



www.afineadironacktown.org

(315) 848-3121

4078 State Hwy 3
Star Lake, NY 13690

Fax: (315) 848-3152

February, 2013

Dylan Walrath
NY STATE DEC
Division of Lands and Forests, 5th Floor
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4250

Re: **FINAL REPORT**
Contract No: C303809
Smart Growth Grant
State Assistance Grant Award: \$ 98,250.00

Dear Mr. Walrath,

I am very pleased to submit this final report about the 2008 Smart Growth Grant. This Department of Environmental Conservation Smart Growth Grant provided numerous opportunities that otherwise would have been lost without the funding of our Community Development Coordinator position. Your investment in the towns of Clifton and Fine via the Smart Growth Grant has allowed for profound changes in many aspects of the operations of our two towns together and has enabled the beginning phases of ambitious grants solicitation and management plans by volunteer groups across the two towns. I am also pleased to have so much good news to report.

The Community Development Coordinator position served as a central clearing house for volunteer activities across a variety of community organizations ranging from the successful effort to save the original Star Lake School building and transform it into an Exhibition Center and community presentation space to providing support for efforts to preserve the Fine Town Hall. The position also served as grants administrator for our Local Waterfront Development activities via grants from the State DOS.

The projects you will see delineated here are clearly the result of growing demonstrable partnerships between the grant partners, town officials, volunteers, state agencies; and elected state and federal officials. These relationships are now strong, functional and growing; we could not have said this before we received your grants.

Former Jones and Laughlin (J&L) Property:



This abandoned 54 acre industrial graveyard has been an impediment to the Clifton-Fine Community since its closure in 1977. This property is classified for industrial use by the Adirondack Park Agency and is one of the largest such sites in the Park. Numerous economic development opportunities have been lost to the community because of the many attempted failures of property remediation.

We are proud to report that significant progress has been accomplished towards the long term goal of redevelopment of this property. The 54-acre property is being investigated as two separate units. An 18-acre unit was identified with the presumption of having a lower risk of contamination. The 18-acre unit includes property on the south side of State Hwy 3, on the east side of County Route 60 and the former parking lot area on the right entering the site. The NYS DEC Environmental Restoration Program “Investigation Grant” awarded to St. Lawrence County was used for this project. The field work was completed over the summer and a draft report has been submitted for review. It is my understanding that investigation confirms that minor or no contamination exists on the 18-acres.

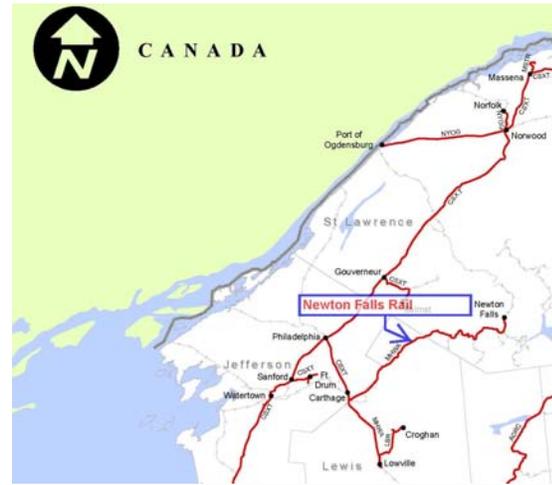
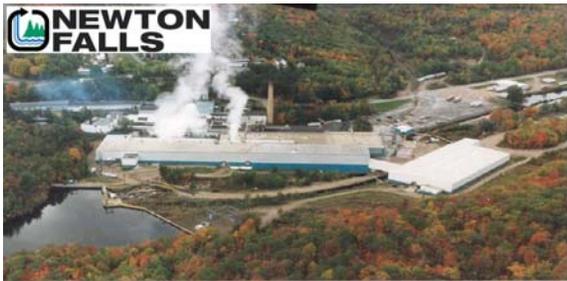
The remaining 36-acre unit has been listed on the State Superfund Registry. The 36-acre unit includes the buildings, the oil spill area, and multiple other contaminants. The DEC selected Parsons Corporation (Syracuse Office) to conduct this Investigation. Field work on that project began over the summer. This is going to be a long term project. Collaboration with the Superfund project and the building demolition project could lead to eliminating this dreadful landmark in the not too distant future.

The challenge for the 18-acre unit is obtaining liability release and sub-dividing this unit from the entire 54-acre property. If sub-divided with liability release, this unit could become available for development. Stay tuned as many attempt to conquer this liability dilemma!

The recent North Country Regional Economic Development Council (NCREDC) announcement included an award to the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) of **\$175,000 for “Preliminary Engineering for Building Demolition”** at the former J&L property. The grant application was submitted with the intent to complement the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Investigation and cleanup projects on the site. Building demolition has been a problematic gap to fill because current DEC programs are not designed with demolition intentions.

The “Preliminary Engineering Report” will provide engineered cost estimates to demolish buildings. I anticipate using the momentum of this project and the other current DEC projects to leverage future building demolition funding from the NCREDC.

Newton Falls Fine Paper:



The Newton Falls Paper Mill has a history in the Clifton-Fine Community for over 100 years. The mill has struggled to remain operating during recent years. The mill operated continuously until closing in 2000. Community efforts in collaboration with the County IDA and numerous State Agencies assisted the mill in reopening in 2007. Unfortunately, current economic conditions have closed the mill and the owner is attempting to sell the asset.

The St Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) was awarded a \$9,972,000 grant through the North Country Regional Economic Development Council process to rehabilitate the Newton Falls Secondary Rail Line. Rehabilitation will allow the ability to ship aggregate from the Benson Mines site, raw material to the paper mill and finished products sold by the paper mill, providing greater access and marketability to our remote area. Without this project, the opportunities for local industry will be severely limited.

As a result of having a person fill the role of Community Development Coordinator, town leaders were allowed to dedicate time and provide the needed leadership for the J & L and Newton Falls paper mill efforts. This CDC provided the needed support (communications, research, etc.) for these projects and freed up time for local leaders that allowed us to make the progress reflected in this report. The Community Development Coordinator also played a key role in facilitating communication between Towns and other partners in these initiatives.

Infrastructure:



The Clifton-Fine Community is celebrating the arrival of high speed internet! SLIC Network Solutions began installing fiber to the home during the summer of 2012. This is available to a majority of the population in the two towns. Their service includes both internet and phone. It is anticipated that cable television services will be available over the fiber lines sometime in 2013. This desperately needed technology has been a refreshing addition to our community!



Cell phone towers have been constructed in the hamlets of Cranberry Lake and Star Lake during the summer of 2012. Both towers are currently awaiting activation. Many residents and visitors are anxious to use this technology. Because of the major investment that has already been expended, we are confident it will be only a matter of time before we can celebrate this accomplishment.

The Community Development Coordinator was used to provide research and to support town leaders on these initiatives.

Waterfront Revitalization:

In an effort to streamline and expedite Clifton and Fine's involvement in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, it was determined that oversight and implementation should be transitioned from the Wildlife Conservation Society to the Community Development Coordinator. Much of 2011 was spent in transitioning the administration function from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) to the Community Development Coordinator. It was first determined that the 2006 grant which had started with WCS as administrator, should remain with WCS, and the 2007 grant would be the first one administered locally.

The Community Development Coordinator played a critical role as local volunteer coordinator and project manager for the Clifton-Fine Waterfront Revitalization Projects. This person administered the grant and provided communication and oversight for the 2007 and 2009 grants.

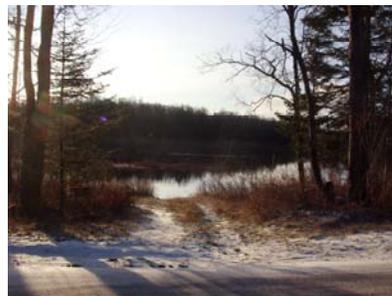
A great accomplishment was completing a capital improvement to town property immediately behind the Clifton Community Center. This project included a doubling of available parking space for water access only seasonal residents and day visitors, as well a new fence for the tennis courts and a new playground for the region's children. We encountered numerous hurdles in the implementation of this grant including the need to move a National Grid utility pole and other obstacles which the WAC, town officials and volunteers all worked together to overcome. One of the points of pride in this project is the \$34,000 in cash and additional \$20,000 in in-kind gifts donated to build the playground.



We have completed a DEC boat launch site on the Little River in Star Lake.



The WAC is working on constructing a new boat launch below the rapids on the Oswegatchie River, near the Tooley Pond Rd. Negotiations continue with the landowner, Timbervest and the APA to find a mutually agreeable administrative structure for the transfer of an easement. We will continue to work with all parties to advance the building of a new boat launch.



There is a Friends United for Neighborhood Development (FUND) group in Star Lake that is focused on improving the streetscape in the hamlet of Star Lake by putting up banners, planting flowers, installing benches and statues, and generally keeping the downtown area clean and welcoming. The upcoming 2009 Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grant has a portion dedicated to further assessment, planning and in future grant phases implementing a Streetscapes plan. WAC will work with the FUND group to enhance and improve the Star Lake streetscape.



The Cranberry Lake 50:

The Cranberry Lake 50 is a fifty mile trail that circumnavigates Cranberry Lake. This trail was developed through the diligent and inspiring efforts of two of our most active area volunteer groups, the Five Pond Partners and the Waterfront Advisory Committee. The Five Pond Partners developed and maintain this trail and keep a website dedicated to encouraging use of the trail with the ultimate goal of encouraging ecotourists to spend time in our region and potentially choose to complete the entire trail and earn a badge for doing so.

There are ongoing efforts to increase participation such as developing a winter completion badge; post cards of key vistas on the trail; and volunteer certificates for service. The brochure has been modified for clarity in trail following and distribution was increased via placements in local businesses and in tourist kiosks around the region. The Committee ran ads to announce our new Cranberry 50 Brochures on North Country Public Radio. We purchased four 10 second spots, one a week for four weeks. The ads directed people to our website where they could order a new brochure. Throughout the summer, volunteers engaged in trail maintenance including development of Big Deer Trail. The committee continues to meet regularly to discuss ongoing trail maintenance needs and opportunities to further promote the trail to a wider audience.

Tourist information kiosks were installed for the Cranberry Lake 50 trail in Wanakena, at the Cranberry Lake campground, behind the Clifton Community Center and at Peavine Swamp. The kiosks were constructed using a combination of DEC, volunteer and local business donations.



Fine Town Hall:

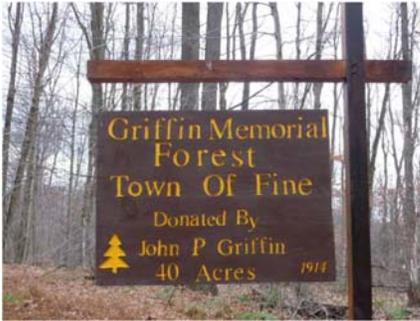


The Fine Town Hall was originally constructed in 1885 as a municipal building and has historically been used as a community hall. The facility has also been historically used as a dance hall, a theater for plays, for various traveling and minstrel shows, socials and movies. The building was added to the National Historic Register in 1996.

The Community Development Coordinator provided leadership with community volunteers to secure funding for a Building Condition Report to assess the viability of reuse of this building. The total project was \$10,000. The Town of Fine funded \$4,500 of the project, with \$5,000 funded by a grant and \$500 from the volunteer Fine Town Hall Committee. The architectural firm of Crawford and Stearns developed a proposal which included developing plans basement structural work, kitchen repair and redesign of the front steps for handicap accessibility.

Based on the report, the Community Development Coordinator assisted the Town in researching grants and determined that National Preservation Trust Grants best fit our situation. We were unsuccessful in our first attempt to secure a construction grant. The Community Development Coordinator continues to work with volunteers and the Clifton-Fine Economic Development Corporation to secure funding for this project.

Griffin MEMORIAL FOREST:



In 1914, John P. Griffin deeded 40 acres of land to the Town of Fine for the purpose of establishing a town forest. This forest is used for the enjoyment of the residents as well as visitors to the Town of Fine. The forest is located just off the Owl Mountain Road in the hamlet of Oswegatchie.

The Town of Fine is working in conjunction with the Ranger School in Wanakena and the Clifton-Fine Central School to improve the town forest. The Community Development Coordinator worked with the Town Historian and numerous volunteers to create a handicap accessible trail with plaques and points of interest.

Regional Events:

Community groups have begun developing annual regional events to support our region. Historically, we have had no point person for coordinating local events and the Community Development Coordinator has provided needed leadership and support to many of these groups. As a result the Cranberry Lake Boat Club and Save our Schoolhouse are now both conducting annual fun runs, each of which attracts up to 100 participants.



The Cranberry Lake Boat Club also hosts an annual Cardboard Boat Race which last year attracted over 250 people. They also host an annual poker kayak paddle to benefit the library.

The Cranberry Lake Fire Department hosts an annual ice fishing derby on Cranberry Lake. This event has over 500 participants and is growing each year. All of these events attract new visitors and enhance the quality of life for our residents. The Community Development Coordinator position has provided us with needed coordination and support for many of these efforts".

**ADIRONDACK ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE
2012 PRESERVATION AWARDS LUNCHEON**

The AARCH awards program annually recognizes exemplary historic preservation work throughout the Adirondack Park. We honor examples of sensitive restoration, rehabilitation, and demonstrated long-term stewardship.

Agenda

12:00 p.m. Welcome and introduction, Susan Arena, AARCH Program Director

12:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30 p.m. Presentation of awards, Susan Arena, AARCH Program Director

3:00 p.m. End of presentation followed by group photograph of awardees

AARCH would like to extend a special thank you to the staff at Top of the World for helping to make this event possible.

The Adirondack Architectural Heritage Awards program welcomes nominations from members and the general public throughout the year.

Help us spread the word about the good work going on in our region by nominating a project in your community.

For more information on our awards program or to obtain a nomination form, contact AARCH, 1745 Main Street, Keeseville, New York 12944, 518-834-9328 or visit our website at www.aarch.org.

All photographs in this program are use with permission from the owners.



Save Our Schoolhouse
Adirondack Exhibit Center, Star Lake, St. Lawrence County
Sensitive Restoration and Adaptive Reuse

In 2006 an announcement ran in a local paper, stating that the 1882 Star Lake Schoolhouse was being disposed of by the Town of Fine and that it was accepting bids to purchase and remove the building. "As a result of this unfortunate situation, something beautiful and exciting is happening in our community. Residents of the Star Lake area -both full time and summer, on the water and off, long-standing and new - have joined together as a whole to save our schoolhouse. We call ourselves, "S.O.S." We value the history and beauty of this building and we are working hard to find a use for it that will benefit the entire community."
(Bargain Hunter, August 7, 2006)

Over the next several years volunteers fundraised and spent hours of hands on work to create what is now the Adirondack Exhibit Center. In recent months the Center has been used for the following: Clifton-Fine Student Art Show, Basket Weaving and Iris Paper Folding workshops, meeting space for various organizations, Adirondack Writers Workshop, J and L Picture Story, Star Lake Schoolhouse Reunion and Creative Movement Dance classes. This is in addition to two permanent exhibits: The Western Adirondack Railroad Modelers Club and the Five Pond Wilderness Club. SOS not only saved their historic schoolhouse, but have provided much needed community space for Star Lake.

Business ASSISTANCE:

The Clifton Fine Economic Development Corporation holds an annual Business Persons Dinner which provides local business owners with the opportunity to network and to hear from their elected officials about the status of key projects. Each year between 70 and 100 guests participate in this community building activity.

Another great success was a Clarkson University “My Business 101” class held at the Ranger School in Wanakena. This four evening class was attended by 30 local business owners, many that have followed up by attending additional programs offered by Clarkson.

The NYS Small Business Development Center has begun meeting local business owners in our area. It is much easier for our businesses to meet locally, rather than traveling 45 minutes to learn about available programs that can be of assistance to them.

The Community Development Coordinator played an irreplaceable role in bringing new business assistance services and opportunities to our area businesses.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Smart Growth Grant has provided Clifton-Fine with needed capacity to pursue new opportunities that have been instrumental in all of our community revitalization successes. Having a dedicated Community Development Coordinator to help support the continued involvement of our dedicated volunteers and town leaders has been critical to our success. The support from the NYS DEC Smart Growth program has meant the difference between stagnation and steady growth in our towns. We deeply appreciate your faith and investment in the Towns of Clifton and Fine.

Respectfully,

Mark Hall
Fine Town Supervisor