2019 DRI Application

Applications for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) must be received by the appropriate Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) by **4:00 PM on May 31, 2019** at the email address provided at the end of this application.

In **New York City**, the Borough Presidents’ offices will be the official applicants to the REDC and organizations interested in proposing an area for DRI funding should contact the respective Borough President’s office as soon possible. Based on these proposals, each Borough President’s office will develop and submit no more than two formal applications for consideration by the New York City REDC. Applications to the offices of the Borough President must be received by email no later than **4:00 PM on May 10, 2019**. The subject heading on the email must be “Downtown Revitalization Round 4.”

Applicant responses for each section should be as complete and succinct as possible. Additional information is available in the 2019 DRI Guidebook, available at [www.ny.gov/DRI](http://www.ny.gov/DRI).

Applicants in the **Mid-Hudson region** must limit their application to a total of 15 pages, and no attachments will be accepted. The map of the DRI Area requested in question number 1 must be part of the 15-page limit.

Applicants should make every effort to engage the community in the development of the application. Prior to submission, applicants must have held a minimum of one meeting or event to solicit public input on the community vision and potential projects and should demonstrate that any input received was considered in the final application.

**BASIC INFORMATION**

- REDC Region: *Long Island*
- Municipality Name: *Town of Hempstead*
- Downtown Name: *Baldwin*
- County Name: *Nassau County*
- Applicant Contact(s) Name and Title: George Bakich, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Economic Development
- Applicant Contact(s) Email Address and Secondary Email Address: GBakich@tohmail.org

**VISION FOR DOWNTOWN**

*Downtown Baldwin, centered on Grand Avenue, is the commercial backbone of the predominantly residential hamlet of Baldwin, located within the Town of Hempstead along the south shore of Nassau County. The Baldwin community has long recognized its assets, including transit access and TOD*
opportunities, historic features, and a diverse and engaged community. This community envisions Baldwin as a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use downtown, with an active, compact, multi-modal Long Island Rail Road Station (LIRR) station area at its center. This vision also incorporates a productive mix of land uses and innovative green infrastructure components to create a place where residents, commuters and visitors want to shop, dine, and recreate. The Town is currently undertaking a new strategic and holistic approach to revitalization of downtown Baldwin through the implementation of a downtown mixed-use overlay zone and design guidelines, which will provide a streamlined framework for future development to support this vision. With targeted DRI investments that complement and build upon this framework, Downtown Baldwin will thrive as the vibrant center of activity and local economic driver that the Baldwin community deserves.

JUSTIFICATION

The downtown and commercial corridor in Baldwin consists of a variety of uses, including retail, commercial, institutional, and public recreation, which are generally clustered in the vicinity of the LIRR station and along Grand Avenue, the hamlet’s major thoroughfare. The community consists of a mix of residential neighborhoods with different architectural styles and a waterfront that contains a rich history of original and renovated cottages. The economic health and resiliency of coastal communities such as Baldwin have recently been affected by unprecedented severe weather events. Furthermore, downtown Baldwin has historically suffered from stagnant economic performance, retail vacancies, and underutilization. The resources to encourage a viable and healthy downtown and commercial corridor are urgently needed for the revitalization of Baldwin to be successful.

But Baldwin is ready for change. Over the past year, the Town has been working toward a new approach to revitalization in Baldwin, called the Baldwin Revitalization Project, drafting a new zoning framework and design guidelines for the proposed DRI area that will foster a resurgence of community vitality and economic stability. The project is anticipated to bring an additional 975,000 square feet of development to downtown Baldwin in the next ten years, including 750 new residential units and 225,000 square feet of new commercial space. The Baldwin Revitalization Project was built on a robust community outreach process, including community presentations, workshops, and stakeholder meetings. Community enthusiasm for the project has been palpable, with more community members asking not if, but how fast we can get this done.

The Baldwin Revitalization Project builds on existing local initiatives in order to implement key projects to revitalize the Grand Avenue downtown and commercial corridor in Baldwin and to address the need for greater resiliency in the face of changing economic markets and demographics.

Ultimately, this DRI investment in Baldwin will serve as a catalyst toward execution of the key projects that are ripe for implementation, which, once set in motion, will result in better economic and physical resiliency in the community. Needed capital improvement projects will complement and provide a vital foundation for the anticipated influx of private investment within the proposed DRI boundaries. This will help revitalize the downtown and commercial corridors in Baldwin as interactive places that promote well-being and pride for the people who live, work and play there.
DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION

1) Boundaries of the proposed DRI area.

The proposed DRI area for downtown Baldwin would coincide with the boundary of the proposed Baldwin Mixed-Use Zoning Overlay District. This area would cover the approximately three quarter-mile mixed-use corridor running along Grand Avenue from just south of Merrick Road to the south to just north of Florence Street to the north. The map that follows this application depicts the boundaries of the DRI area. Grand Avenue, which runs north-south, intersects several important east-west thoroughfares including Merrick Road and Sunrise Highway, and extends to the north and south of the LIRR station. This downtown and commercial corridor in Baldwin consists of a variety of land uses, including retail, commercial, institutional and residential. Given its location near the LIRR station and intersection with important east-west roadways, the Grand Avenue corridor is truly the gateway to Baldwin, providing the primary access to and from the area.

2) Past investment, future investment potential.

An investment in downtown Baldwin would capitalize and build upon several recent and ongoing projects and planning initiatives, including:

a. An $800,000 NYS Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR)-funded Baldwin Downtown and Commercial Corridor Resiliency (DCCR) Study, titled Next Stop: Resilient Baldwin, which outlines implementable strategies to foster economic investment, provide housing options, increase pedestrian amenities and enhance public spaces in Downtown Baldwin. The proposed mixed-use and transit-oriented overlay was a prominent recommendation of this study;

b. A public-private partnership supported by close to $1.5 million in RESTORE NY funding to develop properties within the Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Area, located along the corridor. The Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Area has been studied extensively, with the goals of eliminating blighting conditions and generating economic activity. The Town believes incorporation of the Urban Renewal Area within the DRI boundary will provide a framework for successful redevelopment of a major intersection within downtown Baldwin. This project is highlighted as a project for potential DRI funding below;

c. Anticipated CDBG funding including $110,000 for public facility and infrastructure projects (streetscaping improvements, sidewalk enhancements and aesthetic amenities along Grand Avenue) and $35,000 for building rehabilitations including three commercial rehabilitation projects (façade, signage, lighting and awning improvements);

d. Public investments including a new library and improved fire station access within downtown Baldwin that has spurred private investment across the street from these properties, as well as Nassau County DPW park upgrades to Silver Lake Park just outside the corridor; and

e. Completion of a phased Complete Streets plan for the corridor, titled the Grand Avenue Complete Streets Traffic Study, by the Nassau County Department of Public Works. Funding
components of this plan is also highlighted below as a project for potential DRI funding. The initial phase of implementation has been awarded $4.7 million in U.S. Department of Transportation Surface Transportation Earmarks, which will be supplemented by Nassau County capital funding.

In addition, the Town is currently implementing the Baldwin Revitalization Project to unlock the significant investment potential in downtown Baldwin. As part of the project, the Town conducted a series of roundtables with private developers in Nassau County that specialize in mixed-use transit-oriented development. The results of the roundtables were overwhelmingly positive, with developers indicating that appropriate zoning would provide for the necessary density to facilitate investment in downtown Baldwin. The project is anticipated to bring an additional 975,000 square feet of development to downtown Baldwin in the next ten years, including 750 new residential units and 225,000 square feet of new commercial space. The Town is already reviewing a mixed-use commercial-residential development application for a property located at the corner of Grand Avenue and Merrick Road.

The primary goal of the proposed mixed-use overlay zoning district, expected to be in place by the start of the DRI 2019 program year, is to facilitate this private investment, in addition to public benefits and economic development, within downtown Baldwin. The new overlay district seeks to leverage the area’s proximity to public transportation by promoting mixed-use transit-oriented development around the Baldwin LIRR station to meet increasing demands for housing and retail uses, drive foot traffic, and enhance the visual quality and pedestrian amenities through the implementation of design guidelines.

Further investment through DRI funding will build on past investment and identified infrastructure and economic development strategies, leveraging anticipated private investment in identified developable properties and incorporating proposed policies from recent corridor studies. Essentially, DRI funding and the new zoning framework together will set the table for a transformation of downtown Baldwin.

3) Recent or impending job growth.

As part of the DCCR Next Stop: Resilient Baldwin study, in 2017, a comprehensive market analysis was conducted for Baldwin and the surrounding area. Findings of the market analysis showed that “Baldwin is fundamentally well positioned to absorb new real estate development,” with untapped demand for living in Baldwin and positive economic indicators such as steady population growth and declines in retail vacancies in downtown Baldwin. Short housing absorption times of under two months indicate a high demand for housing in the area and based on community engagement efforts undertaken as part of the study, increasing opportunities for multifamily development and walkable mixed-use Transit Oriented Development are high priorities for our community. Residents also want to see more diverse retail and restaurants developed in downtown Baldwin.

Baldwin’s good schools with a diverse student population, increasing demographic diversity, and proximity to Long Island beaches and to the LIRR station make the area a desirable place to live. Recent and planned LIRR station improvements are spurring more development interest in the area. However, more workers commute out of Baldwin for employment than in. The comprehensive market analysis
indicated that in addition to retail development potential, Baldwin also has the potential to attract niche high tech or incubator space, particularly near its LIRR station.

The Baldwin Revitalization Project is also anticipated to jumpstart the local economy in downtown Baldwin through an influx in residents and commercial space, including both office space and local-serving retail. The project has identified nine sites within the proposed DRI area that are currently underutilized and would provide significant opportunities for future development. Among the community benefits that would be achieved through implementation of this project are a diversified housing stock in downtown Baldwin that can capture and retain young working professionals, reduced commercial vacancies, along with an increased variety of retail options and services, and an increase in the tax base.

Building on this significant opportunity for job growth, the Town envisions using DRI funding towards projects that will further amplify Baldwin's existing attributes to attract new professionals to the area and better serve existing Baldwin residents.

4) Attractiveness of physical environment.

One of the main amenities that downtown Baldwin offers is its proximity to the Baldwin LIRR station and easy connection to New York City and the region. Baldwin has witnessed transformations in other transit-rich towns across Long Island, and the Town believes, with the right investment and policies, Baldwin is ripe for a similar transformation.

In addition to the location, there are several characteristics that contribute to the area's livability, including large well-maintained sidewalks, wide streets (which would accommodate bike lanes), proximity to the waterfront and ocean beaches as well as public parks, and a mix of residential and commercial building typologies, including a multi-family development and existing mixed-use buildings with ground floor retail. In addition, several architectural resources along Grand Avenue, including the Sunrise National Bank building and the Koch building, add a historic aesthetic to segments of downtown Baldwin. The Koch building is a Federalist Revival commercial building currently designated as eligible on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Baldwin residents make up a diverse and welcoming community that has become increasingly diverse in terms of racial, ethnic and age composition over the past 15 years. The majority of residents are those of parenting age and their children, as Baldwin is primarily a family-oriented community. However, the percentage of millennials and elderly populations has increased over time. In addition, the proportion of Black or African American, and Hispanic residents has been increasing steadily since 2000. These demographic shifts indicate that Baldwin is already a community that welcomes and is valued for its diverse population.

In order to maintain and enhance its high-quality, pedestrian friendly environment in downtown Baldwin, in addition to the new zoning overlay district proposed as part of the Baldwin Revitalization Project, the Town has established Design Guidelines for new development and major rehabilitations within the overlay district boundary. All projects within the DRI area would be required to incorporate and demonstrate how it has applied the outlined design principles to meet the purpose and intent of the guidelines. The proposed Design Guidelines provide standards and principles on a wealth of topics,
including architecture, awnings, exterior lighting, signage, service areas, parking, streetscaping, landscaping, sustainability and green building design. Future investment in transit-oriented development, implementation of the complete streets project described above, and the anticipated increasing diversity of housing options, aided by investment in DRI funding, will only further enhance Baldwin’s attractive qualities.

5) **Quality of Life policies.**

The Town of Hempstead is committed to the progressive policies that will enhance livability and increase the vibrancy of downtown Baldwin. The GOSR-funded Baldwin DCCR Study described above (http://www.baldwindccrcstudy.com) evaluated strategies that would help address storm resiliency, foster economic investment, expand housing options, increase mobility throughout the community, and enhance public spaces. The DCCR Study incorporated innovative public outreach tools and techniques, land use and economic planning, and principles of smart growth, including transit-oriented development, placemaking, Complete Streets, and green infrastructure.

In 2013, the Nassau County Legislature enacted a Complete Streets Law, ensuring consideration of all roadway users in the planning and design of new and renovated thoroughfares. In order to identify Complete Streets and traffic calming measures that will provide a safer pedestrian environment, improve circulation and serve as a catalyst for economic development and revitalization in downtown Baldwin, the Nassau County Department of Public Works undertook the Grand Avenue Complete Streets Traffic Study (https://apps.nassaucountyny.gov/Planning/docs/NCDPW%20Baldwin%20Grand%20Ave%20Complete%20Streets%20Study%20Final%20Report%20May%202016.pdf).

Funding for this study was provided by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

The Baldwin Complete Streets Study identifies needs and opportunities and recommends specific improvement measures to implement complete streets and traffic calming measures, enhancing traffic operations and safety along the corridor for all users. The Grand Avenue Complete Streets Traffic Study proposes road diets for various segments along Grand Avenue, north and south of Sunrise Highway, allowing for multi-modal transportation, reducing car speeds, and enhancing pedestrian safety near the LIRR station. In addition, the DCCR Study sets forth a four-pronged approach to increasing economic and physical resilience in Baldwin, including transit-oriented development facilitated by the mixed-use zoning overlay, continuation of the complete streets policies, green infrastructure, and weather-related resiliency efforts which will ready the Baldwin area for future growth and sustainability.

The Town of Hempstead and Nassau County have clearly examined the Downtown Baldwin corridor, and, with considerable community input, long-range goals have been established and the necessary policies have been put in place or are currently being put in place to achieve the revitalization goals for Baldwin.
6) Public support.

The Town of Hempstead has already received overwhelming support for the Baldwin Downtown Revitalization Initiative from the public, local leaders, and stakeholders, including Town Supervisor Laura A. Gillen, Councilmembers Erin King Sweeney, Dorothy Goosby and Anthony D’Esposito, County Executive Laura Curran, and County Legislator Debra Mule, who have advocated for a strategic initiative to diversify and invigorate the Grand Avenue corridor. These local elected officials and their staffs have created a strong coalition dedicated to the successful implementation of the Baldwin Revitalization Project. This coalition will remain intact as it supports the DRI process.

The Baldwin Civic Association, which serves and advocates for the residents of Baldwin, has also promoted this initiative, supporting the goal to bring new vitality to the downtown. In addition, both the Baldwin Revitalization Project and the GOSR-funded DCCR Study employed a collaborative and innovative outreach process to the public and local stakeholders to promote public input and lay the groundwork for a community-supported revitalization plan for the area.

The Baldwin Revitalization Project process has actively engaged community stakeholders, local organizations and municipal agencies, laying the groundwork for future engagement through the DRI (the Baldwin Revitalization Project website, including all relevant documents, is https://hempsteadny.gov/planning-and-economic-development/baldwin-revitalization-project). Feedback was gained through small group roundtables and two large, interactive open house workshops. The Baldwin community was and is active and engaged in furthering the future vision for Baldwin, and the public participation helped to shape the project.

In close coordination with NCDPW, the Baldwin DCCR Study also involved significant public outreach efforts. A designated website provided the study information, including goals and objectives, timeline, history of the NYRCR program, and scope of work; announcements about upcoming public meetings; presentation materials from, and summaries of, public meetings; all public documents; schedule information and updates; and contact information and the ability to leave comments. Options for viewing materials in Spanish were provided, as well as the ability for those with limited vision capabilities to view a simplified version of the Baldwin DCCR Study webpage that stressed text and downplayed colorful graphics. All of these efforts and the coordination and techniques developed to support them could provide tried and tested best practices for the DRI public outreach process that will help build a highly effective outreach strategy.

In addition, there is broad public support for the revitalization of downtown Baldwin. Neighborhood support, participation and engagement have included: Baldwin Civic Association; Baldwin Chamber of Commerce; Baldwin School District; Town of Hempstead Department of Planning and Economic Development; Nassau County DPW; NYS Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery; MTA/LIRR; and other stakeholders. The Grand Avenue Complete Streets Traffic Study also included the New York State Department of Transportation – Region 10 (NYSDOT) as well as representatives from Nassau County DPW. It is notable that the majority of public comments that have been received related to the Baldwin Revitalization Project express a deep desire for successful revitalization of the area.
The Town of Hempstead Department of Planning and Economic Development would act as the local lead for the program and liaise with outside experts.

7) **Transformative opportunities.**

The Town proposes to use DRI funding to catalyze and advance the work that has been undertaken as part of the Baldwin Revitalization Project and other ongoing efforts. The Town held a series of twelve RoundTable Meetings with local, regional and national developers to solicit input on the proposed Baldwin Mixed-Use Zoning and Design Guidelines. Developers provided valuable input to facilitate private investment, public benefits and economic development within downtown Baldwin. Numerous successful developers with proven track-records of developing throughout Long Island would promote mixed-use transit-oriented development around the Baldwin LIRR Station to meet increasing demand for housing alternatives, drive foot traffic and increase demand for retail uses including sit-down restaurants. This interest and excitement in downtown Baldwin would be catalyzed by an infusion of DRI funds.

In addition to substantial developer interest in redeveloping sites throughout downtown Baldwin, several existing businesses are actively looking to leverage downtown Baldwin’s proximity to public transportation. Downtown Baldwin’s central location has become a focus of nearby medical facilities (including Mercy Medical Center and South Nassau Communities Hospital) for the potential location of satellite medical and administrative space. These key redevelopment opportunities will strengthen economic and physical resiliency in the Baldwin community.

The Town is well aware that it must enhance visual quality and pedestrian amenities in downtown Baldwin through implementation of design standards and streetscaping improvements in order to attract private investment and the creation of jobs and further economic development.

With an anticipated influx of over 1 million square feet in new development, the Town has outlined the following transformative projects to ensure that private dollars are leveraged properly and this opportunity for sustainable, long-term growth is not wasted. These projects ready for implementation or have a short timeframe for implementation and would be catalyzed by an infusion of DRI funds:

1. **Reconstruction of properties exhibiting blighted conditions within the Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Area.** Properties located at this critical intersection within the proposed DRI boundary form the southern gateway to downtown Baldwin. However, they have long suffered from deteriorated conditions and high tenant turnover and have inhibited the growth of the surrounding neighborhood and larger downtown Baldwin commercial corridor. The Town has long been committed to the revitalization of this area, and has successfully secured close to $1.5 million in funding received through the RESTORE NY program which is to be used as subgrants to property owners to ensure that redevelopment maximizes community amenities and revitalization benefits. The Town proposes to use DRI funding to towards several projects associated with development in the Urban Renewal Area:
   a. Site improvements of the Town-owned parking facility to ready the site for redevelopment and to service future development on the adjacent properties.
b. Streetscape and public infrastructure improvements to ensure that redevelopment efforts interface with surrounding land uses and provide adequate pedestrian amenities that align with the planned complete street improvements (described below).

2. **Promote transit-oriented development near the Baldwin LIRR station.** Proximity to the LIRR station is one of, if not the largest asset of the proposed DRI area. The Town is looking to capitalize on this advantageous location through the Baldwin Revitalization Project zoning overlay district and design guidelines. Several sites have been identified around or within walking distance of the train station that are currently underutilized and present prime redevelopment opportunities. DRI funding would be used to support and complement proposed TOD development around the train station, to ensure that community amenities are incorporated into future development and that access to the train station is safe and efficient for all users.

3. **Traffic calming and pedestrian streetscape enhancements and amenities planned along the Grand Avenue Corridor.** Funding will be used to implement improvements that will complement the Complete Streets project by Nassau County DPW along Grand Avenue in Downtown Baldwin. The Complete Streets project will be carried out over the next several years, and will include provisions to reduce lanes to slow traffic and reduce crossing distances, and to install new high visibility crosswalks. The proposed road diet would create space for installation of bike lanes along Grand Avenue. DRI funding would further enhance walkability in the area through the provision of pedestrian amenities including trash receptacles, decorative street lamps and wayfinding signage.

4. **Green Infrastructure.** The DCCR Study recommends implementation of green infrastructure measures along the Grand Avenue corridor, including grass or turf medians, installing permeable pavers on curb extensions, street tree replacement, and installation of stormwater planters at new development sites. The Nassau County Department of Public Works is also exploring implementing a Pilot program for solar street lamps. The DCCR Study has laid the groundwork for these projects through cost estimates, location recommendations, and identification of responsible parties. DRI funding would be put directly towards implementation of this proposed project.

5. **Complement planned MTA Station upgrades.** DRI funding would be used to construct improvements associated with the LIRR station, including
   a. enhanced bus shelters to promote multi-modal transfers,
   b. installation of a welcome center/kiosk,
   c. beautification of Town commuter parking lots, and
   d. installation of bike storage lockers.

The Baldwin DCCR Study has already laid the groundwork for this project implementation through cost estimates and identification of responsible parties. MTA planned upgrades, as announced by Governor Andrew Cuomo during his January 10, 2017 State of the State proposal, may include new facilities, WiFi charging stations, public art, new platform waiting areas and improved signage. Together, these improvements will promote safety for LIRR commuters and visitors to Baldwin to further spur private development interest in the area.
6. Façade improvements to local retail businesses. Funding could be used to supplement the Town’s existing Commercial Revitalization Program/Façade Improvement Program through the use of CDBG dollars.

The Town of Hempstead also recognizes that while the projects above have been identified through extensive public outreach as part of previous planning efforts, the Downtown Revitalization Initiative planning process may reveal other projects of high priority. The Town of Hempstead and Baldwin community are excited and ready to implement any other projects that might be identified and deemed to be important and impactful to the revitalization efforts of Downtown Baldwin.

8) Administrative Capacity.

The Town of Hempstead’s Department of Planning and Economic Development (DPED) extensive experience in administering large-scale, federal and state funded projects. DPED has a proven track record in coordinating complex projects requiring permits and approvals at the town, county and state levels. The Town of Hempstead’s DPED receives approximately $3,000,000 a year in CDBG funding. In addition, it has successfully pursued and acquired significant HOME and AHC grants for its Affordable Home Program which has built over 200 affordable homes throughout the Town. DPED’s Commercial Rehabilitation Division has completed over 150 facades, building improvement and streetscape projects. DPED’s Residential Rehabilitation Division has completed over 200 home renovations. Furthermore, DPED has contracts in place with planners, architects and engineers so that projects can be quickly and professionally completed.

DPED has the resources necessary to oversee concurrent contracts once projects are selected for award. All in all, DPED has an experienced staff of 31 people, substantial monetary resources and the willingness and ability to bring to fruition these beneficial projects for the Town’s residents. While DPED will manage this initiative, the Town of Hempstead has substantial additional resources available within other Town offices and departments including the Hempstead Town Supervisor, Building Department, Highway Department, and other Town resources as needed.

9) Other.

As detailed in the application, downtown Baldwin has been the focus of several Town and County studies or initiatives, and it is the Town’s intent to fully leverage and build on the existing studies and community-backed Baldwin Revitalization Project with DRI funding. The Grand Avenue Urban Renewal Area was studied extensively, with the goals of eliminating blighting conditions and generating economic activity. In 2013, Nassau County published an Infill Redevelopment Feasibility Report, highlighting Baldwin as a priority area for sustainable growth and transit-oriented development. With this funding, the Town of Hempstead hopes to fulfill that designation. Baldwin is ready.
RELEVANT LINKS AND ADDITIONAL PROJECT INFORMATION


The NYS Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR)-funded Baldwin Downtown and Commercial Corridor Resiliency (DCCR) Study, titled Next Stop: Resilient Baldwin (https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/2856/Planning-Department)

BALDWIN EXISTING CONDITIONS
SUBMISSION

Applications from interested communities must be submitted electronically to the relevant Regional Economic Development Council at the email address below.

- Long Island LIREDC@esd.ny.gov
  Counties: Nassau, Suffolk