

Hochul announces completion of \$10M Westbury revitalization



Gov. Kathy Hochul announced the completion of a state-funded downtown revitalization project in Westbury on Wednesday. Credit: Howard Schnapp

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Gov. Kathy Hochul has announced the completion of a \$10 million downtown revitalization initiative in Westbury, the first Long Island community to receive the funding for transit-oriented development.

Hochul came to Westbury on Wednesday to mark completion of a seven-year effort that included rezoning downtown for mixed use buildings, apartments near the LIRR station, street and building improvements and a new permanent home for the Westbury Arts Council.

“Seeing the transformation that occurs when they’ve been the beneficiaries of this incredible program, you get a chance to re-imagine entire neighborhoods and to ultimately bring the vision of a community to life,” Hochul said at a

news conference, where she was joined by elected officials from Westbury, North Hempstead and Nassau County.

“And it also attracts new people, new investments and creates jobs.”

The project's completion comes more than six years after Hochul, then lieutenant governor, announced the state funding for Westbury's effort, part of then-Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

Westbury was among 10 communities selected across the state, with a total of \$100 million disbursed.

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Westbury was the first Long Island recipient to be awarded funding in 2016. Additional Long Island recipients have included Hicksville, Central Islip, Baldwin, Amityville, Riverhead and Huntington Station.

The governor said future downtown funding would be prioritized for communities on Long Island and across the state that intend to add housing and other types of development. She pointed to another source of funding, Empire State Development's \$350 million Long Island Investment Fund, which makes communities eligible for money to add housing as part of downtown mixed-use buildings.

Westbury's improvements included — at a cost of \$970,000 — rezoning 52 acres of blighted property near the train station. Developers also built 130 apartments, called the Cornerstone at Westbury, and held a lottery for affordable apartments.

Village officials also built a pedestrian plaza at Post and Union avenues and spent \$5.5 million of the state funding on street improvements along Post, including new trees, lighting and curb improvements and expanded sidewalks. The village used \$600,000 to improve the facades of 10 commercial buildings and three public buildings.

Officials used the remaining \$1.8 million to renovate two community buildings – giving the Westbury Arts Council a permanent home and spending \$430,000 to upgrade the Westbury Recreation and Community Center with new lighting, a gym floor and doorways in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Connie LoCascio, a founding member of the arts council, said the new facility would help attract performers and allow for a larger audience.

“We needed a place to call our own to hold community events,” she said. “We used to go wherever we could find to hold 20 people and we begged to have a space.”

Hochul said the Long Island investments would make more money eligible to communities looking to meet the state’s housing needs. She signed an executive order in July to expand to residential projects after development groups said the fund designed to add jobs was not previously eligible in downtowns.

“Gov. Hochul’s initiative will unlock hundreds of millions of dollars in funding and has the means to create transformative housing projects,” said Kyle Strober, executive director of Association for a Better Long Island. “It will help spur desperately needed housing projects, via incentives, that will provide homes for young people and allow our seniors to age in place.”



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