



# TOWN OF RIVERHEAD

*Yvette Aguiar, Town Supervisor*

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## *Press Release:*

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***Town Board of Riverhead Reach Agreement with State Historic Preservation Office to Move Forward with Demolition to Advance Riverhead Town Square***



The proposed Town Square is expected to further Riverhead's long-time redevelopment goals, while providing the public with recreational opportunities along the riverfront. (The above rendering is preliminary and subject to significantly change upon final design.)

Supervisor Yvette Aguiar announced that the Town of Riverhead has reached an agreement with the New York State Historic Preservation Office that will allow demolition of all three buildings, if deemed necessary by the Town, in order to create Riverhead Town Square.

The Town of Riverhead acquired 117, 121 and 127 East Main Street in May 2021 with the help of an \$800,000 New York State grant and \$1.2 million in Suffolk County funds. Because most of East Main Street is within a state historic district, which the Town entered into in 2012, the Town was aware that SHPO would need to review and participate in the planning process.

The Community Development Department started the review process in earnest upon the town taking title to the properties.

“Upon reviewing a substantive amount of documentation compiled by the Community Development Department, SHPO agreed that there are no prudent and/or feasible alternatives to demolition,” Supervisor Aguiar said. “The Town of Riverhead is beyond excited that this transformative project can now proceed in earnest. The State Historic Preservation Office was cooperative, reasonable and receptive to working with Riverhead to be sure that a mutually beneficial solution was reached. I also want to thank Community Development Director Dawn Thomas and her staff for their diligent efforts in providing the information needed by the state, and express my appreciation to Assemblywoman Jodi Giglio for arranging the in-person visit with SHPO.”

Assemblywoman Jodi Giglio said, “As Riverhead’s representative in Albany, I felt it was my responsibility to help facilitate productive dialog with SHPO. I am very confident that Riverhead Town Square will significantly contribute to the economic rebirth of Downtown Riverhead and the Long Island region.”

“The Landmarks Preservation Commission is pleased that SHPO agrees that there is no feasible alternative to demolition of the existing Main Street buildings to make way for the Town Square. We look forward to working with them on this important project and share their goal to make sure it fits in and is compatible with our historic downtown architecture,” said Landmarks Preservation Chairman Richard Wines.

The next step is SHPO developing a Letter of Resolution that will document the alternatives evaluated and the mitigation measures to be carried out to minimize historical impacts, Community Development Director Dawn Thomas said. These measures may include remembrance of 117 East Main Street to SHPO standards, salvage of defining features, creation and installation of a memorial plaque commemorating 117 East Main Street and its significance to the historic district, and continued consultation with SHPO as construction of the Town Square progresses.

The concept of Riverhead Town Square is supported by more than 20 years of planning studies and will consist of a public gathering space, pedestrian connectivity and open vistas from Main Street to the riverfront. The primary goal of this project is to reorient the pedestrian focus from the traditional Main Street to the Peconic Riverwalk. The Town intends to repurpose some existing town-owned riverfront parking as public gathering spaces, with performance spaces, splash fountains and permeable brick/stone pathways interspersed with rain gardens that behind the new Town Square. These rain/river friendly areas will provide amenities for community members while also helping capture the occasional flooding experienced near the Peconic River. In addition, the site will include interactive environmental learning stations.

“The Community Development Department applied for a multimillion dollar federal grant in July to support downtown revitalization, including the Town Square and continues to aggressively pursue other federal, state and county funding opportunities to further economic redevelopment goals. It is likely that a public – private partnership will be necessary to fully develop the Town Square,” Thomas said.