



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Governor Hochul Announces 11 Transformational Projects for Chinatown as Part of \$20 Million Round 5 Downtown Revitalization Initiative

BRIAN KAVANAGH December 17, 2022

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Governor Kathy Hochul today announced eleven transformational projects in Chinatown as part of its \$20 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative Award. In Round 5 of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, the Regional Economic Development Councils had the opportunity to award two communities \$10 million each or one community \$20 million. The New York City Regional Economic Development Council chose to award Chinatown a \$20 million award in recognition of the specific and acute effects of the pandemic on Chinatown's businesses and the wider Asian diaspora in New York City. With these revitalization projects, this historic community can thrive again and open its unique corridors, restaurants, businesses, parks and cultural institutions, becoming, once again, a place to visit and celebrate the ethnic diversity of the Chinatown community in the Lower East Side.

"This announcement marks a historic moment for Chinatown's community," **Governor Hochul said.** "These critical investments will transform the neighborhood and create a more vibrant and inviting destination for locals and visitors alike, while enriching the neighborhood by improving foot traffic, economic and cultural activity."

Chinatown is an ethnically diverse neighborhood in Manhattan that contains the largest Chinese population in an urban area outside of China, as well as residents of Latin America, Italian and Eastern European Jewish descent and other backgrounds. The community prides itself on its diversity and broad array of cultural attractions, experiences and services. The Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Strategic Investment Plan is focused on improving the quality of life and economic vibrancy for residents and visitors and building on its history as a cultural destination. Through the DRI, Chinatown is creating welcoming landmarks, streetscapes and public spaces to draw visitors and encourage more foot traffic, and economic and cultural activity. Additionally, the awards will establish a community health and wellness center, provide childcare and a family support center, a culinary arts center and a cultural welcome center.

The investments are part of the Governor's ongoing efforts to revitalize the downstate economy and create more opportunities within New York City. The DRI is led by the Department of State, which provides technical assistance as each participating community develops a Strategic Investment Plan identifying specific projects with a unique vision for the revitalization of the downtown area.

The specific projects to be funded through the DRI support several goals and strategies contained in the community's Strategic Investment Plan, such as—improved streetscape connectivity and public gathering spaces; increased health, wellness and business opportunities; and enhanced cultural destinations and amenities. The \$20 million State DRI investment in these projects will leverage additional public and private sector investment as the revitalization process proceeds and builds momentum.

The specific projects to be funded through the DRI include:

**Improve Streetscape Connectivity and Public Gathering Spaces**

**Renovating Kimlau Square - DRI Award: \$5,000,000**

Expand public space at Kimlau Square to support a broader mix of community events, draw visitors into the neighborhood, and provide open space in the heart of the community.

**Beautifying the Park Row Connection to Chinatown - DRI Award: \$4,000,000**

Implement capital improvements to beautify and improve accessibility at Park Row from the Brooklyn Bridge to Kimlau Square.

**Upgrading a Section of Sara D. Roosevelt Park - DRI Award: \$3,285,000**

Renovate park areas to expand access to attractive, welcoming public space with seating, shade, and landscaped areas for the multi-generational local community.

**Installing Murals & Light Projection Art Throughout Chinatown - DRI Award \$924,000**

Install three large-scale painted wall murals, a light projection art installation, and 30 small-scale murals at prominent locations in Chinatown.

**Expanding Light Up Chinatown Street Lanterns - DRI Award \$689,000**

Expand street lanterns into more parts of Chinatown over four phases to brighten the streets and encourage more foot traffic.

**Increase Health, Wellness and Business Opportunities**

**Opening a Community Health and Wellness Center- DRI Award \$1,000,000**

Establish a new community health and wellness center at 60 Madison Street, which would offer high-quality and culturally accessible health and mental health services.

**Reopening the Childcare and Family Support Center at Smith Houses - DRI Award \$550,000**

Repair the 4,700-square-foot childcare and family support center at NYCHA's Alfred E. Smith Houses to provide daycare and other supportive services.

### **Creating a Building Upgrades Fund - DRI Award \$1,000,000**

Establish a grant program to help existing small businesses and building owners make improvements to the local building stock.

### **Enhance Cultural Destinations and Amenities**

#### **Creating a Chinatown Welcome Arch/Gateway - DRI Award: \$2,500,000**

Build a landmark gateway arch to commemorate the cultural heritage of the area and draw visitors to the neighborhood.

#### **Establishing Asian Culinary Arts of New York - DRI Award \$352,000**

Revamp an existing 3,000-square-foot kitchen to support the training of professionals specializing in commercial Chinese and other Asian cuisine.

#### **Establishing the Chinatown Cultural Welcome Center - DRI Award \$300,000**

Create a community gathering space for intergenerational knowledge transfer related to food, art, and culture.

**New York Secretary of State, Robert J. Rodriguez said,** "One of the oldest and largest Chinese neighborhoods in the United States, Chinatown is rich with history and culture. Home to many "mom and pop" businesses, funding is being provided to assist existing small business owners with building and infrastructure improvements. Enhancements to public space include beautifying Park Row—the gateway to Chinatown—and the expansion of public space at Kimlau Square and Sara D. Roosevelt park. Through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, funding is also being provided to establish a new culturally accessible and responsive community health and wellness center. The diverse array of exciting and transformative projects represents a holistic approach that will improve the health, livability and provide economic opportunity for the area's diverse residents, workers, and business owners. Congratulations to the Chinatown community."

**Empire State Development President, CEO and Commissioner Hope Knight said,** "Chinatown is a New York City landmark and a draw for tourists, but it's also a dynamic neighborhood that many people call home. These DRI projects boost the regional economy by building on the area's iconic arts and cultural history, while also ensuring that Chinatown feeds the quality of life needs for its residents, from housing to green spaces."

**Homes and Community Renewal Commissioner RuthAnne Visnauskas said,** "The Downtown Revitalization Initiative's 11 awards for Manhattan's Chinatown will benefit residents with expanded access to critical services and help the neighborhood build upon its rich culture and history to attract new visitors and support business growth. Through strategic investments like these tailored to meet local needs, Governor Hochul is working to grow our state's towns and cities with new economic opportunities and an improved quality of life."

**State Senator Brian Kavanagh said,** "Chinatown is one of our City's most beloved and historic neighborhoods, and it serves as a vital cultural hub for New York's Chinese and Chinese American community and for the residents and small business owners I'm proud to represent. Today's announcement of eleven transformational projects in Chinatown as part of our \$20 million State Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) is welcome news and will help spur economic development and tourism in the area. This robust slate of projects is a testament to the strong vision and dedication of Chinatown's passionate community leaders and organizations, and I commend them for their hard work and collaboration in this effort. Not only will these projects assist Chinatown in its recovery efforts, they also reaffirm the State's commitment to full recovery and renewal in the wake of the pandemic, especially where the need is greatest. I was happy to join Governor Kathy Hochul and Secretary of State Robert Rodriguez in announcing these funds, and I thank them for their ongoing commitment to ensuring that our communities gets the relief they need and deserve."

**Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou said,** "Manhattan's Chinatown is one of the hardest hit communities by the pandemic. Now, many businesses are re-opening or continuing their essential operations. Our community is resilient and the development of these projects will become additional anchor points for our community as we continue to recover and weather additional COVID waves. I look forward to working with our community partners and our state agencies to ensure these projects help our community thrive and provide Chinatown with vital local resources."

**Councilmember Christopher Marte said,** "After decades of neglect, we are excited to see major investments from Governor Kathy Hochul in re-opening Park Row. The entryway to Chinatown has been closed for 20 years, and has had a serious negative impact on foot traffic and the local economy. This project alongside the revitalization of Kimlau Square represents a bright new future for Chinatown's center."

**Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine said,** "I am grateful to the scores of leaders and activists in Chinatown who gave of their time, expertise and creativity over the past year to help develop a transformative investment plan for the future of this community. The projects we're announcing today will be a major boost to public space, economic vitality and quality of life in Chinatown. This is truly a historic moment for this neighborhood."

**New York City Regional Economic Development Council Co-Chairs Winston Fisher, Partner at Fisher Brothers, and Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, City University of New York Chancellor, said,** "The NYCREDC is pleased to see and support the momentum represented by these projects, and excited by what they will mean for Chinatown. The Downtown Revitalization Initiative is an economic engine that transforms unique city centers by enhancing them in ways that make strategic sense for each community, and for the visitors who treasure them."

New York State's DRI, a cornerstone of its economic development program, transforms downtown neighborhoods into vibrant centers that offer a high quality of life and are

magnets for redevelopment, business, job creation, and economic and housing diversity. Led by the Department of State with assistance from Empire State Development, Homes and Community Renewal and NYSERDA, the DRI represents an unprecedented and innovative "plan-then-act" strategy that couples strategic planning with immediate implementation and results in compact, walkable downtowns that are a key ingredient to helping New York State rebuild its economy from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to achieving the State's bold climate goals by promoting the use of public transit and reducing dependence on private vehicles. More information on the DRI is available [here](#).