

## **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE – LIREDC**

**Due on Friday, May 20, 2016 to [LIREDC@esd.ny.gov](mailto:LIREDC@esd.ny.gov)**

### **BASIC INFORMATION**

**Municipality Name:** Town of Riverhead

**Downtown Name:** Historic Downtown Riverhead on the Peconic River

**County:** Suffolk

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

Vibrant Historic Downtown Riverhead is a walkable dynamic neighborhood along the Peconic River located 10 minutes from Calverton Enterprise Industrial Park. Diverse assets include Regional Arts & Culture; Destination Retail, Tourism and Hotels; Suffolk County Courts, College and County Center; proximity to Peconic Bay Medical Center; Multi-modal transportation and targeted regional job growth.

A diverse community open to New Americans/youth/seniors/all races & demographics creates a strong sense of place poised to become an international destination. Dense zoning, sewer & gas generates investment into housing, hotels & restaurants, while the Peconic River provides unmatched natural beauty for pedestrian, bicycle & paddler access.

### **DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION**

This section should be filled out with reference to the criteria set forth in the DRI Guidelines.

- 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.

Historic Downtown Riverhead along the Peconic River is bounded by Court Street bridge (to the County Center/Riverhead Library and Suffolk County Historical Society), the LIRR Main Line (Cornell Cooperative Extension, LIRR station, elementary/middle/ high school all walkable) and ends where LIRR intersects NYS Route 25 (Riverhead Town Hall, Long Island Aquarium/Hyatt Hotel, Suffolk Theater, Suffolk Community Culinary Institute, East End Arts all located on NYS Rte 25). A Business Improvement District, two Urban Renewal Areas, an Historic District, a Parking District, a sewer district, as well as the transportation hub with Suffolk County Bus, Hampton Jitney & LIRR exist & support development.

Attach color map clearly identifying areas within the defined downtown.



- 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. Describe how investments in your downtown could positively impact surrounding communities.

Centrally located & commutable to all of Nassau & Suffolk, Downtown Riverhead is the County Seat, & a business, banking & retail center. Unmatched natural resources create an international tourist destination (Atlantic Ocean, LI Sound & Peconic Bay beaches all within 15 minutes of Downtown Riverhead). A lively agricultural community in & around Riverhead provides a world class sustainable Agritourism industry (wineries, breweries, distilleries, pick your own, farm to table, Foodie, sport fishing, aquaculture). LI Aquarium/Hyatt, East End Arts, Suffolk Theater & large government/institutional employers Peconic Bay Medical Center & the Suffolk County Court Complex/County Center/Culinary Community College anchor a year round economy.

- 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.

Full list of recent public/private investments attached. Many additional blighted yet developable sites along Main Street & LIRR exist. Some sites have fully developed site plans & financing set to begin construction. Many developers proposing mixed-use/income developments, some of which are in advanced stages of planning, would move forward ASAP with DRI support. \$10M DRI grant could trigger \$100M+ private investment ASAP. Mixed use County supported workforce (Summerwind/52 units), (Woolworth/18 units) are fully leased with long waiting lists. Continued NYS investment into housing, supportive infrastructure, recreation, tourism & employment will create a unique Downtown- both international destination & model of diversity that LI lacks.

Leveraged Resources:                      Public \$37,000,000.00                      Private  
\$87,000,000.00

Prior NYS Funding/REDC Funding: Amount \$7,000,000.00

Please identify use(s) of prior funding      Sewer, Arts Council, Theater, Sidewalks, Parks, BOA,  
Urban Renewal, Hotel, Housing, Facades

- 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.

Downtown Riverhead is proximate to various and diverse jobs - most important is the regionally targeted job growth for Calverton Enterprise Industrial Park & reinvigoration of high tech/aerospace with the arrival of Luminati Aerospace & impending sale of 600 additional industrially zoned acres. Additional jobs are at Brookhaven National Lab, the Calverton Stony Brook incubator, Gabreski Airport Business Park, Peconic Bay Medical Center, Suffolk County Center/College/Court Complex, retail, hospitality, agritourism and small business opportunities abound with demographics showing Riverhead is a destination tourism & retail powerhouse attraction. Tanger Outlets attracts 12 million visitors a year alone plus Rte 58 commercial corridor.

- 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.

Natural and manmade beauty with tremendous architectural resources have garnered a National Historic District designation, a federally designated Estuary of Significance, and a NYS designated Wild and Scenic River. Town leadership has a long history of encouraging Smart Growth by implementing dense mixed-use zoning to encourage investment, housing and tourism downtown. NYS Empire Zone and an aggressive local IDA has attracted investors. A winter's farmers market provides fresh food and economic boost. Many decades and millions in state, federal and county grants have improved pedestrian, bike and park facilities. East End Arts Council campus and the only remaining Art Deco Theater in NYS anchor Main Street on the Peconic River.

- 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.

Town implementation of smartgrowth high density zoning downtown with a parking district, sewer & gas encouraged 85 new workforce rentals in the past 5 years. Another 173 units are in various stages of approvals (48 unit workforce by Conifer/CDCLI & 135 units by Georgica Green). A nationally successful MWBE developer proposed another 150-200 unit TOD mixed use housing project at the LIRR station. Town leadership encourages public private partnerships through collaboration with Suffolk County, NYS & fed gov to fund millions of dollars to support planning, workforce housing/supportive infrastructure, historic restoration, tourism, recreation, public spaces, pedestrian, bicycle & waterfront access along with free public entertainment.

- 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.

Town leadership regularly collaborates with businesses, nonprofits, civics, arts/cultural, tourism, transit, environmental, government and institutional partners. We have a diverse population ethnically, racially, economically and agewise. The Town is collaborating with Riverside hamlet in Southampton, Suffolk County, as well as significant regional community benefit projects in close proximity to downtown such as Peconic Bay Medical Center's partnership with Northwell (LIJ) and the First Baptist Church Community Life Center that will provide a diverse mix of housing, community services including a YMCA and job development. The Town has created a Tourism partnership with the Shinnecock Nation at the NYS funded Agrotourism Visitor Center.

- 8) Other.** Provide any other information you feel would be relevant to help this committee to make an informed decision to nominate this downtown for a DRI award.

Many years & millions of public funds for planning & infrastructure created the momentum now attracting private/public investment to transform one of LI's most economically distressed areas. NYS DRI support/technical support /partnership at this critical juncture in growth will refine & guide Riverhead into a vibrant international destination for visitors as well as create a much needed truly diverse, accesible Downtown that supports Millenials, New Americans, historically disadvantaged/disenfranchised communities with a range of housing/jobs supported by a nearby year round regional job center for LI's east end where the economy becomes increasingly difficult for middle income families and youth entering the market to survive.

- 9) Identify.** Current infrastructure challenges or other impediments facing downtown development initiatives.

Currently our growth has created a traffic and parking crisis that we need professional assistance to overcome. We have identified the issues through various planning studies including a \$567,000 NYS BOA study, and \$850,000 Urban Renewal Plan Update and various other investments by the county, state and federal governments. With DRI assistance we could mazimize existing infrastructure such as LIRR service, sewer, gas and location along NYS Route 25. A \$22 million sewer upgrade was just completed and provides additional capacity for development downtown. Gas service capacity enchancements are planned within 2 years providing a perfect platform for new development. Downtown Riverhead is one of the most disadvantaged demographics on LI.

- 10) Describe.** How an existing downtown master plan (if it exists) could coordinate and optimize available resources through a revitalization initiative.

Various layers of incentives and plans have been implemented for Downtown over the past 2 decades including many funded by NYS (Historic Design Guidelines, BOA, Urban Renewal Plans, BOA, Empire Zone, Wild & Scenic River). We are now poised in a perfect position for the DRI to optimize and synthesize these plans to create synchronicity between the various planning initiatives, government grants and private investments to create a Downtown Riverhead that is an

international destination for its beauty, quality of life, dynamic attractions, history and sense of place built upon its diverse community.



# TOWN OF RIVERHEAD

*Sean M. Walter, Town Supervisor*

200 Howell Avenue, Riverhead, NY 11901  
Tel: (631) 727-3200 / Fax: (631) 727-6712  
[www.townofriverheadny.gov](http://www.townofriverheadny.gov)

May 20, 2016

Stuart Rabinowitz, Co-Chair  
Kevin Law, Co-Chair  
Long Island Regional Economic Development Council  
150 Motor Parkway  
Hauppauge, NY 11788

Re: **Historic Downtown Riverhead on the Peconic River**  
**Support for Downtown Revitalization Initiative Nomination for LIREDC**

Dear Mr. Law and Mr. Rabinowitz:

This letter is in strong support for the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council to nominate Historic Downtown Riverhead on the Peconic River for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) award.

Many years and millions of public funds for planning and infrastructure have created the momentum now attracting private/public investment to transform one of LI's most economically distressed areas. NYS DRI support/technical support/partnership at this critical juncture in growth will refine and guide Riverhead into a vibrant international destination for visitors as well as create a much needed, truly diverse, affordable and accessible Downtown that supports Millennials, New Americans, historically disadvantaged/disenfranchised communities. A range of housing/jobs supported by a nearby regional job center for Long Island's east end will provide a haven for middle income families and youth entering the market to enjoy a truly high quality of life in one of the most high cost areas of the world where the cost of living rises exponentially every year.

Historic Downtown Riverhead's natural and manmade beauty with tremendous architectural resources have garnered a National Historic District designation, a Federal Estuary of Significance designation, and a New York State Wild & Scenic River designation. Town leadership has a long history of encouraging Smart Growth by implementing dense mixed-use zoning to encourage investment into affordable housing; tourism initiatives; transit, bicycle, pedestrian and paddling facilities; public spaces; cultural institutions such as the Suffolk County Culinary Institute and Suffolk Historical Society; institutional partners such as the Suffolk County Court Complex, County Center and Cornell Cooperative Extension, as well as public private partnerships such as the Suffolk Theater, the only remaining active Art Deco Theater in New York State that anchors Main Street. Views of the Peconic River are visible on Main Street from across the Town owned historic campus of the East End Arts Council campus that significantly supports the arts on Long Island.



Partnerships with various public investments and incentive mechanisms such as NYS Empire Zone, an active BID, an aggressive local IDA, two Urban Renewal Areas, a parking district, a sewer district, a National Historic District and generous support from federal, state and county funding sources has created a momentum that is undeniable. A winter farmers' market provides easy access to fresh food and ties the downtown to the active rural heritage that defines eastern Long Island. Seasonal festivals draw visitors from all over the state as Riverhead is commutable to all of Nassau and Suffolk.

Despite these advancements, technical support and funding from NYS through the DRI is critical to raise the bar on what a truly livable and lively Long Island downtown could be. Riverhead is and has been for decades one of the most economically distressed areas on Long Island with a large senior population. According to the 2010 US Census, East Main Street (based on Block Group 4, Census Tract 1698) had a **poverty rate of 25.07% with a median household income (MHI) of \$40,160, less than 46% of the Suffolk County median.** Riverhead Hamlet that contains both East Main Street and Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Areas has a poverty rate of 15.5% and a MHI of \$50,611 or 58% of Suffolk County median. 30% of the population is over age 55. **17.6% of the population is black. 25.3% of the population is Hispanic. Additionally, the Hispanic population has grown exponentially since the 2010 census because of Riverhead's agricultural base and affordability giving this community one of the largest influxes of migrant workers and New Americans in the U.S.**

Various layers of incentives and plans have been implemented for Downtown Riverhead over the past two decades including many funded by NYS (Historic Design Guidelines, BOA, Urban Renewal Plans, BOA, Empire Zone, Wild & Scenic River). We are now poised in a perfect position for the DRI to optimize these plans to create synchronicity between the various planning initiatives, government grants and private investments to create a Downtown Riverhead that is an international destination for its beauty, quality of life, dynamic attractions, history and sense of place built upon its diverse community that creates a small town feel welcoming to anyone from local resident to international visitor.

Please join us in this effort to build a truly livable community that preserves a livable and high quality of life for a broad swath of the population.

Thank you for your full consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,  
TOWN OF RIVERHEAD

Sean M. Walter  
Supervisor