

## State to Work with Residents, Community Leaders and Public Officials to Revitalize Downtown Areas

### Downtown Revitalization Investments Are Crucial Part of the State's Comprehensive Strategy to Revitalize Communities and Grow the Economy

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced that the City of Rochester, Monroe County, and the Village of Newark, Wayne County, will receive \$10 million each in funding as the Finger Lakes Region winners of the fifth round of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. As part of DRI Round 5, each of the state's 10 regional economic development regions are being awarded \$20 million, to make for a total state commitment of \$200 million in funding and investments to help communities boost their post COVID-19 economies by transforming downtowns into vibrant neighborhoods.

"Investing in our downtowns is vital to reigniting New York's recovery," **Governor Hochul said**. "These awards will enhance Rochester and Newark so that locals and visitors alike can enjoy all these areas have to offer. The Finger Lakes is a region brimming with history and attractions and I look forward to seeing how these winners will use their funds to bring their communities to the next level."

**Lieutenant Governor Brian Benjamin said**, "As we continue to recover from COVID-19, the State's Downtown Revitalization Initiative is a critical tool to help communities across the Empire State recover. The \$20 million in funding awarded to Rochester and Newark will help these communities achieve more vibrant neighborhoods and boost their post COVID-19 economies."

Led by the Department of State, the DRI serves as a cornerstone of the State's economic development policy by transforming downtown neighborhoods into vibrant centers of activity that offer a high quality of life

and attract redevelopment, businesses, jobs, and economic and housing diversity. In this round, Governor Hochul doubled funding from \$100 million to \$200 million and allowed each Regional Economic Development Council to decide whether to nominate two \$10 million awardees or one \$20 million awardee for transformative and catalytic downtown redevelopment projects. Like past DRI rounds, each selected community will develop a strategic plan through a bottom-up, community-based planning process that articulates a vision for the revitalization of its downtown and identifies a list of signature projects that have the potential to transform the downtown and leverage further private and public investments. DRI funds will then be awarded for selected projects that have the greatest potential to jumpstart revitalization and realize the community's vision for the downtown. Through the DRI, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) will provide technical support to the awardees to assist them with including carbon neutral principles in support of the state's goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent by 2050.

### **Downtown Rochester's Revitalization**

Rochester's DRI will focus on the transformation of the long-blighted area in the center of downtown along the north side of Main Street from Clinton Avenue down to the Genesee River. With a 17% population increase since 2010 and 50% of the population being aged 20-34 years old, Rochester's downtown has seen significant private and public investment in the last 15 years, including new housing, hotels, updates to the convention center, multiple high-tech business and incubators to boost a burgeoning Downtown Innovation Zone, and a resurgence of the city's waterfront thanks to dozens of projects that are part of the state supported ROC The Riverway initiative. However, the Main and Clinton block is in desperate need of redevelopment while progress continues all around it. The winning plan will help to improve streetscapes and public spaces, upgrade the built environment, and increase pedestrian access/connections in order to catalyze

further investment in the area, putting the finishing touches on the city's downtown revitalization, creating a resurgent Rochester where more people will want to live, work and play.

## **Newark**

Downtown Newark is a compact, walkable, well-defined, and concentrated area that the village aims to make the heartbeat of a lively, world-class village and the cultural and commercial center of the Finger Lakes region with the Erie Canal serving as the village's center of commerce. With multiple, large anchor institutions and ongoing job growth, Newark has seen nearly \$220 million invested in the village in the last 10 years. A robust public engagement process led the village to identify needs for infill mixed-use development, more housing for workforce and seniors, and new space for indoor recreation and wellness with a focus on utilizing space along the Erie Canal.

The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council conducted a thorough and competitive review process of proposals submitted from communities throughout the region and considered all seven criteria below before recommending Rochester and Newark as the nominees:

- The downtown should be compact, with well-defined boundaries;
- The downtown is able to capitalize on prior or catalyze future private and public investment in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas;
- There should be recent or impending job growth within, or in close proximity to the downtown that can attract workers to the downtown, support redevelopment and make growth sustainable;
- The downtown must be an attractive and livable community for diverse populations of all ages, income, gender, identity, ability, mobility and cultural background;

- The municipality should already embrace or have the ability to create and implement policies that increase livability and quality of life, including the use of local land banks, modern zoning codes and parking standards, complete streets plans, energy efficient projects, green jobs, and transit-oriented development;
- The municipality should have conducted an open and robust community engagement process resulting in a vision for downtown revitalization and a preliminary list of projects and initiatives that may be included in a DRI strategic investment plan;
- The municipality has the local capacity to manage the DRI process; and
- The municipality has identified transformative projects that will be ready for near-term implementation with an infusion of DRI funds.

Rochester and Newark now join the Cities of Geneva, Batavia, Penn Yan and Seneca Falls, which were the Finger Lakes Region's winners in the first four DRI rounds, respectively.

Rochester and Newark will now begin the process of developing a Strategic Investment Plan to revitalize their downtowns with up to \$300,000 in planning funds from the \$10 million DRI grant. Local Planning Committees made up of municipal representatives, community leaders, and other stakeholders will lead the effort, supported by a team of private sector experts and state planners. The Strategic Investment Plans will examine local assets and opportunities and identify economic development, transportation, housing, and community projects that align with each community's vision for downtown revitalization and that are poised for implementation. The Strategic Investment Plans will guide the investment of DRI grant funds in revitalization projects that will advance the community's vision for its downtown and that can leverage and expand upon the state's \$10 million investment. Plans for the DRI's fifth round will be complete in 2022.

**Acting Secretary of State Brendan C. Hughes said,** "The Downtown Revitalization Initiative will help reinvigorate the economies for Rochester and Newark by capitalizing on recent investments made in each downtown. The Department of State looks forward to working with each community to broaden the State's impact in ways that leverage private investments to create more opportunities for residents, businesses and visitors right here in the Finger Lakes."

**Empire State Development Acting Commissioner and President & CEO-designate Hope Knight said,** "DRI investments are helping to reinvigorate downtown neighborhoods around New York State, reflecting a key component of our economic development strategy. These \$10 million awards for both Rochester and Newark will catalyze transformative projects designed to encourage business growth, job creation and promote tourism—all leading to an even brighter future for these vibrant communities."

**New York State Homes and Community Renewal**

**Commissioner RuthAnne Visnauskas said,** "The Downtown Revitalization Initiative is capitalizing on community assets, spurring local economic development, and driving millions toward strengthening neighborhoods and enhancing Main Streets. The \$10 million investment in both Rochester and Newark will make these communities better, more affordable, more dynamic places to live and work. HCR is proud to be part of this effort and we look forward to seeing the impact this investment will have on the Finger Lakes."

**NYSERDA President and CEO Doreen M. Harris said,** "NYSERDA is pleased to partner with DOS to provide technical support to Rochester and Newark and all of the downtown revitalization winners as they advance sustainable redevelopment. This infusion of support for the Finger Lakes Region and the resulting projects will include energy efficiency and carbon neutral standards critical to meeting New York's goal to reducing climate changing emissions."

**New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton**

**said**, "Today, we celebrate Rochester and Newark as they join nearly 20 other Canal corridor communities in receiving strategic funding through the State's Downtown Revitalization Initiative program. For nearly 200 years, the Erie Canal and the Canal system have been drivers of economic development, allowing communities to grow and thrive along a necklace of waterways, and the investments being allocated ensures their downtowns."

**Senator Jeremy Cooney said**, "I have traveled across the state meeting with mayors about upstate urban revitalization. The DRI is heralded as one of the best economic drivers for downtown development. The selection of Rochester as a \$10 million DRI winner is a huge win for the people of our city. This award will bolster the investments made in Rochester over the past several years by improving our streetscapes and public spaces which will be an economic driver for the renewal of our city center. Congratulations to everyone who put together this winning application. I look forward to partnering with our Mayor-Elect to grow and develop downtown Rochester."

**Senator Samra Brouk said**, "The selection of Rochester as a \$10 million winner for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative is a vital success for our area. With roughly half of our downtown area's population under the age of 34, this is undoubtedly a major investment in the future of Rochester's young people. This award reinforces the investments made in Rochester over the past several years by improving our streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces for all residents and visitors to enjoy. I commend all involved in putting together this winning application, and I look forward to seeing the city's vision come to life."

**Senator Pam Helming said**, "Congratulations to the Village of Newark, Mayor Taylor, and all those whose commitment and hard work has resulted in today's announcement. This investment will help accelerate downtown's revitalization, support economic growth, and advance the transformative

progress made in Newark over the last several years. It is my honor to be a partner to the Village in this effort and I thank Governor Hochul and state agencies for their partnership as well. This is a great day for the families who live here, the businesses that grow here, the tourists who travel here, and all those who love the Village of Newark and keep it moving forward."

**Assemblymember Harry Bronson said,** "I want to thank Governor Hochul, Lt. Governor Benjamin and the entire team at the Regional Economic Development Council for recognizing the potential for the development of the Main Street-Clinton Avenue corridor. As Chair of the Assembly's Economic Development Committee, I know the transformational impact that the Downtown Revitalization Initiative award can be for a community and what it will mean for the business, workforce and housing development downtown. Main and Clinton are the crossroads of our redevelopment plans and this funding will allow the continuation of that vital work."

**Assemblymember Demond Meeks said,** "Today's announcement is great news for Rochester! The Downtown Revitalization Initiative has been helping municipalities throughout the region jump-start economic growth. I'm grateful to Governor Hochul for bringing this transformative award to Rochester, and to all who worked on this effort locally. Congratulations!"

**Assemblymember Sarah Clark said,** "Today's announcement is a win for the people of Rochester and the greater Finger Lakes region. The Downtown Revitalization Initiative has helped many communities across the state jump-start much needed redevelopment efforts in city centers and Rochester will benefit greatly from this program. I am excited to enjoy these transformed public spaces and streetscapes that will also be a catalyst for new economic growth. Thank you, Governor Hochul, for your investment in the development of our region and I look forward to working together on future projects."

**Assemblymember Brian Manktelow said,** "An investment of \$10 million will go a long way toward helping Newark build on their revitalization plan to bring

new economic development opportunities to the area. Through this Downtown Revitalization Initiative award, Newark will be able to support new businesses, create additional housing, and new recreational areas along the Erie Canal. I commend all involved in putting together this winning application, and look forward to seeing the progress Newark makes in the near future."

**Rochester Mayor James Patrick Smith said,** "Downtown Rochester continues its amazing comeback today thanks to Governor Hochul. This \$10 million dollars from the Downtown Revitalization Initiative builds upon our success bringing Constellation Brands home, all of our Roc the Riverway projects, reenergizing Parcel 5 and our complete renovation of East Main Street. Rochester is again the true gem of the Finger Lakes region and that's due to our great partnership with Empire State Development and New York State."

**Rochester Mayor-Elect Malik Evans said,** "Transforming our downtown into a vibrant community free of blight and brimming with opportunity is one of my top priorities. I am grateful to the Hochul administration for partnering with Rochester to make our downtown a lively, hope-filled place. The DRI will allow us to accelerate this vibrancy."

**Newark Mayor Jonathan Taylor said,** "We are so excited that the Village of Newark has been selected as winner of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. With this \$10 million investment, we will continue to capitalize on our proximity to the Erie Canal and add to the vibrancy of our village. I'm so grateful for the members of our community to help make this announcement possible, and to Governor Hochul for believing in Newark. I can't wait to work with the many stakeholders in our village to develop a list of projects to help further revitalize Newark."

**County Executive Adam Bello said,** "Downtown Rochester is in the midst of a remarkable transformation, drawing in new jobs, economic activity, development and residents, but you wouldn't know it right now from looking at



the northwest side of Main & Clinton. This vital funding from the Downtown Revitalization Initiative will help us remake one of the most blighted corners in our downtown as we seek to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank Gov. Hochul and Lt. Gov. Benjamin for their continued investment in our city. A strong Rochester makes all of Monroe County stronger."

**Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Co-Chairs Bob Duffy, President and CEO, Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce and Dr. Denise Battles, President of SUNY Geneseo said,** "The FLREDC is incredibly proud to support the City of Rochester and the Village of Newark with their exciting futures. These community driven strategic plans will benefit both residents and visitors alike. The \$20 million in DRI funding will help to fuel an array of targeted, transformative projects, promoting economic growth and creating vibrant downtown areas in both of these wonderful communities where people will want to live, work, and play."

### **About the Downtown Revitalization Initiative**

[The Downtown Revitalization Initiative](#) launched in 2016 to accelerate and expand the revitalization of downtowns and neighborhoods in all ten regions of the state to serve as centers of activity and catalysts for investment. Led by the Department of State, the initiative represents an unprecedented and innovative plan-to-act strategy that couples strategic planning with immediate implementation, bringing with it an interagency team of state experts to support local government capacity in realizing their community's vision.

In the first four years of the program, the state committed \$400 million to invest in downtowns that are ripe for revitalization and have the potential to become magnets for redevelopment, business, job creation, greater economic and housing diversity, and opportunity. The fifth round of the DRI will have an additional \$200 million commitment. Participating communities are nominated by the state's 10 Regional Economic Development Councils based on the downtown's potential for transformation. Each community is awarded at least

\$10 million to develop a downtown strategic investment plan and implement key catalytic projects that advance the community's vision for revitalization and leverage additional private and public investments.

Downtown redevelopment plays a critical role in the State's nation-leading efforts to support sustainable economic development, reverse climate change, and promote climate justice by creating walkable, bikeable and transit-accessible communities that significantly reduce automobile use and greenhouse gas emissions. The DRI also supports the State's Health Across All Policies/Age-Friendly NY initiative by creating more opportunities for outside recreation and exercise; offering safe, accessible public spaces for social interaction, which improves mental health; and expanding access to fresh, nutritious food, particularly in underserved communities.

The initiative is headed by New York State Department of State. Communities receive support from private sector experts and a team of state agency staff led by the Department of State in close partnership with Empire State Development, and state Homes and Community Renewal.