

# **MID-HUDSON DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE TEMPLATE**

## **BASIC INFORMATION**

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

**Municipality Name:** Village of Nyack

**Downtown Name:**Historic Downtown Nyack

**County:**Rockland

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

Located less than 30 miles from New York City, the Village of Nyack’s historic downtown constitutes the majority of the less than one square mile land area of the village and the majority of its population, and is home to an ethnically, economically and culturally diverse population. Bounded by the Hudson River on the east and going uphill from the river to the Palisades Escarpment on the west, Nyack’s compact, historic downtown with its mix of 19<sup>th</sup>-century mixed-use (commercial and residential) 3 and 4-story brick buildings, Victorian homes, town houses and several small apartment complexes has a complementary mix of uses which contributes greatly to the village’s strong image and sense of place and attracts visitors from throughout the region. Eminently walkable, Nyack’s downtown with its many restaurants and shops, the YMCA of Rockland, the Nyack Center and small, legitimate theaters is within a short walk of the Hudson shoreline and the Village’s incomparable shoreline park, Memorial Park and a newly renovated marina, making the village a regional attraction for its scenic beauty, dining, shopping and entertainment. Nyack has a strong and growing artistic community offering community-wide arts shows, exhibits at Hopper House and small galleries, musical events at various venues, including free concerts in Memorial Park, which attract hundreds of visitors throughout the year. Nyack’s motto for its downtown - “Art and Soul” – is truly reflective of our vibrant community.

The Village is also well known for its many weekend street fairs including the largest Halloween Parade outside of Greenwich Village. In collaboration with *Visit Nyack*, a proactive marketing effort and advertising initiative, the Village is working to increase tourism and retail development in the downtown.

The village’s scenic, cultural and historic assets and its diverse community are the assets upon which the Village of Nyack is implementing extensive revitalization projects and programs. With NY State funding, the Village is updating its Comprehensive Plan and its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program to identify and plan sustainable strategies related to economic development and protection of the waterfront with a focus on multi-modal transportation, transportation-oriented development, increased residential density and commercial activity and resiliency measures addressing flooding in the downtown and sea level rise on the waterfront. The Village is also enhancing the walkability and bikeability of the downtown and use of public transportation with streetscape improvements along the entire length of Broadway, including sustainable stormwater infrastructure, bike lane and bus shelters. The projects currently underway to plan for a “sustainable” and “walkable” Nyack are attracting new development and

promise to attract more. The private sector is partnering with the Village in a number of ways to revitalize Nyack, including the donation of land for a municipal parking facility and trolley service for Nyack and the river villages to the south. The Village is pursuing a partnership arrangement with a NYC-based art museum as a complement to the Village's Hopper House Museum.

Poised to take advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the New NY Bridge and related improvements to the NY Thruway in South Nyack and Nyack, the Village has enormous potential to spark economic development in the region and qualifies as a prime candidate for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The DRI will give Nyack the capacity to plan the optimum strategy for implementing a transformative, comprehensive revitalization "package" of projects that will position and strengthen Nyack as key player in the economic life of the region and address problems in the downtown inhibiting development, including persistent flooding caused by heavy rainfall, which is occurring with greater frequency due to climate change, and limited parking. Funding from the DRI will allow Nyack to keep pace with the rapid construction of the New NY Bridge by expediting the planning process and the implementation of a development strategy to become the Gateway to the Hudson Valley.

## **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.*

Nyack's historic downtown is bounded by NYS Rte 9W on the west, the Hudson River and the village waterfront on the east, Cedar Hill Avenue on the south at the border with South Nyack, Fourth Avenue on the north. Please use this Google link for a map of the downtown: <https://www.google.com/maps/@41.0899028,-73.9225135,15z>

- 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.*

Nyack's downtown contains approximately two-thirds of the village's population of 7,000 and almost all of its retail businesses, restaurants and office space. The downtown consists primarily of mixed-use commercial/residential buildings of 3-4 stories, several multi-story rental housing complexes, the Clermont Condos with 101 units, almost 30 restaurants, the Best Western Motel, Nyack Hospital with 1,650 employees, 3 banks, Village Hall, the YMCA of Rockland with 225 employees, the Nyack Community Center and the Hopper House Museum, which is visited annually by thousands of visitors from around the world. Residential development in the downtown approved by the Village and ready for construction will bring 168 new units in the immediate future, and proposed developments will bring an additional 389 units over the next five years including a major waterfront development known as TZ Vista being constructed on a former brownfield site. Development in the planning stages also includes retail spaces, a theatre

and art gallery, educational facilities, restaurants, waterfront continuous walkway and a parking garage.

The Downtown's catchment area to the west of Rte 9W known as the "Gateway" also provides substantial support to the downtown. It houses a number of commercial operations-retail, fast-food restaurants, automotive repair and sales, two shopping plazas and the newly opened Time Hotel with 180 rooms and several world-class restaurants. A total of 400,000 residents are available as shoppers from the larger market area surrounding Nyack.

**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 of Nyack is currently implementing extensive revitalization plans and projects with funding from NY State, the New NY Bridge Community Fund and the New NY Bridge Waterfront Revitalization Projects 2015 grant program and technical assistance as well as funding from Scenic Hudson. These projects are transformative in scope and will position Nyack as the Gateway destination to the Hudson Valley and a regional economic force. Recently completed projects include a Master Plan for Memorial Park located on the shores of the Hudson funded by Scenic Hudson and improvements and enhancements to Memorial Park funded by NYS Office of Parks, NYS Department of State and the New NY Bridge Community Fund, which include new basketball courts, a skate park, a new gazebo for performances, and a fishing pier and viewing platform. Projects in process include: a NYSDOT-funded Transportation Advancement Program (TAP), "***New Connectivities for Nyack***", to install streetscape improvements along the length of Broadway, which will include a designated bike lane and bus shelters; a NYSERDA Cleaner Greener Communities Grant, "***Update to the Comprehensive Plan-Climate Smart Planning for the 21st Century***", to update the Comprehensive Plan to integrate planning for a resilient waterfront, multi-modal transportation, transportation-oriented development and increased residential density and commercial activity; a NYS DOS grant to revise the Village's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), "***Waterfront Revitalization Planning in the Post-Sandy World***", which will focus on identifying sustainable strategies related to economic development and protection of the waterfront and on resiliency measures to insure the future of the village in the post-Sandy era of sea level rise and climate change; and a NY New Bridge Waterfront Revitalization Project 2015 grant, "***Memorial Park Inlet Bridge***", to construct a pedestrian bridge over the inlet separating Memorial Park from the Village's public boat launch and marina. The Village also recently completed streetscape improvements to Main Street in the central business district with funding from the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) administered by the Rockland County Office of Development. The Village's Comprehensive Planning team is working with a Columbia Planning Studio focused on Ferry transportation feasibility headed by Dr. Floyd Lapp. This study has recently been completed and has developed alternative Ferry routes including excursion tours, Nyack to Tarrytown and Nyack to mid-town Manhattan. The data has been integrated into the Comprehensive Plan Update project. The data developed from NYMTC establishes a catchment area within a ten minute drive time from Nyack with a population of over 36,000 residents targeted as a market for ferry service.

The Village is also working with Pattern for Progress, which has identified Nyack as a study area for their “Urban Action Agenda,” funded through a Ford Foundation grant. Pattern for Progress is working with 25 Hudson Valley communities of the UAA to identify revitalization strategies that are working, and collaborate on a regional revitalization strategy focused on urban centers, which are “... best suited to accommodate the region’s future growth.”

With funding from the Greenway Conservancy, Nyack developed a Sustainability Action Plan in 2013 and appointed a Green Policy Task Force under the direction of the Sustainability Coordinator appointed in 2013. The Sustainability Action Plan organizes concrete steps that Village government, volunteer committees and local citizens are taking currently to promote energy conservation and alternative energy, increase recycling and manage the land and water resources better. The steps outlined in the Action Plan integrate with the work of the Village to implement actions leading to certification status under the Climate Smart Communities program, and laid the basis for the Sustainability Update to the Comprehensive Plan currently being developed.

An important complement to revitalization plans is the NYS DOT-funded project to install new traffic lights and timing system in the downtown that will expedite the flow of traffic from the TZ Bridge, and soon the New NY Bridge, through the village, eliminating bottle necks and tie-ups that inhibit visitors and residents from coming into the downtown.

The Comprehensive Plan studies are addressing key issues for the revitalization of the village - ferry landing alternatives, a bus rapid-transit hub and a transportation improvement district, local trolley and shuttle options, and alternatives for bikes and pedestrian access. Planned transit options will offer pedestrian-accessible, affordable transportation for job seekers and the employed who lack cars to be connected to skilled jobs in New York City and the region, as well provide alternatives to automobile use for all residents and visitors. Updating the Comprehensive Plan stresses sustainability as the centerpiece to create guidelines for an integrated, sustainable planning framework fostering green development and a “walkable Nyack”. The work of the LWRP revision will be to align NYS DOS coastal policies with recent, and planned, local and regional economic, social and physical changes, including the new NY Bridge, Sandy and Irene’s devastation, the reality of climate change and sea level rise and proposed private-sector development. The revised LWRP will develop a waterfront adaptation vision for the future and recommendations for revitalization strategies that integrate the waterfront with plans and programs in the entire village, reduce risks to infrastructure and property from sea level rise and conserve and enhance coastal natural resources that make the village a regional tourist destination.

The revitalization of Nyack and its development as the “Gateway” destination to the Hudson Valley and a regional economic force is being realized through an extensive public/private “partnership” with the Village consisting of private developers, a range of non-profit organizations, including Hopper House Museum and the Green House Preservation Coalition working to restore the oldest residence in the village as a tourist center, TZ Constructors and the New NY Bridge Community Benefits Program whereby state funding secured through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative program, as well as other funding streams, will leverage millions in investment. The Village is planning a transformative, comprehensive revitalization “package” of projects that will position and strengthen Nyack as a key player in the economic life of the region. Revitalization projects include: A municipal parking garage to solve the acute

problem of limited parking in the downtown that is inhibiting development; Drainage improvements for the Nyack Brook and daylighting a portion of the brook to create the Nyack Brook Plaza in the center of the downtown to prevent flooding in the historic business district, allow for new development in areas that are currently flood-prone and create a unique and attractive park; the Memorial Park Shoreline Walkway; and the Village Marina Parking Facility that will allow the Village to move existing parking out of Memorial Park and increase green space in the park.

**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.*

It is estimated that shovel-ready residential development and residential and commercial projects in the planning stages, along with the infrastructure and park improvement projects planned by the Village, will result in approximately 400 permanent jobs in the village in addition to the 2,400 construction jobs to be created over the next five-to-fifteen years. The work involved in the update to the Village's Comprehensive Plan, particularly in the areas of planning for increased residential density and infill development, in the update to the LWRP to enhance and protect the waterfront, and in the streetscape amenities to be constructed for the NYS DOT TAP program currently in the planning stage will lead to job growth in the village and the region. The plans and projects being developed will lead to an improved tourist economy due to more attractive and diverse transportation options including ferry excursions, more local demand for goods and services resulting from increased residential density and increased commercial activity at the transit nodes on the river and at the Thruway Interchange. Job growth is on the immediate horizon with the estimated \$34 million of new residential construction to begin in 2016, which will result in 38 permanent jobs (National Association of Home Builders (2014) estimates a multiplier of 1.13 permanent jobs per million dollars of multifamily construction.)

The wage/salaries of new residents are estimated at \$60,877 per household. With 168 units due to be constructed over the next one-to-three years, this additional buying power will fuel job growth exponentially. The approximately 221 residential units currently in the preliminary planning stages will result in an additional 50 permanent jobs over the next five-to-ten years, and the approximately 160 units in the early proposal stages that will come online in the next ten-to-fifteen years will result in an additional 40 permanent jobs based on current construction costs. The public and private projects in the "pipeline" and in the preliminary planning stages will also result in approximately 2,400 construction jobs over the next 15 years.

Over the next 15 years, it is anticipated that the new commuter transportation options to be developed will also result in a substantial increase in permanent jobs and additional economic activity. The commuter ferry being studied as part of the Comprehensive Plan update, with an estimated construction of \$5 million, potential tourist river cruises, increased marina traffic on the waterfront and the BRT station at the Thruway interchange, with an estimated cost of \$2 million with road/lane improvements, would create approximately 80 direct and indirect permanent jobs. (SRRI, *Stimulus Calculator Infrastructure*, 2012) Shuttles may also be used as a transportation alternative for commuters to the Ferry. This alternative is being studied for the Comprehensive Plan update in addition to garage structure parking in closer proximity to the

ferry. Parking structure(s) for approximately 500 spaces is estimated at \$30,000 per space for a total cost of \$15 million; structures with rooftop amenities and façade and retail wrap are estimated at \$35,000 per space or an estimated cost of \$17.5 million. This option would provide an additional 186 to 215 direct and indirect permanent jobs (based on 12.4 jobs per million of construction cost, SRRI, Stimulus Calculator, Infrastructure, 2012). An additional \$825, 858 per million dollars of economic output is estimated through indirect and induced activities. (SRRI, *Stimulus Calculator Infrastructure*, 2012)

#### **5) Attractiveness of the Downtown.**

Nyack's downtown is compact and very walkable, with the main business streets—Main Street, Broadway and Franklin Street - consisting primarily of mixed-use, 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick buildings of 3-4 stories- and the side streets of 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Victorian homes, some of which have been converted to multi-family. Bounded by Memorial Park and the Hudson River on the east and tree-lined streets going west, the complementary mix of uses in the downtown contributes greatly to the Village's strong image and sense of place and attracts visitors from throughout the region. In 2009, the Village prohibited residential uses on the ground floor of buildings in the core business district, requiring active uses to maintain the attractive, mixed-use character of the downtown. The Village recently completed streetscape improvements for Main Street in the central business district with CDBG funding, which makes that area very walkable. Planning is currently underway for the Village's TAP grant, *New Connectivities for Nyack*, which will further enhance walkability and bikeability of the village, with streetscape improvements along the length of Broadway from the northern border to the southern border of the village, which include new, ADA-compliant sidewalks, a designated bath path, street furniture, sustainable infrastructure and plantings.

As noted earlier, the substantial residential projects being planned by the private sector, and a non-profit developer that intends to develop housing for veterans, include affordable housing as well as market-rate housing, which will make the downtown very attractive to young professionals by reason of the vibrant, diverse housing market and Nyack's walkability.

The Village has plans in place to make Nyack's downtown even more attractive as a place to live and visit through the creation of a new park in the existing municipal parking lot in the center of the historic business district on Main Street. To be called the Nyack Brook Plaza, the park will be unique to the region in that it will feature the Nyack Brook, which will be daylighted through the center of the parking lot, and landscaped sitting areas, creating a "natural" haven in the center of the village where now a deteriorating and unsightly lot stands. The Nyack Brook Plaza will be part of the Village's overall plan to mitigate flooding problems caused by the Nyack Brook during heavy rainfall by containing the brook in a closed culvert system up Main Street to the west of the municipal lot, opening it up through the lot and diverting it back into a closed system further downstream. Flooding from the Nyack Brook severely impacts existing residences and business and will inhibit revitalization if the problem is not mitigated. Solving the flooding problem in part with a beautiful new park will galvanize revitalization

**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.*

As a Climate Smart Community, a Tree City USA Community and a Greenway Community, the Village of Nyack seeks to balance sustainability and development to preserve and protect its historic, scenic and cultural assets while facilitating revitalization. The Village's commitment to enhancing the quality of life for its residents while fostering revitalization is shown by the work to update the Comprehensive Plan and revise its LWRP to provide policies and regulations that will create a sustainable and resilient community capable of balancing interdependent needs and prepared for and adaptable to the impacts of climate change. The Village's vision statement for directing the work of updating the Comprehensive Plan summarizes the Village's commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all of Nyack's residents, stakeholders and those who will decide to live here, and is as follows: "**Value** its rich historic assets and walkable neighborhoods and the diverse and creative culture that has grown from them; **Enhance** its Hudson River waterfront as a vital and attractive resource that should be fully accessible and enjoyed by all; **Strengthen** its vibrant downtown community to help current businesses thrive, attract new investment and visitors and provide economic opportunities for Village residents."

Among key issues for a sustainable Nyack are transportation-oriented-development and fostering public transportation including restoring ferry service to the Nyack waterfront. The Comprehensive Plan update is studying TOD as well as multi-modal transportation options with the emphasis on fostering public transportation on a significant scale, including a BRT area to be developed for the New NY Bridge, ferry service and a trolley service to serve ferry riders. In addition, the Village in partnership with the newly opened 180-room Time Hotel plans to implement a trolley service to serve Nyack and the adjoining river villages, so overnight visitors can enjoy Nyack's downtown and visit other villages without having to drive.

**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.*

As it has done for the work to update the Comprehensive Plan and revise the LWRP, the Village will appoint a DRI Planning Committee to guide the planning and implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and to work with the planning consultant(s) provided to the project by New York State. The DRI Planning Committee will be composed of Village staff, Village officials, volunteers on Village boards, such as the Planning Board and the Parks Commission, and key stakeholders from the business and faith communities as well as the local school district. The Village Planner will serve as the local lead for the project.

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

As part of revitalization planning, the Village is addressing the persistent problems of poverty and unemployment, and the DRI, with its Fast Track Planning Initiative, will allow

the Village to advance plans to improve the lives of its citizens. Perceived as an affluent enclave near New York City, Nyack's unemployment and poverty rates have risen since 2000 and are higher than the county's as a whole. 14.8% of its residents are in poverty-up 10.1% since 2000, and unemployment has risen 5% since 2000 and is currently at 7%. The Village's median income is almost \$30,000 less than the county's, and 21% of its residents earn less than \$25,000 a year (Pattern for Progress Profile of Nyack) The DRI will be a crucial catalyst for revitalizing the village and creating opportunity for all our citizens, which will include affordable housing, affordable transportation to jobs, and employment within the village.

The historic, urban character of downtown Nyack and the fact that the Village has long been supportive of sustainable, dense, mixed-use development offers the opportunity for extensive economic development while retaining those qualities that make Nyack viable as a key player in the region's economic growth. The DRI initiative will provide the ability to jumpstart the Village 's downtown revitalization.