



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara: Revitalization awards for Elmira continue laying foundations for Southern Tier

[Thomas F. O'Mara](#)

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Elmira, N.Y., July 5—State Senator Tom O'Mara, a member of the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council (REDC), welcomed today's announcement of the Downtown Elmira projects that will receive a total of \$10 million in state Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) awards for the Southern Tier region.

Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) said, "The city of Elmira has a number of exciting foundations on which to build and we're hopeful this critical state investment in the city's future will lead to short- and long-term community revitalization and economic growth. We're grateful to the Cuomo administration, our local DRI planning committee, and the important public input that's been offered to help Elmira move forward. These Elmira-based projects represent exciting and fantastic additions to a city that's a cornerstone of the entire Southern Tier region."

According to the governor's office, the winning projects are:

> **West Water Street Mixed-Use Development:** Construct a mixed-use development on a vacant lot in the center of Elmira's downtown. The project will include a four-story building with approximately 50 market rate apartment units, 16,700-square-feet of retail and commercial space on the ground floor, and outdoor landscaping with amenities. The project will enhance Elmira's downtown by creating an active

18-hour environment of commercial, retail and residential uses;

> Lake Street Pedestrian Bridge: Rehabilitate and reopen Lake Street Bridge as a pedestrian connection between the north and south banks of the Chemung River. The Lake Street Bridge is situated adjacent to the Mark Twain Riverfront Park and connects downtown Elmira to the neighborhoods across the river. Re-opening the bridge, which has been closed to vehicular traffic for over six years, will re-connect residents to the downtown, spur development of several underutilized and vacant properties along both Lake Street and Water Streets, enhance the downtown environment, and provides scenic vistas for public use and enjoyment;

> Centertown Parking Garage: Rehabilitate the 40-year-old Centertown Parking Garage to create a safer, more aesthetically pleasing parking structure to serve downtown Elmira. The centrally located, 735-car garage is underutilized due to its disrepair, safety concerns, and poor lighting quality. Renovations will preserve its structural integrity and create a more inviting and marketable parking structure to support downtown activities, small businesses, and retailers;

> Clemens Square: Renovate an underutilized public space in the heart of Elmira's downtown to create Clemens Square, a walkable and inviting public space that links some of the City's most important assets: Clemens Center, First Arena, and Main Street, as well as the West Water Street mixed-use development, several renovated historic buildings, and the renovated Centertown Parking Garage. The new

> Clemens Square will encourage visitors to explore the new offerings in downtown and will provide a new adaptable space for programs and events throughout the year;

> Riverfront Boardwalk: Improve and upgrade Riverfront Park on the Chemung River to include a new elevated boardwalk, seating, planters, and artwork that reestablishes a strong connection between the river and the adjacent downtown core and serves as an attraction for visitors and patrons to downtown Elmira. The new elevated boardwalk park, which will allow views of the Chemung River over the existing flood barrier, will be located directly across from the new West Water Street mixed-use development project, Clemens Square, and the Centertown Parking Garage, thus adding to the experience of visitors to these downtown destinations;

> Activate Buildings in Downtown Elmira: Renovate vacant and underutilized buildings in the area in order to accommodate Elmira's unmet housing, ground floor

retail, and commercial business needs. The project will bring new housing options to downtown and foster growth of retail and commercial offerings and will leverage private capital from property owners;

> West Water Street Parking: Reconfigure public parking on West Water Street to increase the number of spaces available to accommodate new and existing mixed-use development. The new parking lay-out will better serve local businesses, support increased density in downtown Elmira, and allow room for new public spaces elsewhere;

> Downtown Zoning Update: Modernize the City of Elmira's zoning code by adding a new Form-Based Overlay district to apply to the DRI area. The new Form-Based Overlay district will have clear standards and terminology for desired buildings and architecture, public space and streetscapes, parking and circulation, and landscaping. The updates will also make the land use review process within the downtown area more predictable through refined definitions, guidance materials, and streamlined administrative review and approval procedures for new development and allow and encourage infill development that aligns with the goals of the DRI;

> Fund for Small Business Revolving Loans: Provide small loans to owners of buildings within the DRI area to renovate retail and commercial storefronts and spaces. Many existing properties located along Main Street are in need of improvements. The cost of renovation of these older structures to meet contemporary standards is not fully covered by the current rental rates of the Elmira marketplace. This project will establish a revolving loan fund to allow necessary renovations to occur.

New York State's DRI assists short- and long-term local plans to transform neighborhoods, encourage business development, and expand private-sector economic growth. Governor Andrew Cuomo first proposed the initiative in his 2016 State of the State address. It is distributing \$100 million in grants to select cities in each of the state's 10 REDC regions.

New York Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul was in Elmira today to make the announcement at the Clemens Center, where O'Mara and other local, regional, and state leaders joined her.