



**REDC REGION / MUNICIPALITY:**

New York City - Borough of Manhattan

**DOWNTOWN NAME:**

**Penn Station / Garment District:** West 23rd Street to West 42nd Street between Broadway and the Hudson River.

**APPLICANT NAME & TITLE:**

Regional Plan Association (RPA), Tom Wright, CEO & President. See below for additional contacts.

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**REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION - BRIEF BACKGROUND:**

Regional Plan Association (RPA) was established as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in 1929 and for nearly a century has been a key planner and player in advancing long-range region-wide master plans across the tri-state. Projects over the years include the building of the the Battery Tunnel, Verrazano Bridge, the location of the George Washington Bridge, the Second Avenue subway, the New Amtrak hub at Moynihan Station, and Hudson Yards, and establishing a city planning commission for New York City.

In November 2017, RPA published its Fourth Regional Plan for the tri-state area of which several ideas have already been initiated such as Congestion Pricing. The Fourth Plan also includes a comprehensive vision for the Penn Station / Garment District from south of Penn to the Port Authority Station on West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, to revitalize major public transportation lines and commerce while improving pedestrian, cyclist and local business traffic, allowing the garment industry to thrive alongside new business.

**VISION FOR DOWNTOWN RPA's comprehensive plan for the Penn Station / Garment District area of Manhattan:**

RPA's Fourth Plan outlines project to ensure that The Penn Station / Garment District is a vibrant place anchored by the next generation of manufacturing activities:

**TRANSIT & TRANSIT HUBS:**

- Expand Penn Station to the west to Moynihan Station: This vision from RPA's third plan published in the 1990s is now being realized and nearing completion.



- Expand, overhaul, and unify the Penn Station complex to the south to accommodate new Gateway train tunnels under the Hudson, and continuing under the East River to Sunnyside Yards in Queens, directly connecting New Jersey, Manhattan, Queens, and Long Island.
- Expand Metro-North service to Penn Station.
- Combine three commuter rail systems into one network, creating a unified management entity and through-running service at Penn Station, including representation from all the commuter railroads and Amtrak, to better integrate service and amenities and promote through-running including connections from New Jersey to Connecticut and Long Island.
- Build a second bus terminal under the Javitts Convention Center as demand for bus travel is expected to increase by 38 percent in the next 30 years. This Javitts station would free up 30 % of the gates at the existing Port Authority Bus Terminal at 42nd Street. Consolidating intercity buses at a new Javitts terminal would free up 63 intercity/mixed gates at the Port Authority bus terminal to be used exclusively as commuter buses, making it easier and far less costly to upgrade the existing station, and use the additional capacity for the growing demand for commuter buses.
- In the longer term, an extension of the #7 train south with a new stop on 23rd street would allow for rezoning for more office development west of Ninth avenue, as well as transit access to Chelsea Piers and the 23rd street ferry terminal.

#### HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Convert the Garment District into a 21st century production district by consolidating garment manufacturing into permanently reserved space in the lower floors of the old loft factories, which can also house manufacturing activities of all kinds, while startups and design firms have offices on the upper floors, along with residents.
- Preserve traditional architecture and affordable housing throughout the area, while increasing availability of truly affordable units in new market-rate residential towers built in the revived Penn Station area.
- South of 34th street, older office buildings should be allowed to build additions or take other opportunities to add usable space in return for preserving office, commercial, or light industrial uses. The Garment District should be a vibrant place anchored by the next generation of manufacturing activities.

#### STREETS AND PUBLIC SPACE:

- Adapt local streets for a technology-driven future that improves foot traffic for local business growth by prioritizing people over cars, improving bus services, and introducing light rail and / or streetcar lines.
- Convert selected streets around Penn Station into pedestrian walkways with public space along Seventh Avenue to make the area more conducive for shopping, dining, and entertainment.
- Connect Far West Side neighborhoods and signature open spaces—the High Line, Hudson Yards, plazas around Penn Station, and pocket parks over the Lincoln Tunnel access roads—by walkable and bikeable streets.



- Extend cross streets that block the Convention Center into a new waterfront park, widening it from a narrow strip of greenway to a rolling landscape that holds back the raised waters of the Hudson. The waterfront park will include wetlands, new walls, and piers for ferry terminals and recreational activities.

**Proposed next step project for the Penn Station / Garment Industry area:**

As an initial step toward the wide scale plan presented above, RPA recommends that the DRI project could improve the pedestrian and worker experience near Penn Station and the Garment District by improving public spaces, pedestrian safety, bus stops, cycling routes, and other quality of life initiatives to set the stage for future economic development and job growth in a section of the city that, despite its prime location, has very antiquated and office and retail space. This would require the coordination of multiple state and city agencies as well as the local community. Building a cohesive vision for the district and strengthening connections to transit, civic, and business hubs beyond the immediate area could help produce a vibrant and attractive multi-use district that would be a pleasure to live, work, and enjoy spending time in.

**JUSTIFICATION: Overview of the downtown area nominated for the DRI program, highlighting the area's defining characteristics and the reasons for its selection. Explain why the downtown is ready for Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) investment, and how that investment would serve as a catalyst to bring about revitalization.**

The area is at a unique crossroads that should be leveraged now, especially with the opening of Moynihan Station and the potential of building Gateway.

Although this community is both a business and transit hub, among the world's most comprehensive with Penn Station, Port Authority Bus station, multiple MTA subway and bus lines and the central garment producing area in the US, the area has a surprising number of issues that inhibit economic development. Penn Station, the western hemisphere's busiest transit hub, is unpleasant and overcrowded, despite recent efforts by the railroads to make improvements. Port Authority Bus Station rivals Penn for deteriorating service and surroundings.

The Far West Side needs a cohesive vision. While important investments have been made, including new offices and homes over Hudson Yards and the extension of the #7 subway line, a fundamental obstacle remains: the larger district is composed of oversized "superblocks," and the area is disconnected from the rest of the city.

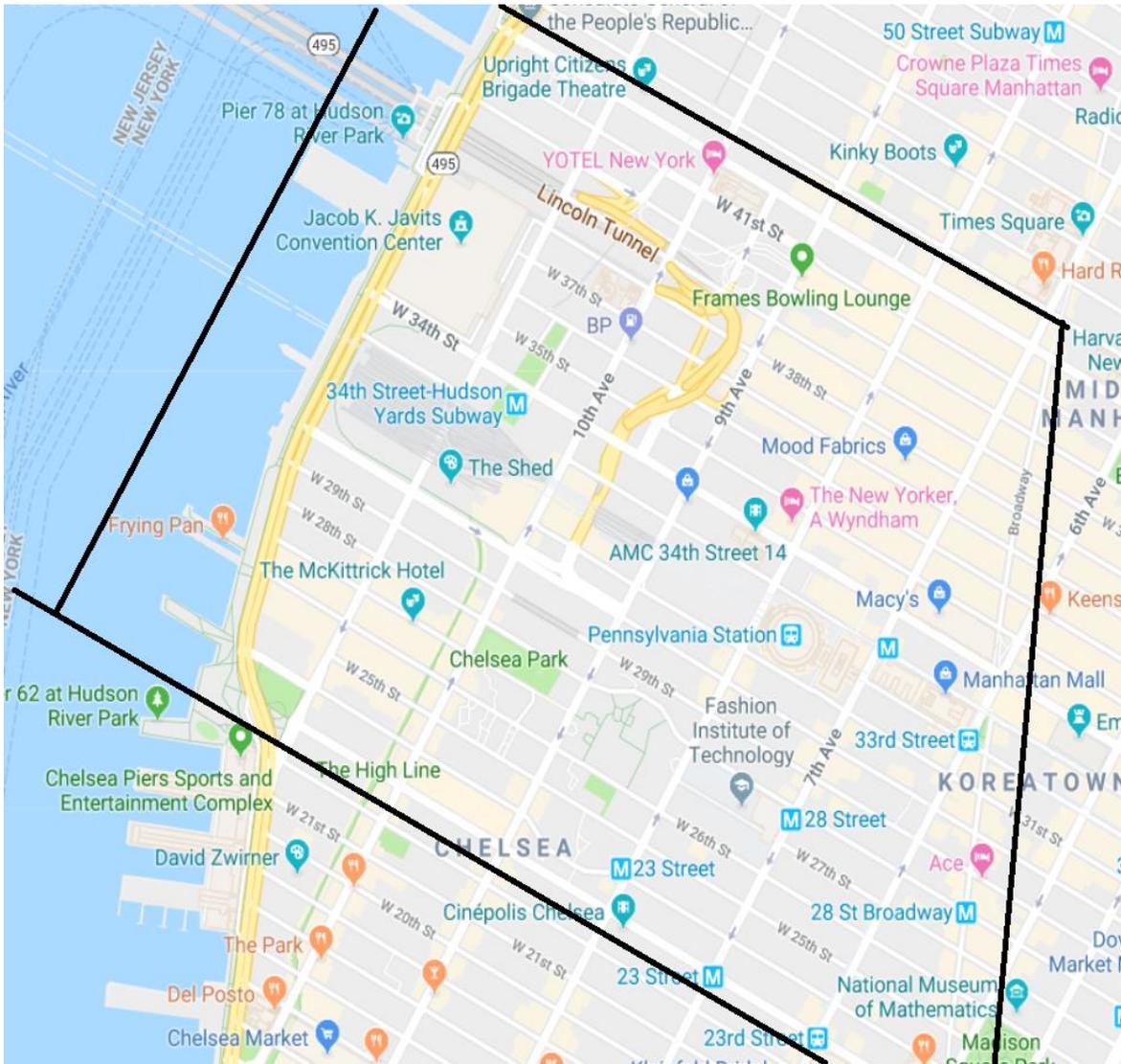
Penn Station, a critical transit link for the city and the region, is aging, dysfunctional and surrounded by equally unappealing streets. The Port Authority bus terminal is deteriorating and well over capacity. Just

to the north was the Garment District, home to a legacy industry that’s struggling with rising rents and a changing marketplace that’s resulted in 1.7 million square feet of vacant floor space.

**DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION:**

**1) BOUNDARIES OF THE PROPOSED DRI AREA:**

**Penn Station / Garment District:** West 23rd Street to West 42nd Street between Broadway and the Hudson River.



**2) PAST INVESTMENT, FUTURE INVESTMENT POTENTIAL:** Describe how this DRI area will be able to capitalize on prior private and public investment and catalyze future investments in the neighborhood



and its surrounding areas. Describe recent planning efforts that support public and private investment in the proposed DRI area.

RPA proposes a re-structuring of the management and financial relationships between the Port Authority and its operating assets. In effect, the Port Authority would function as a regional infrastructure bank, collecting certain revenues from the operating units, paying consolidated debt service, and distributing surplus revenues back to the operating units or investing in new bi-state infrastructure.

Operating entities could apply for financing, and the board and management would evaluate requests based on financial and service criteria, as well as other public interests, including community, health, economic, and environmental impacts. The bank could also initiate planning for large projects, and establish single-purpose entities to design and build them, as it has done for the Gateway project.

Designating independent operating entities and converting the Port Authority into an infrastructure bank would have two primary outcomes: 1) By creating greater transparency and independence in making capital allocation decisions, the proposal would create incentives for more efficient, customer-focused service for each of its operating subsidiaries; 2) It would also help ensure the most important and cost-effective projects are prioritized. Both of these outcomes should increase public confidence in the authority.

**3) RECENT OR IMPENDING JOB GROWTH: Describe how recent or impending job growth within or near the DRI area will attract professionals to an active life in the downtown, support redevelopment, and make growth sustainable in the long-term.**

While Midtown Manhattan has come a long way since the 1970s, regaining its standing as a business center on the world stage, other cities today are surpassing New York, with more investments in new office space and infrastructure. In the next 25 years, the entire New York region has the potential to add 1.9 million jobs, with nearly a million of these in office industries ranging from finance to technology.

The core central business district will need to accommodate more workers and high-value businesses even as it deals with growing congestion and a shortage of room for expansion. To support an expanding regional economy, the Central Business District will need to maintain a diverse mix of office and entertainment districts, improve transit and pedestrian access into and within the commercial core. And attracting jobs to the urban core where transit access is the greatest can make the region even more energy-efficient and sustainable.

To support this growing regional economy, the urban core should be able to absorb over 800,000 jobs by 2040, with over 300,000 of these in Manhattan's Central Business District.



RPA is currently discussing an in-depth analysis of potential economic growth for the Penn Station / Garment District area.

**4) ATTRACTIVENESS OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT: Identify the properties or characteristics that the DRI area possesses that contribute, or could contribute if enhanced, to the attractiveness and livability of the downtown for a diverse population of varying ages, income, gender identity, ability, mobility, and cultural background. Consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, varied housing types at different levels of affordability, walkability and bikeability, healthy and affordable food markets, and public parks and gathering spaces.**

Although this community is both a business and transit hub, among the world's most comprehensive with Penn Station, Port Authority Bus station, multiple MTA subway and bus lines and the central garment producing area in the US, the area has a surprising number of issues that inhibit economic development. Penn Station, the western hemisphere's busiest transit hub, is unpleasant and overcrowded, despite recent efforts by the railroads to make improvements. Port Authority Bus Station rivals Penn for deteriorating service and surroundings.

Penn Station, a critical transit link for the city and the region, is aging, dysfunctional and surrounded by equally unappealing streets. The Port Authority bus terminal is deteriorating and well over capacity. Just to the north was the Garment District, home to a legacy industry that's struggling with rising rents and a changing marketplace that's resulted in 1.7 million square feet of vacant floor space.

**5) QUALITY OF LIFE POLICIES: 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, comprehensive plans, complete streets plan, transit-oriented development, non-discrimination laws, age-friendly policies, and a downtown management structure. If policies that support livability and quality of life in downtown are not currently in place, describe near-term efforts by the municipality to create and implement such policies.**

One of the keys to the region's strength is the synergy which allows both emerging and established businesses to co-exist in desirable commercial areas which have proximity and access to a talented workforce. Older class B & C office space, with their less expensive rents, help provide this. Class B & C office space is often under pressure to either renovate into more expensive class A office space, or convert to residential use. Conversions to residential use are most prevalent in older buildings with smaller floor plates, which are difficult or impossible to renovate to modern standards. This is especially true of buildings outside of core Midtown Manhattan.

However, zoning regulations can limit the amount of residential conversions and preserve much of this cheaper office space, while still allowing for other uses which can help the finances of the building.



These regulations are already in place in some areas of the Garment Center in Midtown South and Chelsea, and can be extended both geographically and in the types of buildings they cover.

With high-density residential districts surrounding most of the Garment District, there are even more opportunities for expansion:

- A redeveloped Penn Station should allow for air rights to be unlocked, and a modern office district developed in conjunction with a transformed West Side.
- South of 34th street, older office buildings should be allowed to build additions or take other opportunities to add usable space in return for preserving office, commercial, or light industrial uses. The Garment District should be a vibrant place anchored by the next generation of manufacturing activities.
- In the longer term, an extension of the #7 train south with a new stop on 23rd street would allow for rezoning for more office development west of Ninth avenue, as well as transit access to Chelsea Piers and the 23rd street ferry terminal.

**6) Public support. Describe the public participation and engagement process conducted to develop the DRI application, and the support of local leaders and stakeholders for pursuing a vision of downtown revitalization. Characterize the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to preparing and implementing a strategic investment plan.**

RPA publicly launched a coalition for improving Penn Station and the surrounding area in October of 2018, gaining support from Community Board 4 and Community Board 5 as well as Senator Brad Hoylman, Councilmember Keith Powers, and Borough President Gale Brewer at a event in October 2018. The Public for Penn campaign has picked up supporters at a brisk pace. RPA is joined on the coalition by Riders Alliance, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Transportation Alternatives, The Design Trust for Public Space, and the Municipal Art Society.

Significant efforts have also been focused on building support on social media and Public for Penn now has over [2,600 Twitter followers](#) and over [3,400 Facebook followers](#) who make it is clear that there is strong public demand for an improved Penn Station. The coalition has also built a robust email list to support the work.

These elected officials and public citizens are united around the clear notion that Penn Station is a disaster and has a massive negative impact on the surrounding area. This has been the opinion of thousands of riders surveyed by New Jersey Transit, the MTA and others – and the opinions are backed by facts. Built to accommodate 200,000 passengers per day, the station now operates at more than three times its intended capacity. With its narrow and crowded platforms, low ceilings, poor heating and cooling systems, abysmal ADA accessibility, lack of cleanliness, and sub-par public amenities, Penn lacks the safety and dignity the busiest public transit hub in the Western Hemisphere should offer.



This grant would help set the stage for larger investments in the area down the road. By enhancing the streetscape and public spaces around Penn Station and throughout the Garment District, we would prepare the area to become the attractive business and entertainment district it has the potential to become without losing some of the incredible character the garment industry brings to the area.

**7) Transformative opportunities. Describe opportunities to build on the strengths described above by providing a list of transformative projects that could be ready for implementation with an infusion of DRI funds within the first one to two years (depending on the scope and complexity of the project). Identify potential development opportunities, such as municipally-owned property that may be appropriate for redevelopment. Projects may be public or private, and could address economic development, transportation, housing, and community development needs. It should be recognized that if a DRI award is made to the downtown, the projects identified here, along with any others that may arise during the DRI planning process, will ultimately be vetted by the Local Planning Committee and the State to determine which projects receive DRI grants.**

Despite being the busiest transportation hub in the Western Hemisphere and adjacent to the nation's largest central business district, the greater Penn Station neighborhood has not fulfilled its potential as a hub for high quality office or other mixed-use development considering its size and regional connectedness. This stands in contrast to Grand Central Terminal (despite the Garment District having better subway access) or other great transportation centers around the world. The district surrounding Penn Station is frequently unsafe or unappealing for pedestrians and cyclists and requires substantial upgrades to the area's public space. The district remains significantly underdeveloped with mostly outdated office, retail, and hotels, very little of which contribute to New York City's ability to retain its prominence and competitive position as a global business center.

There is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change things for the better. Two years from now Moynihan Station will open across 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Amtrak operations will vacate Penn. Then, in 2023, East Side Access service to Grand Central will open and approximately half of Long Island Railroad commuters will transfer to the new service, further reducing demand on Penn Station. This significant dip in ridership represents an important window to build one of the many feasible, solution-oriented proposals for a reimagined Penn Station. Additionally, another important political inflection point will occur in the summer of 2023, when the operating permit for Madison Square Garden is set to expire.

But we must act now. In 2025, Metro North Access to Penn will begin service and should be followed by the completion of the Gateway Program by the end of the decade. Both actions will increase ridership to Penn, and it's projected that ridership will surpass the current numbers shortly thereafter.

Specifically, initial funding could be used for some of the following projects, that would help prepare the area for additional major economic and infrastructure investment:



- Considerable improvements of existing public spaces and plazas including making them liveable and accessible to the public.
- Improving pedestrian areas by granting them more space on the streetscape and improving safety measures, particularly around Lincoln tunnel access points and on the streets connecting Penn Station and the Port Authority Bus Terminal to the Hudson Yards district and the Javitts Center, which are already seeing increased foot traffic due to recent development and increased bus traffic near Javitts.
- Addition of new public spaces and plazas surrounding Penn Station, Javitts Center, Moynihan Station, and the Port Authority Bus Terminal to create a more welcoming environment and streetscape for the incredible number of pedestrians in the area.
- Additional or improved subway egresses throughout the district, for faster and safer access that is more integrated in the surrounding flow of pedestrian movement.
- Improved cycling that is both protected from vehicular travel and mindful of the existing pedestrian flow of traffic, especially on undeveloped cross streets throughout the area.
- Particularly with the passage of congestion pricing, use funding as an opportunity to improve bus service and bus stations in this area to allow for faster, more reliable travel into and out of this the neighborhood.

**8) Administrative Capacity. Describe the existing local administrative capacity to manage this planning and implementation initiative, including the ability to oversee contracts for awarded municipal projects using existing staff and resources.**

RPA was founded as a 501c3 in 1929 and today has a board of over 100 professionals, who are CEO's and administrative leaders of major financial and real estate institutions, along with community organizations. Staffing averages 25 full-time employees augmented by research consultants and interns. RPA maintains three offices, with headquarters in Lower Manhattan, an office in Princeton, New Jersey, and an office in Stamford, Connecticut. With an average annual budget of \$5 million, RPA has administered multiple public / private grant awards and projects over the years, including two current public grants, one from Suffolk County and one from New Jersey Department of Transportation.

Leadership at RPA includes:

**TOM WRIGHT - CEO & PRESIDENT:** Tom became RPA's Executive Director in 2001 and CEO / President in 2015, helping to lead many key RPA initiatives including the historic Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and the campaign to create a mixed-use district at Manhattan's Hudson Yards. Prior to joining RPA's central administration, Tom was deputy executive director of the New Jersey Office of State Planning, where he coordinated production of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan. In the early 1990s, he was RPA's New Jersey director and coordinator of the award-winning Mayors' Institute on City Design. Tom is a member of New York City's Sustainability Advisory Board, which helped prepare OneNYC. He serves on the boards



of the Open Space Institute and the Urban Design Forum, and is an advisor to the Eno Center for Transportation. Tom has a master's in urban planning from Columbia University and a bachelor's in history and a certificate in American Studies from Princeton University.

**JULIETTE MICHAELSON - EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT:**

Juliette led the production of the 2017 Fourth Regional Plan, a long-range, comprehensive plan to promote prosperity, equity, health and sustainability in the region, created over five years involving hundreds of civic groups, community-grassroots organizations, business leaders and designers, giving the plan a broad base of support as we pivot to implementation. Juliette also oversees RPA's operations, including strategic direction, external communications, development and finance. Juliette has steered a number of RPA's large initiatives, including the creation of a network of transit-agency executives from around the world. Prior to joining RPA, Juliette worked at Project for Public Spaces, where she managed a range of outreach, education and training programs to help municipalities and state departments make concordant land use and transportation decisions. Juliette received a bachelor's in political science from Princeton University and a master's in urban planning from Columbia University.

**CHRISTOPHER JONES - SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF PLANNER:** Christopher Jones directs research and planning for Regional Plan Association. Since joining RPA in 1994, he has led many multidisciplinary initiatives to improve economic, social and environmental conditions in the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region. Previously, he managed a federal Sustainable Communities initiative that included 17 cities, counties and planning organizations in New York and Connecticut. He has written many studies and articles on regional development and urban policy, including a comprehensive analysis of metropolitan housing, plans for transit-oriented and community development alternatives for Manhattan's Far West Side. Prior to joining RPA, Chris was the special assistant to the deputy mayor for planning and development in New York City.

**KATE SLEVIN - SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, STATE PROGRAMS & ADVOCACY:** Kate oversees RPA's programs in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, and builds support among a wide variety of stakeholders for the organization's mission to expand economic opportunity, improve infrastructure and strengthen environmental resiliency. Kate joined RPA in 2016 from the urban planning-focused Municipal Art Society, where she was vice president of planning and policy. She previously served as assistant commissioner for government and community affairs at the New York City Department of Transportation where she managed the legislative program for former Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan. Previously, she spent a decade at the Tri-State Transportation Campaign advocating for sustainable transportation and land use policies in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, serving as executive director from 2007-2012 and received the EPA's Environmental Quality Award in 2011. Kate has a master's in urban planning from New York University and a bachelor's in earth and environmental sciences from Wesleyan University and is an alumna of the International Honors Program.



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

Please see this link for the entire Fourth Plan: <http://fourthplan.org/download-the-plan>