

MID-HUDSON DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

BASIC INFORMATION

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

Municipality Name: *Village of Port Chester*

Downtown Name: *Sound Shore Gateway*

County: *Westchester*

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

Port Chester is at a crossroads – both physically and economically. Physically, it sits at the intersection of Interstates 287 and 95, which connects locally, regionally, and nationally; however that access is limited by significant traffic congestion along Boston Post Road (US Route 1), a State owned and maintained roadway. Economically, it is on the precipice of a true revitalization with a unique and current downtown setting that is open for business and is attracting millennials and the “singles, mingles, and jingles” crowd, but is limited in its resources to have a true economic development renaissance. The Village is offering a proposal for one of the region’s most significant private investments – Starwood Capital is proposing a large (1.1 million square-foot) \$350 million mixed-use development on the site of the former United Hospital along Boston Post Road that is anticipated to generate a large amount of new construction and permanent jobs, new resident discretionary spending, and other direct/indirect economic benefits. However, having adequate transportation infrastructure will be the key success factor. This project and its location is where the Village’s physical and economic crossroads meet. The Village has the opportunity to partner with the private sector to bring jobs, residents, spending, and tourism to the Village, County, and region, but has the responsibility to make such a project sustainable as a physical and transportation gateway to the Sound Shore, Village, City of Rye, and region. The Sound Shore Gateway project would be collaboration between the Village of Port Chester, City of Rye, ESD, New York State Department of Transportation, New York State Thruway Authority, and Starwood Capital to supplement the significant private investment proposal with public realm improvements to make it reasonable, sustainable, and beneficial to Port Chester, Rye, Westchester County, and the region. To that end, the Village nominates the Sound Shore Gateway project for the \$10 million DRI award to accomplish the following three items:

- 1. Boston Post Road “Road Diet” and Improved Interstate Connections**—*Boston Post Road provides a significant barrier to the economic growth of Port Chester, Rye, and the region. In fact, at almost every public meeting regarding the redevelopment of the United Hospital site, as well as other proposals for Boston Post Road, residents are generally in favor of the proposals but are concerned about the traffic implications to their lives. Similar to how the Governor has approached large infrastructural issues such as a potential tunnel under the Long Island Sound, the Village of Port Chester believes that something transformative needs to happen along Boston Post Road and with respect to the access ramps to and from Interstates 287 and 95 – The entire roadway network needs to be re-imagined and put on a “diet” to provide a balance between traffic calming*

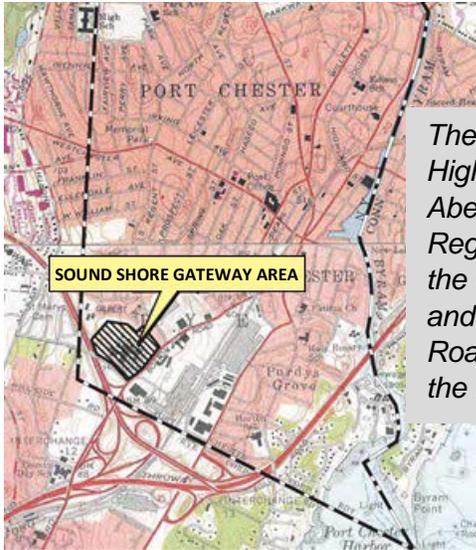
measures to improve safety and the need to efficiently move vehicles through the roadway system, rather than to be reactivated by only mitigating impacts on a project-by-project basis. The main thrust of the Sound Shore Gateway would be to work with NYSDOT, the Thruway Authority, and the City of Rye to conceptualize, design, and construct transformative changes to this portion of Boston Post Road. By doing so, all residents, workers, and visitors to the area would have a more pleasant transportation experience, thereby, spurring economic development.

- 2. Boston Post Road Streetscape Improvements**—*Boston Post Road is a typical suburban automobile-oriented corridor, with a large roadway width, buildings set far back from the roadway with large swaths of surface parking in front, and numerous curb cuts. While the Village has worked hard to ensure that development along the corridor is designed to look aesthetically pleasing and to include as much screening and landscaping as possible, the essence of the corridor is one that does not feel welcoming and does not represent the design-characteristic of the Village. Under the Sound Shore Gateway project, the Village would work with NYSDOT to beautify the corridor and general streetscape. The road diet improvements noted above would provide opportunities to enliven the public realm spaces with landscaping, street trees, gateway signage, and wayfinding signage.*
- 3. Enhanced Access to Abendroth Park**—*The Sound Shore Gateway area not only has the advantage of ample transportation access, but, contains one of Port Chester’s “hidden gems” – Abendroth Park. As part of the redevelopment of the United Hospital site, Starwood Capital is proposing direct access between the mixed-use development, its parking, and the Park. However, the Village believes that those connections could be enhanced by designing the access to ensure that the connections and access are easy to navigate, as well enhancing the connections to stimulate interest by providing signage, public art, public athletic equipment, health information (for example, how many calories are you burning by walking from the parking garage to the park), etc. As part of the Sound Shore Gateway, this new open space resource would be enhanced through multi-modal design and construction of the improved connections.*

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 United Hospital site is currently bounded by High Street to the south, Interstate 287 to the west, Abendroth Park and the properties along South Regent Street to the north, and Boston Post Road to the east. The Sound Shore Gateway area is larger and is defined as the area that lines the Boston Post Road corridor, from approximately Pearl Street in the north to the City of Rye boundary in the south.

- 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 United Hospital site in and of itself is 15.45 acres and is anticipated to have a population of approximately 1,080 residents within the proposed redevelopment. The goal of mixed-use at this site is to develop a new vibrant, year-round downtown that would serve more than just the Village of Port Chester. Rather, it would be a destination for the greater region. Its location is a primary reason why it would be a regional downtown, given easy access to Interstates 287 and 95, as well as close proximity to the Rye and Port Chester Metro-North train stations. In addition, it is anticipated that a future phase of the Lower Hudson Transit Link BRT would go from White Plains to Port Chester. The Village will work with NYSDOT, as well as Starwood Capital, to integrate a BRT station into the plan or corridor so as to provide yet another easily accessible mode for a larger population to utilize. Finally, it is anticipated that the redevelopment of the United Hospital property along with the improvements discussed as part of this Sound Shore Gateway project would spur reconsideration and redevelopment of adjoining parcels, most notably the existing Kohl's site. The opportunity for these properties to include a mix of uses, including residential, would solidify even further the population that would support this new downtown.

- 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.

Port Chester has seen a tremendous amount of previous investment and seeks to capitalize on this previous investment to catalyze future private and public investment, both that which is currently known to be coming down the pipeline and that which is yet untapped.

The Village itself has been willing to do the evaluation, analysis, and, ultimately, spend the money to create a vision and implement that vision. In 2012, the Village completed a five-year process to update its 1968 Comprehensive Plan. The 2012 Plan overall vision retains the qualities of Port Chester that its people have come to cherish, including a diverse

cultural population, quality homes at relatively affordable prices, a vibrant downtown, and its proximity to key employment centers in the region. At the same time, the vision addresses the challenges confronting the Village, including changing socio-economic conditions, unpredictable growth and development patterns, physical constraints limiting waterfront access, and underutilized non-residential properties. This updated Comprehensive Plan establishes the framework for turning these challenges into opportunities and provides strategies for capitalizing on the Village's physical, social, economic and human capital. The result of the 2012 Plan has been a number of follow-up items that have included partnerships with the public sector.

The vision for the Gateway area hinges initially on the redevelopment of the United Hospital property, which, under the ownership and direction of Starwood Capital, is currently nearing conclusion of the SEQRA process. During the visioning process undertaken by the Village that resulted in the adoption of the Village of Port Chester Comprehensive Plan in December 2012, and furthered in March 2013 with the rezoning of the property, the site was a focus and seen as an important redevelopment opportunity. The redevelopment of the site, which is moving forward, envisions a \$400 million mixed-use project encompassing 217,000 square feet of professional and medical office uses, a 135 key limited service hotel and 90,000 square feet of small shop, restaurant and service focused retail at the street level, and smaller (studio and one-bedroom) residential units for organic affordability, consisting of 230 units of housing for the 55+ audience and 500 units of housing specifically designed for millennials. On its own, the project will make an important statement – to residents of the Village and the County and to the visiting public – about the character of the Village at this important gateway.

Across Boston Post Road from the United Hospital site is the Kohl's shopping center. Recent re-tenanting of this shopping center, which has included a Whole Foods, has contributed to drawing a new and larger audience to area, increasing the visibility of the area and telegraphing to other potential users and investors the strength of the market.

The United Hospital project has committed to making significant improvements to Boston Post Road in the vicinity of the Site which will mitigate the impacts of that project. The Sound Shore Gateway project focuses on improvement to the corridor infrastructure to, collectively with the private sector redevelopment, help transform this area into a dynamic and immersive entrance to the Village.

The Village has been described as a "hidden gem". It has all the qualities to be a true diamond for the County, Mid-Hudson Region, and State, but needs an infusion of additional funding to capitalize and catalyze the significant amount of private and public investment. A DRI award would allow the missing pieces of the past and future investment to be filled and would allow that investment to be completed and the vision to come to fruition.

- 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.

The proposal for the redevelopment of the United Hospital site promises approximately 1,800 construction period jobs followed by almost 1,000 jobs during operation. The estimated \$22.6 million in annual new resident discretionary spending can also be

anticipated to drive additional job growth in the area. While such a project has been designed as a regional mixed-use center, there are obvious synergies with Downtown Port Chester, especially the restaurant and entertainment options in the downtown area.

The Sound Shore Gateway project and the DRI award would create a new attractive, active downtown as follows:

- Investing in improving the appearance of the Boston Post Road corridor would be one of the best ways to attract new business and stimulate economic development.*
- The creation of solid connections to Abendroth Park would energize both the Park itself and the Gateway area in general.*
- By enhancing the private investment in the United Hospital site with public realm investments, the Gateway area would be more attractive to millennials and the creative class, the development community, and employers both in and outside of Port Chester. By linking the two the investment and redevelopment will be more sustainable in the long-term.*

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.

Quite simply, the Sound Shore Gateway area currently is an eyesore positioned at the most visible entrance to the Village of Port Chester and City of Rye. It currently does not exhibit many characteristics that contribute to the attractiveness and livability of the community.

- While there is some diversity in terms of commercial and retail businesses, there is a limit on the types of spaces and the ability for mixed-use with residential, notably due to the zoning of the area.*
- While it is an automobile dominated environment, there are pedestrian facilities (i.e., sidewalks) and access to public transit (Bee-Line stops). That being said, it is not a walkable/bikeable environment, and there are many barriers to easy access for alternative modes.*
- Abendroth Park is an underutilized open space that is not easily accessible.*
- Boston Post Road does, eventually, connect with Port Chester's traditional downtown area that provides a wealth of amenities, especially entertainment and restaurants.*
- Port Chester itself has a number of health care facilities that serve the community and is well-served by broadband access.*

The Sound Shore Gateway area's premium location is an extraordinary asset for the Village in terms of visibility. For developers it carries tremendous value in terms of size, access, visibility and the adjacent and nearby amenities in the form of the train stations, Abendroth Park and Port Chester's Main Street district. Redevelopment at the Gateway area will improve on the health of Downtown Port Chester, as is just over ¼-mile from the center of downtown and fully connected by sidewalks and County Bee-Line buses. Available and perhaps additional FAR and enhanced infrastructure – roadway and utilities – would

increase the attractiveness of the district to potential investors. More specifically, the Sound Shore Gateway project seeks to enhance the attractiveness of the area in the following ways:

- *The proposed new zoning would allow construction of attractive mixed-use spaces.*
- *Such mixed-use spaces would contribute to the range of housing options and opportunities that could be provided in the Village.*
- *The immersive public space within the proposed redevelopment of the United Hospital site and the enhancement of access to Abendroth Park would provide tremendous civic amenities and public gathering spaces.*
- *The combination of a roadway diet and streetscape improvements would help to vastly enhance the walkability and bikeability of the Sound Shore Gateway area and would help provide a significant upgrade in the aesthetic environment.*
- *The immersive public space within the proposed redevelopment is anticipated to be able to host a farmer's market downtown. Such a farmer's market would be focused on local farmers and products would provide healthy options to all Village residents and visitors, including lower income populations.*

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 Village currently has a number of policies in place that increase livability and quality of life. These include:

- *The Village has a long commitment to planning and examination of the United Hospital site and Boston Post Road corridor, including the Route 1/North Main Street Corridor Study (2012) and the Village of Port Chester Comprehensive Plan (2012).*
- *Downtown Port Chester is a TOD environment.*
- *One of Port Chester's finest qualities is its diversity and the welcoming and inclusive environment for recent and New Americans. This diversity and environment has made the Village a destination for many to live as well as play.*
- *The Village is constantly looking to upgrade its energy efficiency and is currently contemplating the creating of a green building and site plan standard within its Zoning Code.*

In addition, the Village and Industrial Development Agency (IDA) currently have a request for proposals (RFP) for a Mobility and Parking Management Study with Recommended Plan of Action. Among the tasks contemplated in the RFP is the creation of a Sustainable Complete Streets Policy and implementing that policy through adoption and the preparation of a Sustainable Complete Streets Plan.

The proposal for the redevelopment of the United Hospital site and the Sound Shore Gateway project, taken together, have a number of elements that would increase livability and quality of life:

- *The zoning that is proposed for the United Hospital site has been written to be more modern, include design guidelines and new/shared parking standards, and include green building and site plan standards.*
- *The location of Sound Shore Gateway, just over half a mile from the Rye Metro-North train station, and just a bit farther from the Port Chester Metro-North train station, positions it perfectly as a TOD development that will attract both young professionals and older empty nesters interested in living car-less or less car dependent lifestyles. The project is an opportunity to provide a real option to the young professionals priced out of NYC but wanting an urban experience.*
- *Pedestrian focused streets and bicycle amenities.*
- *Creation of open space and significant streetscaping, including street trees (which are the most important element of the streetscape).*
- *Enhanced connections to the adjacent currently underutilized Abendroth Park.*
- *Buildings would be designed and constructed for energy efficiency.*

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.

While the traditional supporting documentation is not appropriate to include in this application, the Sound Shore Gateway has support, not only from local elected and public officials, but from a number of stakeholders as well.

The visioning process that was conducted in support of the 2012 Village of Port Chester Comprehensive Plan, and the subsequent rezoning, clearly demonstrated the interest of the residents of the village in repositioning this gateway to the Village.

At the May 24, 2016 Board of Trustees' meeting, the Board unanimously adopted a letter supporting the Sound Shore Gateway and application to the DRI program. At that meeting, a number of members of the public and representatives from the Westchester County Association spoke to their support for both the redevelopment of the United Hospital and the Village's application to the DRI program. In addition, and perhaps most important, even residents and representatives from the City of Rye indicated their support for a redevelopment of the United Hospital site, so long as it was reasonable and mitigated traffic impacts. The Village believes that the key stakeholders – including the City of Rye and NYSDOT – want to be supportive to ensure impacts are mitigated so that the region can realize all the benefits.

This actual support will go a long way to make the Sound Shore Gateway a successful DRI community and they will be important members of the local DRI Planning Committee. The initial local lead will be Eric Zamft, the Director of Planning & Economic Development for the Village. The Department of Planning & Economic Development not only helps guide applications through the Village Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals, but also is the primary support for the IDA and LDC and leads the grant writing and administration efforts of the Village.

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

Port Chester is a community of action. With a small, but dedicated staff and the tireless work of volunteers and the public, there is tremendous capacity for implementation and the ability to make the DRI investment not only a successful one, but one that can become a case study throughout the State and, hopefully, the Country. The Sound Shore Gateway project presents an unique opportunity for the State to create a new downtown that will positively influence Port Chester's existing downtown, provide jobs and a place to live, work, and play and that would not only be the gateway to two neighboring municipalities and the Sound Shore, but would be a transformative project for the County and the Mid-Hudson region.

Finally, a picture is worth a thousand words:

The Sound Shore Gateway Today:



The Sound Shore Gateway Tomorrow:

