



RuralEdge
HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Memorandum

To: Greensboro Selectboard
From: Patrick Shattuck
Subject: Project Overview – Greensboro Village Housing
Date: 27 January 2023

The Opportunity – Create a rental housing development in the desirable “lake” community of Greensboro that has, to this point, not had any affordable general occupancy housing. The community has seen eco-tourism and business growth through production of Vermont specialty foods that have seen worldwide success. Lack of housing supply for new employees as well as year-round occupants has resulted in a strong local effort and plan to bring options for affordable housing to sustain the vibrancy and draw of the community.



The Greensboro Town Hall (front and side)

Rear Elevation with parking area

Side elevation with at grade entry

RuralEdge staff have been meeting with the Greensboro Housing Committee since spring 2020 discussing opportunities for development of new, general-occupancy rental housing in the Town. Prior to this engagement, the Town had updated its Town Plan and had emphasized the need for affordable housing opportunities in the community. Since that time, there have been updates to the zoning ordinance to encourage more inclusive residential development adjacent to the historic village center. Acknowledging the dramatic variations in amenities, conditions and property value between the traditional village and the area known as “the Bend”, emphasis was placed on making improvements in “the Bend”. This area has seen connectivity to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail with the construction of new bridges, paved paths and parking areas. Too, “the Bend” became a designated Village Center. The Town continues to pursue planning around the potential for public sewer infrastructure so that additional development could be supported.

Throughout this process, discussions continued and RuralEdge and the local committee monitored opportunities for land or properties for redevelopment that would meet funding criteria and result in a feasible project. Various sites were considered but the increased pressures on the market from COVID limited RuralEdge's ability to even consider negotiating site control. Because of the funding process and timeline associated with feasibility for a new development, RuralEdge (and other developers using public funding) need to secure extended option agreements, which proved impossible given recent market pressures.

In late summer 2022, RuralEdge viewed the grange building in the village (owned by the town) and a significant historic farmstead located at the edge of the Greensboro Bend Village district. RuralEdge believed that an interesting project could be developed with units in both the village and "the Bend" but ultimately the owner of the Bend property got cold feet and suggested beginning negotiations again in Spring 2023 after he returned from his winter home. Given his attachment to the property and mixed feelings about selling, RuralEdge staff concluded that property probably wasn't a realistic option to consider.

In late 2022, RuralEdge staff were approached by a member of the Selectboard and, with the Chair of the Greensboro Housing Committee, toured the current Town Hall building to evaluate whether it might be feasible to consider for adaptive reuse as housing. The building, originally a part of the Greensboro School, has housed municipal offices in the daylight basement and some space on the main floor (accessible via an exterior ramp) has been leased to a local arts group. The main floor retains its original classroom configurations. The upper floor includes an open span auditorium and stage that is not used because of lack of accessibility.

The exterior is well-maintained and retains its historic appearance and large windows (many windows have been replaced with more energy efficient wooden sash). The building sits prominently on a rise at the northern edge of the village providing a strong and visible anchor presence. The lot is triangular, with roads on the eastern and western edges providing access to parking on multiple levels. While attractive, the building has far more space than is needed daily to support town functions.

The town offices occupy a daylight basement that is accessed at grade with a combination of office and meeting rooms as well as an accessible bathroom and vault. The main floor has four large classroom spaces, with associated storage and support rooms. There is a central stair hall with a single, wide split back staircase connecting the three floors. The wall and ceiling finishes are predominately pressed tin, however a combination of ducts, drops and partitions added over time have introduced newer standard building materials. Floors are original and are wood. The top floor is a single auditorium with pressed tin finishes; it is currently unconditioned. There is an attic above proving the potential for further development. Insulation throughout the property is minimal and operating costs are high as a result.

RuralEdge believes that this property provides an excellent opportunity for redevelopment as housing. The town's position, as an owner and occupant, with a goal of seeing new affordable housing produced in Greensboro, creates a unique synergy that would align well. Upon formal approval from the town to proceed, RuralEdge would look to secure site control and would begin a 6–9-month feasibility analysis.

Based on experience with similar buildings, RuralEdge believes that:

- The current building could be configured into 12-14 units.
- Ample space exists at the rear to construct a connected, accessory building with 6-10 additional units that would complement, but be viewed as separate from the historic school building.
- RuralEdge would pursue a mixture of unit configurations aimed at the current and anticipated market in Greensboro to include accessible and adaptable smaller units suitable for area seniors and those living with disabilities complemented with two and three-bedroom units suitable for couples or families. A variety of income restrictions would serve a diverse resident base.
- Focus on historic preservation as well as energy efficiency would be of paramount importance to the development.
- RuralEdge would create community spaces inside and outside the building including the opportunity for community gardens.
- RuralEdge would provide services onsite, including SASH (Support and Services at Home) available to elderly and disabled residents of both the building and the larger community.
- The redevelopment would convert a tax-exempt property to the tax base; all RuralEdge properties pay property taxes.

During a feasibility analysis, RuralEdge would look at the structure, including environmental testing and engage a design team of engineers, architects, and historic preservation consultants to evaluate the building and plan for its adaptive reuse. Septic design and capacity would be a significant component of the redevelopment plan. RuralEdge would procure a market study, appraisal, and capital needs assessment for the current structure and all would become a component of the project. As needs and estimated costs were refined, the budget would be developed, and funding sources identified. Because the town would need to relocate their offices, RuralEdge could, concurrently work with the town to evaluate and plan for the redevelopment of the grange building for such purpose.

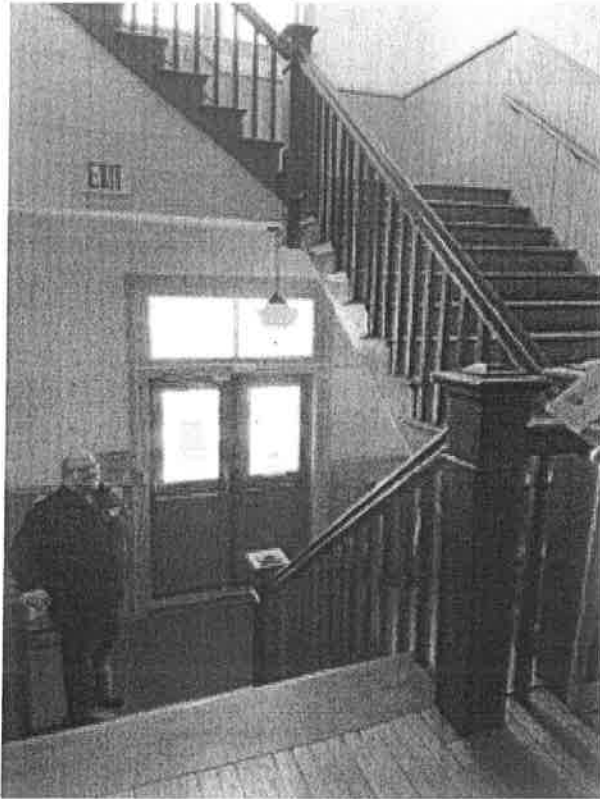
It is expected that with site control negotiated in the first half of 2023, RuralEdge would complete feasibility analysis for the end of the first quarter of 2024 with anticipated funding applications in 2024 with a goal of starting construction early in 2025. Construction would be expected to take one year with occupancy in early 2026.



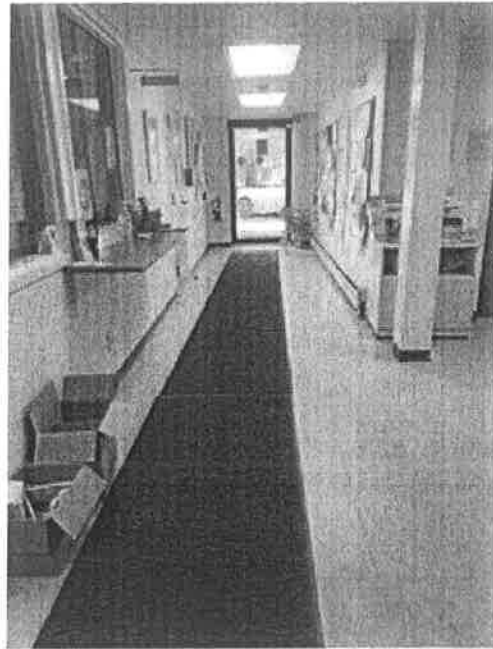
Third Floor Auditorium



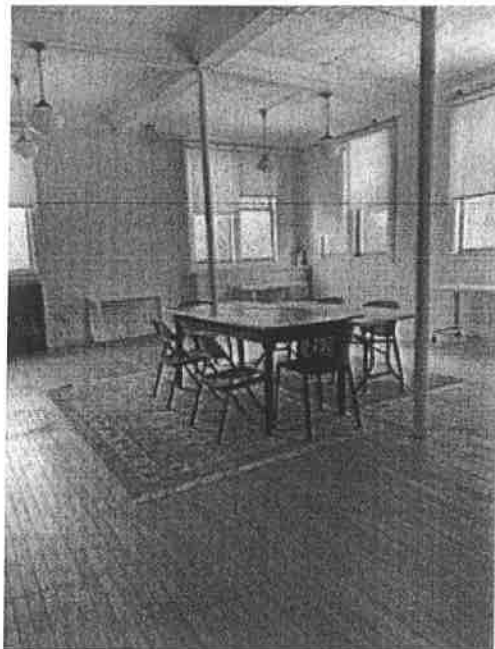
Town Office Space



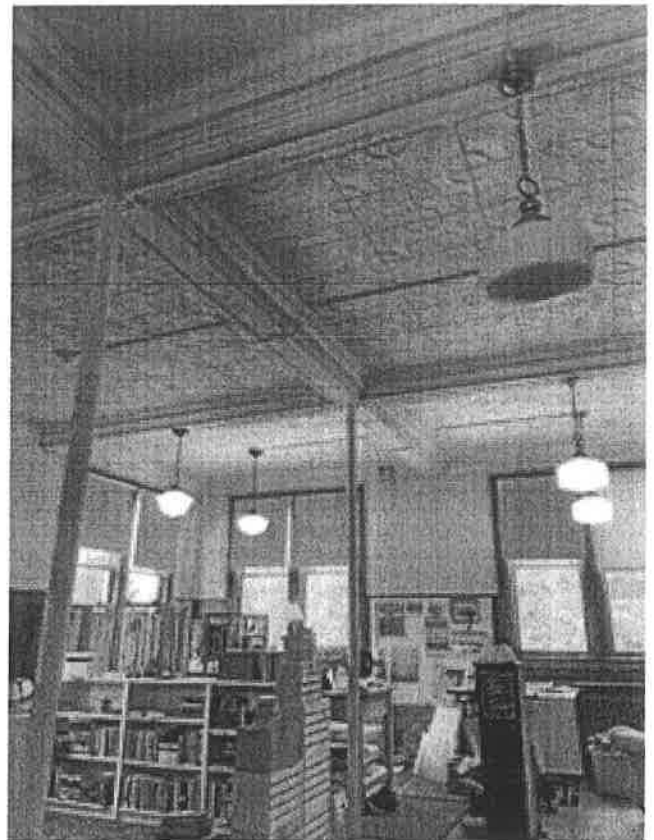
Historic Stair Hall



Town Office Entrance Lobby



Original Classroom Space



Original Classroom Space