

## BASIC INFORMATION

- REDC Region: Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council (MHREDC)
- Municipality Name: Village of Highland Falls
- Downtown Name: Hometown, USA
- County Name: Orange County
- Applicant Contact(s) Name and Title: Joseph E. D'Onofrio, Mayor
- Applicant Contact(s) Email Address: MayorJoe@highlandfallsny.org
- Secondary Email Address: rtaylor@highlandfallsny.org

## VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

The Village is in the middle of a true renaissance. A strong, enduring commitment to inclusive community planning has led to the development of a multitude of local projects and initiatives that have emanated directly from residents and stakeholders that participated in the Village's public outreach program. Additionally, this approach and resulting projects and initiatives are supported by its strongest partner, West Point. The vision is to revitalize a downtown environment that marries 217 years of West Point history with an authentic Hudson River village environment. The Village wants to build on this unique relationship that stems from the synergy created from the 2,500 on-base jobs that employ civilians from the Highland Falls area, and the 2 million annual West Point visitors. This connection has the power to generate a tremendous impact by bringing residents and visitors into downtown to work, recreate and relax. The program proposed in this application includes a welcoming, pedestrian-strong streetscape with stores and shops that evoke the character and heritage of the community's rich history and provide goods and services that residents and visitors alike desire. Interpretive signs and wayfinding draw visitors on a walking tour from the West Point Museum, down Main Street through the business district to Memorial Park. Another part of the vision seeks to build on the expanding regional recreational tourism base that includes a new trail system in the Hudson Highlands West and the Empire State Trail up the Hudson River shoreline. There is also the opportunity to establish a water connection with the Village of Cold Spring on the eastern shoreline of the river. Visitors could travel by water taxi between the two destinations establishing the depot waterfront parcel as a new public dock facility.

These experiences are to be shared by visitors from across the state, the nation and the world through a multi-format branding and marketing program that proudly exhibits the Highland Falls community as an authentic extension of the West Point community. A recent example of this unique branding opportunity began in 1982 when the Village of Highland Falls played a significant part in American history as the West Point community welcomed back the Iranian hostages comprised of fifty-two American diplomats and citizens that were held hostage for 444 days making it the longest hostage crisis in recorded history. As the host community for this event, Highland Falls was dubbed "Hometown USA". In realizing this vision through the integrated revitalization and branding/marketing program, Highland Falls will create a dynamic downtown environment that become a "must-go" destination. The program will build upon a strong and sustainable foundation comprised of the following basic elements:

- Historic gateway to U.S. Military Academy at West Point;
- Location on and relationship to the Hudson River;
- Proximity to the Hudson Highlands, Fort Montgomery State Historic Site, Bear Mountain State Park;
- Completion of projects that have been strategically selected and are ready for development;
- A strong visitor base of West Point and the surrounding attractions;
- A deep and diverse community of people, resources and facilities ready to support and participate in the revitalization efforts; and
- A dedicated resident population committed to revitalization of their downtown.

The revitalization of downtown Highland Falls represents why the DRI program came into being. It is a place rich with history and endeared by the residents. While its heritage is a strength, the passage of years has seen the infrastructure age, building stock deteriorate and vacancy rates increase. Technology and societal norms have continued to evolve while the downtown has been challenged to keep pace. But the community recognizes that the time for a revitalized downtown Highland Falls has come – the following statement was made at one of the recent community meetings and encapsulates the determination and commitment of the entire community: "This is Our Time!". This perspective is bolstered by years of public outreach, planning and organizing projects and initiatives.

The culmination of these efforts is a revitalization strategy comprised of a series of integrated and complementary projects and programs that will transform downtown Highland Falls into a center where residents and visitors will be immersed in a revitalized downtown environment. An environment that proudly evokes its history; provides venues for dining, entertainment; and civic spaces for festivals and events; incorporates up-to-date infrastructure and needed technology; and is a hub for commerce through the availability of goods and services. In achieving this revitalized state, the downtown will provide opportunities for employment across a range of business and service sectors. The impact will be an improved local and regional economy from increased employment, wages and sales; cultural enrichment; and an enduring imprint on the lives of residents and visitors. After years of preparation the Village, through the unique attributes of the DRI program, is poised to act on implementation of its revitalization strategy – this IS the time.

## JUSTIFICATION

Downtown Highland Falls is characterized by a range of uses from residential, to retail business, to dining and entertainment, to personal and governmental services, to public parks and open spaces. This range of uses exists with a quaint and compact setting. The boundary of the area as illustrated in the map included with this application was strategically delineated to capture the unique attributes and opportunities of downtown Highland Falls. The determination of the boundary for downtown Highland Falls is based upon several levels of considerations including:

- **Natural Features** – As a riverfront community, one of the Village’s striking natural features is the sloping nature of the topography towards the shoreline of New York’s most-storied river, the Hudson River. The downtown boundary as presented in this application is purposely linear in its orientation and its shape as it parallels the river shoreline and maximizes the benefits of the viewshed over the river and the direct shoreline frontage.
- **Existing and Proposed Land Use** – The boundary as included with this application is the result of analytical approach to including land uses which complement one another and when brought to the highest and best form of use, will result in the establishment and proliferation of critical mass – an important consideration for the sustained success of downtown businesses. The other consideration applied from a land use perspective is the establishment of an area inside the boundary which allows for maximum benefit to existing businesses and institutions in the downtown area through expansion, while augmenting existing business with new businesses. For the area outside of the boundary, attention was paid to preservation of the integrity of residential neighborhoods and avoidance of potential adverse impacts associated with uses that may be in conflict with the single-family, detached residences that comprise many of the Village’s traditional neighborhood settings. However, the boundary was set in such a manner so that the walkable connections between these neighborhoods and the downtown area not only remains intact but, will be enhanced and physically improved.
- **Characteristics of the Built Environment** – Downtown Highland Falls features a traditional Main Street lined by inviting storefronts housing businesses with a mix of goods and services in two- and three-story buildings of traditional American architecture. The density and architecture of the existing buildings and the provision of streets and sidewalks provide multi-modal access to the downtown area. The downtown area as shown encompasses a densely developed area, meaning that lot coverages are high and building heights are multi-story. In consideration of the age and heritage of many of these buildings, they are also either listed on or qualify for listing on the state and national register. These attributes will be enhanced with the fulfillment of the vision that DRI funds will aid in achieving.
- **Strong Partnerships** – As the host community to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, one of the world’s iconic institutions, the downtown area provides a readily identifiable connection to, and appreciation for local and national history which continues to awe and inspire generations of residents and visitors. Cadets contribute their time through the Center for Nation Reconstruction and Capacity Development at West Point in their direct work with the local community assisting in the revitalization of the Village of Highland Falls.

With the vision for downtown Highland Falls established, the Village of Highland Falls has taken significant steps to prepare for a DRI investment. Through partnership with regional and local stakeholder agencies and groups, a pragmatic planning process has been implemented. The result is an overarching plan for the use of DRI funds that has been built from the “ground-up” by including key participants to assist with building the component parts of the plan in a logical manner. The foundation for the DRI considers the following local, regional and statewide initiatives and plans:

- Village of Highland Falls Comprehensive Plan (update planned);
- Orange County Comprehensive Plan;
- Modernized Village land use code as part of the consolidation of the planning and zoning boards with the Town of Highlands;
- Open Space Plan for Orange County (update planned);
- Master Plan for water resources in Orange County;
- Village of Highland Falls Historic Downtown Plan (being completed through the Army/Community Heritage Partnership Program resulting in the creation of a Local Development Corporation (now Economic Development Corporation) and the revitalization of the Main Street Historic District;
- Revitalization Strategy of Main Street, including accommodating the Empire State Trail along the Hudson River, streetscape and façade improvements, public investments to leverage private investment, providing additional public amenities, and developing the tourism sector;
- Strategy for economic development and job growth in Orange County, including 64 recommendations for municipalities looking to attract businesses, small businesses and economic development partner agencies;
- Orange County Greenway Compact to promote the Hudson Valley Greenway Compact Criteria through the use of the best design practices;
- University of Pennsylvania School of Design, Landscape Architecture and Penn-Praxis study selected by the Regional Plan Association (RPA);
- U.S. Military Academy Cadets Capstone Study;
- Feasibility study for the redevelopment of the waterfront and historic train depot;
- Concept plan for Ladycliff Park and a proposal for improvements to Roe Park currently under development; and
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy (LWRS) (in progress).

The Village has also built partnerships with key stakeholders who have contributed to the recent momentum. These include:

- U.S. Military Academy at West Point;
- Hudson River Valley Greenway;
- NYSERDA;
- NYS Palisades Interstate Park Commission;
- Scenic Hudson;

- Hudson Highlands Land Trust;
- Town of Highlands Historian and Historical Society;
- Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council;
- Orange County Industrial Development Agency (IDA);
- University of Pennsylvania School of Design; and
- Regional Plan Association.

In recent years, the Village has matched municipal funds with available grants to improve sidewalks, install/replace street trees, conduct renovations of individual buildings, replace deteriorated lighting fixtures, and purchase and renovate a building for use as a Senior Center. However, these projects have occurred over a sustained period of time and in a “piecemeal” fashion. As a result of inclusive and broad-based approach to planning for the future of downtown Highland Falls, the Village is prepared for successful implementation of its DRI program. The DRI program by virtue of its scale and scope will provide the funds necessary to implement the planned projects in a comprehensive and coordinated manner as envisioned during the plan development process.

Under the DRI program, the impact of the funding will be maximized through expanded job creation among downtown businesses, increases in valuation among downtown area properties, increases in sales tax revenue resulting from heightened levels of commerce, an enhanced vibrancy to the downtown through increased activity and dynamic integration of uses. The justification does not end with these direct impacts but is further enhanced by indirect impacts in the form of improvement to overall fiscal condition in the operations of the Village government and the services it provides. Increased commercial valuation in downtown property values and increased sales tax revenue resulting from increased sales and commercial activity serve to shift the demand for revenue away from the residential real property tax borne by residents of the Village.

A high functioning downtown will directly improve businesses, product and service offerings, employment, downtown area property values, sales tax revenue, cultural activities, and the diversity of the downtown area land use pattern. A high functioning downtown will also indirectly improve the overall fiscal conditions of the Village easing the property tax burden to the residents of the Village. The justification is for DRI funding for the Village of Highland Falls is broad-based with deep implications for businesses and residents alike.

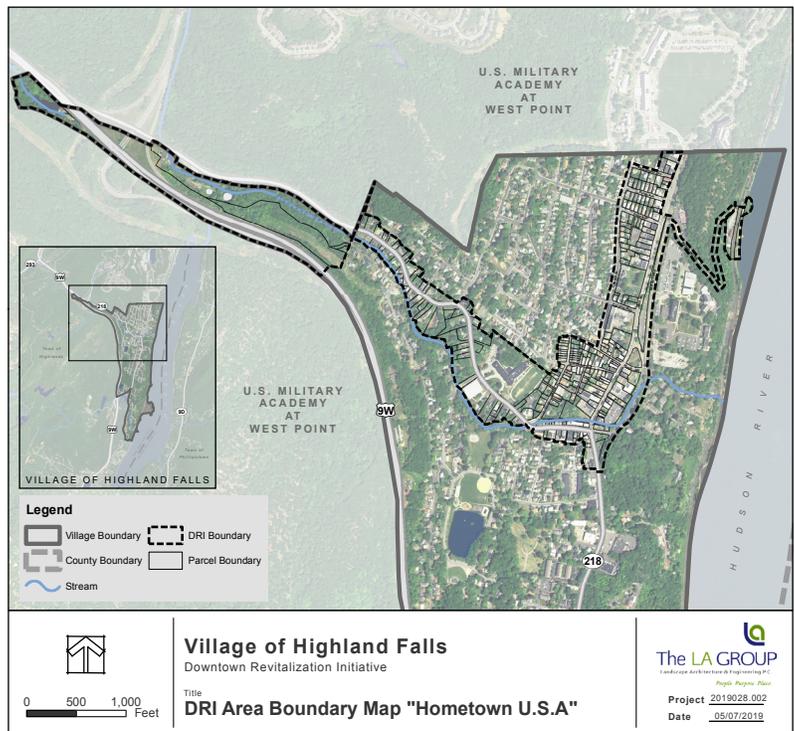
## DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

### PROPOSED BOUNDARY

The proposed DRI area for the Village of Highland Falls extends north-to-south from the northern Village boundary at U.S. Military Academy at West Point’s Thayer Gate to the southern-most intersection of Main Street and West Point Highway. East-to-west it follows Highland Brook from West Point Highway to the western Village boundary to incorporate the properties along County Route 218. West of Main Street, the DRI area covers all parcels east of Church Street, and south of Tobin’s Lane including those which line the western side of Center Street. Station Hill Road and the site of the historic train depot along the Hudson River were incorporated into the DRI area since the entrance at Main Street and West Point Highway is the single access point and the property contains the only usable public waterfront in the Village. See the boundary as illustrated on the map on page 1 of this application.

### Natural Geography

The geography of the DRI area is defined by the rolling hills and deep forests of the Highlands region, the steep slopes of the Hudson River Valley, and several freshwater sources and their tributaries to the Hudson. The Hudson River and Highlands were designated part of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area in 1996. The Hudson River is also a designated American Heritage River. The other significant water bodies in the Village are the Hudson River, Roe Pond, and Pells Pond. Each provides an open space buffer that limits future development on parcels adjacent to or nearby these areas. Highland Brook flows through the edge of the downtown area, crossing under Main Street and West Point Highway to the Hudson River. The brook, from which the Village gets its name, extends from Bog Meadow Pond in Black Rock Forest to the Hudson River and acts as a natural separation between the downtown and the rest of the Village. These places are local treasures, providing an escape from urban life in a downtown setting.



## Transportation and Connectivity

Connectivity to the downtown area is a core consideration for the successful implementation of the vision for downtown Highland Falls. The transportation system serving downtown Highland Falls is multi-modal in its makeup and function. This circumstance is a direct result of the heritage of the Village and its evolution since its establishment in 1906. Settlement of the Village began in the downtown area, developing concentrically from the core outwardly into the residential neighborhoods through a series of interconnected roads, streets, pathways, and sidewalks. Regional connections were further enhanced via passenger and freight rail lines. In consideration of this history, the downtown is inextricably linked to these neighborhoods and the surrounding region.

Today the downtown is connected to the rest of the region by two main roads, State Route 9W and County Road 218 and the CSX west shore rail line. State Route 9W is a major roadway along the western Hudson River, linking Highland Falls to markets in Fort Lee, New Jersey and New York City in the south and Albany and the Capital Region to the north. Since the 1930s, the state route has served as the primary means for the movement of freight and passenger vehicles to and from the Village and therefore a significant factor in the growth and development of the downtown. County Road 218 is an extension of Main Street to Storm King Highway and State Route 9W. State Route 9W and County Road 218 are also valued for their scenic experience. Due to the constraints of the regional terrain and preferences of early inhabitants to locate settlements along the Hudson River, these roads were required to traverse many mountains, valleys and forested areas which provide some of the most breathtaking views of the Hudson River and New York landscape.

Prior to the rise of automobiles as the preferred mode of transportation, goods and visitors traveled to the downtown by rail. Now owned by CSX Railroad and restricted to freight movement, the rail line along the west shore of the Hudson River was the primary route for freight from New York City ports to the Village and for local passengers to the many other communities of the Hudson River Valley. The former train depot remains as a beautiful reminder of this past. The historic significance of the station house was recognized by the state and federal government in 1982 with its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Although the depot is no longer functioning, the site remains an asset to the downtown by providing an area for waterfront activities and public access to the Hudson River. This is a unique amenity for a central business district.

Within the downtown, pedestrians can easily visit local businesses, parks and other special places with use of a continuous network of sidewalks and walking paths. Whether its strolling through Ladycliff Park, window shopping on Main Street, or taking the Highland Falls Greenway Trail to Roe Park, the Village downtown is completely accessible for pedestrians. Main Street is fully connected by sidewalks but there is an opportunity to improve connections between adjacent residential neighborhoods and Main Street businesses. Increasing downtown pedestrian circulation and connectivity will improve the pedestrian experience, reduce the potential for conflicts between different transportation modes, reduce traffic by removing the need for an automobile in the downtown, and put more feet on the street to increase the liveliness of downtown and generate more business activity. The intent is to utilize DRI funds to significantly improve these connections and downtown area destinations, businesses and service providers.

## Neighborhood Character

The Village is the primary year-round downtown business district for the Town of Highlands and the primary gateway into West Point. The DRI area focuses on the walkable, compact neighborhood of two-and three-story buildings around the historic Main Street. Main Street is the central business district and node for civic activity and community life. 55 properties in the DRI area house commercial activities which provide goods and services to residents and offer dining and shopping experiences for visitors. Memorial Park, Ladycliff Park and Roe Park offer locals opportunities to engage in recreation and events with their neighbors.

The downtown contains the greatest concentration of the iconic 19th and early 20th century architecture which has defined the character of the Village. About one-in-four of all buildings and half of residences were constructed in the 19th century and nearly 60-percent of all buildings and three-fourths of residences were constructed before the second World War. Among these are seven of the Village's most unique historic sites dating from 1841 to 1894. At the same time, less than 5-percent of all buildings and just over 6-percent of residences were constructed in this century. While the rest of the region is expanding as a result of new subdivisions and high-density residential development, downtown Highland Falls continues to maintain one of the last historic Main Street experiences.

## PAST INVESTMENT AND FUTURE INVESTMENT POTENTIAL

### Investment Goals

The revitalization strategy for the downtown is to maximize the effectiveness of private and public investment to the DRI area to accomplish the vision by targeting projects which are compatible with local and regional goals. The goals for downtown are:

- Improve the form and function of downtown Highland Falls through implementation of a comprehensive program of integrated projects and services that strategically enhance the attractiveness of downtown to residents and visitors alike;
- Expand and improve connections between downtown businesses, service providers, institutions, parks and the local population and visitors;
- Provide a responsive and diverse product-based and service-based marketplace;
- Enhance the appearance of downtown in both the public realm (park areas, public buildings wayfinding and streetscape) and the private realm (private buildings – existing and new, signage, and open spaces)
- Provide a memorable downtown experience through the provision of exceptional cultural attractions; products and services as well as viewsheds and public spaces;
- Improve all modes of transportation – pedestrian, vehicular, and transit; and
- Upgrade recreational and leisure time opportunities through parks and recreational areas with facilities that support community festivals, events, active and passive recreation while serving as potential venues for literature and the visual and performing arts.

These goals are supported by the long-term strategy of the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Corporation (MHREDC) to develop a specific urban approach. The current draft of MHREDC’s Strategic Plan includes several goals which are aligned with local investment priorities. Some of the major topics include leveraging natural assets for tourism and attracting new businesses and residents, improving key infrastructure, small to medium sized business development, and building sustainable partnerships.

At the County-level, the Village of Highland Falls was identified as a Priority Growth Area in the most recent update to the Orange County Comprehensive Plan. The County intends to support concentrated growth in the existing historic centers of the region, such as Highland Falls, which already include a prominent central business district. A strategy was adopted which calls for focusing efforts on the promotion and expansion of existing assets and key industries which define a locality. These industries are agriculture, arts, manufacturing and technology, medical, and tourism. The goals of the strategy include:

- Balance economic growth by attracting new business interests and assisting existing businesses;
- Invest in public funds to ensure sufficient water and sewer capacity, easy access to transportation, full wireless technology service, and an array of housing options;
- Work with employers to provide workforce training and educational programs for residents, to increase the pool of skilled labor;
- Create a supportive culture for small businesses, including general training and resources for business owners.

To realize these goals and opportunities the Village has undertaken the following projects:

**List of Recently Completed Projects or Projects Underway**

| Project Type   | Project Description  | Source   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Main Street Improvements</b>                                | New sidewalks, trees and curb replacements (\$200,000)   | DOT multi-modal grant                                  |
|  | Streetscape improvements (\$50,000)  | Village  |
|  | Street paving (\$190,000)  | DOT multi-modal grant                                  |
|  | New LED lighting   | NYPA outright grant                                    |
| <b>Building Construction and Renovations</b>                   | Eight Main Street building improvements and beautification project (\$540,000)   | Restore NY; Orange County IDA                          |
|  | Senior Citizen Center purchase and renovations (\$350,000)   | DASNY grant; CDBG                                      |
|  | Highland Falls Library renovations (\$82,000)  | DASNY grant  |
|  | School district capital projects, including improved sports facilities, classroom advancements in technology, and structural improvements (\$20 million) | Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District |
|  | Holiday Inn expansion (\$1 million)  | Private  |
|  | Old Guard Hotel construction (\$25 million)  | Private  |
|  | McDonald’s renovation (\$1 million)  | Private  |
|  | Wallkill Savings and Loan renovation (\$1 million)   | Private  |
|  | Auto Spa construction (\$5 million)  | Private  |
|  | USAA Financial Center renovation (\$5 million)   | Private  |
|  | PenFed Building purchase and redevelopment (\$700,000)   | Private  |
|  | Bear Mountain Bakery opening   | Private  |
|  | First Command Financial opening  | Private  |
|  | Renovation of 425 Main Street for new restaurant (\$1 million)   | Private  |
|  | Davis Barracks expansion (\$250 million)   | West Point   |
|  | West Point Visitor’s Center improvements (\$25 million)  | West Point   |
| Keller Hospital improvements (\$25 million)                    | West Point   |  |
| Camp Bucker renovation (\$30 million)                          | West Point   |  |
| Research and Development Building construction (\$250 million) | West Point   |  |
| <b>Parks and Public Spaces</b>                                 | Memorial Park improvements (\$1 million)   | Village  |
|  | Ladycliff Park sidewalk improvements (\$80,000)  | Village  |
|  | Ladycliff Park improvements (\$1 million)  | Village  |
|  | Roe Park improvements (\$1 million)  | DASNY grant; Village                                   |
|  | Revolutionary War Preservation Project (\$12 million)  | West Point   |

|                       |   |            |
|-----------------------|---|------------|
| <b>Infrastructure</b> | Centralized Parking Garage construction (\$150 million)               | West Point |
|                       | Campus street pavement and improvements (\$1 million)                 | West Point |
|                       | James I. O’Neill High School infrastructure renovation (\$30 Million) | West Point |
|                       | Camp Natural Bridge renovation (\$10 million)                         | West Point |
|                       | Parking garage construction (\$10 million)                            | West Point |
|                       | Water Plant renovation (\$5 million)                                  | West Point |
|                       | Wastewater Treatment Plant renovation (\$25 million)                  | West Point |

As evidenced by the list above, the Village has participated in individual grant programs and where possible, matching funds from local sources has been provided to accomplish incremental projects. As funding is inconsistent and year-to-year approvals cannot be relied upon, this approach is highly inefficient and implementation can take years, if not decades to reach fulfillment. The incremental nature of this approach and the extended time involved diminish the impact of the projects. The key to properly implementing the objectives for the revitalization strategy for downtown Highland Falls and to complete the realization of the associated benefits is to implement the strategy in a comprehensive and holistic manner. The DRI program has the unique capacity to support the Village in completing the projects that are planned or underway.

**Downtown Investment**

Additional investments through the DRI program will be the responsibility of the municipal government of the Village of Highland Falls. As with past projects, the success of downtown investments is significantly improved through collaboration with local partners. There is an existing network of public, private and nonprofit entities working with the Village to revitalize the downtown. Technical assistance, financial support, administrative capacity, and labor contributions are a few of the areas where the Village will seek assistance from their partners. Current partners who are committed to the revitalization of downtown include: Town of Highlands; Orange County; Highland Falls Chamber of Commerce; Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC); Orange County Industrial Development Agency (IDA); Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council; and U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

As of 2017, the Highland Falls Economic Development Corporation (HFEDC) is no longer in operation. Many of the former roles of the EDC have fallen to the Chamber of Commerce and the Orange County IDA. The Chamber’s function is primarily to market the Village downtown and manage community events while the IDA has provided financial support to Village investments. Most recently, the IDA granted Highland Falls \$45,000 to offset engineering expenses for the Main Street building improvement project funded through a Restore NY grant. The Village will continue to work with these organizations and its other partners to maximize the potential of investments in the downtown.

**Investment Potential**

Highland Falls is a desirable place to work and operate a business as the Village is located within a region with consistently higher rates of employment and comparatively lower rates unemployment; above average household incomes; quality educational services yielding comparatively high test scores and graduation rates; and a uniquely favorable business circumstance stemming from the high rate of visitors to West Point on annual basis. In consideration of these factors, Main Street grew as the natural center of commercial development activity in the Village and the intent of the revitalization strategy is to expand this activity in a smart and sustainable manner. The strategy intends to incorporate targeted incentives through assistance to businesses and building owners to revitalize challenged properties that are a blighting influence to the downtown area. Properties that are underutilized or vacant will be returned to productive use through public-private investment partnerships where public funds are used to leverage private investment to achieve adaptive reuse these properties and return the status of these locations as valuable contributors to the local economy through increased commerce and employment. The result will be the reestablishment of highly valued properties that enrich the local economy and decrease the burden on the residential tax base in the adjoining neighborhoods. There is an estimated 26,500 square feet of available commercial spaces and storefronts which are ready for redevelopment through this public and private investment approach. Other high-profile development opportunities include the elementary school building, an existing commercial property on County Route 218, and the historic train depot. According to the National Main Street Center, merchants in traditional downtown areas that have a coordinated public-private Main Street strategy can double their sales, receipts and revenue.

In addition to providing a public-private approach to downtown property renovation and restoration, revitalized elements of the public realm along Main Street such as street trees, awnings, streetlights, benches, sidewalks, and signage generate more foot traffic for local merchants resulting in increased commerce, business viability and property valuation. As the Village continues to invest in these elements, the growth potential of downtown businesses increases leading to new job opportunities and greater prosperity. There are several projects of the revitalization strategy that will be focused on the public realm of the downtown area. These include:

- Improving downtown area civic areas and parks including a performing arts amphitheater;
- Establishment of a “tourism port” on the Hudson River waterfront to provide water taxi service to and from the Village of Cold Springs directly across the Hudson River on the river’s easterly shore;
- Continuing downtown streetscape beautification from Cozzens Avenue to Mountain Avenue/County Route 218; and
- Provision of thematic lighting and other complementary streetscape elements (benches, wayfinding, interpretive signage, etc.) that speaks to the heritage of the Village and its close association to West Point.

To complete the comprehensive approach to revitalization the strategy incorporates investment in a branding and marketing program to provide a coordinated platform for downtown businesses, festivals, and cultural events to communicate with residents, visitors, and customers seeking to learn about the enriching experiences and quality services and products that are available in downtown Highland Falls.

**Housing Market**

Highland Falls is a small village of modestly sized and priced houses and a walkable commercial district. The community highly values the intimate environment which reduces the threat of higher-density residential development. Downtown residential neighborhoods have seen a healthy increase in property sales volume, with increases in median sale price as well. Average days on market are decreasing while sales volume is increasing. According to Trulia, between March 28 and June 27, 2018, the median sale price of single-family homes in Highland Falls was \$142,000, a year-on-year decrease of 12.3-percent. The median rent as of July 1, 2018 was \$2,450. According to the US Census Bureau 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) the occupancy rate across all housing types is 94 percent. The strength of the housing market and the proximity of the housing in and around downtown will be strong contributing factors to the success of the proposed revitalization strategy

**Infrastructure Capacity**

In recent years, the Village of Highland Falls and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point have invested nearly a quarter-of-a-billion dollars in local infrastructure projects ranging from renovations to the water plant and wastewater treatment plant to sidewalk and curb maintenance along Main Street. Therefore, there is available capacity for accommodating the anticipated water and sewer needs arising from the implementation of projects funded through DRI program. Additionally, portions of the streetscape in the downtown area will have been improved. However, substantial needs remain. Therefore, the Village intends to utilize DRI funds for further infrastructure improvements to complete streetscape improvements where voids remain. Based on feedback from the local population and input from key stakeholders, additional infrastructure projects include:

- Replace old utility poles and wires;
- Replace sidewalks in poor condition;
- Improve broadband speed, access and connectivity – a critical need to attract new businesses to downtown;
- Introduce a downtown public wi-fi system;
- Replace old parking meters;
- Install pedestrian-oriented lighting through Main Street; and
- New downtown parking garage.

**JOB GROWTH**

**Market Description**

The Village is home to an estimated 3,841 people. Nearly half are age 25 to 54 and in their prime working years. The labor force is also well educated with over 95-percent of those 25 years and older having completed high school and over half with at least an Associate’s degree. This is indicative of nearly a decade of growth in the share of management, business, science and art occupations. With these professional jobs has come greater wealth and more spending power as well. The Village has a substantial market for businesses. Almost a quarter of the population is between the ages of 20 and 35, the most desirable age market. Median household incomes have increased by nearly 14% since 2010 to \$74,278 which is more than \$10,000 greater than the estimated state average.

| Employment (2010-2017)                          | 2010  |       | 2017  |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total Population                                | 2,222 | -     | 3,841 | -     |
| Civilian Labor Force                            | 1,179 | 69.7% | 2,147 | 70.8% |
| Management, Business, Science and Art           | 343   | 31.9% | 836   | 38.9% |
| Service   | 200   | 18.6% | 400   | 18.6% |
| Sales and Office                                | 272   | 25.3% | 521   | 24.3% |
| Natural Resources, Construction and Maintenance | 171   | 15.9% | 162   | 7.5%  |
| Production, Transportation, and Material Moving | 90    | 8.4%  | 228   | 10.6% |
| Unemployed                                      | 103   | 5.9%  | 90    | 2.8%  |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates.

Highland Falls is at the crossroads of the four counties directly north of New York City – Orange, Rockland, Putnam and Westchester. The estimated collective population of these counties is approximately 1.8 million, a massive base from which to draw labor and tourism activity to the downtown. With one-in-twelve U.S. residents living within driving distance of Orange County, there is room for market growth. The immediate region on the western shores of the Hudson River includes about 12,000 people from the Village, the military academy, and the hamlet of Fort Montgomery. An additional 4,500 students live much of the year at the military academy and frequent the downtown. James I. O’Neill High School educates students from the communities of Highland Falls, Fort Montgomery, West Point and Garrison on the opposite side of the Hudson River, regularly drawing about 600 students and their parents to the Village.

The Village is accessible by the Hudson Line of the Metro-North Railroad which has a stop at the hamlet of Manitou directly east on the Hudson River. Train commuters can cross the Hudson River at the Purple Heart Memorial Bridge (previously Bear Mountain Bridge) and continue north for about 4.5 miles to the downtown. According to the Department of Transportation, an average of over 20,000 vehicles use the Purple Heart

Memorial Bridge to cross the Hudson River each day. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) reported a record 16.9 million rides on the Hudson Line, up by 400,000 rides in a year. Ticket sales in the upper section of the Hudson Line have specifically increased by 2.1-percent over the past year. Total Hudson Line ridership has increased at a greater rate than any other line since the start of the Metro-North Railroad in 1987. Rail ridership and bridge crossings are predicted to continue climbing as regional growth increases demand, bringing more activity to downtown Highland Falls.

**Tourism**

People have long been attracted to Highland Falls for its proximity to several natural, historic and cultural assets. These places are the essential components of the robust and growing tourism market, with an estimated \$3.6 billion in revenue to the six counties of the Hudson Valley resulting in jobs and revenue to the Village. The major assets include:

- **U.S. Military Academy at West Point** – West Point is the third largest tourist attraction in the state outside New York City. Nearly 3 million people visit West Point and Highland Falls each year, including over 500,000 foreign tourists.
- **Hudson Highlands** – There are over 14 million visitors per year to Highlands outdoor recreation venues across New Jersey and New York, greater than Yellowstone, Yosemite and the Grand Canyon. The Village of Highland Falls is located within the western region of the New York State Hudson Highlands. Titled Hudson Highlands West, this region includes six state parks, Storm King Art Center, Black Rock Forest, and three regional trails as part of an approximately 550-mile trail system. The 17-mile region draws an estimated 14.5 million visitors annually.
- **Bear Mountain State Park** – There are about 275-acres of parkland within a half-mile of the Village boundary. A significant portion of these lands are within Bear Mountain State Park, the most frequented state park in the region. In 2016, the State recorded 2,173,972 visitors to Bear Mountain State Park. Visitation numbers have increased by nearly 15% since 2010 and are only expected to rise as state plans for improvements to existing facilities and the expansion of recreational trails are implemented.
- **Appalachian Trail** – The 2,160-mile trail from Georgia to Maine is the longest hiking-only footpath in the world. Each year, more than 3 million people visit the trail and over 3,000 attempt the complete hike. 160-miles of the trail extends through the New York-New Jersey region. Bear Mountain State Park is the focal point of the trail in Orange County.

There are eleven establishments with a total of 513 rooms within 5 miles of the downtown offer accommodations for overnight visitors.

| Accommodations (5-mile Radius)                     | Number of Rooms |
|--|-----------------|
| West Point Motel                                   | 51              |
| Fair Bridge Inn and Suites                         | 54              |
| U.S. Academy Motel                                 | 15              |
| Overlook on Hudson Bed & Breakfast                 | 5               |
| Hudson River Crest Bed & Breakfast                 | 7               |
| Holiday Inn Express and Suites                     | 120             |
| Thayer Hotel                                       | 151             |
| la bel Worstell Bed & Breakfast                    | 8               |
| Bear Mountain Bridge Motel                         | 5               |
| IHG Army Hotels Five Star Inn                      | 34              |
| Bear Mountain Inn, Overlook Lodge & Stone Cottages | 63              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                       | <b>513</b>      |

The recent expansion of the Holiday Inn to 120 rooms and construction of the 100-room Old Guard Hotel demonstrate how growth in regional tourism is being felt in Highland Falls. These places employ many residents and contribute to the economy. Increased activity at the major regional assets and improvements to the attractiveness, livability and business climate of Highland Falls through the DRI program will only result in new and expanded accommodations providing additional job opportunities to the local population.

To expand the reach of downtown businesses and improve impact of tourism to the downtown area the Village strategy includes the installation of “tourism port” on the Village-owned property at the end Station Hill Road on the shoreline of the Hudson River. The port would provide water taxi to and from the Village of Cold Springs directly across the Hudson River. This new service would reduce the number of vehicles attempting to cross the river thereby reducing traffic, saving fuel and reducing carbon emissions.

**Presence of New and Expanding Employers**

The U.S. Military Academy is the primary employer for residents of Highland Falls. With the student body slated to expand by over 1,000 in the next few years, it can be expected that new administrative, management and service opportunities will be available at the military academy along with construction-related opportunities as the academy expands its facilities.

Although the trends are positive, there is ample room for growth. The DRI can be used to increase opportunities for new businesses which result in new job opportunities. The Village and its partners implemented a successful strategy for local economic development which will be enhanced

with an injection of funds from the DRI program. Construction projects will have short-term labor requirements and spur additional job growth by increasing the attractiveness of the downtown as a place to live and do business. Village objectives which will directly contribute to job creation include the following:

- Establish an assistance to business and property owner program to spur redevelopment and adaptive reuse of underutilized and dilapidated properties in the downtown area.
- Establish a community restaurant lab to fill vacant storefronts, meet the demand for higher quality dining and create a systemic culture of small business development.
- Assist the Orange County IDA with the development of a small business retail incubator on Main Street to provide technical assistance and physical space for local entrepreneurs to collaborate and advance their ideas.
- Building facade and storefront improvements program through a Village reimbursement fund.
- Expand the operations of the Chamber of Commerce to regularly update a vacant commercial space inventory.
- Set up a downtown shuttle service for cadets to generate additional business activity in the downtown and increase the number of cadets able to work off hours in local businesses.
- Reuse of the historic train station as a public amenity with an in-house private business providing desired goods and services to users of the tourism port and redeveloped waterfront park.

An initiative ancillary to the downtown revitalization program involves development of the 248-acre property just to the south of the downtown area. The shovel-ready property was conveyed by the federal government and is ideal for any business wishing to take advantage of the proximity to West Point for contracts and labor, the proximity to the Metro North Hudson Line, State Route 9W and Interstate 87 for travel to and from New York City, and the natural and historic beauty of the Highlands region to attract outside labor to Highland Falls.

The Orange County Economic Development Strategy supports the Village’s framework of utilizing existing natural and historic resources to maximize employment, spur creation and expansion of local businesses while enhancing and preserving the natural landscape. The idyllic landscapes, outdoor recreational amenities, transportation connectivity, presence of a major military academy, inviting downtown, and sense of history are attractive qualities which factor in significantly to the decision of many to live and work in the Village. Strengthening connections between these places will only result in more jobs and economic activity in Highland Falls.

## ATTRACTIVENESS

The Village of Highland Falls is a remarkably beautiful place due to its geographical location on the Hudson River. Its location on the “highland” gives it a special presence on the Hudson River. Highland Falls is an attractive place to live and work because it is listed among the safest and most livable villages in New York. The Village is ranked the second best place to live in Orange County in 2019 by the online service Niche, owing much of this result to the good public school system, population diversity, variety of retail, recreation and entertainment opportunities, and low violent crime rate. According to the Division of Criminal Justice Services, the overall number of crimes have decreased since 1990, with violent crime declining most significantly.

There is no better testament to the desirability of the Village than the significant number of military veterans and West Point graduates who have made Highland Falls their home. About 15-percent of the population are civilian veterans, many who fell in love with the area during their time at the military academy and decide to settle in the Village at the end of their service. Several of the most popular events over the years are organized by or directly support local veterans, including the Stride & Ride Relay, Rolling Thunder Salute to Veterans Ride and Expo and the Fourth of July parade. Many of the streets downtown display military tribute banners supplied by the Chamber of Commerce which honor residents’ beloved veterans, active-duty, reserve, and National Guard members.

The location, scale and compact nature of downtown Highland Falls are principle attributes that are ideally suited for festivals and events. For generations the downtown area has been the area where residents from the Village and across the region have come to celebrate holidays, memorialize fallen service men and women, and to gather for special events. The public-private improvements forthcoming from the implementation of Village’s redevelopment strategy will strengthen and reinforce this role in the lives of the residents and cadets alike.

Two small community parks and a larger public park are key elements of the downtown area that add to its attractiveness. Memorial Park was established in 1951 as a commemoration of local veterans of World War II. It offers benches and a large gazebo for visitors to stop and rest among the trees and plantings. Due to its location, the park has served as the center for many events and community gatherings, including celebrations for Halloween, Independence Day and Memorial Day. Ladycliff Park is a pocket park in the center of the Village on Main Street utilized primarily as a respite for residents, workers and shoppers. Roe Park, located at the west end of Walnut Street, is the largest public park offering an array of recreational amenities such as baseball fields, basketball and tennis courts, swimming facilities and fishing. The Village has been committed to the maintenance and improvement of these parks, recognizing the value of these public places to the vitality of the downtown. In recent years, a total of nearly \$3 million has been invested in the upkeep and improvement of park grounds and facilities, including \$80,000 in sidewalk maintenance around Ladycliff Park to improve the aesthetics and increase pedestrian safety and accessibility.

Local and regional trails are an important element to the attractiveness and connectiveness of the Village. The Highland Falls Greenway Trail is an established downtown trail loop which connects the West Point Visitor’s Center to Roe Park. The approximately 2-mile trail uses the existing sidewalks on Main Street, West Point Highway, Walnut Avenue, and Dale Avenue, highlighting historic buildings and public parks along the way. The trail was developed over the years with funding from the Hudson Valley Greenway program through Orange County and the Army/Community Heritage Partnership Program. Support was provided by the Highland Falls Local Development Corporation, West Point and Historic

Hudson Highlands who adopted a Walk of Fame marker program informing trail users of the history of places throughout the Village downtown and the people who contributed to their significance. The Empire State Trail will add further value by linking New York City to Canada and Buffalo to Albany via a continuous 750-mile route that will create the longest multi-use state trail in the nation. Located on both sides of the Hudson River, the trail will pass through Highland Falls.

The downtown is a celebration of the country’s finest 18th and 19th century architecture and the All-American Main Street. The historic center of the Village is a healthy mixture of commercial uses and community services, including retail, restaurants, the Village Hall, Town Hall, Highland Falls Library and Village Post Office. The half-mile-long Main Street is lined with charming buildings like the Italianate-style Village Hall, the public library with its covered front porch, a clutch of historic churches, two barbershops, an ice-cream parlor, an Irish bar, a Mexican restaurant, a Chinese restaurant, a hardware store, a consignment shop, a McDonald’s, Carnie’s Eats-N-Treats offering carnival fare like corn dogs and fried Oreos, Thayer Gate Deli and Café near the entrance to West Point, and the 62-year-old Park Restaurant. In the center of the Village, commercial uses spread into some side streets, with a small handful of businesses located in the surrounding residential neighborhoods resulting in true downtown atmosphere.

Main Street is also a designated historic district. The historic buildings in the registry and Main Street Historic District represent the aesthetic of “Hometown USA” and the importance of Highland Falls in the history of the state and the nation. DRI funds could be used to develop the administrative capacity necessary to build an inventory, complete the process for getting registry statuses for additional properties, and create a strategy for acquiring and implementing state and federal incentives for historic renovation, marketing and tourism resources. Continued investment in the historic and cultural resources of the downtown will strengthen Highland Falls as a heritage tourism destination.

**DRI Area Properties in the National Register of Historic Places**

| Name  | Address           | Description  |
|---|-------------------|--|
| Church of the Holy Innocents and Rectory    | 401 Main Street   | Episcopal church completed in 1841 was designed by Robert Walter Weir in memory of his children.     |
| First Presbyterian Church of Highland Falls | 341 Main Street   | Romanesque Revival church designed by Frederick Clarke Withers and completed in 1868.                |
| Highland Falls Railroad Depot               | Station Hill Road | Shingle-style building completed in 1880.  |
| Highland Falls Village Hall                 | 303 Main Street   | Italianate-style former bank building completed in 1894.   |
| House at 116 Main Street                    | 365 Main Street   | Italian villa-style home completed in 1865.  |
| House at 37 Center Street                   | 20 Center Street  | Greek revival-style home dating to the mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century.                                 |
| The Squirrels                               | 2 Squirrels Road  | Historic estate of John Bigelow constructed in 1845 and redesigned by famous architect Calvert Vaux. |

Highland Falls is a designated Certified Local Government, Main Street Community and Preserve America Community. These programs recognize the cultural and natural heritage of the Village while committing state and federal funding and technical assistance to preserve the defining historic character and special places. The additional banners, plaques, marketing materials, and promotional items available to the Village through these programs has improved the pedestrian experience and downtown aesthetics, drawn greater numbers to downtown businesses, and increased local pride in the history and culture of the community.

**QUALITY OF LIFE**

In addition to the attributes listed above, the compact and yet diverse pattern of land uses in and around the Village is a fundamental element that contributes to its attractiveness as place to reside within the Hudson Valley region. One of the principle attributes among these uses on a regional level, is the productive agricultural use of the land. In 2013, Orange County joined Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester Counties in establishing the Hudson Valley Food Hubs Initiative. Orange County farmers benefit from a local food hub through aggregate sourcing, distribution and marketing of goods, and partnerships for opportunities in new markets, greater access to business development programs and improved relationships with local businesses and communities. The Chamber contributes significantly to the quality of life in the downtown by assisting with the highly successful Highland Falls Farmers Market. Held every Sunday from June through October, onsite vendors offer seasonal local produce and a variety of goods to shoppers. Activities often include listening to local bands and musicians and participating in weekly special events such as the Arts and Crafts Day, Family Festival, and Endless Summer Party.

*MyTown Marketplace* in Highland Falls is an example of a local business which has taken advantage of the growing food hub. Only a 5-minute walk south of downtown on Main Street, *MyTown Marketplace* was opened by owner Albert Rodrigues and his family with assistance from a National Food Trust grant aimed at improving food access, nutrition education and the availability of affordable, healthy food. *MyTown Marketplace* sells locally sourced food, organic products and traditional groceries. Mr. Rodrigues acknowledges that overwhelming support from the community has been a critical component of his success. In fact, the Highland Falls location has been so successful that the owner was able to open a second location with his own financing. *MyTown Marketplace* and Mr. Rodrigues are the type of business and owner the Village wants to continue investing in. This is a case study of the best qualities of Highland Falls.

The primary designation in the Village is the B-1 district, which stretches from the West Point entrance at Thayer Gate at the north end of the Village, to just south of Regina Road. The higher density residential districts are contained primarily within the center of the Village. The DRI area contains the significant downtown business and medium- to high-density residential districts which result in the mixed use, compact design of the Main Street corridor. Current districting in the downtown promotes smart growth by concentrating businesses and living space in a hub of activity already accessible by major transportation networks and infrastructure systems instead of incentivizing sprawl. Denser mixed use and higher density residential developments are more able to provide more affordable and varied housing options through economies of scale and multiple funding streams which expand equity and opportunity. For businesses in the downtown, higher concentrations of population put more feet on the street, increasing their customer base and therefore their growth potential.

The Village supports the principals of an age-friendly community. It recently invested nearly \$1 million in the Senior Center and a dial-a-bus service which assists those who have physical, mental or cognitive challenges. The Village’s commitment to a streetscape that is fully accessible for physically challenged individuals also reflects their interest in becoming a community that is for everyone. The Village is moving toward a fully connected municipal Wi-Fi system in response to the needs and expectations of all residents and students.

The Village has a well-established Chamber of Commerce which provides support services and marketing for its members. The Chamber prepared a Village tourism brochure showcasing member businesses and providing a reference for visitors to the downtown. The Chamber is responsible for listing member businesses on a wayfinding sign near Thayer Gate as well as a kiosk/walking map at the three-tiered garden in Roe Park. The Chamber also maintains a website as a central location for local businesses. The website includes links to and from other regional tourism websites to Highland Falls destinations. A downtown business has the opportunity to grow through membership by increasing their promotional capacity, connecting directly with the local customer base, and raising their profile by participating in community activities. The Chamber of Commerce increases small business sustainability in a volatile market and supports their growth and development.

## PUBLIC SUPPORT

For the preparation of the DRI application, a broad and inclusive public outreach program was facilitated by the Mayor’s office and Village staff. The goal of the outreach program was to garner broad input on the vision, needs of the community, and priority projects. Support from local-residents, community leaders and private interests is essential for the proposed transformative projects to be effective and successful through the long-term. In recognition of the importance of public involvement, the program consisted of multiple formats to provide maximum opportunity for input and participation.

The following are the components of the public outreach program:

- **DRI Webpage** – Central to the outreach program was the investment made to create a dedicated webpage for the downtown revitalization effort in anticipation of the DRI funding round. The website serves as the central portal for the community to provide input, access information about revitalization efforts, review comments from other participants, and become engaged in the process. In addition to serving these purposes prior to the DRI application submission, upon notification of approval, the website will transition to its next phase of usefulness by providing information on post announcement activities, planning, and meetings as the Village positions itself to implement the DRI program. With the work of website development already completed and with the system of communication through the website already ingrained in the community, the Village and residents are ready to immediately begin DRI program implementation. The webpage can be accessed from the following link: <https://highlandfallsrevitalization.org/>.
- **Petition in Support of the DRI Program for downtown Highland Falls** – Once the proposed projects and initiatives were presented, residents were provided an opportunity to directly express their support for the DRI program. To provide a means to express this support the Village formulated and made available a petition for residents to sign in support of implementing the revitalization program using DRI funds. When considered in total, the petition is powerful evidence of the broad-based support for downtown and revitalization through the DRI program. Nearly 300 people signed the document. The signatories to petition can be viewed at the link above.
- **Main Street Forum** – On April 24th, the Village hosted approximately 20 high profile stakeholders at the Senior Citizen Center for a forum to discuss the strengths, needs and opportunities of the Main Street corridor. Attendees ranged from state and county officials to downtown business persons. The forum focused on ways that the resources of the community and the region could be applied to support the downtown revitalization. A video of the forum is available on the Village DRI webpage.
- **Public Meeting** – On May 20th, the Village facilitated a public meeting at the Senior Citizen Center to solidify public support for the DRI application and gather further input on the strengths, needs and opportunities specific to Village residents. The results of the meeting can be viewed at the link above.
- **Outreach through Newspapers** – The regional newspaper, the Times Record and the local newspaper, the News of the Highlands wrote separate articles on the DRI program and its potential impact on the revitalization of downtown Highland Falls. The News of the Highlands also included the results of a public survey they distributed asking the community how DRI funds could best be utilized. On May 30th, the News of the Highlands posted an additional article directing the public to the DRI webpage for more information. All articles can be viewed at the link above.
- **Letters of Support** – The Village received Letters of Support for downtown revitalization through participation in the DRI program from 16 key figures from across the region, including:
  - o Elaine McConnell, President of the Garden Club;
  - o Rich Minicozzi, Partner, Thayer Hotel;
  - o Jim Hall, Executive Director, Palisades Interstate Park Commission;
  - o Edward Major, West Point graduate, CEO of Bear Mountain Bakery;
  - o Michelle Smith, Hudson Highlands Land Trust;

- o Stella Bailey, Fort Montgomery State Historic Site;
- o Jim Modlin, President, Highlands Chamber of Commerce;
- o Congressman Patrick Moloney;
- o Assemblyman Colin Schmitt;
- o State Senator James Skoufis;
- o Tim Connors, West Point graduate, Director of Camp Smith;
- o Andrew Sidamon-Eristoff;
- o Bob Livsey, Supervisor, Town of Highlands;
- o Dr. Frank Sheboy, Superintendent, Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District;
- o Joe Colombo, Ret. Major, Past Planning Board Member; and
- o Stella Bailey, Hudson Highlands Historical Society.

Copies of their support letters can be viewed at the link above, or copies of the letters can be directly accessed through the following link: <https://highlandfallsrevitalization.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/DRI-Support-Letters-2019-1.pdf>.

## TRANSFORMATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Development goals will take advantage of opportunities and develop projects that position the DRI area as a remarkable downtown experience for the local community and visitors, especially for the families of the West Point staff and faculty. The Village will support the DRI funds by committing its \$1.1 million reserve fund to support projects such as land acquisitions and planning that are essential to the progress of the DRI but for which DRI funds cannot be utilized. A strategy of the DRI plan will be to support the purchase of property for development of key projects for public or joint private and public use and to transition underutilized sites from tax burdens to tax revenue. An additional \$300,000 has been allocated to the Village DPW to support infrastructure projects.

To prepare for development of the key waterfront parcel the Village sponsored a feasibility study for the conceptual redevelopment of the waterfront and historic train depot. The proposal included improvements to the Station Hill Road entrance, the addition of a linkage trail and overlook, development of a waterfront park with walking paths, redevelopment of the former marina, reestablishment of the train station for public use, and a new pier capable of servicing large vessel docking for river cruise and charter boats. The site is currently for sale. Another key property that includes 248-acres of lands belonging to West Point is in the process of being gifted to the Village of Highland Falls by Congress. This shovel-ready site already has serious expressions of interest by developers and investors.

### Transformative Projects

Through an integrated strategic approach inclusive of a broad range of public outreach initiatives, the Village developed the following list of transformative projects to revitalize the downtown. These projects are illustrated on the Transformative Projects Map on page 14.

1. **Main Street Streetscape Improvements** – Sidewalks, curbing and pedestrian amenities between Cozzens Avenue and County Route 287. This project would complete the ongoing efforts by the Village, including \$50,000 in similar streetscape improvements and repaving through northern Main Street, to improve the public elements of this important corridor of the downtown area.
2. **Small Business Development Program** – Assistance for businesses and building owners within the DRI area will be administered through a multi-faceted approach. The program has the potential to increase the sustainability of Main Street businesses, encourage small business entrepreneurship by filling financing gaps, reduce the frequency of storefront vacancies, and increase the desirability of investments in Main Street properties. The components of the program are:
  - Revolving Loan Program – Low-interest loans in partnership with a major lending institution for business expenses and commercial property improvements.
  - Orange County IDA Retail Business Incubator – DRI funds will assist the Orange County IDA and property owner with some of the upfront costs to establish a business incubator. The incubator has the potential to empower those unable to afford traditional retail space or those without the knowledge to start their own business while generating a culture of entrepreneurship and cooperation in the Village.
  - Community Fresh-lab Restaurant Incubator – Modeled after the City of Batavia’s restaurant incubator, the project would develop a more sustainable restaurant market by capitalizing on the Hudson Valley Food Hubs Initiative, addressing the restaurant sales leakage, and offering restaurant business and management skills training.
3. **Main Street Façade Program** – Incentivize all businesses and property owners along the Main Street corridor to meet an architecturally-themed set of design guidelines and a uniform signage code. The result will be a high-quality aesthetic that preserves the historic qualities of downtown buildings and the heritage of the downtown area. Through the DRI, the Village will establish a reimbursement fund for DRI area business owners. These grants will incentivize building owners to immediately make façade improvements with a system of guidelines specifically formulated to evoke and respect the original architecture of the buildings within the DRI area. This initiative focusing on the architectural elements of the private realm when combined with improvements to the streetscape elements of the public realm will present a cohesive and visually striking downtown environment.
4. **Downtown Parking Garage** – A new parking garage is needed to maximize parking opportunities and provide additional parking in the Village downtown to serve existing business activity and encourage more pedestrian traffic. Three parcels behind Village Hall were

identified as the preferred location of the parking garage due to the direct access to Main Street. In consideration of the compact nature of the downtown Highland Falls wide areas of horizontal parking can no longer be used for surface parking. Therefore, it is crucial that vertical spaces within this compact area be efficiently and intelligently utilized to meet the necessary parking needs. The vertical nature of the parking garage will centralize parking availability and free up spaces elsewhere in downtown for more productive uses that further meet the needs of residents and visitors.

5. **Indoor Farmers Market** – This initiative focuses on the establishment of a permanent year-round building to serve as a marketplace for agriculture products produced by area farmers. Farm-to-market routes are becoming shorter as local farmers seek to directly sell their products directly within the local market in which these products are grown and produced. Consumers benefit from vegetables, meats and produce that is more nutritional, and fresh. Downtown Highland Falls is an ideal setting from which a market for locally grown agriculture products can be sold. To facilitate this market on a year-round basis this initiative proposes to construct a market building with its primary purpose as market – open air during warmer months, and heated/enclosed during colder months. During not market times, the building can serve as a multi-function community space to support a range of events, festivals and activities. It is anticipated that this facility will bolster the downtown area as a destination marketplace, event-place, festival-place, and arts/culture-place.
  
6. **Tourism Port/Train Station Restoration** – Under this initiative the Village would transform the waterfront area which was the site of a former marina. The property has a high potential for unique development opportunities as it is the only public access point to the Hudson River in the Village with a direct connection to the downtown and West Point. The DRI program would assist in the administration, engineering and permitting costs to redevelop the property and return it back to useful and productive service. The components of the development plan are:
  - **Tourism Port** – Create an active port with a water taxi service to the Village of Cold Springs across the Hudson River. The Village of Cold Springs has established itself as destination-style location for shopping and dining out. This concept will bolster the economies of both communities by providing an efficient, timesaving, water-based connection between Highland Falls and Cold Springs. The tourism efforts and economies of both communities would be bolstered by this initiative and tourists would benefit from a “two-for-one” experience as they visit each community and enjoy the natural beauty of the Hudson River corridor from their on-water ride across the Hudson River. It is envisioned that visitor packages of events, activities and dining experiences could be coordinated between the two communities while expanding the market reach of each community on a shared basis.
  - **Downtown Brewery** – The Village will take advantage of the rapid growth in the craft beverage industry in New York with the establishment of a microbrewery with the former train station existing on the site. The station through its waterfront location and historic architecture is well-suited as an outlet for sale of locally brewed and distilled beverages. With the fulfillment of this initiative through the DRI award, the Village would be positioned to leverage private investment to achieve this end use.
  - **Waterfront Park and Site Improvements** – Through the Village’s recently completed waterfront plan, this initiative would progress the plan’s recommendations such as the development of a waterfront park to complement the tourism port described above, improve site access, and construct of a new marina to operate in conjunction with the tourism port. Included with this initiative is improving access from downtown, down the slope and to the river shoreline where the park, tourism port and brewery would be located. Options to considered to date have ranged from improving the existing access road through repaving and stabilizing road-side embankments, to instituting a shuttle service using a fleet of electric-powered vehicles, to installing a funicular that provides transit service between the tourism port, shoreline park and brewery, and the downtown area.
  
7. **Highland Falls Historic Walk** – Expand and improve the Greenway Trail as a historic walk. A faux brick walkway would replace existing Main Street sidewalks. A connection through Ladycliff and Memorial parks would increase the accessibility of downtown parking and businesses with use of an inviting downtown loop. Extending the historic walk to the proposed Highland Brook Trail and to Station Hill Road would link users of nearby outdoor amenities to the downtown. Interpretive signage would be placed strategically to enhance the user experience.
  
8. **Highland Brook Trail** – Capitalize on the natural right-of-way through the downtown by developing a new trail along the brook. The trail would begin at a proposed trailhead on the south side of County Route 218 at its intersection with State Route 9W. From there, the trail would continue along the brook as a natural surface trail, connecting several identified viewpoints and connect with the Historic Walk. The ongoing Village LWRS will produce a conceptual layout of the trail.
  
9. **Village Welcoming Center/Museum** – Under this initiative a welcoming center and museum would be constructed at the connection point of the Highland Brook Trail and the Highland Falls Historic Walk at 251 Main Street. This is an ideal location to position the welcoming center as an interpretive area, a trailhead and the gateway to the downtown. The components of the development plan are:
  - **Informational Kiosk** – The kiosk will provide the Village, Chamber of Commerce and the various local organizations a place to post maps of the downtown and regional amenities, promotional materials, event information, and other items in a single location.
  - **Margaret Cochran Corbin “Molly Pitcher” Exhibit** – Molly Pitcher is a national heroine of the American Revolution and the first woman to receive a military pension. Molly Pitcher passed away near West Point where she was buried with full military honors. With DRI funds, the Village will erect an exhibit to celebrate the life of Molly Pitcher and teach future generations the significance of her sacrifice. In addition to commemorating Molly, the exhibit will be an opportunity to teach about the American Revolution and celebrate other important women in local history.
  - **Orange County Tourism Satellite Office** – A satellite office for Orange County Tourism at this location will increase County tourism efforts in the Village, provide the County an opportunity to interface with the millions of visitors to the Village each year at a central

location, and increase activity on Main Street.

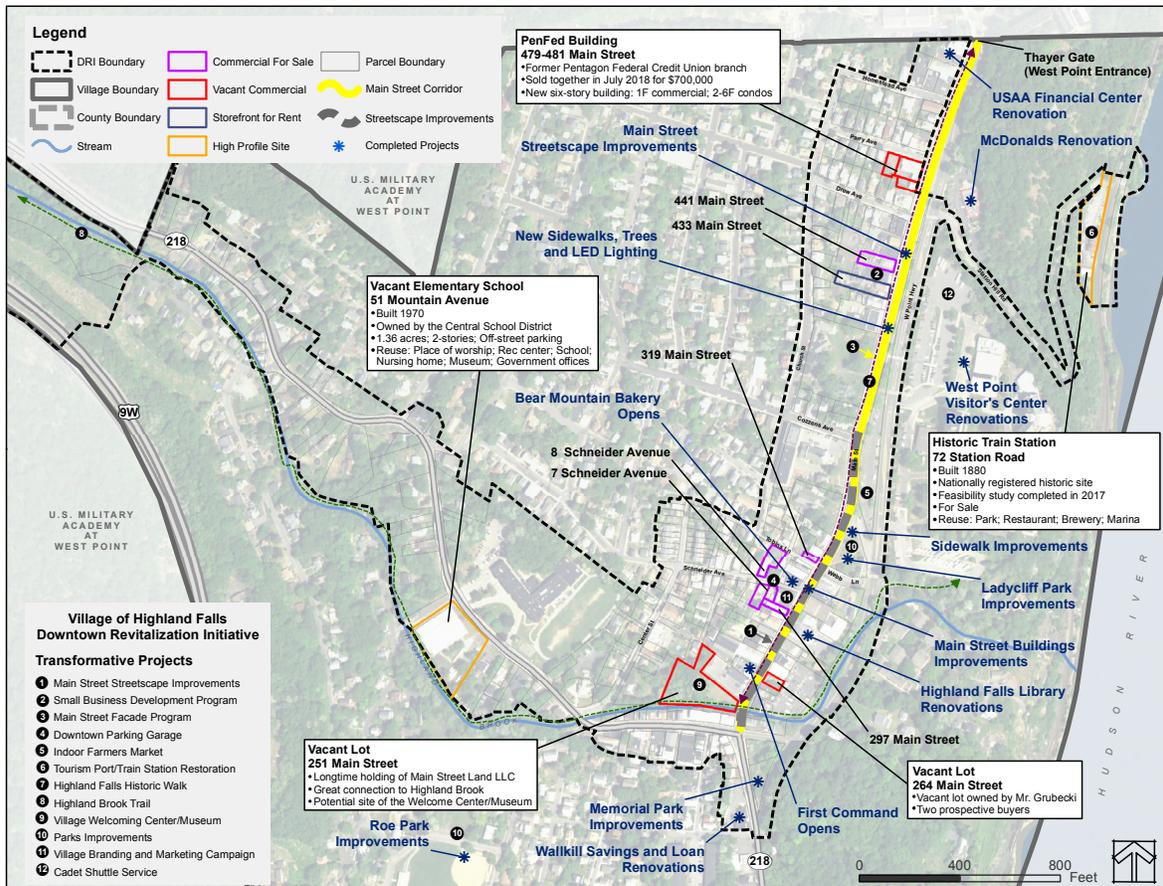
- Relocation of the Highlands Historic Society – The Highlands Historic Society will be better positioned to interact with their target audience and will increase activity on Main Street by relocating to the new welcoming center and museum.

**10. Parks Improvements** – The Village is working with a consultant to develop a set of recommended improvements to Village parks. DRI funds would be leveraged with local funds to complete the necessary design, engineering and construction work. Projects discussed include:

- Expand Roe Park to adjoining sites;
- Upgrade existing recreation programs and facilities for youth and seniors;
- Construct an indoor recreation center;
- Construct a Village Amphitheater in Ladycliff Park as a centerpiece for downtown festivals and events. The amphitheater would provide the venue for hte performing arts as a standalone event or insupport of other festivals; and
- Adopt and implement a concept plan for improvements to Ladycliff Park, including new sod, walkways, wayfinding and interpretive signage, benches, lighting, and landscaping.

**11. Village Branding and Marketing Campaign** – Under this initiative the Village would work in partnership with the local business community, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce, and West Point to develop a branded theme that would be used in all elements of a coordinated marketing and advertising program. The purpose would be to provide a means to effectively market the Village’s amenities, businesses and attractions to the millions of visitors that are already coming to West Point each-and-every year. Unlike other efforts that seek to establish a visit base, Highland Falls has one that already exists. Therefore, the focus will be to extend the visitation into the adjoining area of downtown Highland Falls. As a first step, effort will focus on a brand for downtown Highland Falls. Once developed and agreed upon this branding will be featured in multiple advertising and information formats across multiple venues and locations. It is envisioned that streetscape elements (signage and wayfinding), media platforms (print, electronic, webpages – private and Village-based, street-side banners, etc.) and broadcast ads will utilize this brand to provide a consistent and attractive message to visitors accessing these formats. This initiative is viewed as crucial to the success of the overall revitalization program.

**12. Cadet Shuttle Service** – A 2013 survey of a sample of cadets found 65-percent would visit Highland Falls more frequently if there was a shuttle service. Based on the recommendations of the report, the Village will charter a weekend bus service to connect students to the downtown. The study concluded that the shuttle would earn local businesses an estimated \$25,000 per year just from fares. After the implementation of the shuttle service, additional studies will be conducted to determine its total economic impact and a strategy for improving the service.



## ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

Mayor D’Onofrio will be actively involved on project administration on a daily basis and will be assisted by the Regina Taylor, Village Clerk. Additional support and assistance will be provided by the nine employees which comprise the staff at Village Hall and the long-standing partners from the Planning and Development Department for Orange County in Goshen.

However, as part of the preparatory process undertaken by the Village, and in recognition of the desire to implement the DRI program expeditiously, the Village will establish a paid position with dedicated office space at Village Hall to directly manage the successful administration of the DRI program projects and associated funds. The Village has already set aside office space in the Village Hall to accommodate the new position and to serve as a centralized location within downtown from which administration will occur and the administrator can directly perform the implementation of the program.

As a result of the extensive public outreach undertaken in preparation for this DRI application, volunteers who have signed the petition of support will also be organized to assist with the administration. As a unique attribute of the Highland Falls administrative approach, the Village will continue working with the US Military Academy through the established relationship with the Department of Systems Engineering and the Center for Nation Reconstruction and Capacity Development to recruit cadets to participate in the revitalization process.

The administrative qualifications of the Village are further evidenced by successful administration of past and current grant programs. Most recent grants include: \$56,250 DOS; \$500,000 Restore NY grant; \$50,000 DASNY grant; \$140,000 DASNY grant; \$82,000 DASNY grant; \$300,000 CDBG; \$200,000 DOT Multi-Modal grant; \$100,000 DOT Multi-Modal grant; and NYPA outright grant. The New York Power Authority (NYPA) project demonstrates the ability for the Village to develop partnerships to implement positive actions in the community. In September 2016, the Mayor signed an Energy Efficient Services Agreement between NYPA and the Village. The agreement determined that NYPA was responsible for purchasing and installing new LED lighting for fixtures along Main Street. The project did not include any development costs to be reimbursed by the Village. As a result, Main Street lighting became more efficient and inviting at no cost to the Village. The Village is also responsible for the management of 58 active Housing Choice Vouchers through the Village Housing Authority. Through a partnership with regional stakeholders and support from a dedicated paid staff member, the Village will be more than able to successfully implement the DRI plan.

## OTHER

In summary, the community of Highland Falls closes this application with one final thought:

Downtown Highland Falls is unquestionably a special place.

This application has highlighted the special and unique qualities of downtown Highland Falls that make it one of New York State’s most endearing downtown areas. As such the residents are especially prideful of their downtown and their desire to see it improve has been unyielding. This energy has been channeled through an inclusive public participation program into a series of thoughtful plans that explain the resident’s needs and the projects and initiatives that they have formulated to address these needs. The residents and the Village officials have worked hard to reach this point. A point at which they are confident in the program they have developed and the success it will yield. They are prepared; and they are ready. Ready to be successful, ready to improve their downtown, and ready to do the work needed to achieve this successful result. The Village officials, the leadership and cadets of West Point, the business community, and the residents stand in unison ready to work with DRI program to achieve revitalization of downtown Highland Falls. We ask that New York State, through the DRI program join in this partnership and work with us to achieve revitalization that has been years in the making. This IS our time.