

Suffolk pols to vote on \$1.7M land buy to bolster sewer service in Smithtown



State Sen. Mario Mattera (R-St. James) has said purchase of land near the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center for Smithtown sewers would drastically cut nitrogen loading to the nearby Nissequogue River from downtown cesspools and septic systems now in use. Credit: James Carbone

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Suffolk County legislators are scheduled to vote Wednesday on a \$1.7 million Kings Park land buy for planned Smithtown sewers.

The 16.7-acre site near Building 1 on the east side of the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center would be used for disposal of treated wastewater, according to records. Money from the federal American Rescue Plan Act would fund the acquisition. Dormitory Authority of New York is the seller.

In an email, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone wrote that sewer infrastructure was “critical to the continued revitalization of our downtowns ... Tomorrow, we will move a critical piece of the puzzle forward.”

Smithtown Supervisor Edward Wehrheim could not be reached Tuesday for comment.

Legis. Robert Trotta (R-Northport), who represents the area, said he expected the proposal would win approval and that he supported the purchase, with reservations.

“Do I think it’s in the best place? No, but I’m not going to stand in the way of this project going forward,” he said, and warned that demolition of structures on the site could be expensive.

Former Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo in 2017 promised \$20 million each for sewers in Kings Park and Smithtown. Town and county officials told Newsday earlier this year that downtown Kings Park sewers could come online by spring 2025.

The Smithtown project would connect sewers along the hamlet’s Main Street to the existing Kings Park treatment plant.

A release last year from State Sen. Mario Mattera (R-St. James), who represents the area and began advocating for sewerage for the town as a civic activist, said purchase of the Psychiatric Center land for Smithtown sewers would drastically cut nitrogen loading to the nearby Nissequogue River from downtown cesspools and septic systems now in use.

After purchase, local officials will demolish “derelict” buildings now on the site, using a small portion of the land that will not be visible from outside for wastewater disposal, according to the release. Most of the land will be kept as open space, and mature trees and steep slopes will be preserved.

Business leaders in Kings Park and St. James, where a dry sewer line awaits hookup, have said connection will spur economic development by freeing businesses from strict wastewater limits in place for septic systems. Hookup would make it easier to build downtown apartments or add tables to restaurants and cafes, advocates have said.

Some business owners, though, are skeptical of user fees and one-time hookup charges and have said sewerage offers less obvious benefits for so-called “dry uses” like offices and shops. Suffolk officials told Newsday this year that in Kings Park, hookup costs, borne by property owners, would vary; user charges would be about \$548 for homes and \$1,507 for businesses in 2026, the first year in which all charges can be assessed.

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