

Mid-Hudson projects wishing for state grants

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A New Windsor-based developer wants a \$4.2 million state grant to help pay for a project in Uptown Kingston that would consist of 129 apartments, a 38-room hotel, a 475-space parking garage, a pedestrian plaza and some stores and restaurants.

Michael Bruno, a Tuxedo Park entrepreneur who's been buying and restoring buildings in Tuxedo and Sloatsburg to revive a strip of Route 17, is asking the state for \$1.8 million to support the next stage of his work, which will include an expansion of an inn he created.

The owners of the closed Antrim Lodge in the western reaches of Sullivan County would like \$1.6 million in grants to turn their stately, 127-year-old resort into an upscale inn and restaurant — a draw for Catskills tourists.

Those are the biggest requests in Orange, Ulster and Sullivan counties on the latest grant wishlist submitted by the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council. The panel of representatives from business, government and other sectors in the seven-county region have identified those projects and 16 others as their top priorities this year, part of an annual ritual since 2011 that helps direct the flow of tens of millions of dollars of state grant money to businesses, nonprofits and local governments in the mid-Hudson.

This year's priorities include three projects in Kingston, a city already chosen last month to get \$10 million in state funding for similar work through a separate program focused on downtown revitalization.

In addition to JM Development's mixed-use project in Uptown Kingston, the economic development council prioritized grant requests to turn the former Hutton Brickyards into a riverfront entertainment complex and to open a film-and-technology center in a closed factory. The later project, known as The Metro, is a collaboration between the nonprofits RUPCO and Stockade Works, founded and led by actress Mary Stuart Masterson.

The regional panel also gave the state a list of dozens of other grant requests it supports but didn't elevate to priority status. Following a practice state officials devised after Gov. Andrew Cuomo took office in 2011, state agencies will wade through these wishlists from all 10 regional councils in New York and announce grant awards in December.

In the annual report that lists the Mid-Hudson's latest funding priorities, the council indicates that three-quarters of the 574 projects that have been offered a total of \$269 million in state grants since 2011 are either done or proceeding on schedule. It also states that its projects have created 5,871 jobs, not including construction work or indirect employment effects.

Getting supporting data on how many jobs individual grant recipients say they have created isn't easy.

More than six months ago, the Times Herald-Record asked Empire State Development, the agency that oversees the annual grant competition, for a list of Mid-Hudson projects it has awarded grants since 2011, their status and the numbers of jobs they created — the same data used to compile totals for the council's annual reports.

ESD still hasn't provided the information. The agency's latest letter extending its expected response time said it will try to respond by the end of this week.