



Downtown Revitalization Initiative

APPLICATION

BASIC INFORMATION

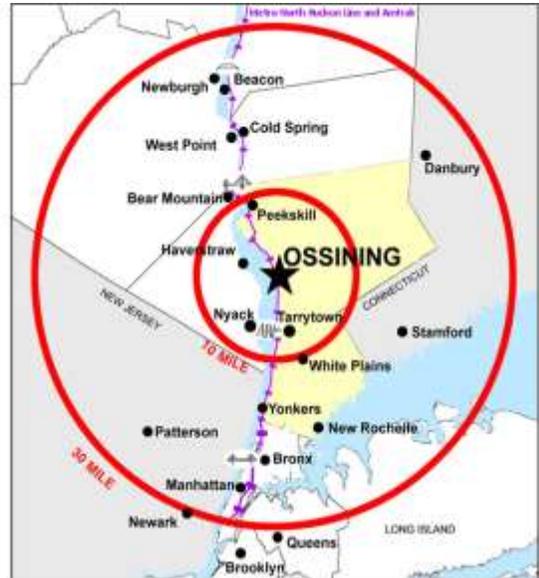
Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Region: **Mid-Hudson**

Municipality Name: **Village of Ossining**

Downtown Name: **Village Center & Waterfront**

County Name: **Westchester**

The vision: **“Our desire is to grow our Village while respecting existing communities and businesses and our racial and socioeconomic diversity. We are guided by our collective principles, which include sustainability, inclusivity, and creating an inviting, innovative, and aesthetically pleasing community for all”** (Retrieved from: [Downtown Redevelopment Working Committee, 2017](#); DRWC).



JUSTIFICATION



There is a desire in the Ossining community to transform the heart of our Downtown. The urban renewal era had a devastating effect on our urban fabric and business community. Forty years later, the Village is still seeking to recover. At two of the Five Corners in our Village Center, Village-owned parking lots have replaced prominent buildings.

Our goal is to transform these spaces into mixed-use developments that create job opportunities and expand housing options while establishing open space for public gatherings. As a part of this Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) area, the Village seeks to implement creative transportation options and parking solutions.

This year, *Westchester Magazine* featured Ossining as one of the **Top Ten Most Affordable Places to Live in Westchester** (Retrieved from: [Westchester Magazine 3/8/3018 Article](#)). The article highlighted the Village and specifically took note of Downtown’s historic architecture. We were also recognized as **One of the Best Places to Live**, and referred to us as “insanely affordable as Westchester goes” (Retrieved from: [Westchester Magazine](#)

[10/3/2018 Article](#)). Ossining was also recognized as the 29th **Safest Places to Live** in America among communities with populations of at least 25,000 (Retrieved from: [Patch 10/8/2018 Article](#)). With a growing favorable reputation of being a great place to live, we look forward to building upon our recent accolades, as well as implementing our future goals and initiatives. While our properties are more affordable than most neighboring communities, our effective tax rate is quite high. According to *See Through NY*, in 2016 (the latest figures available), Ossining had a full value per capita of \$78,647 with an effective tax rate of 1.09%. These statistics compares to the downstate large-village average of \$137,259 FV and an ETR of .76%. The Village ranks 15th highest among all NYS villages for taxes per capita and 35th in the region. There is a large amount of non-taxable property, especially along the Hudson River. As a result of the presence of Sing Sing Correctional Facility, Metro-North, and an abundance of non-profit agencies, the burden of taxation falls upon the residential properties. Through revitalization and new commercial development, taxes would shift to a broader base, lowering the effective tax rate, and stimulating additional investment. DRI funding would serve as a catalyst for business investment (Retrieved from: [See Through NY Benchmarking](#)).

The DRI area offers significant room for new commercial, retail and residential development. This growth will take place in a walkable urban center and along adjacent corridors, including the Waterfront District. Couple this with the dynamic population changes that are underway and we have a community on the precipice of change.

The Village of Ossining's population is unique to the region. Over the past ten years, our residents have become more diverse. At present, the Village has a growing immigrant population (up 18% in seven years) whose entrepreneurial spirit is evident in the new businesses opening Downtown, which provides additional labor to support regional growth. At the same time, the Village is experiencing a definable migration of young, urban professional families who are buying and renting homes here. Our community feels like an urban oasis with suburban amenities. These dynamic trends support a socio-economic diversity that our community values.

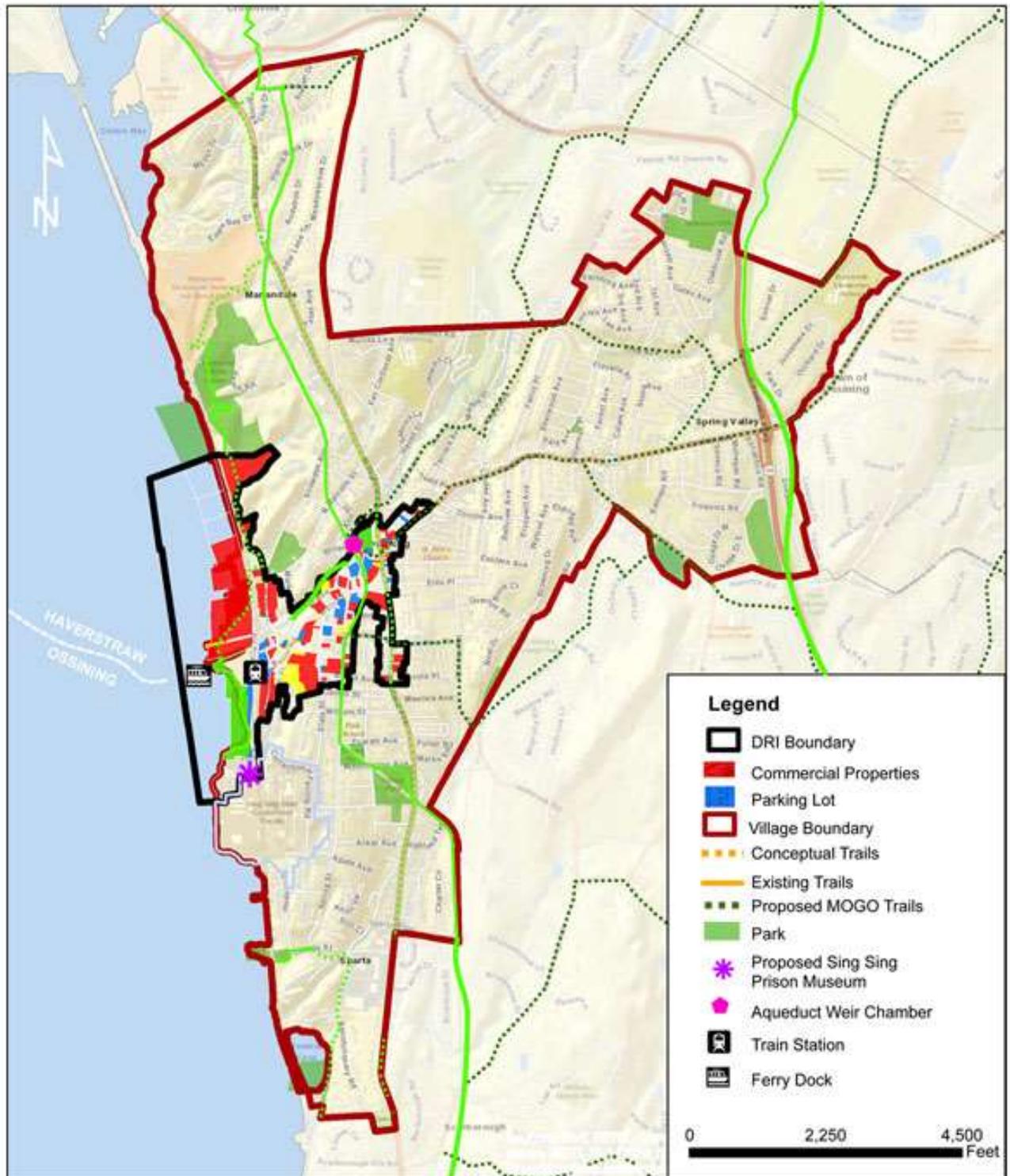
The number one recommendation from the Village's Housing Needs Assessment undertaken last year, was to focus on our economic strategy:

"Ossining's tax revenues are disproportionately comprised of residential property tax revenue. Meanwhile, service sector jobs offer only limited opportunities for economic mobility and social benefits. The effect of the village's limited economic development has meant that lower economic residents have few opportunities to find better-paying jobs within the Village and therefore continue to struggle to meet rising housing costs. Meanwhile, homeowners are confronting rising residential property taxes without sufficient relief from commercial tax revenue" (Retrieved from: [Kevin Dwarka, 2017](#)).

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

1) Boundaries of the Proposed DRI Area

The proposed DRI boundary mirrors the Village Center and the Planned Waterfront Zoning Districts, as outlined in the Ossining Comprehensive Plan (2009). The Hudson River forms the western boundary of DRI area. From the south, the area borders Sing Sing Correctional Facility, then travels generally northeast to Highland Avenue, encompassing the business district. The eastern boundary aligns with State Route 9, incorporating several businesses, and then heads northeast to the Ossining Public Library on Croton Avenue. The northern boundary follows a south westerly path and includes the Joseph G. Caputo Community Center, Sing Sing Kill Greenway, and encompasses old industrial lands along the Waterfront, ending at the Crawbuckie Nature Preserve (Retrieved from: [Ossining Comprehensive Plan, \(2009\)](#)).



**Proposed Downtown Revitalization Initiative
Village of Ossining, New York**

2) Catchment Area

The Village of Ossining's current population is 25,299. According to the US Census Bureau (2011/2015 American Community Survey), the population has grown 8.5% since 2000, compared with Westchester County's rate of 4.7% (Retrieved from: [Kevin Dwarka, 2017](#)). New housing developments discussed later in this application will add over 600 additional units either within or directly adjacent to the Village Center and Waterfront Districts.



Ossining has three different catchment areas that support the Village Center and Waterfront Districts. First and foremost is the Downtown core. This compact and well-connected area is home to residential, commercial, recreational, and waterfront uses. You will find essential public services located inside the Village Center that include the Joseph G. Caputo Community Center, Birdsall-Fagan Police Court Facility, fire department headquarters, Village & Town offices, as well as the Ossining Public Library. These essential services are within easy walking distance to approximately 7,000 residents (almost 28% of the total population).

The second catchment zone encompasses a 10-mile radius reaching north to Peekskill, east to Mt. Kisco & Chappaqua, and south to the Briarcliff Manor & Tarrytown communities. Residents traveling to Downtown Ossining visit our award-winning theater and music stores, dine on a variety of ethnic cuisines, hike, and bike along the historic trails, and utilize the Waterfront.

The third and broadest catchment zone includes visitors traveling from outside of the lower Hudson Valley region, such as New York City and points west of the Hudson River. Visitors to Ossining come here via train, boat, car, and bike to access historic sites and to travel along recreational corridors. The Sing Sing Prison Museum will be another major attraction in the region, with an estimated 130,000 visitors per year, generating increased tourist spending and job opportunities and contributing to the revitalization of Downtown Ossining.

3) Past Investment, Future Investment Potential

Past Investment

Village (public) investment of \$350K includes upgrades to the water transmission supply along the Waterfront, State Street, and Main Street, in anticipating of future development. Main Street and the connecting Secor Road and Central Avenue were upgraded with streetscape enhancements including new ADA sidewalks, decorative lighting, and hanging flower baskets. The Village also invested \$700K in installing energy efficient LED street lights, including in the Downtown area.

Anticipating increased development, the Village is in the design phase for a new potable water treatment facility which will expand its capacity from 4 MGD to 7 MGD. Ground will be broken on this new facility in 2019 and will be completed in two years. Preliminary work included a modification to the Indian Brook Dam for \$6.2M.



The Village of Ossining makes the most of our infrastructure investment. The Village transformed a sanitary sewer upgrade into a glorious walkway connecting the Joseph G. Caputo Community Center to the Waterfront, for a total project cost of \$5.3M. Pedestrians are able to appreciate this Hudson River tributary as never before, passing under our iconic double-arch bridge and through the heart of our Downtown.

In 2017, the Village appointed the DRWC to establish a clear set of recommendations for strengthening our **economic diversity** and our affordable housing policies. Many of their

ideas and suggestions are incorporated into this document. Also, the Village commissioned Kevin Dwarka, LLC to conduct a **housing study** which drew heavily on community engagement and included empirical data. Final recommendations included an **action plan** which listed the first task as creating an economic development strategy and building management capacity. Ossining is looking to move forward decisively with implementing these priorities (Retrieved from: [Kevin Dwarka, 2017](#)).

Private investment has included the development of Harbor Square, the first Waterfront luxury housing project in the Village, which comprises a full-service restaurant and public park expansion (between the NY Waterway Ferry and Metro-North train station). Harbor Square’s developer invested \$2M for a waterline upgrade, street parking, the Henry Gourdine Park installation, as well as lighting and sidewalks. This project is the catalyst for future development along the Waterfront and on the eastern side of the train tracks. Additional investment includes newly constructed senior housing at the midway point of Main Street.

Along the **Waterfront area**, new **business** investment *within the last two years* has included the opening of a theater, brewery/restaurant, high-end restaurant, fitness trainer, and doggie daycare.

Business investment in the **Village Center** *within the last two years* has included an award-winning coffee shop, Peruvian restaurant, Colombian restaurant, Portuguese restaurant, and vegan restaurant along with a New York State Farm Brewery. Additionally, a toy store and learning center, clothing shop, CrossFit Gym, and children’s theater opened for business.

Future Investment

The Village currently is investing \$2.8M in upgrading the Broadway Bridge in Downtown, which is the lower section of the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail's historic double-arches.

We are working with the Hudson Valley Arts and Science team to develop a **public dock extension** that will open the Waterfront to day boaters, small tourism vessels, and fishing. Furthermore, this extension will allow larger ships like the Clearwater and the Freedom Schooner Amistad to dock here as part of their regional Hudson River tours.



An essential feature of the DRI initiative is planning and community engagement. The Village hired a professional planning consultant to handle development and to streamline the planning process. The Board of Trustees has allocated funds to enhance citizen engagement, update the Comprehensive Plan, initiate parking studies, and develop a new economic strategy. (Retrieved from: [Ossining Comprehensive Plan, \(2009\)](#))

Millwood Ossining GO Cycling Trail (MOGO): The Village of Ossining, in partnership with the Towns of Ossining and New Castle, Westchester County, and the Hudson River Valley Greenway, are developing plans to enhance pedestrian and bike access between commercial areas and open space in the Ossining and New Castle areas. This trail will begin at the Ossining train station, travel through Ossining’s Village Center, wind along North State Road, and end in Millwood. This trail network will be an “Emerald Necklace” for the region, bolstering economic development and the tourism industry, while reducing the community’s environmental impact through the conservation of open space and decreased dependence on cars for transportation. These improvements for pedestrian and bike access are expected to be especially beneficial to the many residents in our community that do not have access to a car for transportation (Retrieved from: [Town of Ossining \(2017\) Millwood Ossining Go](#)).

New Residential Development Under Planning Board Review

Several housing developments in progress would bring over 600 units to the market within the Village Center and Waterfront Districts.

Hidden Cove: This is slated for 198 units on the property once occupied by the historic Brandreth Pill Factory, which once stood along the banks of the Hudson River. It is expected that 10-20% of the units will be affordable. Access is from Snowden Avenue along the northern border of the Waterfront District. This project is currently being reviewed by the Planning Board.

Snowden Woods: This proposed 190-unit complex is currently undergoing SEQRA review. Nestled in the woods along the Crawbuckie Nature Preserve to the west, and abutting Hidden Cove to the north, many units are expected to have stunning views of the Hudson River.

Riverwalk Development: This 65-unit building, located off Snowden Avenue as well, will be found along the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail. The trail will serve as the primary pedestrian path to Downtown, offering access to food, entertainment, and healthcare.

Secor/Main Mixed-Use Development: Talks are underway for a developer to build a mixed-use development with parking along the Main Street/Secor Road corridor. This road serves as the traffic connection between Downtown and the Waterfront Districts. It is currently underutilized, with some dilapidated housing and one historic structure. The developer would create additional retail space to stimulate lower Main Street. The Village owns several parcels in this development area.

4) Recent or Impending Job Growth

Open Door is a healthcare provider whose mission is to keep the people of Westchester and Putnam Counties healthy and strong, regardless of their ability to pay. It is headquartered in Downtown Ossining and employs over 500 people region-wide. Open Door is in the process of redeveloping its facility here to enhance their technology-based outreach. Moreover, Open Door has added 40 employees in its Ossining facility over the last five years, bringing its total local employment to 175 people.

Downtown Ossining boasts many places where local residents can work quietly during the day. Residents can also take the short train ride to New York City for meetings and other engagements. As a result, people of all ages can live/work/play/eat/shop here.

Ossining Innovates! is a grass root, a community-based initiative that designs and offers activities to introduce and explore entrepreneurial ideas. They aim to launch the **“Ossining Community Incubator, a program which will nurture and support entrepreneurs who are creating or conceiving businesses, social enterprises, or non-profits that exploit local opportunities.”**

5) Attractiveness of Physical Environment



Ossining is a just 42-minute train ride to Grand Central Terminal in New York City, making it a welcome home for commuters. Getting off the train in Ossining, one is awestruck by the Hudson River, which is over two miles wide when it reaches our community. Moreover, one notes how green our Village is, ranging from Waterfront parks to dense foliage throughout the community. Ossining’s topography also ensures that residents and visitors enjoy expansive views of the surrounding area.

The DRI area is home to a wide-range of recreational spaces, businesses, and prominent buildings. Westerly Road, located on the west side of the Metro-North tracks, is home to three marinas, two restaurants, 188 apartments at Harbor Square, Louis Engel Town Park (home to our Summer Concert Series stage), Henry Gourdin Village Park, and the future home of the Sing Sing Prison Museum. Westerly Road is connected to Water Street by two vehicle/pedestrian bridges which are maintained by Metro-North. Water Street is home to an increasing mix of industrial and retail uses. Metalized Carbon and Riverkeeper make up the southern end of Water Street. A craft beer bar, Columbian restaurant, gym, and live theater make up the core of the

fledging Station Plaza business district, located one block up. The intersection of Water Street and Snowden Avenue includes Snowden Park, condominiums in a repurposed school building, and the home of a building supply company.

Other notable structures found in the DRI area include the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail (constructed in 1837), the historic Ossining Boat and Canoe Club (built in 1915, and which provides river access for boaters, kayakers, paddle boarders, and canoers), and the Ossining Weir Chamber (constructed in 1842 in order to supply New York City with fresh water).

Developable Mixed-Use Spaces

There are two significant areas available for mixed-use development, both owned by the Village. The first is Market Square, located on the south side of Main Street (and formerly home to historic buildings demolished as a result of urban renewal). In 2014, the community created a vision for rebuilding and restoring the historic integrity of Main Street using enhanced urban design studies. This proposal included new public space, as well as townhouse-style residential units located above retail and underground parking.

The Village owns approximately 10 acres of developable land (in pieces) in the Waterfront District and another three acres of parking lots within the Village Center that are candidates for redevelopment. Many of these lots lie along the steep hill connecting upper Main Street to the Waterfront District and train station. A large parcel also lies along the Sing Sing Kill Greenway.

Housing Types at Different Levels of Affordability, Walkability and Bike-ability

To preserve socio-economic diversity in conjunction with luxury housing development, the Village is working with local affordable housing organizations, New York State Housing and Community Renewal (NYSHCR), and Westchester County to develop and preserve affordable housing in the area (primarily rental residences in mixed-income structures). The Village is committed to ensuring quality housing for various income levels to maintain sustainable economic growth and diversity.

Interfaith Council for Action (IFCA) Housing Network, in partnership with the Village, was awarded \$295K in CDBG funds in 2015 for the rehabilitation of 10 affordable rental units. This year, IFCA Housing Network was awarded over \$2M by NYSHCR's Small Rental Development Initiative Program. This funding will be used to rehabilitate and incorporate sustainable technology for 23 units of affordable rental housing. A Legislative Initiative Grant of \$250K, facilitated by Assemblywoman Sandy Galef, and funded by the Dormitory Authority of New York State, allowed for the rehabilitation and restoration of a severely distressed, eight-unit Victorian home by IFCA Housing Network.

Avalon: 10% of the units in this 168-unit luxury complex (opened in 2013) are affordable. The Old Croton Aqueduct Trail connects directly to the facility with potential access to the Crawbuckie Preserve.

Harbor Square: This 188-unit one and two-bedroom luxury complex is a leader in waterfront redevelopment. It opened in 2016 and 10% of its units are affordable. The development includes a year-round waterfront restaurant and a public park along the Hudson River. It is adjacent to the Metro-North Rail Line and NY Waterway's Ferry to Haverstraw.

80 Main St: This 25-unit one to three-bedroom development opened in 2018. It was approved for adults 55 and older and is now leasing. It sits on a knoll above lower Main Street. Three of the 25 units are affordable. The complex faces west toward the Hudson River. The views from its units are spectacular and it is within easy walking distance to the Village Center and the Waterfront Districts.

Healthy and Affordable Food Markets



One of the best options for healthy and affordable food can be found weekly at Ossining's Down to Earth Farmers Market, located at Market Square in the heart of the Village. Farmers from all over New York State bring a variety of fresh products to our Downtown as a part of this program.

In addition, there are 13 small grocery stores interspersed throughout Downtown, specializing in unique cuisines as well as fresh food options.

Public Parks and Gathering Spaces

Extensive programming is offered by the Recreation and Parks Department at the Joseph G. Caputo Community Center, located in the **Village Center**. The Community Center, which houses the Recreation and Parks Department's offices, includes three multi-purpose rooms, a game room, a gymnasium, and an aquatic center (one of the few such centers located in the area, and which offers swimming classes for youth). This Community Center is utilized year-around by the full range of age groups for a variety of activities. Also located in this building is the Ossining Heritage Area Visitors Center, an excellent educational exhibit that includes information and displays focused on the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail and Sing Sing Correctional Facility.

Old Croton Aqueduct Trail: Built between 1837-1842, this underground utility operated for 113 years bringing fresh water from the Croton Reservoir to Manhattan's Central Park. The trail that was built along the path of this utility runs the entire length of the Village of Ossining and Westchester County. The linear park mostly is an unidentified, grassy strip through Downtown. Improvements including lighting, ADA compliant walkway, and interpretive signage would create a family-friendly walking and biking experience for the surrounding neighborhoods and visitors to Downtown. It could also connect to bike trails located both north and south of the Village.

Sing Sing Kill Greenway: A public works project that transformed a sanitary sewer into a pedestrian greenway through the heart of Downtown. Easily accessible from the Joseph G. Caputo Community Center, it connects the upper Main Street area to the Waterfront District.

Ossining currently has **130 acres of parkland**. Along with the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail and the Sing Sing Kill Greenway, there are 11 other parks/green spaces located in the Village, ranging from the 16-acre Veterans Park to the 0.1-acre William Street Tot Lot. These facilities offer a range of recreational opportunities, including, but not limited to, playing fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, large wooded areas, nature trails, horseshoe pits, picnic areas, rose gardens, and bocce courts.

In the three Planned Waterfront Zoning Districts, the Village offers a density bonus in exchange for a developer committing a significant portion of land to be used as a public park or open space, either by conveying the property to the Village or by other means such as covenants and deed restrictions. Similarly, in these zoning districts, a density bonus is offered to a developer in exchange for the provision of a portion of the publicly accessible "RiverWalk" along the Hudson River.

Historic Architecture

Ossining's Downtown Historic District is often pointed to as the best example of 19th-century buildings in Westchester. Though the south side of Main Street and several blocks of Spring Street were torn down during the urban renewal era in the 1970s, the north side remains mostly intact. This continuous stretch of brick Italianate buildings was constructed primarily in the 1870s, when the Village, then called Sing Sing, was

among the most prosperous in the lower Hudson Valley region. Our historic Downtown architecture is protected and honored as a locally landmarked Historic District.

Like many Downtowns, Ossining's Main Street struggled with an economic downturn in the late 20th century. But a turnaround is finally taking place, and the lovely Italianate buildings are being restored and filled with shops, coffee houses, and restaurants. Downtown Ossining is beginning to resemble the prosperous past.

Museum in the Streets (MITS): MITS is a free, self-guided walking tour and consists of 25 numbered panels with images and explanatory text about the architecturally and historically significant buildings within the Downtown Ossining Historic District.

Smith-Robinson House: Built circa 1840 in the Greek revival style, this historically significant home lies at the western border of Broad Avenue and is crucial to Downtown. The building, originally constructed of Sing Sing Marble (stone quarried by convicts at Sing Sing Correctional Facility) has fallen into disarray. The current owner has permits for reconstruction, but fell victim to the 2008 recession and now is experiencing a fiscal crunch. These structures are part of the lore and history of Ossining and are unique in Westchester. The Village of Ossining is committed to preserving and celebrating its past while creating a community built on diversity, tolerance, and beauty.

19th Century Era Churches: Within the Village Center are four churches that could utilize funding assistance to paint and repair their exteriors. These contributing buildings add significant beauty to the area, bring residents together, and offer an opportunity for public space, but lack the funds needed for maintenance.



6) Quality of Life Policies

In January 2017, Governor Andrew Cuomo launched Health Across all Policies in New York State, an initiative to integrate health considerations in policy decisions in order to improve health and wellness throughout the State. The Village of Ossining consistently promotes healthier lifestyles by promoting walking, cycling, recreation, and encouraging residents to spend more time outside (Retrieved from: [New York Department of Health](#)).

Arts and Culture



There is a growing Arts culture in Ossining, bringing jobs and visitors to the area. The Ossining Arts Project (OAP) is a Village Board-appointed committee of volunteers whose mission is to forge a cohesive link between all of the arts groups and individual artists in Ossining, enabling them to work together more efficiently and effectively, and to use this synergy to nurture the arts. The OAP has brought the Ossining Jazz Festival and many other collaborative opportunities here. In addition, you can find the

Westchester Collaborative Theater, which is a theater company dedicated to nurturing new work for the stage. Member playwrights, actors, and directors participate in a Lab process where, three nights per month, new plays are read and critiqued. We also boast the Ossining Arts Council, which is a group of volunteers that promote and showcase the talents of artists at all levels and inspire a passion for the arts in our community. Ossining has been developing small-venue music and theater locations to attract top-flight artists to the DRI area. Land use and other quality-of-life policies could encourage more of this activity, and would enable the establishment of a small inn for visitors.

Modern Zoning Codes

In 2016, the Village amended its Zoning Code to broaden the definition of “artist workspace” and uses for spaces owned by civic organizations. As a result, it permitted live music and original productions in the Downtown. Moreover, it allowed for the establishment of breweries, distilleries, and other light artisanal manufacturing. All of this expands the area’s cultural richness and increases entrepreneurial activity.

Comprehensive Plan

The Village's most recent Comprehensive Plan was published in 2009. This plan reflects the culmination of an intensive four-year outreach and public input process. Its publication corresponded with significant updates to the Village's Zoning Code.

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan sets forth goals in the areas of economic, physical, social, and environmental betterment. The plan also has specific sections addressing the development of the Village Center and Waterfront Districts. In regards to the Village Center, it calls for an increase in visitors "by building on [the area’s] historic architecture, soaring views of the Hudson, pedestrian-friendly scale, and ethnic and socio-economic diversity." Objectives for the Village Center include promoting Ossining as a desirable place to do business, creating a unique dining and shopping destination to serve both residents and visitors, addressing perceived and actual parking problems and updating the existing business district zoning regulations (Retrieved from: [Ossining Comprehensive Plan, \(2009\)](#)).

The Comprehensive Plan also identifies clear objectives for the Village's Waterfront District. These objectives include maximizing public enjoyment of the waterfront, making Ossining a destination for low-impact boating and other water oriented-uses; promoting development that provides amenities, services, and attractions that will draw people to the Waterfront, ensuring environmentally smart development, preserving public views of the Hudson River and the Palisades, and preserving the historic architectural features found along the Waterfront. One of the key strategies presented in the Comprehensive Plan regarding the revitalization of the Waterfront is the extension of the RiverWalk through the entire length of the Village.

Local Waterfront Development Plan



In 1991, the Village adopted its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). It contained 44 policies that focused on development, recreation, historic and scenic preservation, and the protection of air and water resources. A number of these policies specifically addressed enhancing public access to the Waterfront District, the promotion of water-dependent and water-related recreational uses, and the construction of a linear trail along the waterfront to link recreational facilities.

In 2011, the Village published its Waterfront Access and Trail Path Plan. The 2011 Plan divides the Village’s Waterfront District into three study areas: south, central, and north. It devises short and long-term goals addressing a variety of topics, including potential alignments for segments of the Westchester RiverWalk through the Village of Ossining, signage opportunities, site-specific recommendations for improvements to Waterfront recreational resources; and cost estimates, permitting requirements, and potential funding sources for recommended waterfront and trail improvements.

Complete Streets Plan

In 2015 the Village passed a **Complete Streets Policy**. The policy recognized the challenges created by the narrow streets in this historic Village. The resolution identifies that our roads should allow children to get to

school, people to get to work or play, neighbors to gather, and visitors to experience our community and patronize our businesses, by either walking, biking, or driving.

Architectural Design

Also in 2011, the Village released its framework for architectural design. This framework is intended to provide a context for thoughtful and constructive changes to the buildings, sites, and streetscapes of the Village. Through this plan, readers will find information regarding historic styles and sensible preservation and energy conservation techniques, recommendations as to sound architectural practices for various districts in the Village (including Downtown’s Historic District), and regulations which must be followed for plans impacting designated landmarks. These guidelines will preserve the unique character of the Village in an environmentally responsible way (Retrieved from: [Architectural Design Guidelines](#)).



Transit-Oriented Development

One of the objectives of the Village’s 2009 Comprehensive Plan is to improve transit options for residents. Regional train service is available through the Metro-North System, which directly serves other Hudson River towns, as well as New York City. The NY Waterway Ferry runs between Haverstraw (located in Rockland County) and Ossining. Furthermore, the Bee-Line Bus Service operates four routes in the Village, all four of which connect at the intersection of Spring Street and Waller Avenue.

The Village’s Comprehensive Plan calls for the creation of transit-oriented development in the DRI area by in-filling the lots surrounding the Ossining Train Station and Ossining Ferry Dock with diverse land uses. As a part of this goal, the Comprehensive Plan calls for reorganizing both the pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems around the station and dock, while safeguarding the area’s best buildings and views. The plan notes that shared and structured-parking, as well as the relocation of bus and taxi stops, will likely be needed to create a true transit-oriented development (Retrieved from: [Ossining Comprehensive Plan, \(2009\)](#)).

As a result of this Plan, the Village established the “Planned Waterfront-b Transit Oriented” Zoning District.

Non-Discrimination Laws

In 2017, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution affirming that we are an inclusive community. The statement was issued in both English and Spanish in response to expressions of growing fear in our large immigrant community.

The Village of Ossining is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. The Village has also implemented a policy of protecting and safeguarding the rights and opportunities of all people to seek, obtain, and hold employment in an environment free from harassment.

In 2018, the Ossining Police Department conducted a department-wide “implicit bias training.” This initiative followed the recommendations of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing to address stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and distorted perceptions of others.

In Ossining’s 2018 Budget, it is noted that the mission of the Village of Ossining Housing Choice Voucher Program is “to promote adequate and affordable housing, economic opportunity and a suitable living environment free from discrimination.” As a part of this program, the Village aims to promote fair housing laws and to refer complaints regarding discrimination to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”).

Age-Friendly Policies

The Village's 2011 Waterfront Access and Trail Plan identifies the need for multi-use trails specifically designed to handle wheelchairs. Moreover, this plan intends to enhance access to the Waterfront for all users, as is feasible. This equitable approach accommodates the needs of seniors.

The Village's 2009 Comprehensive plan calls for the provision of affordable housing for seniors. In addition, the plan identifies the need to enhance pedestrian rights-of-way and transit systems/stops in order to make movement easier for seniors. (Retrieved from: [Ossining Comprehensive Plan, \(2009\)](#))

Downtown Management Structure

The Downtown Development Fund Council (DDFC) was established through a public-private partnership with the developer of Harbor Square to promote collaboration and shared responsibility with shared benefit between the Village, property and business owners, residents, and patrons of the Downtown. Goals include enhancing the Downtown streetscapes to instill pride and attract new businesses. To achieve this vision, the DDFC recommends use of a dedicated special purpose fund to be used for improving the Village's Downtown and Waterfront Districts. Funds can be appropriated in various ways, including potential public improvement grant matches or participation in public-private partnership activities. To date, the fund invested in a Downtown streetscape project that included wrapping trees in LED lights as and tree well plantings. This single-handedly transformed the Downtown evening experience by creating a soothing ambiance that transformed dark areas into safe, well-lit sidewalks. They also initiated a discount card highlighting local businesses. The DDFC is now embarking on a "Neat Streets" initiative proposal. The goal of the program is to increase economic development, sustainability, encourage public access, and use of the Village's Waterfront. The DDFC reviews the various projects and programs to better the Village Center and Waterfront Districts.

7) Public Support

Local Leaders and Stakeholders

In 2017, the Mayor and Board of Trustees appointed 15 community members to lead the **Downtown Redevelopment Working Committee (DRWC)**. They were tasked with a 90-day study to develop recommendations for how to reimagine Ossining's downtown. Topics included the development of public space and Downtown parcels, economic and business development, transportation and parking, as well as the integration of the Downtown and Waterfront Districts. The members of the DRWC are emblematic of the high level of engagement we find in Ossining. Beyond their diverse professional experiences, it was their expertise with the community that they love guided this process. Their final product won this year's **Westchester Municipal Planning Federation Planning Achievement Award**.

The recent Village Housing Needs Assessment drew heavily on community engagement and empirical data. It recommends a policy framework where step one is an effective economic development strategy and step two is strengthening code enforcement.

The results of the outreach that took place during the Housing Needs Assessment, as well as the work of the DWRC, have been directly incorporated into this proposal.

The proposed DRI area also encompasses the Broad Avenue corridor that is the focus of a current study led by IFCA working in partnership with the Downtown Development Fund Council and the Village of Ossining. Pattern for Progress is the consultant leading the first phase of this initiative and is conducting stakeholder charrettes.

Local Project Lead

The Village Manager's office will serve as the local project lead for the DRI program.

8) Project List to Demonstrate Readiness:

Economic Development

Sing Sing Prison Museum (SSPM): Located along the banks of the Hudson River, the project will include both a museum and an institute for criminal justice uniquely situated alongside a working maximum-security State penitentiary. The organizers behind the museum launched a \$50M fundraising initiative to renovate two historic structures (the 1825 Cell Block and the Powerhouse), design and build new exhibitions, and create the institute in four phases (with a **projected opening by 2025**, the prison's 200th anniversary). *Ergonomics* projects 130,000 visitors with an economic impact of \$12M annually. They are projecting 224-236 full-time jobs with a statewide impact between \$26-30M. SSPM organizers have secured over \$3M to date needed to initiate the first phase to stabilize the powerhouse and prepare a small exhibition location.

200 Main: The Beaux Arts Ossining Bank for Savings, built in 1908, may finally have a future. Owned by the Village of Ossining, the Board of Trustees authorized Phase 1 spending to secure the roof and interior. The next phase for 2018 includes the removal of asbestos and mold while preserving the grand interior ceiling and bank vault. The building then will be ready for a strategic repurposing and a marketing plan.

Olive Opera House: Known as the other "big house," built in 1865, the community used the building for entertainment such as live theater, lecture programs, minstrel shows, and vaudeville productions right in the heart of our Downtown. In 1874, a fire destroyed the building, but was rebuilt and opened the same year. At one time, the facility served as one of eight movie houses in the Village. There is interest in restoring the facility. However, the details are currently confidential.

Transportation

Ossining's 1998 Downtown Vision Plan recommended scaling back the "divisive character of Route 9" by converting one or more lanes to parking and adding sidewalk extensions at critical intersections to facilitate pedestrian crossing. Improvements were intended to increase the area's pedestrian-friendliness, making walking more attractive, convenient, and safe. It was seen as a way to restore a connection both physically and psychologically between the two sides of the Village. Increased on-street parking would facilitate retail and Downtown uses and support bicycle use. Signalization along this corridor frequently causes traffic bottlenecks (Retrieved from: [Vision Plan](#)). As of 2018, this road continues to separate a large part of our community from the Downtown and is seen as a barrier to walkability. The Village is ready to see improvements along this state-owned road to enhance connectivity.

Ossining is set to become home to the SSPM, which anticipates over 130,000 visitors annually. Historic Hudson River Towns (HHRT) is spearheading the effort to highlight this museum as a historic landmark because of the associated positive impacts for the Hudson Valley region and New York State. According to a report prepared by BFJ Planning, 50% of the museum visitors will arrive by alternative transportation methods, including via train. An **urban circulator** is recommended to facilitate pedestrian movement throughout the Village and along the Waterfront (Retrieved from: [Sing Sing Prison Museum Program Plan](#)).

Housing

Recommendations from the recent Housing Needs Assessment advise a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges of existing substandard housing and expanding high-quality, mixed-income housing.

Hudson Steppe: Located at 34 State Street, this is the location of the old Printex factory. The six-acre lot also includes the historic 1936 Smith-Robinson House, an original Sing Sing marble structure (this will be preserved and restored as part of the project). When built, Hudson Steppe will be a 189-unit luxury apartment development, with 10% designated as affordable housing. The factory and the older addition on each side of the historic house will be removed and replaced with three residential buildings. There will be an innovative parking garage with 231 spaces. The 7,000 square-foot historic mansion is slated to be office space. The developer has **all the necessary permits** to commence construction. When completed, Hudson Steppe will have a **transformative impact** on the surrounding neighborhood, especially Broad Avenue.

Community Development

The Ossining Children’s Center (OCC): The Leach & Thomas funeral home at 32 State Street in Downtown, will become the new location for the Ossining Children’s Center. For 120 years, the facility has served Ossining, expanding their programs and the number of children served. They boast a *Quality Stars NY*, 4-star rating. OCC is currently fundraising for the new facility and anticipates addressing the Planning Board in August 2018.

Façade Improvement Grant/Loan Fund: The DDFC recently awarded a “Neat Streets” contract to locally-owned Honest, Inc. The mission of this project is to broaden awareness of the effect that debris and litter have on our community’s image. It will also help educate property owners on the laws regarding building maintenance, street presence, and proper handling of waste by the business and residential community. As an incentive, the DDFC is prepared to offer façade improvement grants to help the small business offset the costs.

Project Readiness: Our vision for the DRI area can be realized quickly through a variety of tools that will make the project review process more efficient. Such tools include the use of generic environmental impact statements that address similar projects within the DRI area, and potentially the creation of a form-based code. Both of these tools would make it clear to developers what the Village expects when it comes to quality development. They would streamline the project review process and make it generally faster, saving applicants both significant amounts of time and money. The stability and cost-savings these tools offer would, in turn, attract more development to the DRI area, further expanding housing options, growing jobs, and diversifying our tax base.

9) Administrative Capacity

The Village of Ossining’s residents are active, involved, and engaged in the governance of their community and willing to participate in the DRI process and implementation phase as appropriate.

Political Leadership

After extensive citizen engagement over the past several years, the Board of Trustees determined that it was necessary to boost administrative capacity for economic development and community revitalization. First, they appointed a new **legal advisor** and then a **Village Manager**, both with the skills and proven accomplishments to facilitate the effort. Next, the Board of Trustees appropriated the funds necessary to advance redevelopment by hiring additional staff in the areas of planning, building, and code enforcement. Combined with strong financial, public safety, and engineering teams, the Village is poised to successfully administer the DRI Grant.

Staff Internal Capacity

The Board of Trustees strengthened the **Legal Department** by hiring a skilled Corporation Counsel knowledgeable in contract and real property law, including license agreements, deeds, and contracts of sale.

Also, he has experience with SEQRA, land use, and dispute resolution. The Board of Trustees expanded the department to include a prosecutor for the building department and a research analyst. These positions allow time for Corporate Counsel to focus his attention on critical projects in the Village.

The Manager brings three essential skills necessary for successful implementation: fiscal management, grant implementation, and business acumen to create public/private partnerships. Having served first as a CFO in the private sector, she successfully led the redevelopment of an upstate New York village revitalization by securing and administering over \$15M in grant funds for housing improvement, infrastructure upgrades, recreation improvements, Downtown historic façade restoration, and economic growth. After moving to a larger city, she later led the restructuring of the planning/building department, facilitated a visioning process, and created economic opportunities for growth. A national accomplishment includes heading the creation of a public/private partnership for the adaptive reuse of an abandoned 54-acre industrial site in a downtown (Retrieved from: [EPA Success Story](#)).

The Village employs a highly-skilled Project Manager with significant experience in the private sector. Through her past work on a variety of initiatives, our Project Manager is respected for her ability to deduce those strategies that must be implemented, and devising related action plans, in order to achieve an overall project goal. These project goals have touched on a variety of areas, including, but not limited to, community engagement, the efficient administration of programs, resource distribution, profit margin growth, and more. The Project Manager is able to coordinate a variety of parties in their efforts to achieve a unitary goal, and to mediate negotiations between said parties. Relying on her past successes, the Project Manager will be able to assist the Village with the administration of the DRI, helping to guide the visioning process while still meeting day-to-day obligations.

The Board of Trustees allocated funds to increase staff capacity for an additional building inspector, code enforcement officer, and a director-level position to **oversee a new initiative to streamline the building permitting** process. By addressing code issues and enhancing the quality of life, the Board of Trustees expects to encourage a higher standard of living across the community.

Together, this team, coupled with the established infrastructure in the **Public Works** and **Finance** Departments, have a proven ability to oversee multiple projects in different stages of development.

10) Closing summary

Ossining is where cultures meet. In this Amazon-era economy, Ossining is fortunate to foster artists and entrepreneurs who are able to thrive in our Village Center and Waterfront Districts. As one of the most affordable communities in Westchester, just a beautiful and convenient train ride to Grand Central, we continue to attract a diversity of innovative and industrious new residents.

Village government has the desire and capacity to welcome smart development that meets the needs of our dense, varied, and engaged community. The DRI area is a convergence of diverse residential, retail, industrial, and commercial properties, all with a view of the magnificent Hudson River.

The funding and guidance of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative will dramatically expand our ability to invite the kind of development that transcends the urban renewal era, and leads us to fully realize our potential as a haven for entrepreneurs and artisans who celebrate the diversity of our Village.

Resources: All references are hyperlinked directly to their sources.