



TOWN OF RIVERHEAD
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Press Release

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PRESS ADVISORY: Riverhead Officials Host Groundbreaking Ceremony at Site of Future Town Square, Marking Major Milestone

RIVERHEAD, NY – The Town of Riverhead held its groundbreaking ceremony for the Riverhead Town Square, a flagship downtown revitalization project that marks a new chapter for community life and economic growth in the heart of Downtown Riverhead. The ceremony took place this afternoon, December 12, 2025, at 12 p.m.

This ambitious project, made possible by dedicated town leadership, federal, state and county funding, and a committed partnership with developer J. Petrocelli Development Associates, will create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly Town Square featuring landscaped green spaces, an amphitheater, public playground, walkways, a boutique hotel, and mixed-use commercial spaces. The Town Square will reconnect Main Street to the Peconic River, establishing a dynamic public space for residents and visitors alike.

The project received widespread financial support from federal, state and county funding sources in recent years. Specifically, \$24,123,369 in federal RAISE funds, \$4.2M in NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) funds awarded through the Department of State, \$400,000 in Brownfield Opportunity Area funds awarded through the Department of State, \$3.2M in state funds awarded through Empire State Development, \$1.4M of those funds towards the amphitheater, \$500,000 in funds through the New York State Parks and Historic Preservation, \$2.4M in Suffolk County Jumpstart funds and \$97,500 in Suffolk County Downtown Revitalization funds.

“Investing in Riverhead’s new Town Square is an investment in the residents who call this Long Island community home,” Governor Kathy Hochul said. “By creating accessible public spaces and connecting Main Street to the Peconic Riverfront, we’re strengthening the downtown area,



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supporting local businesses, and reimagining how residents and visitors alike experience Riverhead.”

“Today’s groundbreaking for Riverhead’s new Town Square is an exciting step for a community that envisions a more vibrant and connected downtown,” said Secretary of State Walter T. Mosley. “With support from the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, this new public plaza and gathering space will create a welcoming waterfront destination that will open new opportunities for community events, strengthen the economic heartbeat of downtown and make the Peconic River an accessible, celebrated asset for residents and visitors alike. Riverhead’s new Town Square will serve as a source of pride and possibility for community members.”

Supervisor Tim Hubbard expressed enthusiasm about the milestone: “Today we celebrate more than just the start of construction; we celebrate the realization of a vision that has been 30 years in the making. The Riverhead Town Square will be the economic, social and cultural epicenter that our downtown desperately needed—a place that will bring community members together, boost local businesses, attract visitors, and reconnect us with the natural beauty of our waterfront. This project represents the best of what we can achieve when government, community, and private partners collaborate toward a shared goal. We’re building a future where Riverhead thrives socially, culturally, and economically. This groundbreaking is a testament to our resilience and our commitment to growth that honors both our history and our future.” Hubbard continued, “I want to thank everyone involved, from our federal, state and county partners, to our dedicated town staff to Joe Petrocelli and his team, whose passion and expertise have been central to bringing this dream to life. Together, we’re not just building a square; we’re building community pride and a stronger Riverhead for generations to come.”

“Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law we passed, I was proud to deliver a highly competitive \$24.12 million U.S. Department of Transportation RAISE grant to Riverhead to reimagine and revitalize its downtown,” said U.S. Senator Charles Schumer. “This transformational infusion of federal funding will allow Riverhead Town to reclaim the Peconic riverfront for public enjoyment; install necessary flood mitigation measures; spur mixed-use development; support local small businesses; and make downtown safer and more accessible for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists alike. I have been glad to work with Riverhead leaders to secure funding for these improvements because I know they will supercharge Riverhead’s renaissance and secure its place as a great place to live, work, shop and raise a family for decades to come.”

“I congratulate the Town of Riverhead on reaching this major milestone, which shows what’s possible when every level of government works together. Supervisor Hubbard and the Town Board have been strong partners in securing Long Island’s fair share of federal infrastructure funding. I’ve delivered millions for clean drinking water and downtown improvements across Suffolk County, and I’ll keep



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fighting for this project, for the Riverhead Police Department, and for the safe, affordable, economically vibrant community Riverhead deserves," said Congressman Nick LaLota.

Empire State Development President, CEO and Commissioner Hope Knight said, "Riverhead's new Town Square reflects the power of investing in projects that strengthen local economies and enhance quality of life. By opening new connections from Main Street to the waterfront and creating a year-round gathering space, this project lays the groundwork for sustained economic activity and continued downtown revitalization. ESD is proud to support a community-driven vision that advances both economic opportunity and a stronger, more inclusive public realm."

Empire State Development Board Chairman Kevin Law said, "This groundbreaking is an important milestone for Riverhead and for the continued revitalization of Long Island's downtowns. Strategic state investments like this help reenergize Main Streets, attract new businesses, and create public spaces that bring communities together. Riverhead's new Town Square will open access to the waterfront, draw more activity to local shops and restaurants, and strengthen the East End as a destination for residents and visitors alike. This is the kind of investment that makes a real difference for Long Island and for the people who call Riverhead home."

Long Island Regional Economic Development Council (LIREDC) Co-Chairs Linda Armyn, President & CEO at FourLeaf Federal Credit Union and Dr. Kimberly R. Cline, President of Long Island University, said, "The Downtown Revitalization Initiative continues to deliver transformational results across Long Island, and the Riverhead Town Square is a powerful example of that impact. This project will create a vibrant, inclusive public space that strengthens community connections, and reinforces Riverhead's role as a gateway to the East End. We look forward to seeing this new Town Square become a welcoming destination for residents, workers, and visitors for years to come."

Each Town Board Member also expressed strong support. Councilman Ken Rothwell said, "This project will be transformative for our downtown, fostering new opportunities and creating a welcoming space for families and businesses." Councilman Bob Kern said, "I'm proud to see years of planning coming to fruition, connecting our town to its waterfront in ways that will enrich us all. The flood mitigation efforts within the Town Square project are critical—not only are we revitalizing downtown, but we are also addressing the real challenges of flooding that have impacted our community for years, ensuring a safer, more resilient Riverhead for everyone."

Councilwoman Denise Merrifield said, "The Town Square will be a hub for business, culture and community events, enriching the lives of our residents. It will significantly benefit the local economy by attracting new businesses, supporting existing ones, and increasing opportunities for job growth and community investment. Councilwoman Joann Waski said, "This development honors Riverhead's heritage while paving a path for a vibrant, prosperous future."



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Developer Joe Petrocelli said, said "We are honored to be part of such a landmark project. Riverhead Town Square is more than construction—it's about creating a new center for community life, year-round activity, and economic revitalization. We're ready to get to work and deliver a space that residents can be proud of and that puts Riverhead on the map as the cultural and economic hub of eastern Long Island."

New York State Senator Anthony Palumbo said, "The groundbreaking ceremony for the Riverhead Town Square Project is a momentous occasion for the community and a testament to the hard work and collaboration of our state, local and federal partners in supporting this transformative plan. I applaud Supervisor Hubbard and Councilmembers Rothwell, Kern, Merrifield and Waski on their leadership and continual efforts to move this project forward to completion."

Assemblywoman Jodi Giglio said, "As a former Riverhead Town Board member and current member of the New York State Assembly, I am proud to support the groundbreaking of the Riverhead Town Square. This project represents a significant step forward in revitalizing our downtown, creating new opportunities for local businesses, and providing a vibrant space for residents to gather, celebrate, and grow together. I look forward to seeing Riverhead thrive as a cultural and economic hub for the East End."

Suffolk County Legislator Catherine Stark said, "As a lifelong Riverhead resident, I've seen our Main Street through its many chapters. From a bustling center by the Peconic River, to years when downtown struggled to thrive. This project turns a new page that I can't wait to witness. This town square project, supported in part by Suffolk County's Jumpstart grant, will reconnect our community to the Peconic River, create new opportunities for local businesses, and give families a welcoming space to gather. It's proof of what we can accomplish when local, state, federal and county partners work together for the good of our community."

"The Riverhead Town Square project brings years of planning to fruition with public space, a destination for families, tourists, residents and business owners to enjoy the revitalized downtown. Kudos to the Riverhead Town Board, staff and the folks who have invested both publicly and privately to put this project in place," said Eric Alexander, Director, Vision Long Island.

Riverhead Business Improvement District President Gary Hygom said, "The Town Square groundbreaking marks the beginning of a bold new chapter for our town — one that promises a vibrant, reimagined Riverhead full of energy, culture, and opportunity for the BID district business community. We are excited for what's to come!"

East End Arts Council Executive Director Wendy Weiss said, "It is exciting to see this



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demonstration of progress on the Downtown Revitalization. East End Arts & Humanities Council is grateful for the efforts being made by the Town and Petrocelli group to protect our historic buildings and for the opportunity to be a part of this critical change to the area the organization has called home for over fifty years."

Riverhead Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Liz O'Shaughnessy said, "On behalf of our entire board of directors I'd like to extend our sincere gratitude to all those worked tirelessly to bring this project to life! A lot of blood, sweat and tears went into this and it is truly exciting to break ground knowing that the vision will soon become a reality."

Suffolk Theater owner Robert Castaldi said, "The new Town Square will be a true centerpiece of downtown Riverhead's revitalization. It will bring people together and create the kind of vibrant gathering space every community needs. The Suffolk Theater has long been a significant Main Street anchor, and with the square right at our doorstep, the theater itself serves as a grand architectural frame for this new public space. Together, we're setting the stage for exciting events, welcoming visitors, and restoring Riverhead's sense of place for generations to come."

The Town Square groundbreaking represents a crucial step towards Riverhead's comprehensive plan for downtown revitalization, balancing smart growth with enhancing quality of life. Regular updates on the project's progress will be shared with the public throughout construction.