

Howard Zemsky
President & CEO, Empire State Development



In January 2015, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo nominated Howard Zemsky to serve as president and CEO of Empire State Development and Commissioner of the New York State Department of Economic Development. Commissioner Zemsky was confirmed by the Senate on March 30, 2015.

Empire State Development (ESD) is the chief economic development agency of New York State.

Commissioner Zemsky and his colleagues — more than 450 people working in regional offices around the state — manage a broad range of programs, incentives and services designed to increase private sector investment and job creation in New York. Commissioner Zemsky works closely with Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and with the regional co-chairs to successfully implement the plans of the 10 regional economic development councils, the governor’s decentralized, collaborative and strategic approach to economic development.

Prior to coming to ESD, Commissioner Zemsky co-chaired the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council and worked on initiatives aimed at revitalizing the upstate economy. A longtime Buffalo business leader, Zemsky’s company, Larkin Development Group, has redeveloped approximately 1 million square feet of historic building space in Buffalo since 2002, with a particular focus on reclaiming Buffalo’s earliest industrial neighborhood, the Larkin Historic District.

In recent years, Commissioner Zemsky has also chaired the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority and the SUNY (State University of New York) Buffalo State College Council. He has also served as president of the Richardson Center Corporation, a nonprofit board charged with rehabilitation of the 140-year-old Richardson Olmsted Complex.

Commissioner Zemsky has a bachelor’s degree from Michigan State University and an MBA from the University of Rochester. He is a Brooklyn native, raised on Long Island, and a longtime resident of Buffalo, where he and his wife Leslie have lived for 30 years with their three children.