OSSINING'S VIBRANT COMMUNITY & BRIGHT FUTURE

BASIC INFORMATION

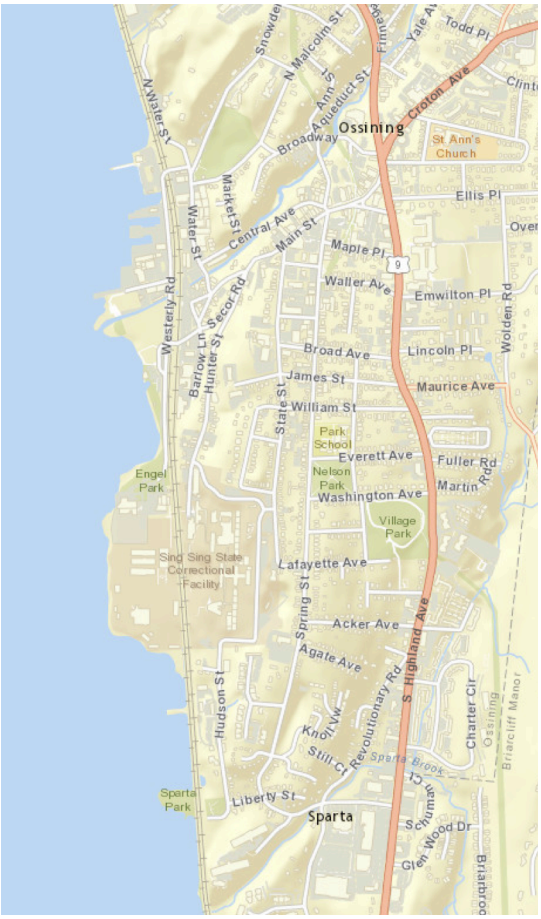
Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: Mid-Hudson

Municipality Name: Village of Ossining (in partnership with the Town of Ossining)

Downtown Name: Village Center

County: Westchester

The Village of Ossining is ripe for dramatic economic revitalization. Its glorious location on the Hudson River connects to NYC in 47 minutes by an express MetroNorth train, and to surrounding communities via Westchester's Bee-Line Bus system. The historic downtown architecture is protected and honored as a locally landmarked Historic District. Our nationally celebrated public schools boast more Intel award semi-finalists than any other school in the nation, and the dual language program is creating a generation of bilingual children that reflects our most recent immigrant population primarily from South America. Latino residents comprise 40% of our population. Ossining's remarkable cultural diversity is represented in our celebrations, community organizations, and local businesses.



DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

1) Boundaries of the Downtown Neighborhood

The Village Center is a compact and well-connected area of residential, commercial, and waterfront development, and encompasses varied zoning districts. This Village Center includes important community "hubs" – Ossining High School, Ossining Public Library, Village & Town Hall, Police and Court Facility, and the Ossining Community Center and Visitors Center.

The historic downtown area is in close proximity to the Hudson River and the MetroNorth station. The Downtown Neighborhood proposed for the DRI award is the area designated as Ossining's Village Center. The northern boundary runs from the Hudson River at Westerly Road, along Broadway and Aqueduct Street, crossing Route 9/North Highland Avenue to Denny Street, to include the Ossining Public Library property. The eastern boundary begins at the Ossining Public Library, and runs along Croton Avenue to meet the Downtown Ossining Historic/Architectural Design District Overlay zoning area, which essentially runs along Route 9/South Highland Avenue, encompassing

portions of the eastern side of South Highland Avenue, including Ossining High School. The Downtown Ossining Historic/Architecture Design District Overlay ends at Emwilton Avenue, and eastern boundary of the proposed Downtown Neighborhood continues along South Highland Avenue and Revolutionary Road until Rockledge Avenue, and the Sparta Historic/Architectural Design District overlay zone. The southern boundary aligns with the boundary of the Sparta Historic/Architectural Design District overlay zone to the Hudson River. The western boundary runs along the Hudson River, connecting this southern point in Sparta to the northern point at Westerly Road and Broadway, including the Riverfront Development District, as well as Sing Sing Correctional Facility.

2) Size

When most Ossining residents think of "downtown," this is the area they most associate with community events, transportation, shopping, historic character, and local identity. This neighborhood includes the Ossining Metro-North Station, several Westchester Bee-Line Bus stops, the Ossining-Haverstraw Ferry, and is within close proximity to the Scarborough Metro-North Station as well. Route 9 connects Ossining by car/bus with all the Rivertowns.

Ossining is a very "walkable" Village, which allows residents and neighbors from adjacent communities and beyond to connect to Downtown easily and affordably. Due to the many public transportation options that connect with Ossining, this area is also very accessible to our neighbors throughout Westchester County, Rockland County, and New York City. The Ossining-Haverstraw Ferry makes Ossining a unique rivertown, because it provides connection to Rockland County without direct access to a bridge. Many of our neighbors on the Hudson River are at an inherent disadvantage by only being accessible by their "land-locked" neighbors, but Ossining has visitors daily from Rockland as well.

Ossining's character has is dramatically influenced by its history of welcoming immigrants in every generation. Descendants of large Italian and Portuguese populations, as well as African Americans who migrated from southern states, are leaders in every facet of our community. Today's new Americans are coming to Ossining primarily from South America, principally Ecuador. Ossining's expanding population and growing poverty rate is most easily recognized with the increasing school enrollment and recently passed the 50% threshold for the free/reduced lunch program.

3) Past Investments & Future Investment Potential

The Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2009 demonstrates the Village's commitment to partner with private developers, public resources and community organizations to foster the success of the whole Ossining community.

<u>Density with Opportunities to Develop</u>

With nearly 8,000 people per square mile, the Village of Ossining is more dense than many cities. Remarkably there are still opportunities for significant development in the Village Center, including several parcels at that are owned by the Village of Ossining. These properties include empty lots in the downtown, and key opportunities to connect it with the waterfront.

Urban renewal knocked down historic buildings in the heart of Ossining's downtown more than four decades ago. Two major pieces of property in the central 5-corner intersection remain parking lots and the Market Square area, which hosts the weekly farmers market and community gatherings. The Village owns these lots and has already begun engaging the public on how we may redevelop these to create the cornerstone for our economic revitalization that will shape the village for generations to come.

Ossining is pursuing a pilot study utilizing an innovative software platform to gather community input for potential development enhancing the connection of the downtown to the waterfront. This opportunity is accessible to the Village because of partnerships with the US Federal Housing Monitor, the Westchester Community Foundation, affordable housing leader IFCA and the Town of Ossining who collectively have committed $38,500 dollars *and* in-kind support.

The Village-owned historic Ossining Bank for Savings at the top of Main Street is a marquis building that sadly has been vacant for decades. It may soon be repurposed as an indoor artisanal food market by a private investor who has been granted Preferred Developer Status by the Village Board.

Community Investment in Local Economy

The Village's Downtown Development Fund Council has recently been reinvigorated with new membership to fulfill their goal of recommending use of a funds dedicated to the economic development of the downtown and waterfront. This fund established as part of the development agreement for Harbor Square with Ginsburg Development Companies, is an acknowledgement of the critical role a vibrant downtown economy plays in the success of the luxury rental units that are nearly completion on Ossining's waterfront.

The Greater Ossining Chamber of Commerce is located in downtown, and supports local business owners and leaders with events as intimate as a monthly Business B4 Business coffee and workshop, and as grand as the Village Fair that welcomes thousands of attendees to Main Street every June. They are a vibrant resource always eager to partner.

Leaders Among Affordable Housing

Ossining was a leader among municipalities committed to inclusionary zoning for affordable housing when we passed our 2006 regulations and the 2009 Comprehensive Plan that followed. As part of a process to review the Comprehensive Plan, the Board of Trustees is now preparing RFPs for both a Comprehensive Parking Study and a Housing Needs Assessment.

The Village has also taken recent steps to preserve the affordable housing that is currently available. The 124 affordable units at Snowden House located just north of the Village Center will remain accessible to residents with incomes in the 30-50% AMI range. This is thanks to recent actions by the Village, Town and School Boards to approve transfer of a PILOT and extend the affordability for decades to come. Also, just this month the Village Board called for a public hearing to consider implementing Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA) legislation which would provide rent stabilization for over 700 units.

Ossining is a diverse community, and home to the Interfaith Council for Action (IFCA) and the Community Preservation Corporation, organizations dedicated to providing housing assistance and other resources to families, as well as to provide assistance to developers dedicated to building affordable housing.

4) Job Growth

Ossining is an attractive location for businesses based on a variety of factors, not the least of which being our diverse population and workforce. With a history based in industry, there are many sites downtown that offer substantial possibility for adaptive reuse, including the former DPW site on Water St. In addition to the opportunities to inject new life into old sites, there are also new spaces for businesses to thrive as a result of mixed use development. Many of the businesses that are already here continue to grow, such as Hudson Link, an organization that has caused the rebirth of the college degree program at Sing Sing, while also offering life skill training and re-entry support.

Recent Investment in by Small Businesses with Mixed Use Development

Developers and local entrepreneurs are working together to invest in the economic vitality of Ossining's downtown. Several new local businesses have opened in downtown in the past two years including the Cravin' Jamaican Restaurant, Hot Societe Clothing Boutique, and Melita's Outlet. Several more have signed leases and are preparing to open this year including Six Degrees craft beer pub near the MetroNorth station and a new café on Main St.

A number of exciting recent and soon-to-be mixed-use developments are growing the downtown residential population and welcoming new small businesses.

- 49 workforce housing units opened in 2012 just a block from Main Street. In 2014 the first retail space became occupied by "Theater O", a studio inspiring children with programs and performances, and jobs for theater professionals. That business is thriving and considering expansion.
- Ginsburg Development's waterfront luxury residential mixed-use development Harbor Square (188 units including 19 at 80% AMI) anticipated in mere weeks. The restaurant construction is nearly complete and we look forward to adding this new waterfront dining attraction this summer.
- In-fill development was welcomed in the downtown historic district (27 market-rate units + 3 units at 80% AMI). Ossining will soon see its first business in this location since Kipp's Pharmacy burned down more than 20 years ago. A local entrepreneur has just signed a lease to open Good-Choice Kitchen in one of the two retail spaces and will serve "organic farm-to-fork fare".
- The Orchid luxury condominium building on Spring St will soon welcome the Sing Sing Kill Brewery & Taproom as the first retail establishment since the former warehouse and factory began its journey to be repurposed a decade ago.
- Hudson Steppe is a downtown high-end residential and mixed-use development (189 units, including 19 at 80% AMI) preparing to begin construction. They are restoring an historic home located on their property and repurposing it for office space.

Non-Profits Make Ossining Their Home

Another important landmark in Ossining is Sing Sing Correctional Facility. With strong community support, and led by Historic Hudson River Towns alongside community stakeholders such as the Town and Village of Ossining, a proposal for a Sing Sing Museum & Center for Justice has secured over $1.3 million in funding through New York State grants, with assistance from Assemblywoman

Sandy Galef and Senator David Carlucci, and private funding. This museum will highlight Sing Sing's cultural and historic significance to our area, partner with organizations focused on social and criminal justice, and draw tourists to Ossining. A major cultural institution of this kind draws, not only tourists who visit, but also intellectuals, academics and designers who locate nearby.

Hudson Link has just purchased a building in the downtown with help from the Buffet Family Foundation which will be utilized for helping train and reintegrate former inmates into the work force as well as offering other supports. Neighbor's Link is looking for space to set up a facility in the downtown to serve underserved populations by helping with day laborer job placement and legal representation, job and safety training, language skills, supports for tax filing and so much more.

5) Attractiveness of the Downtown

Natural Beauty & Public Green Space

Views of the Hudson River are accessible from every neighborhood in Ossining. And no one is ever far from a public green space. The most recent spectacular addition to the Village Center is the Sing Sing Kill Greenway which opened in April. Who would have thought that a sanitary sewer project required by the DEC could become a magnificent public greenway winding through the heart of downtown Ossining? You would be hard pressed to find a more glorious and effective use of public fund than this 1,800 foot walkway connecting the ADA accessible ramp at the Community Center, passing under the iconic double arch, to the bridge at Central Avenue. A continuation of this greenway is part of a long term vision to strengthen connectivity between downtown and the waterfront. This project is so innovative and well executed, the Village is being honored for the work by the Westchester Planning Federation.

Ossining residents are fortunate to have spectacular sunsets over the Hudson, and we now are adding to the parks where residents and visitors can enjoy them. Henry Gourdine Park at Harbor Square will be officially open in early summer. It includes stunning sculptures, a playground, murals, and a small amphitheater.

All summer long the Waterfront Concert series draws music lovers and anyone who enjoys a glorious Hudson River sunset, to gather at Louis Engel Waterfront Park on Friday nights to eat, listen, dance and watch children play.

Drawing Crowds with Farmers & Festivals

Every Saturday the community gathers to support local farming and delicious food at the farmers market in Market Square. Down to Earth Markets was founded by Ossining residents and continues to have its headquarters on our Main Street. This B-Corp runs farmers markets throughout Westchester and New York City which source produce, prepared food and beverages from local New York State farms and purveyors. Just last year, the company organized a local fashion show that highlighted reuse of materials for clothing design, local designers, health and beauty businesses, and attracted press and visitation.

Green Ossining, an offshoot of Town and Village government, just organized its 6th Annual Earth Day Celebration drawing over 4,000 visitors to the Ossining waterfront. The environmental watchdog group Riverkeeper has its headquarters at the waterfront in Ossining. Cultural organizations bring crowds to downtown throughout the spring and summer with events such as the Portuguese Festival and the Italian Festival. The Ossining Fire Department is recognized as one of the leading volunteer departments in NYS. Their annual parade draws dozens of departments from across the region.

6) Policies to Enhance Quality of Life.

Walkability & Connectivity

In 2014 the Village passed their Complete Streets Policy. Encouraging residents to walk to downtown for their shopping and social connections is a priority for Ossining. As more than a dozen new parking spots were recently added in the downtown to support local businesses, also incorporated were spots for motorcycles and a bike rack.

Drawing Crowds to Downtown & the Waterfront with Food, Events & Culture

Last year the Village became the first municipality in Westchester to formally pass a Cultural Arts Policy, and established an Arts Committee to support the thriving local arts community, a powerful force for economic revitalization. The Ossining Arts Council leases the top of an underutilized firehouse for art shows, concerts, and theater performances. The Ossining Documentary & Discussion Series hosts a monthly event in the Budarz Theater of the Ossining Library.

Westchester Collaborative Theater, the only theater company in Westchester to perform all original works, has leased a space in our waterfront district and looks forward to hosting workshops, readings and intimate performances as soon as renovations are complete. Recently the Village Board passed a law amending the zoning text to allow for non-profits such as the WCT to host events integral to the success of their business model.

7) Local Support

Lynn Brooks Avni, Director of Planning & Development is the Initial Local Lead to work with outside experts on the DRI planning council. The Village actively fosters partnerships with a robust group of stakeholders, who share a vision of revitalization for the downtown.

Partnering with Fellow Government Entities

State Legislators Senator David Carlucci and Assemblywoman Sandy Galef have contributed and/or designated over $1.25 million of their discretionary capital dollars to improving the quality of life in the downtown and at the waterfront. County Legislator Catherine Borgia has worked on legislation and with the County IDA to make sure affordable housing, as well as mixed use space, can be built to suit the needs of the community.

Strengthening the Community with Education & Service Organizations

The Ossining School District is launching a community-based campaign that will partner with the Village, Town, Library and local businesses to get parents and community members involved with making sure every child starts school with a robust vocabulary so that their chances of reading on grade level by third grade will be greatly improved. The Sing Sing Prison Museum & Center for Justice has been supported as a Priority Project by NYS ESD funds for architectural studies and preservation of the 1825 cell block and the 1937 Power House. The Village Mayor will serve as ex officio on the Museum board.

Expanding Access to the Waterfront & Neighboring Municipalities

Ginsburg Development Corp has agreed to help pay for an expanded dock, (a NYSDEC grant for this has also been secured) adjacent to their Harbor Square Development. This will entice boat tourism and visitation with a dock that will be accessible for boating day-trippers, large cruise and historical vessels, and recreational fishing in the Hudson. New York Waterways runs a ferry service that connects Rockland County to Westchester, from Haverstraw to Ossining.

The Town and Village boards are working together on identifying ways to connect the business hubs with local public transportation, and are pursuing shared grant applications to maximize resources for the greater success of the communities.

8) Other

Efficiency, Renewables & Resiliency

The Village is saving more than $100,000 annually on its energy costs thanks to the newly installed LED streetlight fixtures. The cost of the investment is more than paid for by the energy savings. Brilliant!

Both the Town & Village of Ossining opted into the 100% renewable energy source offered by the new Community Choice Aggregation program. Ossining is a leader among municipalities taking advantage of programs offered by Sustainable Westchester.

The Village was lead agency in the $100,000 NYPrize grant to perform a Microgrid feasibility study. This effort included reaching out to several public and private agencies including the Town, Schools, CableVision, the County, and the NYS Department of Corrections.