

LI projects' advocates cheer state grants

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Nassau and Suffolk officials cheered Thursday's announcement by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo that dozens of Long Island's most promising projects would receive state grants.

The region was among four in New York awarded more than \$100 million each in state aid for initiatives deemed economic and job engines.

In total, 66 Long Island projects received \$101.6 million, to be allocated before the end of the fiscal year in March.

Among the largest grants were millions toward sewer improvements as part of the Hempstead Village downtown revitalization, transit plaza infrastructure for the Wyandanch Rising development, and money to fund the design phase of a sewage treatment plant for the Ronkonkoma Hub project.

Wyandanch Rising received the most among municipal projects on Long Island -- \$6 million. The state highlighted its potential to "transform the most economically, socially and environmentally distressed community . . . into an active mixed-use, mixed income, transit-oriented community."

For Hempstead, Mayor Wayne Hall said the village's \$5 million in state aid would help create jobs while working to improve the village's aging infrastructure, including the sewer system. "This is going to help Hempstead and the region. It is going to create jobs," Hall said. "Hempstead is on the right track."

Brookhaven Supervisor Mark Lesko said the \$4 million for the Ronkonkoma Hub would be used for a sewage treatment plant to serve 50 acres of the transit-oriented development, a collaboration between Brookhaven and Islip centered on the train station and Long Island MacArthur Airport.

"This is a win," Lesko said, noting that the town Thursday recommended a master developer for the project.

Stony Brook University received millions in funding for several projects that could energize the local technology industry, said Dr. Samuel Stanley Jr., the university president. "Long Island was a home to innovation in the past and could continue to be in the future," he said. "We need to take advantage of our existing assets and to play on those more than we're doing."

Stanley served on the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council, which recommended to the state which projects deserved funding. He said he abstained from votes related to his university.

Brookhaven National Laboratory partnered with some of the Stony Brook University projects that received money.

Other funded science projects included Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, which received \$2 million for an advanced drug testing facility linked to its cancer research.

"The injection of state economic development funds to Long Island is well deserved and will help catalyze our growing research cluster, particularly in the area of biomedicine," said lab president Dr. Bruce Stillman.

With Aisha al-Muslim, Denise Bonilla, Patrick Whittle and Sarah Crichton

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