

## SECTION 1.2

# Introduction to the DRI and NYF Programs

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*The Downtown Revitalization Initiative and NY Forward programs focus on creating healthy, vibrant, walkable downtowns that catalyze sustainable economic development and accrue numerous economic, social, and environmental benefits to the locality, the region, and the State as a whole.*

Business and development leaders recognize that downtown communities, which offer a high quality of life and a critical mass of diverse public amenities and activities, can serve as catalysts for increased and sustainable local economic development. Investments that re-energize commercial cores attract a diverse population of new residents and visitors of varying ages, incomes, and interests, thereby strengthening the customer base for local businesses and providing the reliable workforce needed to attract and retain employers and grow the regional economy.

Government leaders recognize that focusing investment in commercial centers is also fiscally responsible. Compact development lowers the cost of delivering essential government services (police, fire, emergency medical) and reduces demand for costly new infrastructure, making local government budgets more efficient and reducing the burden on taxpayers. In addition, compact, mixed-use development is energy efficient and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. By focusing development in its downtown, a community can reduce its carbon footprint by promoting the use of public transit, making places more walkable, and reducing dependence on private vehicles.

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#### DRI and NYF Program Goals

The core goals of the Downtown Revitalization (DRI) and NY Forward (NYF) programs are summarized in the box to the right. As part of the DRI/NYF planning process, each community will use these goals as a starting point to develop its own set of localized goals that support its vision for revitalization. The State’s programmatic goals and the community’s local goals should guide the entire DRI or NYF planning process, inform project development and selection, and be clearly reflected in each community’s Strategic Investment Plan.



#### DRI and NY Forward Program Goals



Create an active downtown with a strong sense of place.



Attract new businesses that create a robust mix of shopping, entertainment, and service options for residents and visitors, and that provide job opportunities for a variety of skills and salaries.



Enhance public spaces for arts and cultural events that serve the existing members of the community but also draw in visitors from around the region.



Build a diverse population, with residents and workers supported by complementary diverse housing and employment opportunities.



Grow the local property tax base.



Provide amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality of life.



Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts.

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### DRI Program Overview

The Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) was launched in 2016 to accelerate the revitalization of downtowns in all ten regions of the State so that the downtowns can serve as centers of activity and catalysts for increased local investment. As a cornerstone of the State’s economic development program, the DRI transforms downtown neighborhoods into vibrant centers that offer a high quality of life and become magnets for redevelopment, business growth, job creation, and economic and housing diversity.

The Department of State (DOS) administers the Governor’s DRI in close coordination with Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), Empire State Development (ESD), New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA), and several other State partners.

### Community Characteristics

In general, DRI communities:

- Are sizable downtowns with a regional draw;
- Include major employment centers and tourism attractions;
- Provide a walkable network of destinations;
- Are characterized by relatively dense urban development with diverse land uses; and
- Provide multi-modal transportation options (e.g., mass transit, bicycle infrastructure) or have the potential to increase multi-modal infrastructure.

### Available Funding for the DRI Round 6

The State has allocated \$10 million to each of the State’s ten Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) regions to make one DRI award of \$10 million. The REDCs are responsible for nominating awardees.



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**NYF Program Overview**

NY Forward (NYF) was launched in 2022 to support a more equitable downtown recovery for New York's smaller communities, with a focus on hamlets, villages, and neighborhood-scale commercial centers. Similar to the DRI, the DOS administers the Governor's NYF program in close coordination with HCR, ESD, NYSERDA, and several other State partners. Through the NYF program, these smaller downtowns will receive planning and implementation support needed to attract more businesses, residents, and visitors, while also providing a higher quality of life for all residents.

**Community Characteristics**

In general, NYF communities:

- Provide important services to the local community/neighborhood in a mixed-use, walkable setting;
- Often feature a distinct sense of place due to the presence of rich cultural, historic, natural, and/or agricultural assets;
- Often have less dense development than a DRI community; however, NYF communities are still compact and walkable; and
- May include villages, hamlets, and neighborhood centers nested within a larger municipality.

**Available Funding for NYF**

In the first year of the NYF program, each REDC had the option of nominating two communities for \$4.5 million NYF awards or three communities, one of which will receive \$4.5 million and two that will be awarded \$2.25 million. NYF funds are also used to provide robust capacity-building and technical assistance directly to communities throughout each phase of the program.

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This table provides an overview of characteristics common to DRI and NYF communities. However, the list is not exhaustive given the unique attributes of the State's downtowns.

<b>Community Characteristics</b>	
<b>DRI</b>	<b>NY Forward</b>
Larger, walkable, more dense geographical areas with amenities that serve the regional community	Smaller, walkable, less dense geographical areas with amenities that serve the immediate local community
Multi-modal transportation, including mass transit options	More vehicle dependent; patrons mainly arrive by car
Employment center for the regional economy	Predominantly service-oriented businesses and employment opportunities. Services may include maintaining employment and job growth
Larger, urban tourist center with more attractions spread out over several blocks of development — walkable between multiple nodes of activities/ attractions	Small-town charm – with heritage, antiques, cottage, agriculture and other niche based tourism In NYC, Business Improvement District (BID)-scale residential-focused districts
Availability or potential for rail/bus/ferry public transportation making Transit Oriented Development possible	Vehicle dependent with limited public transportation potential. Residential, or rural agricultural centric development
High-density development: most buildings are three or more stories; buildings contain a number of uses and tenants; there is greater square footage of built space per acre	Low-density: most buildings are two to four stories; buildings contain a few uses and tenants; there is lesser square footage of built space per acre
Existing or potential for higher density buildings, multi-story buildings with opportunities for upper story housing	Lower density - Two to four story buildings with opportunities for upper story housing

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The following table is an overview of the common types of projects and project characteristics for DRI and NYF communities and is intended to be a guide for communities. It is not an exhaustive list of project types or characteristics.

Potential Projects	
DRI	NY Forward
Larger private, mixed-use projects	Smaller projects focused more on building renovation and redevelopment and activation of upper-stories (ex: housing, additional commercial) rather than new construction
Adaptive reuse	Adaptive reuse
New public construction projects on developable properties, creating new public spaces	Projects that deal primarily with vacancy and rehabilitation, but may include new construction or creation of new public space
Projects that elevate urban- and employment-based downtown qualities and enhance the regional draw of the DRI area	Projects that elevate specific cultural and historical qualities that enhance the feeling of local charm
Wayfinding projects to connect the network of amenities and attractions distributed over several commercial corridors	Tight commercial activity area with opportunity to enhance cultural heritage through signage or historic markers