

MID-HUDSON DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: Mid-Hudson

Municipality Name: Village/Town of Mount Kisco

Downtown Name: Village Center

County: Westchester

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

Mount Kisco's Downtown has a long and rich history that truly became energized with the arrival of the train line and station more than a century ago. Mount Kisco's Downtown has grown, experienced numerous changes, and benefitted from critical investments throughout its history. It is now ready to take another giant leap forward and become an even stronger engine of economic activity, job growth, diverse housing opportunities, and recreational activities for all of its residents in a livable, walkable, and sustainable community that is in demand.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

This section should be filled out with reference to the criteria set forth in the DRI Guidelines. **Answers to each question are limited to one page each.**

- 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 boundaries of the Downtown would begin at the intersection of E. Main Street (Rt. 117) and Dakin Avenue and proceed north along E. Main St. (Rt. 117) onto North Bedford Road (Rt. 117); turn west onto Jeff Feigel Square and south back to Main Street (Rt. 133); turn west along Main Street (Rt. 133) to the intersection with Maple Avenue; then turn south along Maple Avenue before turning east on Lieto Drive and continue to Lexington Avenue; cross Lexington Avenue and continuing east onto Sarles Avenue and then east along Highland Avenue; Highland Avenue then turns north briefly to rejoin Dakin Avenue; finally turn east on Dakin Avenue and heading back to the intersection with E. Main Street. The Mount Kisco Downtown not only includes all properties located entirely within the boundaries of the area described above, but also all properties directly adjacent to described 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.

The Mount Kisco downtown is easily accessible for the more than 10,000 residents of the Village, many of whom live within a few blocks. The Downtown also has significant parking to accommodate the more than 48,000 residents of the surrounding communities such as Bedford, New Castle, and North Castle. Lastly, the Metro-North Harlem Line train station in

the heart of the Downtown makes it accessible for visitors or employees from throughout the region as it is a little less than an hour from Grand Central.

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

The Village has previously made significant investments in the infrastructure throughout the Village such that public water is available throughout the Village as well as separate sewer and stormwater collection systems. The Village invested in a new public library that is located in the Downtown, has a geothermal heating and cooling system, was completed in 2009, and serves as a tremendous community space. The Village has installed ADA compliant dropped curbs and ramps at most intersections throughout the Downtown as well as decorative lighting lamps that were converted to LED lighting last year. This year the Village will look to replace all of its overhead street lights to LED and install electric car charging stations near the train station.

Presently, the Village is developing educational and recreational opportunities through three different historic and nature hiking trails that enable residents and visitors to walk from downtown to the top of Kisco Mountain to overlook the downtown, a trail that takes hikers into the middle of a beautiful wetland full of various plants and wildlife that is adjacent to Downtown, and a trail that takes people by various historic markers throughout the Village and through pristine wooded terrain along the Kisco River. The Village also made significant investments in the area when it built Shopper's Park more than fifteen years ago to improve parking, create additional greenspace and recreational opportunities, improve water quality, and increase pedestrian access and connections throughout the Downtown. This year the Village is also replacing a pedestrian bridge within Shopper's Park that had been lost and will restore pedestrian options and access throughout the Downtown. In addition, the Village continues to make investments in streetscape improvements and sidewalks to enhance the Downtown and ensure that it continues to be walkable and easily accessible for all people. Moving forward the Village is prepared to make further infrastructure investments in supporting redevelopment of the Village's two main parking lots at the Metro-North train station known as the North Moger Lot and the South Moger Lot. These two lots comprise more than seven (7) acres of open paved land and are a tremendous opportunity to further revitalize the Downtown, attract new businesses, attract new residents through various housing options, increase economic activity and job creation, provide new greenspace, and cultural and community opportunities while maintaining the necessary parking. Redevelopment of these two lots would certainly strengthen Mount Kisco and ensure a vibrant, livable, walkable, and transit oriented downtown for years to come.

The Downtown has benefited from some past investments by not-for-profits such as the presence of the Open Door Family Medical Center (a Federally Qualified Health Center) at the corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue and whose mission for four decades has been "to provide high quality health care that's affordable, accessible, and efficient," as well as various houses of worship. The Downtown has also seen private business investment recently with Modell's acquiring the former Border's space where they will be opening a store this year, the return of the Mount Kisco Farm and Oriental Grocery on S. Moger in the past year that has fresh produce and a great selection of food options, and the continued success of excellent restaurants using locally sourced food at Café of Love and the Little Drunken Chef on Main Street that are always busy.

- 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.

Mount Kisco is an employment and commercial center in the heart of northern Westchester County where people come to work with retail and healthcare serving as the two largest employment sectors employing more than 2,000 people between the many retail businesses within the Village, Northern Westchester Hospital, CareMount Medical (formerly the Mount Kisco Medical Group), and other providers. The Village has a “Main Street” approach to retail development with a walkable downtown, as opposed to an indoor mall. In addition, the presence of the Metro-North Train station in the heart of the Downtown that residents can easily access on foot, bike or car make many employment opportunities in New York City and communities all along the Metro-North Harlem line easily accessible as well.

Redevelopment of Mount Kisco’s Downtown, particularly the Village’s two parking lots would provide attractive and affordable housing options for Millennials who would be able to easily walk to the train station and enjoy the many amenities within the Downtown such as national, regional and local retail stores, a variety of excellent restaurants, fresh food and produce markets, recreational and cultural opportunities, the Village Library, movie theater, houses of worship, banking, professional services, and close proximity to the Northern Westchester Hospital and other medical providers, as well as the Village’s pool complex, basketball, and tennis courts in Leonard Park.

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

A possible vision of redevelopment for Downtown Mount Kisco focused on the two existing parking lots that consume more than seven (7) acres of existing prime real estate would be to build a second deck of parking above a portion of the two existing lots that would free up space in both lots for the development of new mixed-use spaces. A second deck on the North Moger lot would have minimal impact due to the topography of the surrounding area which all sits at higher elevations and would also be partially blocked by the new mixed-use spaces or housing opportunities placed closer to Main Street and the train station. A second deck in the South Moger lot would make space available along the west side of South Moger Avenue to build two story mixed use space with retail on the first floor and housing on the second floor. This would be consistent with the development that currently exists on the east side of the street. In addition, there is a Gazebo in the middle of the block that would be kept intact as it serves as one end of a pedestrian promenade that takes people from South Moger Avenue in between and among businesses into Shopper’s Park, where they cross Branch Brook on a pedestrian bridge to Village Hall and the Mount Kisco Library, and finally to Main Street and its many businesses including the Mount Kisco Movie Theater. It is hoped that the pedestrian promenade could continue west from the Gazebo, where pedestrians could ascend by stairs or elevator to a green roof built over the second deck of parking in the South Moger lot. A green roof, similar to High Line Park in Manhattan, on the roof of two levels of parking in the South Moger Lot would provide an excellent opportunity

to increase greenspace, and enable greater recreational, cultural, and community opportunities. The entire Village/Town of Mount Kisco is also within the New York City watershed and placing a green roof over parking areas would greatly improve water quality by allowing stormwater to travel through the green roof and into the Village's stormwater system rather than running across the paved impervious parking lots. The same could be done in the North Moger lot as well. The result is the transformation of the current seven acres of impervious parking surface into an attractive space for residents to walk, live, congregate, and hold various community events, while also increasing a diversity of housing opportunities, increasing commercial space to attract new businesses, and integrating the entire redeveloped area into the fabric of Downtown. A Downtown that is already part of a regional employment and commercial center, part of a vibrant "Main Street" commercial development that includes retailers with an eclectic mix of services, entertainment and restaurants, many of which are locally owned, part of a community served by an award winning school district and the exceptional Mount Kisco Elementary School which features a successful dual language program, and part of a community that is ready and excited to take another great step forward.

- 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 Village/Town of Mount Kisco is looking to prepare a Sustainable Comprehensive Plan Update of its' 2000 Comprehensive Development Plan, a complete Zoning Update with Form Based Code overlays, and environmental review. The update will seek to reiterate and strengthen efforts to achieve alternative transportation options, Smart Growth principles, conservation of natural areas, and protection of public health and safety which have all been identified in the existing plan while also recognizing the Metro-North train station as a transit hub in the Downtown and utilizing Transit Oriented Development as an organizing theme to redevelopment, new development, and housing. The Mount Kisco Comprehensive Plan update also aligns with the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council's Strategic Plan in 12 out of 15 Goals (2-10, 12, 13, and 15). The Village has also previously adopted legislation to become a Greenway Compact Community, enable Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE), and Community Choice Aggregation with 19 other municipalities in Westchester to help residents and businesses lower their utility costs and provide a 100% renewable energy option that is more affordable than current utility rates. The Village has also recently adopted the New York State Unified Solar Permit and updated its' building code and fire prevention program. The Village also has the ability to establish residential parking permit systems throughout the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods to ensure residents have a place to park. The Village Board of Trustees, Village Manager, and Village personnel are committed to the adoption and implementation of any policy that will contribute to the betterment of the Village and its residents. The Village is also examining the establishment of a Business Improvement District within the Downtown as well as the possibility of providing free wi-fi throughout the Downtown area. In addition, the Village is working with various stakeholders throughout the community in overhauling its website to enable greater access of Village government services by residents, visitors, businesses, and property owners to the Village's many services. The new site presents a tremendous branding and marketing opportunity and will be easily navigable and viewed on mobile devices as well as desktop or laptop computers; there will even be a mobile application available for free download.

- 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 Village/Town of Mount Kisco Board of Trustees are committed to investing in critical infrastructure throughout the entire Village of Mount Kisco, particularly the Downtown. The Village is also working closely with the Mount Kisco Chamber of Commerce and meeting with property owners to find out ways in which the Village can be most helpful in their efforts to improve their properties. The Village continues to meet with realtors and potential developers interested in opportunities in Mount Kisco. The community certainly supports any effort that will help increase revenue, expand the tax base, help lower property taxes for everyone, increase job opportunities and a diversity of housing options for current and new residents, provides additional recreational and cultural opportunities, and enable the Downtown to perform as a powerful economic engine for Mount Kisco and the entire region.

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

The efforts and vision of revitalization for Mount Kisco's Downtown are consistent with many of the stated goals of the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council, consistent with efforts being undertaken by the Westchester County Association to make the County and its communities more attractive to a younger and more diverse workforce, and basic Smart Growth principles.