

National Association for County Community and Economic Development
Awards of Excellence Committee

2018 Awards of Excellence

8/17/2018 deadline

Nassau County
Village of Farmingdale Downtown Revitalization

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Submitted: 8/17/2018 1:01:08 PM (Pacific)

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Entry Form [top](#)

1. Enter the name of the agency or agencies responsible for the program entry:

This information will be on the plaque if your entry wins the award.

Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development

2. Indicate the brief title of the program or name of the project to be considered for an award of excellence, using the exact wording that you would like to appear on a plaque, should your entry win:

Farmingdale Village Downtown Revitalization

3. Indicate Congressional District(s) served by project and name(s) of U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators:

Congressional District No. 2 - Peter King

4. Indicate the awards category for which you are applying:

REMINDER – Multiple categories require multiple processing fees.

- Community Development
- Economic Development
- Homeless Coordination/Assistance
- Affordable Housing
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- Planning/Policy/Program Management
- Innovation

Program/Project Summary

5. Briefly describe the problem, the innovative solution, and results.

This brief summary is important and will be used to describe your program/project in NACCED's awards packet, on the web site, and in any communications with Congress or the Administration.

In the early 2000's, the Village of Farmingdale suffered from many of the same problems that plagued other Villages on Long Island and the rest of the country: the decline and disinvestment of the traditional downtown. Due to the economic downturn, the Village faced deteriorating infrastructure, numerous store vacancies and an ever-shrinking tax base. During this time, there were more than 25 vacancies on Main Street alone, with the problem getting worse due to competition from malls and the nearby Route 110 corridor. In addition there were many under utilized industrial properties close to the train station that weren't contributing much to the community. However, Farmingdale still possessed all the fundamental characteristics of an attractive, pedestrian-friendly village with an active village center, a concentration of businesses, and close proximity to the Long Island Railroad Station (LIRR). In other words, there was great potential to revitalize the downtown area with smart growth ideas and mindful planning.

In 2006, the Village began a community visioning process to determine the future of the Village. This led to an updated Downtown Master Plan ("Plan"). The Plan's purpose was to guide development and public investment in downtown Farmingdale over a 25-year span.

Many aspects of the Plan have been implemented since its adoption. These include new mixed-use developments, multi-family residential developments, commercial façade improvements, and street and parking improvements near the LIRR and along Main Street. This investment has brought additional foot traffic to Main Street to support the local businesses and attract other businesses to open shop. Recently, the Village voted to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) which will contribute to the maintenance, development, and promotion of the commercial district. A great economic indicator of the success of Farmingdale's redevelopment is that the tax base increased a total of 12% over a six-year time period.

Today, Farmingdale is one of the hottest downtowns on Long Island with numerous restaurants and shops drawing visitors from around Long Island. Farmingdale's downtown was voted best in Long Island in 2015 and was the recipient of a Smart Growth award by Vision Long Island in 2016 for its Transit Oriented Development initiatives.

Problem or Need

6. What circumstances or situation in your county stimulated the need for this program or project? What were the objectives in designing the program or project?

The circumstances that stimulated the need to re-evaluate the future of the Village of Farmingdale was the declining local economy, declining tax-base, and lack of investment in the downtown. The objective was to develop an updated Master Plan to transform Farmingdale from a tired downtown to a bustling destination place. To update the Plan, the Village held community visioning workshops to gather public input from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. Through various outreach efforts, eight priorities emerged. These priorities were:

Main Street revitalization

Transportation

Housing

Open Space

Community Facilities

Street Design

Architectural Character

Overdevelopment

From these identified priorities, the Village developed a multi-year Master Plan which will take Farmingdale through 2035. Key components of the Plan are to create an identifiable architectural character, improve the pedestrian environment, coordinate building signage, improve parking, create opportunities for new open space, and incorporate mixed-use structures. The Plan identified both challenges and opportunities in the quest for revitalization.

Key challenges included the following:

High Rental rates, Large Store Plates, and Absentee Landlords;

Inconsistent Display Standards

Presence of Non-Retail Uses

Nearby Competition

Key opportunities included the following:

Developer Interest

Proximity of Main Street to the LIRR Station

Proximity of Main Street to Farmingdale State College

Farmingdale faced the challenges and took advantage of the opportunities.

Solution

7. Describe the critical elements of your project/program and how they remedy the problem or address the need described above. Include any key steps, decisions, partnerships, etc. How were the objectives met? Describe the innovation in this solution.

The Village sought to address the noted high vacancy rates in its core downtown business district and attract more foot traffic by investing in sidewalk and streetscape enhancements using Community Development Block Grant funding available from Nassau County. The Village is a member of the Urban County Consortium and its downtown is in a low and moderate income census tract. The County worked with the Village to improve the existing sidewalks to make the area more pedestrian friendly. Funds were also applied to an aggressive commercial façade program. From 2006 to 2017 the County awarded more than \$410,000 in Streetscape Improvements and almost \$1 million in commercial rehabilitation funds to the Village. The Village's extremely successful "Sign, Light and Awning" program covered 80% of the cost for business owners to upgrade their signage to the new code with the business owners covering the remaining 20%. Through this program over 50 businesses have made improvements to their storefronts, improving the overall look of Main Street.

An Existing and Emerging Conditions Report completed in 2009 and a long-range Visioning Plan dubbed Farmingdale 2035 led to the adoption of changes to local zoning codes to allow for more flexible, mixed use development near the busy Long Island Rail Road station and along Main Street. These changes provided a financial incentive to redevelop industrial and underutilized properties in the area. The zoning allowed for three story buildings with retail at ground level and apartments above to help bring more foot traffic and customers to Main Street. The rezoned area was focused at the northern end of the Village closer to the train station to minimize the number of people driving rather than walking to and from the station.

To date, the revitalized downtown and new zoning codes have had the desired impact, attracting developers who have constructed close to 250 units of rental housing and another 24 townhouse condominiums within walking distance of the train station. The County assisted many of these developments with tax incentives through the local Industrial Development Agency and with HUD HOME funds.

The success of the Village's community development efforts have led to a new concern: lack of parking. Thus, the Village in recent years has been awarded CDBG dollars to re-design and reconfigure several municipal parking lots that service the downtown. Additional wayfaring signs for both drivers and pedestrians have also been installed. Other projects that were a part of the revitalization project included the creation of two new pocket parks in the downtown and several traffic calming projects to make the area safer and more friendlier to pedestrians.

Costs and Sources of Financing

8. Describe in as much detail as possible the source(s) and use(s) of funds to construct the project or start up the program, as well as the sources and uses of ongoing operating funds if applicable. Describe any innovative or unusual cost savings or financing techniques.

The revitalization of downtown Farmingdale utilized multiple funding sources and a large and complicated array of partners.

From 2006 to 2017 the Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development awarded the Village \$2,267,500 in CDBG Program funds. Of this total, about \$410,000 was allocated for Streetscape Improvements and almost \$1 million was awarded for commercial rehabilitation. The Village also received \$430,000 to improve its parking fields and install wayfaring signs. The more than 50 local business who participated in the "Sign, Light and Awning" program covered contributed 20% of the costs for improvements to their properties with the Program covering 80%. with the business owners covering the remaining 20%. To reduce costs, materials were purchased in bulk and signage was designed to minimize need for custom profiles.

The Nassau County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) approved tax incentives to many of the housing developers. Due to the benefits expected to be derived from the housing and the requirement that 10% of the units must be affordable, the IDA approved Payments In-Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) for several of the developments. The County Office of Housing and Community Development also provided \$100,000 in HOME funding to be used as homebuyer downpayment assistance in the one owner-occupied development.

Results

9. Describe the tangible results of the program. Describe how the project or program will be sustained over the long term. If the project or program is not currently operating, please explain why not. How or why do you think important aspects of this project or program might be adaptable to other communities?

As a result of the combination of programs and other incentives, downtown Farmingdale is one of the most vibrant downtowns on Long Island. There is a very low vacancy rate and a thriving restaurant scene. All of the apartments that have been built filled up within a few months of completion and more are in the planning phases. Property values have been steadily increasing in the Village as the revitalization has progressed.

While the commercial rehab program has helped numerous businesses, there are still a number that are still in need of improvements. The available funding has decreased as more sign projects have been completed and the Village has revitalized, but the Village intends to continue the program for businesses in need of support as long as it can in order to help maintain a business friendly environment.

The zoning changes have already led to the development of 273 residential units near the downtown and proximate to the Village's LIRR station. The Farmingdale station services approximately 4,625 daily commuters on an average day. Nine morning rush hour trains leave the station each day for the 50-55 minute trip to either New York City's Penn Station or Brooklyn's Atlantic Terminal. So the location of Farmingdale is desirous for both commuters and for those interested in availing themselves of all of the New York City's entertainment and cultural attractions. More housing development in the downtown is expected as developers have already submitted applications for Village review. Combined with the revitalized business district, these achievements have led to an increase of 12% in the local tax base in the Village during the 2002-2018 time period. This gives the Village resources to address local issues and ensure continued vitality. In August 2018, in response to a request from local businesses, the Village Board voted to initiate the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) in Farmingdale. Local authorization is the first step in a process that requires state approval. The creation of a BID will give the business community a new source of revenue to help promote the area as a shopping, dining, and entertainment destination in Nassau County. Many municipalities can use commercial rehab, streetscape improvements and mixed use development to revitalize their downtown areas. Maintaining a safe, attractive and interesting environment for pedestrians can help attract people to a place and providing places for people to live within a short walk of shops can help get "feet on the street" to support Main Street businesses.

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Documents [top](#)

Documents Requested *

Photos/Visual Documentation

Other

Required? Attached Documents *



[Photos of Revitalized Farmingdale Downtown](#)

[Farmingdale Map and Articles](#)

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