

## **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 Smithtown

**Downtown Name:** Smithtown

**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):

Smithtown was a vibrant center for the entire Town. However, the center began declining in the 1970s with the opening of malls and shopping centers. This decline was compounded by changes in Suffolk County's sanitary code (ca 1980) that significantly limited growth in non-sewered areas. This limitation had the unintended consequence of spreading out development, further weakening the downtown. However, Smithtown still has the potential to be a major economic, cultural center in the region. It is centrally located, has access to NYC via the Long Island Railroad, and is adjacent to parkland, the Nissequogue River and the Village of the Branch historic district.

### **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.

The downtown area of Smithtown consists of all business-zoned and multi-family-zoned properties along and around Main Street (NYS Rte 25/25A) between Edgewood Avenue and NYS Rte 111. It also includes New York Ave School, the fire department, and one business use that is residentially zoned, as the property is ripe for multi-family development and will likely be rezoned. However, it does not include any property in the Village of the Branch. The core of the downtown area is concentrated between the railroad to the west and NYS Rte 111 to the east. It includes a total of 129 acres.

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.

The overall business area is about 129 acres with a total floor area around 1.2 M sq. ft. The downtown serves the hamlet of Smithtown, with a population of 26,470. However, as a result of its central location, accessibility (NYS Rte 25/25A run through the downtown), proximity to the Nissequogue River and amenities such as restaurants, the Smithtown Performing Arts Center, government offices, the downtown draws people from throughout the Town of Smithtown. The total population of the Town is 117,801. The population of Smithtown has been stable since the 1970s, but MTA projects population growth with East Side Access. Investment would facilitate concentrating development in the downtown and save valuable open space elsewhere.

**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.

Private investment:

1. development of former lumberyard with 3-story mixed-use building (11,149 sq. ft. retail + 20 apts), three 5,000 sq. ft. apt buildings (12 apts each), and chromaglas STP. The development received variances, but needs Site Plan approval. Investment could -> add apts + eliminate need for onsite STP
2. Redevelopment of New York Ave School (for sale). Proposals received for apts
3. 2 building renovations per year
4. new CVS

Public investment:

1. municipal parking lot renovation
2. \$3.45M building renov. (Horizons)
3. County IDA funded downtown improvement/TOD plan for Smithtown
4. County funded sidewalk improvements, street trees & concerts
5. DOT traffic calming on Main St
6. MTA East Side Access & station upgrade

Leveraged Resources:                      Public \$4,450,000.00                      Private \$25,000,000.00

Prior NYS Funding/REDC Funding: Amount \$200,000.00

Please identify use(s) of prior funding      Funding includes public and private investments over past 5 years and future projects listed above

**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 Hauppauge Industrial Park and Stony Brook University are the largest employers in/near the Town. There are approx. 55,000 employees in the industrial park and there are about 13,500 faculty and staff and 24,000 students at SUNY Stony Brook. Stony Brook has been expanding, acquiring land and building new housing and academic centers. Stony Brook and the HIA work closely together to attract professionals to the area. Downtown Smithtown is a prime location for industrial park and university employees & students. It is a 12-minute train ride to Stony Brook and a 10-15 minute car ride to the industrial park.

- 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.

There are 3 pocket parks, a performing arts theater, retail, and government/community services in the downtown. There are 2 supermarkets adjacent to the downtown. There is bus and train service in the downtown and sidewalks throughout. The Smithtown Historical Society historic district is immediately east of the downtown. The Nissequogue River, Greenbelt Trail, and passive and active parkland are 0.5-0.75 miles from the downtown. There's a health clinic and hospital 0.6 miles and 1.5 miles respectively from the downtown. For housing, there are 107 apartments and 42 condos in the downtown, dense one and two-family residential neighborhoods immediately north and south of the downtown and 1/2-acre residential lots within walking distance.

- 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.

Policies in place: Zoned CB (downtown uses, setbacks & parking). Transfer of Density Flow Rights - downtown Smithtown is a receiving area, allowing storefronts to expand beyond County Sanitary Code density reqmts.

Town is modernizing downtown zoning to a form-based code and creating a complete streets code

Plans: Comprehensive Plan Update - Draft Comp Plan was completed. Public hearing is scheduled for June 15. Expect to adopt before end of year. Recommendations include: restore historic character of buildings; relocate auto-oriented uses out of downtown; add on/off-street parking; facilitate construction of apts above and behind stores.

Regional Plan Association is preparing a downtown improvement/TOD plan for Smithtown

- 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.

There is support from the Chamber of Commerce and Town & County officials. In 2011, the Chamber organized a walking tour with Dan Burden (Walkable Communities Inc) to discuss methods to improve traffic issues and pedestrian safety in downtown Smithtown. The Town Board is committed to modernizing zoning and adopting policies to facilitate revitalization. The County IDA provided funding for the RPA downtown improvement plan. NYSDOT supports Complete Streets improvements. Support at all gov't levels to improve water quality. The Smithtown Planning Department will be the local lead for the program.

- 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.

The area holds significant potential as a tourist destination. The Nissequogue River, Greenbelt Trail, Caleb Smith State Park Preserve and Blydenburg County Park are all less than a mile from the downtown and railroad station, making them easy for people from NYC and the surrounding area to access. The river and parks provide many opportunities for hiking, fishing, kayaking, and biking. The Town is in the process of updating its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (expect to adopt January 2017). The draft LWRP identifies implementation projects and includes projects and policies to improve access b/w the downtown and waterfront.

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

The largest impediment is the lack of sewers. Over 40% discharge more than 2x County Sanitary Code density requirements (meaning they cannot expand without connecting to a STP) and another 20% discharge more than their allowed density flow. This greatly limits expansion/construction of restaurants, apartments, medical offices, and other wet uses. With sewers, there'd be potential to construct > 200,000 sq.ft. above existing stores.

The second largest impediment is through-traffic. Unlike other downtowns on LI, NYS Rte 25A joins Rte 25 as it runs through Smithtown, creating more traffic congestion in the downtown. NYSDOT recently restriped the road, but other measures are warranted to reduce congestion and improve pedestrian safety.

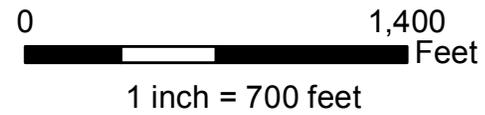
**10) Describe.** How an existing downtown master plan (if it exists) could coordinate and optimize available resources through a revitalization initiative.

The Town's existing master plan is 55 years old and the downtown Smithtown plan is 30 years old. The Town has completed a draft update to the Plan and expects to adopt an update by the end of the year. The update, along with the Regional Plan Association's downtown improvement plan (also expected by the end of the year) set forth objectives and implementation measures to achieve those objectives. The plans are also used to identify and prioritize capital projects.



# 2016 DRI Application Smithtown

Prepared by Smithtown Planning Department



Downtown Boundary 