

# The Cambridge Freight Yard Revitalization Project

*A community initiative to purchase, preserve and revitalize the historic rural freight yard in the heart of the Village of Cambridge*

## Project Goals...

- Generate business activity and create jobs in Southern Washington County
- Preserve unique historic structures
- Expand cultural and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors
- Attract visitors to the area



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## A Vision for the Future

Cambridge, New York is one of those rare small communities in America that is preparing for the future while celebrating its past.

Architecturally the center of the Village remains largely as it was 125 years ago when the railroad was an everyday part of American life. The recently restored Cambridge Hotel bustling with activity faces an open green and the elegant old passenger depot. Just down Main Street is Hubbard Hall, a 125 year old opera house, which is home to a thriving arts center. Treasures of eras past are housed in the nearby Cambridge Historical Society and Museum.

Luckily, the historic rural freight yard has escaped the wrecking ball, making it a rarity in the nation. Although the historic structures remain, they are underutilized and most alternatives for using the land would have them demolished. Several Main Street storefronts are empty and others cannot expand due to a lack of land for sewage disposal and public parking.

A coalition of civic organizations, businesses, citizens and local government has formed a new non-profit organization, The Cambridge Valley Community Development and Preservation Partnership, Inc., to reclaim this rare intact freight yard and important section of town.

The principal goal of the project is to make the old freight yard site as vital to life in Southern Washington County today as it was when the Delaware and Hudson Railroad served the area and its agriculturally-based economy. To help achieve this, the Project will convert the historic freight buildings into shops, classrooms and galleries, greatly expanding the business, cultural and artistic programs offered.

The Project will catalyze creation of three new businesses and, by providing much needed land for sewage disposal and public parking, it will enable several other businesses to grow. The increased commercial activity around the freight yard will promote local entrepreneurship, create new jobs and expand the tax base. An inviting small park at the center of the freight yard will provide opportunities for recreation and relaxation for visitors, families and residents.

This ambitious Project offers a unique chance to preserve the historic integrity and beauty of the Village, while at the same time securing a strong foundation for economic growth into the 21st century.



## How will the Project Attract Visitors and Expand Cultural and Recreational Opportunities in Southern Washington County?

To entertain, inspire and offer life long learning opportunities, freight structures will be converted into visual arts classrooms, galleries and retail spaces for artists and local entrepreneurs, and a new performing arts annex will be constructed behind Hubbard Hall. Aside from these expanded cultural venues, visitors will be attracted to the historic charm of the preserved rural freight yard. Guided by interpretive signage and exhibits, they will be invited to explore the role of the rail system in an agrarian economy of the late 19th century. Pedestrian walkways and an inviting small park with benches and period lighting will create attractive routes between Main Street and the cultural and retail properties throughout the site, as well as provide space for relaxation, family recreation and community celebrations.

### **Beacon Feed Freight House (c.1880)**

The Beacon Feed Freight House was once the transfer point for a wide variety of agricultural products traveling by railroad to and from the Cambridge Valley. The structure will be transformed into a visual arts center for Hubbard Hall's various educational programs. It will include classrooms, artist studios/shops and a gallery.

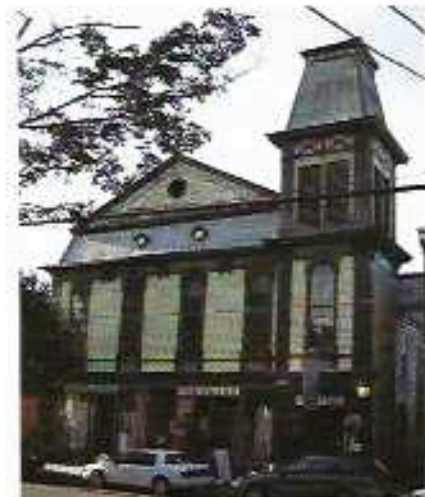


### **Lovejoy Foundry Freight Barn (c.1880)**

The Lovejoy Foundry Freight Barn was used to store locally designed plows and tools for shipment nationwide. The first steel plow designed for general use was shipped from this site. Revitalization plans call for the post and beam structure to be adapted to support local entrepreneurs and farmers.

### **Cambridge Freight Depot (c.1852)**

Furthest north on the site is the freight depot which was in operation until the 1960s. This authentic post and beam structure will house office space and a seasonal gallery featuring rotating exhibits about the history of the region and the work of local artists.



### **Hubbard Hall Projects' Performing Arts Annex**

Founded 25 years ago in an 1878 opera house, Hubbard Hall Projects is the region's art center dedicated to presenting the best of theatre, music, dance and visual arts. Annually over 30,000 visits are made by people to enjoy its critically acclaimed theatre company, chamber music group, dance program, and educational programs. Guided by its own strategic plan, Hubbard Hall will construct a multi-functional rehearsal space/performing arts Annex to meet the demands of its expanding programs.

## How Will the Project Increase Business Activity and Create Jobs?

A comprehensive plan prepared by the Village of Cambridge identified several barriers to increased commercial activity around the freight yard site. The Revitalization Project addresses many of these problems: insufficient parking; inadequate sewage; and underdeveloped economic potential on Main Street.

Besides preserving the historic charm of the Village, the Project will have a large impact on economic activity in three important ways:

- New jobs will be created. Three new retail establishments, two of which are on Main Street, will be developed in structures currently suffering from deferred maintenance.



One East Main Street



13-15 East Main Street



Blacksmith's Shop

- The Village will construct off-street public parking, making it easier to visit businesses along Main Street, as well as nearby events, such as the farmers' market, balloon festival, craft shows, and the tourist train, the Battenkill Rambler.
- Several nearby businesses, including The Cambridge Hotel and The Cambridge Diner, will obtain access to land for expanded septic systems, allowing them to grow.

## What Happens Next?

The Freight Yard Revitalization Project will be realized in three phases with the financial support of individuals, local businesses and government and public grants.

- **Phase One:** Acquire the two acre Freight Yard including the five historic structures on it; develop a detailed design for the site; construct expanded sewage requirements.
- **Phase Two:** Adapt three freight structures for seasonal public use; revitalize and sell 13-15 East Main Street; construct public parking lot; and develop park/greenspace.
- **Phase Three:** Construct performing arts Annex for Hubbard Hall Projects; and restore freight structures for year-round use.