

MID-HUDSON DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

BASIC INFORMATION

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

Municipality Name: Patterson, Town of

Downtown Name: Patterson Hamlet

County: Putnam County

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

In recent years, the Town of Patterson has been actively working towards revitalizing the Patterson Hamlet area, which historically has been the center of our community. This effort has included several different initiatives designed to enhance the area in order to encourage private sector investments needed to revitalize Patterson's Hamlet. For the past two decades the Town's focus on revitalizing this area has been to create a stronger community center. While much has been accomplished, we find ourselves falling short of meeting the goal of having a vibrant economic center. The Town now intends to slightly modify its approach for downtown revitalization. While the intent is to continue to promote a stronger community center for our residents, we now recognize that this alone will not produce the downtown center we desire. To create our vision of a thriving downtown center, we need to recognize and take advantage of our strengths and assets in the immediate area, and refocus our efforts towards building a destination; a place that draws people from outside the immediate community. These assets include the adjacent transportation corridors of NYS Route 22 and I-84, the MetroNorth Railroad providing easy access to areas south and New York City; an abundance of parks and natural areas, commercial recreation, rich historic locations and pre-civil war homes and churches and a number of vacant or underutilized lots which can be used to meet the goals of the Town.

The Town is seeking to foster an environment where Patterson's downtown area, "the Hamlet" is revitalized by promoting the area as a tourism destination. For many years the Town has been seeking to encourage and promote economic growth within the Hamlet to reinforce the area as the community center. While we have accomplished much, to improve upon our successes we need to change direction and promote the Hamlet not just as a community center, but as a tourism destination. The Town is well posed to do this. The Hamlet is between two major north-south transportation corridors; Interstate Route I-84 and NYS Route 22. At the center of the Hamlet is the Metro-North Railroad. There is water and sewer in the area, although both will need to be expanded.

DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

This section should be filled out with reference to the criteria set forth in the DRI Guidelines. **Answers to each question are limited to one page each.**

1) Boundaries of the Downtown Neighborhood. Detail the boundaries of the targeted neighborhood, keeping in mind that there is no minimum or maximum size, but that the neighborhood should be compact and well-defined. Core neighborhoods beyond a traditional downtown or central business district are eligible, if they can meet other criteria making them ripe for investment.

The Hamlet is approximately 1 ½ square miles or 935 acres in size and is bounded on the east by Route 22, on the west by Cornwall Hill Road, on the north is the Dutchess County line and to the south is the Great Swamp.

Patterson's Hamlet is a high density, mixed use, village-style area that has developed along two major transportation routes - Front Street and Route 311. Route 311 is an east-west transportation corridor which connects Interstate Route 84 with NYS Route 22. Front Street is a north-south local road, which includes a centrally located MetroNorth Train Station. The Hamlet is a mixture of residential housing on small lots surrounding two intersecting commercial districts. Within the Hamlet there are 188 single- and two-family residential homes, with an average lot size of just larger than ½ an acre. In addition there are two apartment buildings and three multi-family housing projects which brings the total number of homes in the Hamlet to well over 400 residential units. Also located within the Hamlet are a number of small consumer-oriented retail businesses, restaurants and institutional uses. Immediately to the east and north of this downtown area are a number of commercial businesses which provide jobs and recreational opportunities. To the south is an 86 acre nature preserve offering hiking and other passive recreation opportunities.

The Town of Patterson, Putnam County is located approximately 50 miles north of New York City, and 20 miles northeast of the City of Danbury Connecticut. At the last census the Town had a population of 12,023 persons. Patterson is home of the Great Swamp - the 2nd largest wetland system in New York.

The Patterson Hamlet is a walkable community, with shops, restaurants and other businesses to support the immediate community. However, there are an equal number of vacant parcels ripe for development which provide incredible opportunity to build the Hamlet into a "destination" for recreation and tourism.

Located in the Hamlet is a 20,000 square foot community recreation center owned by the Town which is used to provide many events including boxing, military shows, dance classes, community tag sales and concerts. Just outside of the Hamlet is the Thunder Ridge Ski Area which provides downhill skiing during the winter months and paintball during the times when the ski area is not operating. Recently the Ski Area has undergone a change in management, with the new management seeking to expand the Ski Area and add additional summer activities. Some of the summer activities that have been discussed include mountain biking, zip lines, and a summer concert series. The owners of the Thunder Ridge Ski Area have recently acquired property adjacent to the Ski Area which includes a long defunct restaurant. The Owners, with encouragement from the Town, are seeking to reopen the restaurant with entertainment and/or a microbrewery.

Immediately to the south of the Hamlet is the Patterson Environmental Park; an 86 acre nature preserve, with hiking trails and a former quarry owned by the Beech Island Marble Company, approximately a century ago. The Park provides a boat launch for canoeing on the Croton River of the Great Swamp. In fact, surrounding the Hamlet there are over 3,600 acres of passive recreation lands open to the public for mountain biking, hiking, nature studies, hunting and fishing.

- 2) **Size.** Outline why the downtown, or its catchment area, is of a size sufficient to support a vibrant, year-round downtown, with consideration of whether there is a sizeable existing, or increasing, population within easy reach for whom this would be the primary downtown.

The Hamlet is approximately 935 acres in size. Roughly one-third of the parcels in this area are undeveloped or under-utilized properties which allow for a significant potential for further growth in this area. Within the Hamlet there are 188 single- and two-family residential homes, with an average lot size of just larger than ½ an acre. In addition there are three multi-family housing projects which brings the total number of homes in the Hamlet to just over 400. The commercial districts within the Hamlet can be found along Route 311, which is also known as Patterson's main street, and along Front Street. Including the outlying areas, there are over 12,000 residents that view the Hamlet as the Town's primary downtown area.

However, the MetroNorth commuter rail line, which provides easy access between Patterson and New York City greatly increase the number of people that would be attracted to Patterson's downtown area for recreational opportunities, if the Hamlet is viewed as a tourist destination. The Rail Line, along with the I-84 and Route 22 transportation corridor greatly increase the "catchment area" for the Hamlet.

Portions of the Hamlet, including Front Street are in the Patterson Hamlet Sewer District. Sewage from properties located in this District is treated by an 80,000 gpd sewer treatment plant. The plant is currently operating at just over one-half of its design capacity, leaving room of the inclusion of additional properties. There is also a community water supply system in the Hamlet which provides potable water to several of the residential properties in the Hamlet. Both of these facilities are located on a thirty-two acre parcel owned by the Town of Patterson. There is sufficient room on this parcel to expand both of these facilities.

- 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.

Patterson has made several investments in furtherance of developing a stronger and economically vibrant community center. Many of the initiatives designed to revitalize the Hamlet were conceived during a charrette held by Regional Plan Association at which many local residents met to discuss the existing condition of the Hamlet and how it could be improved. Following the charrette, the Town held several public hearings on various improvements that have been proposed for the Hamlet. One of the more important initiatives was the relocation of a number of institutional uses, including Patterson's Town Hall, to the Hamlet to create a municipal complex.

The Town, working with local and State agencies, has undertaken a number of steps designed to encourage the private sector to invest in the Town's vision for the Patterson Hamlet area. To date the following initiatives have been completed:

- 1) Improvements to the Route 311 streetscape including improved landscaping, design guidelines for signs and new buildings, all of which are designed to make the area more attractive and pedestrian-friendly.
- 2) Renovation of an existing building which is now home to the Patterson Library.
- 3) Relocation of Patterson's Town Hall to the Hamlet area.
- 4) Construction of a sewer system to collect and treat wastewater for the Front Street commercial properties.
- 5) New sidewalks along NYS Route 311, and along Front Street.
- 6) Construction of a new MetroNorth train station.
- 7) Construction of a new Town recreation center.
- 8) Relocation of a new state of the art Justice Court facility next to Town Hall to create a municipal complex.

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.

Several parcels in close proximity to the MetroNorth station are available for development. Patterson's zoning code permits mixed-use development; first floor commercial with residential units on the upper floors. The proximity to the MetroNorth station is an attractive incentive to young professionals relocating to the Hamlet area.

Patterson is presently evaluating changes to the Town's Zoning Code to encourage specific types of development in the Hamlet in an attempt to entice job growth in this area as well as investments in new housing. The Planning Board has evaluated and recommended that the Zoning Code be amended to permit bed and breakfast style lodging in the older historic homes of Patterson. In addition, the Town's Planner has prepared a recommendation on zoning to encourage artisans and craftsmen within the community.

5) Attractiveness of the Downtown. Identify the properties or characteristics the downtown possesses that contribute or could contribute, if enhanced, to the attractiveness and livability of the downtown. Consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, housing at different levels of affordability and type, healthy and affordable food markets, walkability and bikeability, and public parks and gathering spaces.

The Hamlet has many of the elements which if enhanced would create an attractive and livable downtown area. These elements include easy accessibility to the MetroNorth trains or the Putnam County bus lines

- conveniently located between two major transportation corridors.
- Within walking distance is a twenty-thousand square foot recreation facility, 7,200 sq.ft. library, and Town Hall.
- affordable housing
- easy access to a grocery, restaurants and a delicatessen
- easy access to recreation both passive and active recreation

In addition, there are several parcels which if properly developed could enhance the attractiveness of this area. Recently the Town was approached by a local developer to develop three 3-story mixed use commercial buildings along Front Street. The project was well received by the Town who believed that all the elements for this type of project were in place. We were surprised to find the project blocked by the local health department who required the Town or the developer to provide a community water supply for the project.

The Hamlet also has almost all the elements needed for transformation to a vibrant tourist destination:

- The Hamlet is in close proximity to the Thunder Ridge Ski Area which provides downhill skiing during winter months and paintball when the ski area is not open.

The Hamlet is centrally located to over 3,600 acres of parks and open space which allow a variety of passive and active recreation including mountain biking, hiking, canoeing, hunting and fishing.

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

The Town's Comprehensive Plan promote the Hamlet as a downtown community center. Patterson's Zoning Code allow for a mixed used development within the Hamlet; first floor commercial with the upper floors residential units typical of most downtown areas. The Town has developed specific design requirements for signs in an attempt to create an identity for the Hamlet. Similarly, the Town has adopted architectural standards for the Hamlet.

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

The “local lead” for the program will be the Patterson Town Supervisor. Revitalization of the Hamlet has a long history of community support.

Around 1990, the Town was contacted the Regional Plan Association who were looking for communities to include in a case study that was being conducted as part of RPA’s Third Regional Plan. The initial focus of the Plan was to promote development of compact communities near centers of mass transportation, such as rail stations, as an alternative to the region’s trend of spread-out, auto-dependent growth.

The Town and RPA began by assembling the various maps, plans, laws, and planning documents that affected the Hamlet. These were then analyzed by RPA to begin preparing an Action Plan. One of the most important components of the study which provided much of the information that was incorporated in the Action Plan was a one day planning charrette.

In February of 1993, thirty individuals were selected, representing diverse segments of the community, to attend a one day planning charrette conducted by an urban designer. Chosen to participate in the charrette were local businessmen, developers, Hamlet residents, large land owners, and environmental advocates. Government officials were intentionally excluded, as we wanted the results to be fair and unbiased. Participants were divided into six groups and guided through an exercise designed to develop a common vision for the future of the Hamlet. The individual groups were given large maps of the Hamlet and asked to mark up these maps with what they felt were the best and the worst elements of the Hamlet. In addition, each group was asked to markup a map to show their concept of the “ideal” Hamlet. Following the “brainstorming” sessions, each group posted their maps on the wall and presented their concepts. This planning charrette yielded a great deal of information on the importance of various elements of the Hamlet, how these elements can be enhanced, things that the participants felt detracted from the quality of the Hamlet, and elements that were missing and needed to be brought into the Hamlet.

There were many common elements on each plan and it became clear that although the participants represented many diverse backgrounds, that there was a remarkable consensus on almost all of the topics presented. The key points of the consensus included:

- An affirmation of the Town’s goal to re-establish the Hamlet as a town center.
- Support for new residential housing in the Hamlet being developed on lot sizes similar to the traditional small lot size Hamlet pattern.
- The Hamlet should be a “walkable, pedestrian-friendly” place.
- Main Street and hamlet center should be revitalized to serve as the town’s retail district and the hamlet should be the Town’s institutional and civic center.

Subsequent to the planning charrette, RPA prepared two plans for the Hamlet area. A no-action plan was prepared which showed how the Hamlet would develop if the status-quo was maintained, i.e. if no changes were made to the laws and requirements that dictate how and where development was to occur within the Hamlet. A second alternative plan

was also prepared which showed how the Hamlet should look based on the opinions received at the planning charrette, and the discussions that were held with the local government officials. Viewing the plans it was apparent that there was a striking difference between the two different build-out scenarios. To make the second plan a reality would require a number of changes in the design requirements for the Hamlet including a reduced lot size, landscaping requirements and architectural standards. In addition, to encourage the appropriate type of growth would require several improvements to be completed by the Town.

This workshop provided the basic foundation for many of the initiatives that have been taken by the Town. For example, one of the key design elements that was leaned during the time spent with RPA is that for a linear Main Street which is not directly on a main transportation corridor, similar to what we have in Patterson with Front Street, there needs to be an anchor to draw people into the main street area.

To expand upon the RPA work, in 1996 a group of Hamlet residents, with the support of the Town Board, completed a study on the Hamlet. The Study provided a detailed examination of the existing conditions within the Hamlet and made specific recommendations on the development patterns that would promote a village-oriented type of growth within the Hamlet. In 1999 an addendum to the Study was completed by the Town's Planning Department which provided guidelines for architectural styles within the Hamlet. The Master Plan Study for the Hamlet of Patterson and the addendum were ultimately adopted by the Town Board. Together they have provided the basic framework for many of the changes made by the Town intended to improve the existing conditions within the Hamlet. Several of the Town's efforts are summarized below.

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

Over the years Patterson has completed several initiatives designed to improve the Hamlet. Among these initiatives are:

Design Standards

The Town has adopted design standards for new development within the Hamlet. While not law, these design standards can be used by the Planning Board as guidelines when reviewing new development applications. In addition, the Planning Board has recently completed a review and made recommendations to the Town Board establishing specific design guidelines for new signs in the Hamlet that reflect the communities desire to protect the historic quality of the area.

Streetscape

One of the elements that is of critical importance to a main street area is the visual element, reflected in the architecture of the buildings and streetscape. One of the first projects that the Town completed was an improvement to the appearance of the Route 311 streetscape. The area along Route 311, immediately east of Front Street was a

drainage ditch filled with weeds that was little more than a place for passing motorists to throw their garbage. The Town cleaned up the garbage, provided improved drainage and landscaped the area.

Library/Courthouse

In the mid 1990's the Town accepted the donation of the old Patterson Fire House located along Route 311 near Front Street. The building was renovated and is now home to the Patterson Library.

Train station

The Town collaborated with Metro-North on the design and construction of a new elevated platform located on Front Street, which included antique-style lighting fixtures and landscaping.

Sewer District

One of the big issues in revitalizing the Front Street commercial area in the Hamlet was the inability to provide adequate wastewater facilities. The Town was successful in securing funding to construct a new 80,000 gpd sewage treatment plant which treats sewage from the Front Street commercial area.

Route 311

Recently the New York State Department of Transportation undertook a major reconstruction of the portion of Route 311 which runs through the Hamlet. The improvements included road resurfacing, drainage improvements and new concrete sidewalks running the length of the Hamlet which significantly enhanced the pedestrian-friendly character of the Hamlet. One of the reasons that the Town was so successful in working with NYS DOT on the improvement project is that they were made aware of the Town's vision for the Hamlet early on. This allowed NYS DOT to include this vision in their design for Route 311.

Town Hall

In March of this 2002, the Town of Patterson moved into its new facilities located along Route 311, at the intersection of Front Street. This move is the first step in addressing one of the issues that came out of the charrette. For an isolated linear main street to be economically successful, it requires that an anchor exists at either end of the main street which will draw consumers both to and along the main street corridor. Patterson Town Hall provides just such an anchor at the north end of Front Street. The Town has been working on providing a second anchor at the south end.

Recreation Center/Commuter Parking Lot.

Perhaps one of the most challenging and rewarding projects the Town has undertaken is located at the south end of Front Street, and will provide the second anchor needed for the Front Street commercial district. For years Clancy Moving Company has been located at the end of Front Street, and although Mr. Clancy has continually acted as a good neighbor, the type of operation, with its early hours of operation and large truck traffic, has been a constant source of irritation to the adjoining residential neighborhood. To make matters worse, Mr. Clancy's business was doing very well, which means that Mr. Clancy was fast outgrowing the site. In addition, a moving company is not the type of business that makes for a good anchor to a main street. About 1996 two parcels of land along Route 22 in the Town's industrial area went up for tax sale. The Town, in cooperation with the County acquired the two lots and initiated a land swap with Clancy Moving and Storage. This spring Mr. Clancy moved to his brand new 70,000 square foot facility on Route 22. Having secured the property, working through Senator Leibell's office the Town began negotiating with Metro-North railroad to construct a 140 commuter parking lot on a portion of the property. On the remaining portion of property the Town has begun to develop plans for a new Community Recreation Facility.

Village Green

The Town has recently completed design plans for the construction of a village green on a parcel immediately east of the new Town Hall. When completed the park will have a pond, benches, tables and other amenities for people who wish to visit.

Together these improvements will create an attractive appearance, and an environment that will draw people to the area. The new Town Hall on the north end of Front Street and the community recreation center/ Metro-North parking lot on the south end of Front Street will act as anchors to ensure the continued economic stability of the Front Street business area. Once completed these improvements will result in renewed interest from the private sector in investing in developing new businesses within the Front Street area.

Patterson has many natural resources and structured recreational opportunities surrounding the Hamlet which can be taken advantage of, if properly planned. We envision the Hamlet becoming a destination point for day trips on the MetroNorth Rail lines out of New York City for individuals that would like to enjoy a walk in the local parks, hiking, or mountain biking. But what we believe makes the Patterson Hamlet uniquely qualified for this funding assistance is the vacant and underutilized lands in the Hamlet which creates a tremendous potential for growth along with incredible flexibility towards designing a plan which promotes job growth and tourism.