

Orange County receives more than \$8.9 million in econ development grants Legoland, Warwick factory, Tuxedo Revitalization Project biggest winners



Photo illustration The state announced the winners of \$83.3 million in grants last week, which will go to support 105 projects in the seven counties that make up the Mid-Hudson region. Orange County raked in a total of \$8.9 million, with the biggest winners being the Legoland theme park proposed for Goshen, a syrup factory coming to Warwick and a project aimed at revitalizing the Tuxedo Sloatsburg Corridor.

BY ERIKA NORTON

GOSHEN — The state announced the winners of \$83.3 million in grants last week, which will go to support 105 projects in the seven counties that make up the Mid-Hudson region.

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The grants are part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s Regional Economic Development Council Initiative, which focuses on long-term strategic plans for regional economic growth.

The big winners The largest award in the county of \$3 million went to Merlin Entertainments, the developer of the proposed

Legoland New York theme park in Goshen, a project which already received \$4.1 million in state grants when the park was originally planned for Rockland County. According to Focus Media Vice President JP McGuirk, the public relations firm representing Merlin, the funds are earmarked for new construction, furniture, fixtures and equipment for the park.

In Warwick, Star Kay White, Inc., a company that mainly manufactures flavorings and extracts, was awarded a combined \$2.6 million in grant funds for a new \$20 million state-of-the-art facility planned for the Warwick Valley Office and Technology Park, formerly the Mid-Orange Correctional Facility property. The facility would house the company’s primary syrup manufacturing line.

The Tuxedo Hudson Company also received a \$750,000 grant to help fund the company’s [Revitalization Project of the Tuxedo Sloatsburg Corridor](#), the underdeveloped stretch of Route 17 that runs through those two towns. Spearheaded by entrepreneur Michael Bruno, the goal of the project is to re-energize the area’s commercial economy by transforming the properties along the corridor, many of them with historical buildings, into places for antiquing, world-class cuisine and lodging.

These places include the renovation of the Tuxedo Market, the Tuxedo Tavern, and the Sloatsburg Garden Hotel, the Sloatsburg Antiques/Art Center and the Sloatsburg Farm.

“We are thrilled that the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council recognizes the benefit of our project and we are honored to be included,” Bruno said. “The funds awarded will help us to realize our goal to get the market and hotel open in 2017.”

Nearby, the Village of Woodbury also received \$135,075 of funding for comprehensive system/program mapping of the municipal storm water sewer system (MS4), which will help the village identify discharges into local waterways.

According to Mayor Michael Queenan, the Village of Woodbury has approximately, 1,090 inlets and about 270,000 feet of storm sewer. The mapping will help the village comply with state MS4 general permit requirements and also assists the village in enforcement of illicit discharges and municipal management of the capital resources.

“It helps us really to protect the natural resources, especially the Moodna Creek,” Queenan said. “You’re required to do this for your permits. It’s a costly endeavor, and we’re going to have to put up some of the money ourselves, but getting this grant is a big benefit and it mitigates the impact to the taxpayers.”

County grants Orange County received a number of grants for environmental projects. The county Department of Public Works received a grant of \$510,985 to expand the Yard Waste Composting Facility located at the New Hampton transfer off Route 17M.

“They had done some small scale piloting with dealing with organic waste, like yard waste and other things,” said County Planning Commissioner David Church, “so this would greatly expand that. We’re trying to take that waste out of getting just dumped or carted.”

According to Church, the money will go to help pay for some site improvements and some equipment to scale the program up, plus some monitoring of how the program goes to hopefully figure out a way to implement the program at all of the county transfer stations.

The county Planning Department also received funding to continue with the Climate Smart Communities Certification process.

“Certification is that the county through the legislature, made a pledge to act to pursue and advance certain actions that are smart for the climate and address climate change,” Church said. “The certification, we met the minimum necessary of those steps, so we’re trying to do more than that now.”

Orange County was the first county in the state of New York to be certified as a Climate Smart Community, and because the county was certified, it was eligible for this grant money.

“We’re on the podium, but we’re not the winner,” Church said, and so this funding will go to the county’s next steps in the certification rating system.

These next steps include developing a county-wide Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), conducting a vulnerability assessment and developing Climate Adaptation Strategies. Church said the project is specifically structured around the different large watersheds in the county.

For the project, the county is partnering with the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance, the Orange County Water Authority and the SUNY New Paltz, specifically with faculty members who do specialized research through the Benjamin Center.

“We’re going to do some research on what climate change is impacting those watershed areas and then come up with some proposed actions on how to address them,” Church said.

Gov. Cuomo is also beginning to make this initiative of making climate smart communities an element of a larger program called Clean Energy Communities. Church said the county wants to get to the level where we can qualify for that, which would not only show that the county is progressive about these issues, but make the county eligible for additional, new funding.