

FEATURED

Haverhill gets \$9M, promise of new project

Sal's Pizza empire founder to invest in downtown

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Tim Jean

TIM JEAN/Staff photoGov. Charlie Baker, center, looks over an artists renderings on the 5th floor during Wednesday's tour of Harbor Place in Haverhill.



HAVERHILL — Gov. Charlie Baker was in Haverhill on Wednesday to announce the downtown Harbor Place project will receive an additional \$9 million from the state to pay for infrastructure improvements needed to further the redevelopment of downtown Merrimack Street.

City officials said the funding is critical to that redevelopment, which is expected to include a 10-story development with a restaurant and market rate housing that would be tied to the new Harbor Place boardwalk.

The proposed development was announced by Sal Lupoli, owner of the Lupoli Companies of Lawrence. Lupoli is founder of the Sal's Pizza empire and was also behind the development of the massive Riverwalk complex on Merrimack Street in Lawrence, which includes Salvatore's Restaurant.

Recently, the Lupoli Companies was the only company to respond to the city's request for proposals to buy a municipal parking lot located between the Rent-A-Center and Haverhill Bank on Merrimack Street, for the purpose of redeveloping the property, which is about an acre in size.

Baker made his announcement in front of a crowd that gathered Wednesday on the new Harbor Place boardwalk. Those in attendance included many local and state officials, representatives of UMass Lowell and members of the Greater Haverhill Foundation and the Planning Office for Urban Affairs — the two organizations that partnered to build Harbor Place.

Baker told the crowd that Massworks grants are one of the best ways the state can help cities and towns that are interested in redevelopment opportunities.

"This was a really competitive process," Baker said about the grant Haverhill is receiving. "It meant the best projects went to the top of the pile."

Harbor Place, now under construction, will include a UMass Lowell satellite campus, housing, offices, retail and a boardwalk along the Merrimack River. The project replaces the old vacant Woolworth building and several other old buildings that have been demolished.

Dempsey told the crowd that the goal of government is to provide money that will be a catalyst for investment.

"Massworks monies will allow for those infrastructure improvements to occur that will hopefully lead to continued investment," he said, adding that one of the people looking to invest in Haverhill's downtown is Lupoli.

Lupoli, directing his comments to Baker, said he has already bought real estate on Merrimack Street. He did not reveal details of his proposed downtown development. [2](#) New Comments

"I'm excited about building restaurants on this boardwalk and I'm excited about job creation for one reason, because the state of Massachusetts believes in it," Lupoli said, "because the state of Massachusetts stepped up and put their money up on the table to create the spark."

"As a result of the spark you created, look what we have here today," Lupoli said while looking up at the Harbor Place buildings. "As a result of the spark you created, you're going to see at the end of this boardwalk some wonderful opportunities if given the chance.

"More than anything, we want to become part of your community," Lupoli added.

The Massworks grant that Baker announced will be used to provide needed infrastructure improvements throughout the Harbor Place project, while an additional grant will be used to provide necessary infrastructure improvements along Merrimack Street to support additional economic development.

Dempsey said this latest round of funding brings the state's total investment for the Harbor Place project and the Merrimack Street renaissance to nearly \$45 million.

Dempsey said the Harbor Place project, which combines commercial and educational space with enhanced public access, is a "transformative" development that will change the landscape of downtown.

"Redevelopment of downtown Haverhill has been a priority for me," Dempsey said. "I am pleased to have secured additional funding for phase two of Harbor Place, along with continued infrastructure improvements for Merrimack Street. It is my hope this will lead to further development downtown."

Dempsey noted that members of Haverhill's legislative delegation, state Sen. Kathleen O'Connor Ives and Reps. Linda Dean Campbell and Dianna DiZoglio, were also supportive in the efforts to secure Massworks money.

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