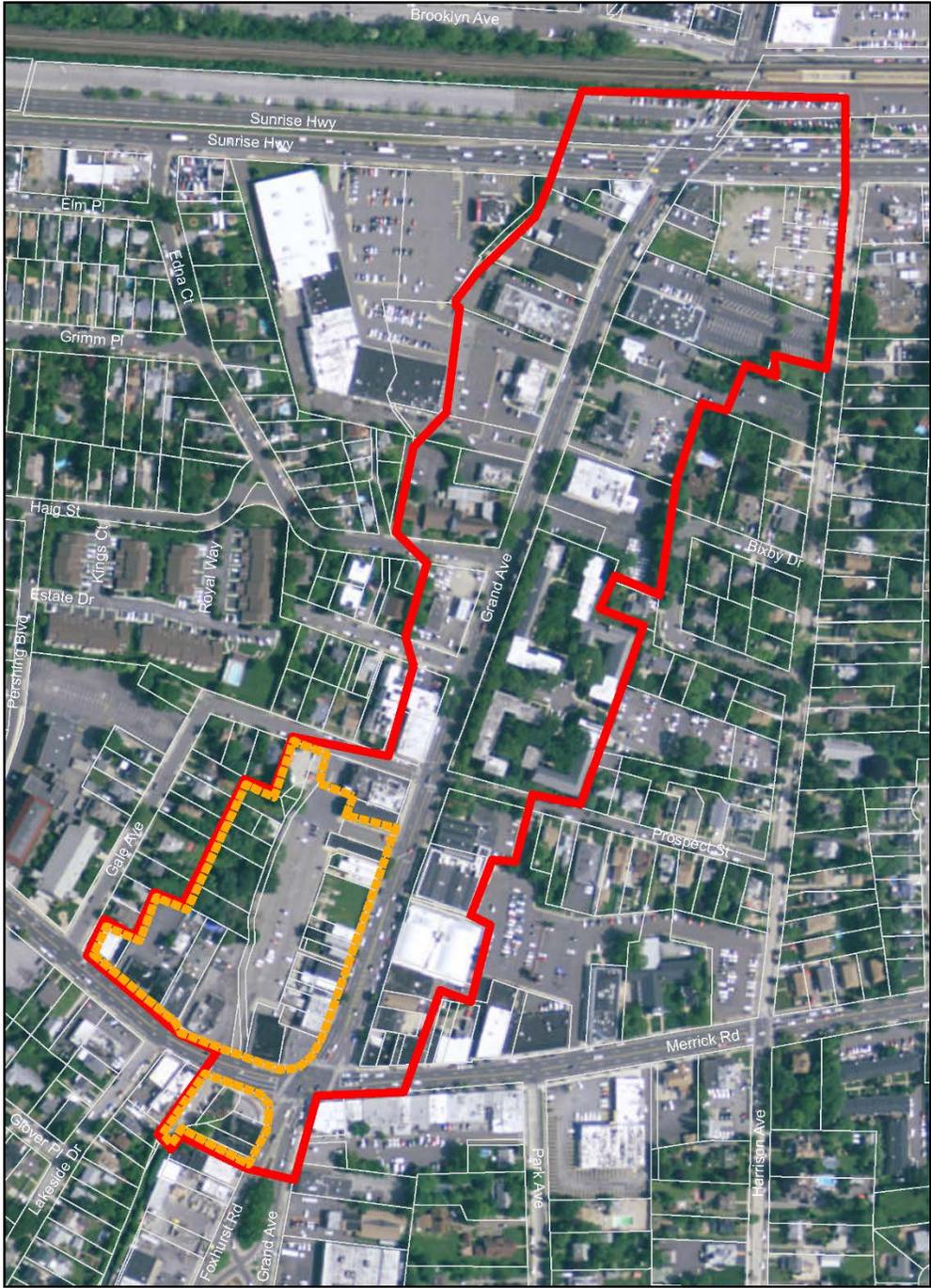
This section should be filled out with reference to the criteria set forth in the DRI Guidelines.

- 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.

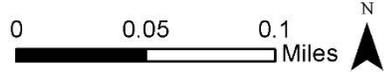
The Baldwin downtown is an approximately half-mile mixed-use corridor along Grand Avenue between Merrick Road to the south and NYS Route 27 (Sunrise Highway) to the north. Grand Avenue is the major north-south thoroughfare in Baldwin, zoned for business and residential uses. The Babylon branch of the Long Island Rail Road runs parallel to Sunrise Highway on the north side; the Baldwin Station sits at the northern boundary of Downtown Baldwin.

Encompassed within Downtown Baldwin is the Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Area (URA), which includes a northern segment within the block just north of Merrick Road and west of Grand Avenue. Both the Urban Renewal Area and Downtown Baldwin boundaries are identified on the map below.

Attach color map clearly identifying areas within the defined downtown.



——— Baldwin Downtown
- - - - - Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Area



- 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.

Downtown Baldwin serves residents and workers roughly within a 1/3- to 1/2-mile radius of the corridor (Census Tracts 4137 and 4136). In 2015, 10,807 people lived within this area, providing a strong consumer base for the downtown; consumer spending in 2015 totalled \$121,458,238 for retail goods.

Data from ESRI Business Analyst indicates that there is untapped market potential within the catchment area, suggesting that surrounding communities could support increased development and that investments in Downtown Baldwin would positively impact those communities. In addition, it is anticipated that residential development and the increased population associated with this initiative would further support a vibrant, year-round downtown.

- 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.

Recently, several major projects have been executed in Downtown Baldwin, including a new public library and improved fire station access. In addition, the Town has issued an RFP for mixed-use development of the Grand Avenue URA, already receiving several positive responses which highlight the significant private interest in the area. A Baldwin Resiliency Study is also underway which will recommend strategies to provide housing options and foster economic investment, ultimately to create a more resilient community.

Further investment through this initiative will build on past successes, leveraging private investment in identified developable properties and incorporating lessons learned from larger corridor initiatives. (see question 8)

Leveraged Resources: Public \$780,000.00 Private \$0.00
Prior NYS Funding/REDC Funding: Amount \$250,000.00
Please identify use(s) of prior funding New signs and streetscape improvements in front of retail establishments.

- 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.

Approximately 4,600 people are currently employed in Downtown Baldwin. Revitalization of the area, including development anticipated within the Grand Avenue URA, is expected to bring more jobs to Downtown Baldwin, attracting new mixed-use projects that will increase density and spur economic activity. Several vacant or underutilized sites along Grand Avenue corridor are ripe for

redevelopment. Through the creation of a more vibrant and attractive neighborhood center, Downtown Baldwin will be able to attract and retain new working professionals.

- 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.

One of the main amenities that Downtown Baldwin offers is its proximity to Baldwin station and easy connection to New York City and the region. In addition to the location, there are several characteristics that contribute to the area's livability, including large well-maintained sidewalks, wide streets (which could accommodate bike lanes), and a mix of residential and commercial building typologies, including a multi-family development and existing mixed-use buildings with ground floor retail. Strikingly, two architectural resources, the Sunrise National Bank building and the Koch building, both in need of some repair, frame Grand Avenue at Sunrise Highway, acting as a gateway to Downtown Baldwin and a reminder of its potential.

- 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.

The Town of Hempstead is committed to the progressive policies that will enhance livability and increase the vibrancy of Downtown Baldwin. In the RFP issued for the Grand Avenue URA, the Town exhibited flexibility in the zoning requirements to allow for mixed-use developments that will create a pedestrian-friendly street front and provide market rate and affordable housing. The Town has also proposed road diets for the full length of Downtown Baldwin, allowing for multi-modal transportation, reducing car speeds, and enhancing pedestrian safety. The Resiliency Study will highlight missed policy opportunities, which the Town is ready and willing to implement to further its goals for downtown revitalization.

- 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.

The Town of Hempstead has already received overwhelming support for the revitalization of Downtown Baldwin from local leaders and stakeholders, including Supervisor Anthony J. Santino, Councilwoman Erin King Sweeney, and County Legislator Laura Curran, who have advocated for a strategic initiative to diversify and invigorate the Grand Avenue corridor. In addition, the Baldwin Civic Association, which serves and advocates for the residents of Baldwin, has also promoted this initiative, supporting the goal to bring new vitality to the downtown.

The Town of Hempstead Dept. of Planning and Economic Development would act as the local lead for the program and liaise with outside experts.

- 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 Baldwin has been the focus of several Town and County studies or initiatives upon which downtown revitalization funding would build. The Grand Avenue URA was studied extensively, with the goals of eliminating blighting conditions and generating economic activity. Nassau County published an Infill Redevelopment Feasibility Report, highlighting Baldwin as a priority area for sustainable growth and transit-oriented development. In addition, the Baldwin Downtown and Commercial Corridor Resiliency Study, supported by Disaster Relief funding, will provide a comprehensive assessment and policy recommendations for achieving economic and physical resiliency along the corridor, creating a roadmap for future investments.

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

Sunrise Highway, a three-lane highway, acts as the biggest barrier for connecting downtown Baldwin to the Long Island Rail Road and the northern portion of the Grand Avenue corridor. The Town of Hempstead expects to invest resources to address connectivity challenges created by Sunrise Highway. In addition, all proposed redevelopment in the area would require review for consistency with zoning and the adequate provision of utility infrastructure. However, the area's proximity to transit indicates that interest and investment in Downtown Baldwin will be robust, enabling new development to overcome any infrastructure challenges identified.

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

The Town of Hempstead Comprehensive Development Plan, originally prepared in 1967, was never formally adopted. The contents of the Comprehensive Development Plan have been amended from time to time through the adoption of detailed sub-area plans such as the Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Plan. The Plan outlines proposed actions to redevelop deteriorated properties and key underutilized sites within the URA through a program of acquisition, demolition, and rehabilitation, supported by a rezoning. The RFP for redevelopment of the URA has already been issued, and is consistent with the goals of the downtown revitalization initiative. Anticipated private investment will serve as a springboard for future investment of resources in Downtown Baldwin.