

MID-HUDSON DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

BASIC INFORMATION

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

Municipality Name: New Rochelle

Downtown Name: Downtown Overlay Zone (DOZ)

County: Westchester

Downtown Description -

From the 1960's to the 1990's New Rochelle experienced significant disinvestment in its downtown, including loss of population and business activity, as customers migrated to less urbanized, more auto-centric malls and commercial centers. Although New Rochelle has brought some positive activity back to its downtown during the last 20 years, progress has been sporadic; the downtown has not yet attracted the broad, sustained investment necessary to achieve its potential as a regional engine of cultural, office, retail, restaurant, entertainment and mixed-income residential development.

With these clear challenges in mind, leaders from the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors – with considerable community input and support – came together starting in 2014 with the singular, shared goal of transforming our downtown. This partnership has resulted in the most ambitious downtown development plan in the Hudson Valley: **a sweeping \$6.7 billion public-private initiative that aims to create 5,500 new housing units, 19,000 new jobs, more than 2 million square feet of new office space, and nearly 11 million square feet of total new construction in a compact, walkable, transit-served, mixed-use district, exemplifying sustainable, smart growth principles and reflective of New Rochelle's remarkable demographic and socio-economic diversity.**

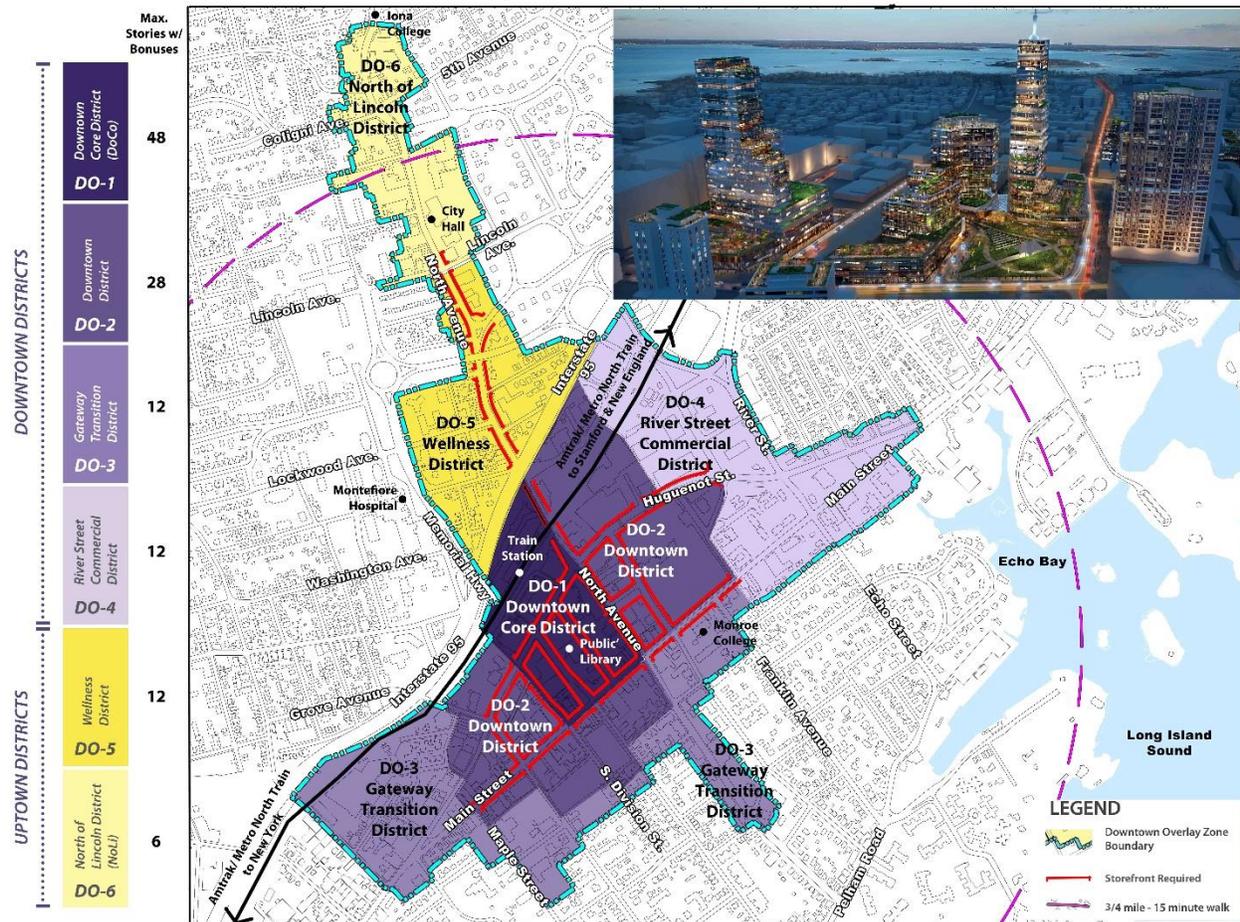
New Rochelle's pioneering development framework, approved unanimously by the New Rochelle City Council in December 2015, lays a clear, predictable path for successful investment, with three core components: (1) a master development partnership with a capable, well-capitalized private sector team; (2) a progressive form-based zoning code that combines flexible use standards with prescriptive design requirements and community benefit bonuses; and (3) a completed generic environmental review that greatly reduces financial and procedural impediments to development.

While New Rochelle is clearly in need of DRI funding to ensure and accelerate the successful transformation of the downtown, it is equally clear that with the framework noted above already in place and for reasons further described in this application, **the City is uniquely positioned to take immediate advantage of State assistance and to leverage State dollars for maximum positive impact.** Indeed, New Rochelle's central location, unrivaled transit access, respected higher educational institutions, outstanding schools, and diverse human and physical characteristics give the city significant achievable potential to be a thriving live-work-play magnet for millennials and other professionals – enhancing the competitive position of our region as a whole.

Beyond these local impacts, selecting New Rochelle for the DRI offers a broader and perhaps more significant benefit, because New Rochelle’s plan can be a model for the entire State – a framework that could be easily replicated in other communities with similar characteristics. In this sense, **New Rochelle presents the Economic Development Council with an opportunity not only to boost the fortunes of a single well-positioned city, but also to invest in a demonstration project – a proof of concept – with enormous direct and indirect value to nearly every city in the region.**

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

1) Boundaries of the Downtown Neighborhood



New Rochelle’s unique and innovative Downtown Overlay Zone (DOZ) defines the boundaries of a 279-acre compact, walkable, transit-served district and includes, but is not limited to:

- Six overlay zones that allow varying uses and densities depending on the walking distance to the New Rochelle Transit Center.
- A historic, pedestrian-scaled Main Street, with largely continuous street-level activity, suitable for preservation, enhancement and reinvestment.
- The lower North Avenue corridor, New Rochelle’s primary north-south arterial, suitable for complete-street mobility and enhanced links to Lona College and Montefiore Hospital.

- Multiple publicly-owned properties that are suitable for redevelopment.
- New Rochelle’s Public Library, the most visited library in the Westchester Library system.
- Ruby Dee Park, a centrally located one-acre open space that is home to a weekly farmer’s market and multiple outdoor cultural events.
- 1960s-era urban renewal sites with significantly-sized footprints that can be repositioned according to modern planning standards to attract young professionals and empty-nesters.
- A lively arts and restaurant scene, with potential for significant expansion.
- Nearly 600 businesses, employing an estimated 10,000 workers.
- Approximately 9,000 highly-diverse residents, of which more than 50% are non-white and approximately 28% are foreign born.
- A busy transit center served by Metro North, Amtrak and Bee-line Buses and utilized by well over 2 million passengers per year, all within walking distance of the entire DOZ.

Despite these assets, New Rochelle’s downtown remains far short of its potential. Nodes of successful activity are too widely-dispersed to ignite the downtown economy as a whole. Uses are imbalanced, with insufficient commercial and office presence. And local consumer demand is not fully captured within New Rochelle’s borders because of inadequate retail options.

2) Size

New Rochelle’s downtown is sizeable and has exceptional potential for positive growth.

Dimensions: New Rochelle’s DOZ encompasses 279 acres centered around Ruby Dee Park and the transit center.

Diverse Property Types: There are opportunities for large-scale development and smaller in-fill development, as well as for the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic structures.

Transit Access: Access is provided through multiple New England Thruway and Hutchinson River Parkway exits, a bustling Transit Center with Metro-North service to Grand Central, the only Amtrak stop between Penn Station and Stamford, and regional Bee-line bus service. When MTA completes its Penn Access capital project, New Rochelle will boast the closest station to New York City with direct access to Manhattan’s east and west sides, as well as connections to 4 new stations in the Bronx. In addition, New Rochelle is currently in the early planning stages for a Downtown Circulator Bus transit system to link residents and employment centers to retail, transit and recreational destinations.

Central Location: New Rochelle is close to everything. New York City, Stamford, White Plains, LaGuardia, and Westchester Airport are all within 20 miles and within a 30-minute travel time of downtown New Rochelle, with multi-modal transportation options available to each. As such, millions of people can easily and affordably access New Rochelle as workers, customers, or visitors, while residents enjoy easy access to everything in the area.

Growing Population Base: After several decades of declining population, New Rochelle’s population has grown to its highest level during the past 2 decades, from 67,265 in 1990 to 77,062 in 2010. Growth has been especially pronounced in the downtown area, where approximately 1,500 new housing units have been constructed in the past twenty years. Build out of the 5,500 units in the DOZ will bring an additional 11,000 residents to the downtown.

Innovative Zoning: The innovative form-based code was unanimously adopted in 2015 for the entire 279-acre downtown and permits nearly 11 million square feet of new construction with

a completed generic environmental impact statement to reduce the risk, expense, and delay often associated with investment. The new code also incentivizes active storefront commerce, civic spaces, historic preservation and economic development, creating vibrancy at street level.

Institutional Links: New Rochelle is home to three colleges – Iona, the College of New Rochelle and Monroe, the last located within the DOZ. In addition to fostering a population of well-educated young professionals, all three institutions have worked in close partnership with the City and provide year-round demand for student housing, amenities, and retail for their 11,000 students. Montefiore Hospital, located immediately to the west of New Rochelle’s downtown, is the City’s largest private employer and serves as a potential engine for medical office development and has plans to open a new nursing school.

Waterfront Proximity: The Long Island Sound shore is within walking distance of New Rochelle’s downtown, and the potential exists for greater synergy between the shoreline, urban downtown core, and transit center, further enhancing live, work and play opportunities.

Pre-Existing Development: Development in the 1990s and 2000s has already established an important foundation of newer housing, entertainment, and dining, while also introducing urban scale and density to New Rochelle’s downtown core.

Public Safety: New Rochelle is the safest city of its size in New York State.

3) Past Investments & Future Investment Potential

New Rochelle has benefited from some public and private investment in recent decades including streetscape upgrades, public parking construction, parkland creation and wastewater treatment plant improvements. Additional public and private investments either committed or needed are listed below.

Committed/Planned Investments:

- Creation of a training and employment center for New Rochelle residents.
- \$5 million investment to facilitate a conversion from a one-way to a two-way traffic circulation system on two major streets.
- \$200,000 investment in a city-wide complete streets plan that will lead to a substantial redesign of several roadways in the downtown area.
- Penn Station Access has a State commitment of \$250 million towards a \$1 billion MTA project linking Metro-North service directly into Penn Station, providing critical system resiliency to protect service for more than 275,000 daily customers in the event of natural or other disasters. This project will afford New Rochelle commuters with the closest station to Manhattan with direct service to the east and west sides of Manhattan.
- \$7 million commitment from NYSTA to replace the aging North Avenue Bridge located at a critical downtown gateway and to improve pedestrian and vehicular mobility.
- Development in the DOZ over the next 10 years including 5,500 residential units, 500 hotel rooms, 1 million square feet of retail space and over 2 million square feet of office space
- \$1.6 million investment in a new black-box theater, sited at the ground level of a new 28-story residential tower to begin construction in 2016.
- \$700,000/year investment by the BID in extensive infrastructure and maintenance projects.
- \$2.2 million to create a 12,000 square foot maker space within the proposed Arts and Cultural District.

Future Investments Needed Include:

- Need funding for the installation of approximately 30 high-speed broadband kiosks to provide free high speed broadband service in the downtown.
- Need funding for train station upgrades to accommodate increased traffic due to population increases and employment opportunities, as well as the future Penn Station Access.
- Need funding for the North Avenue Bridge over I-95 expansion to include open space and improved pedestrian circulation and to help reconnect divided parts of the City.
- Need \$2 million in additional funding to facilitate a conversion from a one-way to a two-way traffic circulation system on two major streets.
- Need funding to improve connectivity within the DOZ and to nearby employment centers, health care facilities, educational institutions, and recreational amenities by implementing complete streets, a bikeshare program, bus shuttle loops and improved pedestrian connections.
- Need funding for additional and enhanced open space in the downtown and at the nearby waterfront.

4) Job Growth

New Rochelle is well positioned to both spur and benefit from regional employment growth. Currently, New Rochelle's downtown area, together with immediately proximate institutions and businesses, already supports an estimated 15,000 jobs. Our downtown development plan is projected to create approximately 19,000 additional jobs over 10 years, with construction jobs accounting for roughly 3,000, and the remainder in the retail, restaurant, hotel, and office industries.

Moreover, the mixed-use, transit-served nature of New Rochelle's downtown, further bolstered by a diverse local population and lively cultural scene, creates ideal conditions for an "innovation district," attractive to millennials, recent graduates, entrepreneurs, tech-start-up founders, and members of the creative/knowledge class.

New Rochelle also has the potential to reinvigorate the lagging Westchester office market by creating a new urban-scaled, transit-served office product, presently in short supply. Recent analysis of office demand by industry sector suggests that by 2021, assuming a 30% capture rate, total office demand in downtown New Rochelle could exceed 1.2 million square feet.

New Rochelle's proximity to New York City gives regional significance to our local actions. With millions of people residing within 20 miles of downtown New Rochelle, any local job creation offers a significant opportunity for persons who are unemployed or underemployed. In addition, a progressive job training policy recently adopted by the New Rochelle City Council will help eligible residents acquire new skills and achieve placement both in temporary construction positions and in long-term careers.

By helping companies, entrepreneurs, colleges and investors — across sectors and disciplines — co-invent and co-create a new generation of job creation, economic development and placemaking, New Rochelle can become a model for economic development and placemaking for communities throughout the state.

5) Attractiveness of the Downtown

New Rochelle has created a blueprint for a thriving, mixed-use downtown destination that enhances historic assets, while also aiming to correct past planning errors that have left much of the downtown fragmented, unwelcoming to pedestrians, or frustrating for small-scale investors. Our new form-based zoning code emphasizes best planning practices known to enhance walkability and attractiveness, with standards for continuous street frontages, glazing, upper-level setbacks, significant corners, and terminal vistas. The zoning code further establishes height bonuses in exchange for LEED gold or platinum equivalency, open space creation, historic building preservation, and other vital elements of a healthy downtown area. New Rochelle's process of Peer Architectural Review creates a collaborative mechanism for enhancing the visual appeal and contextual quality of new construction. Finally, New Rochelle's affordable housing policy requires that at least 10% of new housing units be affordable, with incentives provided for additional units. As the recipient of the DRI, the City would work with State officials to:

- Create a Strategic Investment Plan to establish and prioritize the economic development, transportation, housing and community projects that can best lead to successful realization of the downtown vision and leverage additional investment.
- Expand and enhance New Rochelle's multi-modal transportation center by augmenting the train station facilities to capitalize on enhanced Metro-North service to Manhattan and on anticipated links directly to Penn Station.
- Build upon the mixed-use character of downtown by promoting retail, office and institutional uses with façade and landscaping enhancements to storefronts, sidewalks, plazas, and pocket parks.
- Expand the number of mixed-income residences at varying levels of affordability through construction of affordable, workforce and upscale residences.
- Improve the streets connecting the Downtown to the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Create programs to incentivize fresh food markets, food festivals and healthy food businesses, building on New Rochelle's successful downtown farmer's market.
- Enhance the cultural arts and historic assets of the downtown.
- Make necessary infrastructure improvements to support the downtown redevelopment.

6) Policies to Enhance Quality of Life

New Rochelle's downtown plan, adopted just last year, has already been recognized as a model, winning formal recognition from the American Planning Association and the Westchester Municipal Planning Federation. As noted above and detailed more fully below, the adopted downtown plan and the associated zoning code include:

- A comprehensive form-based code that promotes street level activity, a broad mix of uses and intensity of development appropriate for vibrant commerce and cultural activity.
- A transect-based land-use scheme proscribing six Downtown Overlay Zones of varying intensities permitting 6, 12, 28 and 48 stories, with the higher densities permitted closer to the Downtown Core and Transit Center.
- A comprehensive set of incentives designed to promote economic development while funding or constructing community benefits.

- Storefront and streetscape requirements to create continuity in the pedestrian, civic space, and retail experience in the Downtown core.

In addition, the City has plans to:

- Promote the creation of more civic spaces, pedestrian spaces in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods and linking these places with improved sidewalks, trails and bikeways. Improve links between the downtown and the City’s impressive waterfront parks and vistas along Long Island Sound.
- Reconfigure two major one-way downtown streets, Main Street and Huguenot Street, into two-way streets to improve pedestrian safety, boost downtown commerce, and reduce carbon emissions.
- Implement a comprehensive Complete Streets plan, intended to enhance crosswalks, facilitate bike access, beautify streetscapes, improve wayfinding, and otherwise enhance the experience of pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.
- Improve access and connectivity to areas adjacent to the downtown such as recreational opportunities and the Arts and Cultural District extension in the light industrial area.
- Utilize best planning practices and policies for quality downtown revitalization.
- Create an Arts and Cultural District and changes to the zoning in the adjacent light industrial area to allow for “createforce” housing and live/work units for artists.

7) Local Support

Support for New Rochelle’s downtown development initiative has been remarkably broad and deep. The downtown plan was adopted on a unanimous, bipartisan basis by the New Rochelle City Council, and continues to be strongly supported by the City’s elected political leadership. New Rochelle’s School District participated directly in an analysis of growth-related school impacts and has been strongly supportive of the “fair share mitigation” formula that emerged from this analysis. New Rochelle’s Industrial Development Agency unanimously approved a new UTEP that serves as a framework for downtown growth incentives.

New Rochelle’s downtown plan has been cited as a model by regional business and planning advocates, including the Business Council of Westchester, the Westchester County Association, and the Regional Plan Association, and has received formal recognition from the American Planning Association and the Westchester Municipal Planning Federation.

Most importantly, the general public was fully engaged in establishing the plan’s parameters and goals through a process of “Crowdsourced Placemaking” (CSPM). This process, which spurred the ongoing NR Future initiative, now has approximately 2,120 members.

By utilizing the proprietary CSPM program, New Rochelle worked to co-create a shared final development vision, spur entrepreneurial activity and include portions of the public who are often left out of traditional outreach programs. The City and Developer conducted over 50 public meetings and engaged the local business community and Chamber of Commerce along with local property owners. The process is helping the Master Developer and the City to best meet the needs of its residents today and into the future, with a focus on arts, culture, the innovation sector, and the retention of the millennial generation, young professionals and retirees in the City of New Rochelle.

Local Lead: The Commissioner of Development, Luiz Aragon, who spearheaded the creation of the City’s downtown plan, will be the local lead for the program. He can be reached at laragon@newrochelleny.com or 914-654-2182. The Commissioner’s leadership will be supplemented and supported by direct involvement from other officials, both elected and appointed, as needed. The City of New Rochelle has no higher priority than executing our downtown development goals.

8) Other

A Regional Model: As noted above, New Rochelle presents the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council with a special and unique opportunity not only to assist a single community with its development efforts, but – more importantly – to validate and promote a model that can be replicated in multiple communities.

Ready to Roll: Many of the key hurdles typical of large-scale development have already been addressed and overcome through the significant prior work of the City of New Rochelle.

The Clock is Ticking: While a master plan can be important, the ability to react swiftly to market preferences is often essential to transforming vision into reality. Therefore, in addition to the zoning allowances and environmental pre-clearance noted above, New Rochelle has created an expedited process for site plan approvals – just 90 days from submission to approval - providing a true “Open for Business” environment that takes full advantage of favorable, but temporary, economic conditions.

Best Bang-For-The-Buck: New Rochelle has “great bones,” yet, despite recent progress, its downtown has struggled for the past two generations. The gap, therefore, between New Rochelle’s current condition and its potential condition is particularly large. And because of the development framework just adopted by the City, there exists today a clear and achievable means of closing that gap. New Rochelle occupies the sweet spot where State assistance can accomplish the most good in the shortest time.

Award Winning: With an unparalleled location, superb quality of life, heritage of originality and a focused business climate, New Rochelle is New York’s next great place. In addition to the awards mentioned above, New Rochelle has been awarded “Best Place to Live’ (Movoto & Westchester Magazine), ‘Most Diverse City’ (WalletHub), ‘Best Walking City’ (Prevention Magazine), ‘Best Place to Raise your Kids’ (Business Week) and ranks as one of America’s top safest cities.

Ideally Yours: In 2015, New Rochelle launched a comprehensive branding effort to determine those essential qualities that make it a great place to live, work, play and shop, while reinforcing our identity as a community that truly celebrates human diversity. Please look at our new website: www.newrochelleny.com and we believe you will begin to see our city as we see it: a place with big challenges, but even bigger opportunities; a place that is ideal for living, commuting, playing, and development; a place, in short, that is Ideally Yours.