

MID-HUDSON DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

BASIC INFORMATION

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

Municipality Name: Town of Mount Pleasant

Downtown Name: Town of Mount Pleasant

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):

The Hawthorne downtown area, located along State Route 141 in the Town of Mount Pleasant in Westchester County, is a perfect candidate for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (“DRI”) award. This area of the Town has been essentially untouched since the 1950’s. There has been an explosion of new corporate development in the Town which has created an overwhelming need for a central location where young professionals and Town residents can congregate, shop, eat, and have access to reasonably priced housing near public transportation. Over the past year, Town elected officials, local property owners and Town community groups and residents have collaborated on a plan to revitalize the Hawthorne downtown and create a strong sense of place. A DRI award would enable the Town to transform the Hawthorne Downtown in order to meet the needs of its residents and its workforce residents, by creating a vibrant, walkable and livable area designed to retain tomorrow’s workforce and enhance the local tax base.

The Hawthorne hamlet has several key existing benefits which make a DRI investment desirable and sustainable. At the center of the Hawthorne Downtown is an active Metro-North station providing access from New York City to the south and as far as Wassaic in Dutchess County to the north. The cost of rental apartments in New York City have skyrocketed, requiring more young professionals to seek less expensive housing outside the city. Most of these individuals prefer areas that have direct access to New York City and require less dependence on personal vehicles. The Town’s revitalization plan incorporates a mixed-use commercial zone to provide less expensive housing in close proximity to the railroad station and on public bus line routes, while also creating the necessary food market/entertainment areas needed to retain these professionals.

There has been substantial growth in the Town of Mount Pleasant and planned future growth that will assist in sustaining the development of the Hawthorne downtown area. Significant commercial development has recently occurred in the Town with the arrival of Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Westchester Medical Dental School, EF Academy, and Audi. There are also pending commercial projects from BMR Realty, PepsiCo and the North 60 Project which will bring a large number of young professionals to the Town, and highlight job and economic growth to the region and state. There are also two large

residential projects for the construction of approximately 140 single family homes that will increase the population of the Town. A DRI for the Hawthorne downtown will support these developments and will keep young professionals in the area.

The hamlet is ripe for development, with the key components necessary to promote investment in a revitalization project along with the economic investment and other development needed to sustain such an initiative.



One of the various entry/exit ways into the Elwood Avenue corridor.

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 Hawthorne Downtown Revitalization Plan (“HDRP”) encompasses a 23 acre centralized business area located in the hamlet of Hawthorne within the Town of Mount Pleasant. This area is supported by a Metro-North Harlem Line station, three commuter parking lots, and commercial and mixed use buildings. The station has a ridership of approximately 1,000 daily users. The parking lots within the downtown area accommodate 359 vehicles and there are 44 commercial and mixed-use properties located within the project area. The east-west limits of the HDRP area commence from Broadway (State Route 100) between the Taconic State Parkway to Elwood Avenue and the north-south limits extend on Elwood Avenue/Commerce

Street (State Route 141) from Cross Street to Liberty Street. The area within the HDRP is zoned as Commercial-Neighborhood Retail (C-NR) and Commercial-General Commercial (C-GC). This downtown area has very low building coverage to property density resulting in ratios of 20% building coverage area per total parcel area. This metric highlights the underutilization of the properties located in the HDRP area and the potential for new mixed-use and housing components through proposed amendments of the C-NR and C-GC zones.



Southernmost stretch of Elwood Avenue

- 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 Hawthorne Downtown area can easily support a vibrant year-round downtown because it already has key existing components that bring a large number of people to the area. The existing Metro North station brings over 1,000 people to the area every day. Additionally, a significant amount of vehicular traffic travels on State Route 141, which is the main road that serves the Hawthorne Downtown area. The creation of a vibrant community with options for dining and other activities would keep these people in the downtown area. The downtown revitalization would also attract the 10,000 residents of the hamlets of Hawthorne and Thornwood who currently have no downtown area in which to shop or congregate. The HDRP contemplates other improvements designed to attract pedestrians and cyclists to the downtown through the Elwood Avenue Streetscape Project, which contains new sidewalk and bicycle friendly improvements. The Town of Mount Pleasant has also experienced

tremendous job growth during the past three years. Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, located three miles from the HDRP, has created 400 new jobs within the Town. The campus where Regeneron is located is owned and operated by BioMed Realty (BMR). BMR is currently before the Town's Planning Board for an additional 400,000 square feet of future laboratory and research space designed to meet the needs of the growing bio-tech industry in Westchester County. Toll Brothers Inc. is currently constructing twenty-six (26) new homes in a development located less than one mile from the Hawthorne Downtown. An additional 116 residential homes have been proposed within close proximity to the HDRP. These projects, along with other numerous developments of existing residential and commercial properties, will assist in attracting people to and sustaining a revitalized downtown.



Center stretch of Elwood Avenue, just south of the Metro North Station

- 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 HDRP would encompass the Elwood Avenue Streetscape Project, which has received a commitment of \$500,000 from the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) towards the \$3 million streetscape project designed to create a walkable community between the Hamlets of Thornwood and Hawthorne. The Mount Pleasant Industrial Development Agency (IDA) has expressed a willingness to provide some or all of the remainder of the funding for the Elwood Streetscape Project. Part of this project includes streetscape redesign elements within the HDRP.

Additionally, existing landowners within the Hawthorne Downtown area are willing to invest in expansions of their buildings and façade improvements as part of any downtown revitalization. There are also dilapidated buildings that potential real estate investors have expressed an interest to Town officials in purchasing and renovating. These potential investors have not done so because the existing conditions in the Hawthorne Downtown do not give them confidence that they can be successful. The Town believes that if the public sees that an investment is being made to revitalize the area, it will spur additional growth, investment and development.



Northernmost stretch of Elwood Avenue, just north of the Metro North Station

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

The Town of Mount Pleasant has experienced tremendous job growth during the past three years. Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, located three miles from the HDRP, has created 400 new jobs within the Town. The campus where Regeneron is located is owned and operated by BioMed Realty (BMR). BMR is currently before the Town's Planning Board for an additional 400,000 square feet of future laboratory and research space designed to meet the needs of the growing bio-tech industry in Westchester County. The "North 60 Project", located within two miles of the HDRP, is estimated to create 8,000 new. All of these workers have little to no options in the Town for less expensive housing near public transportation or any downtown area in which they can walk, shop and eat. The HDRP would dramatically reshape and alter the appearances of the downtown area to provide options to these workers. Additionally, the investment in a new downtown and streetscape project with the amenities listed above would result in the creation of a substantial number of permanent jobs.



Conceptual drawing of proposed “North 60” Bio Tech facility located 2 miles from Elwood Avenue

- 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.

There are a number of existing elements located in the proposed redevelopment area that contribute to the attractiveness of the downtown. The Metro-North Hawthorne Station is in the center of the downtown area and brings a large number of people to the downtown area each day. Additionally, the main road that runs through the downtown area, Elwood Avenue (Route 141) brings a large number of people through the Hawthorne downtown. Elwood Avenue is also lined with a number of properties that are suitable for mixed-used development. These elements provide a perfect location for rental apartments at a variety of levels of affordability, and for healthy and affordable food markets. Adjoining the HDRP is a Town park that contains fields and basketball facilities and a pavilion for picnics. A Downtown Revitalization Grant would enable the Town to maximize the potential of the Hawthorne Downtown area to create a more cohesive downtown. Among other things, the Town would build a parking structure which will increase the available parking spaces at the Hawthorne Metro North Station. The parking structure would also be used to satisfy the parking requirements for the mixed-use spaces, which would enable land owners to have more lot coverage, thereby creating larger buildings, with more residential living space and larger or more retail space. The grant would also be used to fund streetscape improvements with new sidewalks and bicycle friendly amenities to increase the walkability and bike-ability of the downtown. The streetscape project will also meet

the goals of the Cleaner Greener Communities programs by reducing the number of auto trips, increasing pedestrian and bicycle use, reducing the delays and emission of traveling vehicles, upgrading street lights to energy efficient L.E.D. lighting thereby reducing power consumption, while reducing the potential impacts of storm water through the installation of pervious materials and other resources.

1c Pkwy, Sp



Map of Elwood Avenue, an ideal location for revitalization due to its proximity to other major thoroughfares (Taconic Pkwy, Sprain Pkwy, Route 9A, Route 141, Bronx River Pkwy)

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

The Town has presented its Downtown Revitalization Plan for Hawthorne to staff and local residents with presentations at local public events and Town meetings. These plans include modifying the zoning codes in the downtown area to permit higher density and mixed-use development, the re-design of the roadway and traffic flow to promote pedestrian traffic, and the adoption of new parking, livable space and use requirements geared specifically toward the downtown area, to facilitate the implementation of “Complete Streets” plans and transit-oriented development.

These changes will also meet the goals of the Cleaner Greener Communities programs by reducing the number of auto trips, increasing pedestrian and bicycle use, reducing the delays and emission of traveling vehicles, upgrading street lights to energy efficient L.E.D. lighting while reducing the potential impacts of storm water through the installation of pervious materials and other resources. All these elements will assist in providing an enhanced quality of life to the residents and users of a new revitalized downtown district.



Center stretch of Elwood Avenue across from Metro North Station.

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

The Town has the unwavering support of its government officials and the community for its Hawthorne Downtown Revitalization Plan. The concept for the downtown revitalization was created by the Town Supervisor, the Town Board, Town Engineer, Town Building Inspector and the Town’s Planning Consultant. The Town unveiled the concept of revitalizing the Hawthorne downtown to the public in August 2015 at its annual “Mount Pleasant Day” Street Fair. This project received almost unanimous support from Town residents and business owners. The owners of the private property located in the downtown area have also expressed a willingness to cooperate with the Town, since a revitalized downtown will make their property more valuable. The Town Chamber of Commerce and Industrial Development Agency both support the plan, and State Senator Terrence Murphy has pledged his assistance. The initial local lead for the program will be Town Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi.

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

The Hawthorne downtown is desperately in need of a massive overhaul in order for the Town of Mt. Pleasant to compete with other communities in the Hudson Valley. Without an attractive and vibrant downtown, the Town lacks a sense of place and is unable to attract tomorrow’s workforce to live in our community. We ask that you please partner with us to transform our downtown from a dilapidated and tired corridor which is just a way point for people looking to go elsewhere to a diverse hub where people want to live, work and shop.