

Overview

Have you noticed.....? Significant activity has been underway in the eastern half of the Owlkill Commons in the last several months. As detailed below, a host of community members have been collaborating to advance revitalization efforts on four main fronts:

- Activating, recently donated VARAK park, as a truly community space and home to the Farmers Market;
- Rehabilitating 9 West Main Street as a dynamic mixed-use structure;
- Planning activity to promote public access to and better stewardship of an amazing, inviting stretch of the Owl Kill—including exploring options to naturalize the stream near the historic Victorian Footbridge and creating a .55 walking trail in the Village along the creek, and
- Making improvements to other structures and open space within the 'lumberyard.'

VARAK Park Donated to the Community Partnership

In February 17 Mile VARAK donated 1.15 acres of land to the Community Partnership— specifically the park in front of VARAK Park (including sections of the Owl Kill over which the Village-owned Victorian Footbridge sits) and the strip of land between Pearl Street and the Owl Kill to the east. Immediately the Community Partnership extended an invitation to the Cambridge Valley Farmers Market to consider relocating back to the center of the Village, making Owlkill Commons its permanent home. Happily, Market members unanimously accepted.

Given the condition of the stream retaining walls, volunteers installed temporary fencing and planted flowers along the stream. To invite people to spend time in the park, the Market purchased and placed picnic tables; Battenkill Books donated beautifully decorated Adirondack Chairs. It has become a wonderful place for community members to connect, support the local agricultural community, and listen to great music. Visit the Farmers Market on Sundays.... Feel free to reach out the Community Partnership about sponsoring events in the Park.



Cambridge Valley Farmers Market, and Local musician Dan Costello



What's happening to the buildings in the Lumberyard?

9 West Main Street

Because 9 West Main Street is the largest and most prominent building, it is a priority to renovate and bring it back to life. 9 West is a house wrapped in a more modern set of additions. In Phase One the Community Partnership focused on rehabilitating the second floor, two-bedroom apartment and making structural improvements to flooring and roofing systems throughout the building, including upgrading some heating and electric systems.

Phase Two is much more ambitious. It includes making the first floor of the structure more inviting with the installation of large windows throughout. And celebrating the east side of the structure (which has a lot of visibility from Main Street) through the construction of a patio for exterior seating. It will provide ADA accessibility to all the commercial outlets within. A new roof and relevant mechanical systems will be installed.

Who will be in the space? It is flexible and designed to host multiple commercial pursuits. Henry's Barber Shop plans to return to its iconic spot in the building. A large section, facing Main Street, is designed for a café/coffee shop—which is much desired by the community. Retail or office space is also available. Know an entrepreneur looking to put down new roots or expand along Main Street? Please give us a call 518-677-3555.



Cory Record and Chad Burr and their team continue the work of framing and building out the first-floor space at 9 West Main. They're doing a great job, so if you happen to walk by while they're at work, give them a "thank you!"

The ‘Cottage’ has been rehabilitated

The Cottage is an adorable, naturally well-lit, one-story 400 square foot structure with two main rooms (and a small bathroom) --- conveniently adjacent to parking. Over the course of the last few months, the Community Partnership rehabilitated it—installing new interior and exterior doors, a new window, and a sink cabinet in the bathroom. It has been brought to life with coats of fresh interior paint, repairs to the exterior siding and the slate roof, and the addition of plantings out front. Famous 9 West Main tenant Henry’s Barber Shop is relocating temporarily to the Cottage while construction on 9W continues. In the first half of 2024 the Cottage will be available for rent for commercial purposes. Give us a call if you or someone you know are interested



Schematic for the Red Barn Developed

The Community Partnership plans to rehabilitate and invigorate the now vacant, two-story deteriorating ‘Red Barn’—specifically improving the façades and first floor commercial space (2,273 square foot). As a first step in this process, the Community Partnership hired Keefe & Wesner Architects, PC to draft a design that includes façade improvements, creation of two open flexible commercial spaces full of natural light and views of green spaces, with shared restrooms and easy parking access. The building will be made energy efficient and climate smart. The timeline for next steps is contingent on grant funding.



Lean-To Removed and Repurposed

At the rear of the property, along the banks of the Owl Kill sat a 700 square foot Lean-To, once full of junk. Volunteers removed the junk, repurposing many items; Jeremy Alexander removed the structure in February. It too will be repurposed. Now there is more space for the emerging park and spring flowers....

Stewarding the Owl Kill

The Community Partnership is striving to better understand and seek guidance on how to stabilize and naturalize the Owl Kill near the Green Bridge and better steward the Kill along a proposed .55 mile walking trail in the Commons.

Over the past few months a subcommittee has met with officials from NYS Department of Conservation (Region 5), the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and Washington County Soil and Water Conservation Office to seek guidance on the project.

We also held a public meeting seeking input on three design options for stabilizing and naturalizing banks in front of VARAK. We have learned some of the basics of stream stewardship and identified need for experts to help guide future plans. Our next step will be to collaborate with scientists to evaluate, assess and collect data on the natural features and characteristics of the Owl Kill—its hydrology, hydraulics, and geomorphology.



Top photo: (left-to-right) Phil Bell, Rick Lederer-Barnes, Sarah Ashton, Mark Kanonik, Casey Holzworth (OPRHP), Alane Chinian (OPRHP), Robbie McIntosh, Benjie White. Thank you to Ken Gottry for photos

We need your financial support to complete 9 West Main Street within the next several months.

We seek to complete the rehabilitation of 9 West Main without the benefit of grant funds—reserving monies from NY Forward for other projects within the community.

HOW TO DONATE?

Send a check by mail to:
Community Partnership
PO Box 72
Cambridge NY 12816



Or pay by credit card on our website at www.cambridgecommunitypartnership.org.

We are a 501(c) 3 organization so donations are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law