



West Falls

NY Forward | 2023 Application



NY Forward

REDC REGION
Western New York

PROGRAM
NY Forward

MUNICIPALITY
Town of Aurora

DOWNTOWN NAME
West Falls (Hamlet)

COUNTY
Erie County

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Honorable Council:

On behalf of the Hamlet of West Falls and the Town of Aurora, we are honored to present you with our proposal for NY Forward funding. In a culmination of over four years of efforts, this application is rooted in careful planning with several exciting projects that are ready to advance.

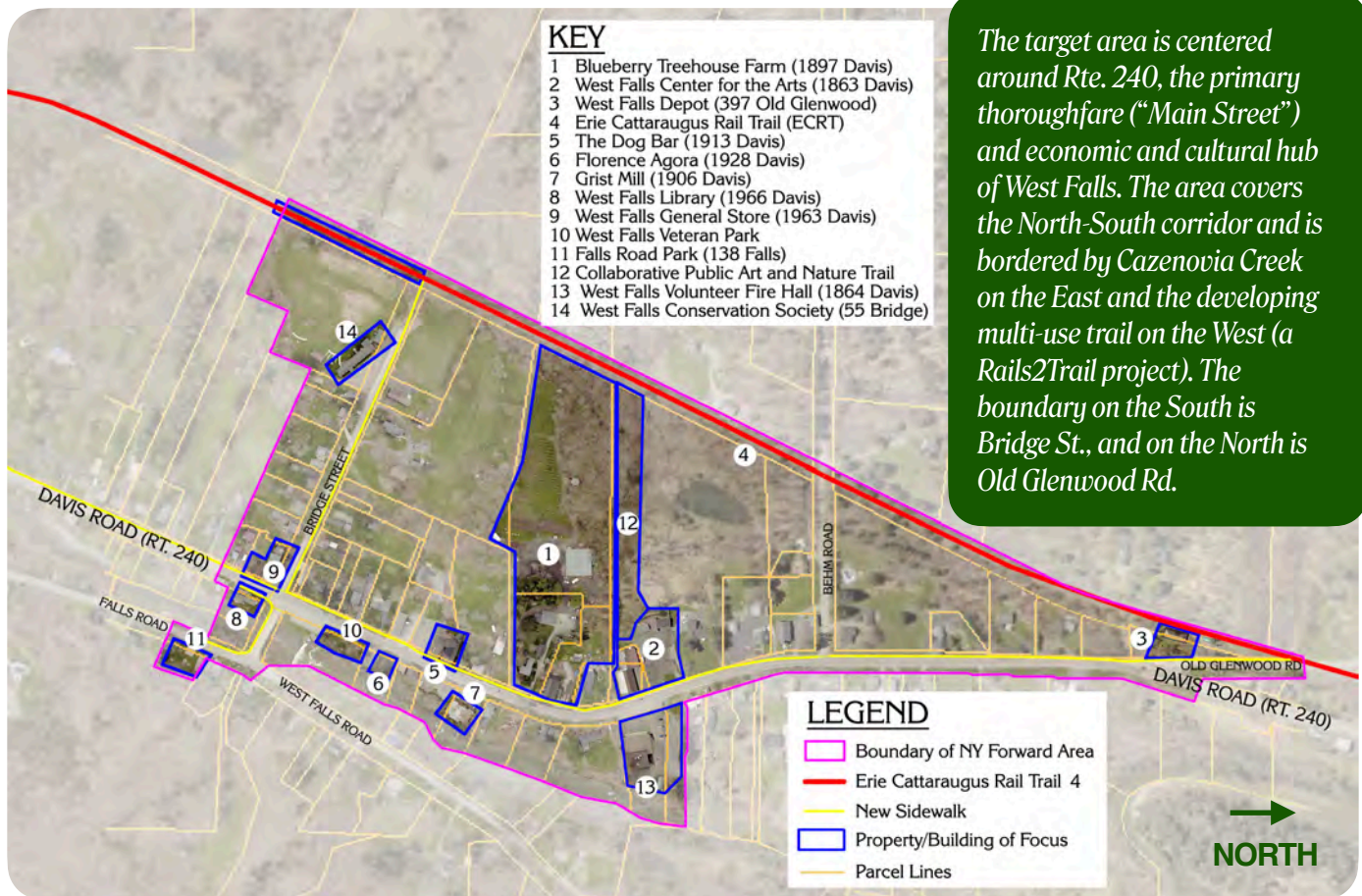
In 2020, the Aurora Town Board created a West Falls Advisory Committee to bring together community activists, business owners, and residents to understand and promote the needs of the Hamlet of West Falls. This active and vibrant community surprised even us with its energy and creativity. In 2022, the Town of Aurora applied for NY Forward funding to solidify the goals of the community, and it helped us to recognize how transformational NY Forward funding would be, if awarded, for our town and the surrounding municipalities. With assistance from NY Forward, West Falls will become:

- A healthy, family-friendly destination combining a multi-use trail, agritourism, a sculpture park, outdoor playgrounds, and an arts center.
- A walkable/bikable community that serves as a model for other rural hamlets to promote diverse housing and sustainability.
- A commercial core and the heartbeat of the Rte. 240 corridor and surrounding towns of Aurora, Colden, and Orchard Park.
- A fun and attractive gateway along the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway for nearby winter activities, including two downhill ski resorts and X-country, snowshoeing, and snowmobile trails.
- The first rural hamlet to be awarded funding in the NY Forward program.

The time for this investment is now. We have worked closely with the NY Department of Transportation to include ADA curb ramp upgrades and new ADA compliant sidewalks on both sides of the downtown area. We received funding from Erie County to develop a comprehensive plan for the Town of Aurora. And, we continue to build on our newly awarded Bronze Status as a Climate Smart Community.

Sincerely,
James Bach, Supervisor
& the Aurora Town Board

2 Geographic Area & Justification



GEOGRAPHIC AREA

West Falls, which traces its history to the early 1800s, is a dense, rural hamlet within the Town of Aurora, Erie County, that also serves the neighboring towns and villages due to its location on a main thoroughfare. The main street area is compact and walkable, and is the location of historic, cultural, natural, and agricultural assets. The center of town is the West Falls Dam Site and park, built originally to power the nearby grist and saw mills, and a relaxing stop for travelers. Across the street is a community-run library (1934) and on the corner is the old general store, which is a classic turn-of-the-century storefront building that is currently vacant. A short, 2-minute walk away is the conservation society (since 1943) that provides valuable programming for all ages. The conservation society meets an entrance to the new, multi-use trail being built from a converted rail line that runs parallel to the main street. Heading north, there is a historic mill, the former West Falls Hotel (opened in 1808, currently The Dog Bar restaurant), and an exciting agribusiness that combines blueberry picking, a modern treehouse restaurant and bar, and short-term apartments. Continuing North, there is a community-run center for the arts in a converted bakery and a church. North from this, where the trail comes back into the main street, there is a historic, vacant, former train depot (1917). There is currently a well-used sidewalk on one side of the street, but the NYS DoT is undergoing major repairs, which will include ADA-compliant sidewalks and curbs on both sides of the street.

JUSTIFICATION

West Falls is a historic hamlet with its own identity and civic cohesiveness, but it has struggled to maintain that cohesiveness in the face of centralization of services and people into larger communities. The Hamlet used to have its own elementary school, but it was merged into the school buildings in the nearby Village of East Aurora. The West Falls Elementary School is now privately run as the Aurora Waldorf School. Similarly, the Erie County library system used to maintain a public library. After it closed, residents were so committed to the hamlet's identity that they reopened the closed library building as a non-profit community library. The volunteer West Falls Fire Company, West Falls Conservation Society, and the new West Falls Center for the Arts and Erie-Cattaraugus Rail Trail have become centers of community identity along with the re-opened library and serve as driving forces for West Falls' revitalization.

The Hamlet of West Falls has an important role in the development of the Town of Aurora and greater area. There is a high demand within the Town of Aurora for low- and middle-income housing that is located in a walkable/bikable area and, as a result, the housing prices within the more affluent Village of East Aurora are often too high for those families. West Falls is a location that could fill that gap, but the receipt of NY Forward funds is essential to make that happen.

With more affordable housing than the neighboring Villages of East Aurora and Orchard Park, but with excellent and highly rated schools, West Falls is poised to create an environment that provides new employment opportunities, grows the local property tax base, creates a green and sustainable community, and offers diverse housing.

3 Vision Statement

Our vision statement was developed over two years by the West Falls community over a series of five open meetings with input from over 100 residents. Residents overwhelmingly support West Falls as a community where growth and development respect our treasured natural environment and historic character. Simultaneously, residents wish that businesses return to the downtown area to provide a more vibrant main street. Residents who live in single-family homes

outside of the target area also expressed support for a walkable/ bikable center for local amenities without the need to drive 20-30 minutes for basic needs and entertainment options. Finally, the residents of West Falls expressed a desire to remain close to the outdoors with healthy recreational options and live in harmony with and protect the environment.

“West Falls will embrace its historic role as a principal rural center along the Cazenovia by leveraging its natural assets, unique hamlet atmosphere, and vibrant community engagement to foster a welcoming, walkable, green community for its residents and visitors with intriguing local amenities and healthy, family-oriented outdoor and cultural activities.”

4 Past Investments

With over 30,000 visitors per year, the Blueberry Treehouse Farm has proven that West Falls can be a destination for healthy, family-friendly recreational activities for all times of the year.

With expected attendance in 2023 to surpass 10,000 and recognition as a “Rising Star” by the Arts Services Initiative of Western New York, the West Falls Center for the Arts is a prime example of how West Falls is a growing space for arts and cultural events for both local residents and the greater region.

Even as a small community, West Falls has invested a tremendous amount into its downtown core. Following a decline in businesses and the deterioration of some historical and important buildings, the local community and the Aurora Town Board recognized the

tremendous potential for West Falls and have laid the groundwork for the projects described below.

The Town of Aurora and New York State continue to make improvements to the area. Upon advisement of the West Falls Advisory Committee, the Town has spent \$7,000 on north-bound and south-bound welcome signs and other beautification measures. The Town has also worked closely with state officials and the NYS Department of Transportation to ensure that the target area will receive a complete road redo, with a six inch drop and stormwater mitigation (including improved drainage throughout the hamlet), ADA compliant curbs, and extended sidewalks on both sides of the street. The total project cost is \$4.1 million, but this also includes milling outside the target area.



West Falls at its core is centered on strong community organizations and non-profits who continually invest into the community. The West Falls Volunteer Fire Company of Aurora Colden Fire District No. 6 is currently undergoing a \$2,500,000 addition and renovation to its fire hall, including a community room for public events. The project is self-funded, including private donations totaling over \$1,500,000. The West Falls Center for the Arts recently received \$250,000 in funding from Erie County to repave its parking lot and demolish run-down neighboring buildings. In kind donations of \$60,000 over the past year have been used to update the kitchen and serving area. The West Falls Community Library, which is not part of the Erie County system, received over \$300,000 from West Falls residents to remain open. The Town of Aurora has invested over \$25,000 in public funds to make improvements to the building. The Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail is also fully self-funded. While the organization has concentrated its efforts on other parts of the trail, it has still devoted \$19,900 to address drainage issues and \$18,750 to conduct a

preliminary study for the Aurora part of the trail. Finally, the West Falls Conservation Society has invested over the past year in building improvements to maintain its facilities.

Businesses have also seen the advantages of West Falls. The Blueberry Treehouse Farm is a combination of 3 adjacent lots with over 11 acres of property. The owners, Jyl and Rico Rivera, have restored the blueberry farm as an ecotourism site, together with a café, bar, and music venue, and remodeled apartments for short-term rentals. Altogether, the Rivera's investment totals over a million dollars. Another key business in West Falls is The Dog Bar, which has been owned by the Schenne family since 1941 in the original hotel building dating back to 1808. The Dog Bar has seen various improvements totaling \$60,000 (parking, renovations, and kitchen updates). Another major investment of note is Scott Bieler's \$470,000 investment in the Grist Mill, a historical building that was severely damaged and an eyesore in the hamlet.



Future Potential

The tremendous potential of West Falls

- A healthy, family-friendly destination combining a multi-use trail, agritourism, a sculpture park, outdoor playgrounds, and an arts center.
- A walkable/bikable community that serves as a model for other rural hamlets to promote diverse housing and sustainability.
- A commercial core with local amenities and the heartbeat of the Rte. 240 corridor and surrounding towns of Aurora, Colden, and Orchard Park
- A fun and attractive gateway along the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway for nearby winter activities, including two downhill ski resorts and X-country, snowshoeing, and snowmobile trails.
- The first rural hamlet to be awarded funding in the NY Forward program.

Though much progress has been made in West Falls, there is still a tremendous amount of potential. The Aurora Town Board and its West Falls Advisory Committee are focused on creating an active “downtown” area with a strong sense of place that is dedicated to the past heritage of West Falls and a future as a burgeoning

recreational, cultural, and arts center. The Town of Aurora recently passed new regulations for all commercial zones affecting the target area and additionally put into place a West Falls Overlay and Design Guidelines to better protect West Fall's historic past and unique feel. The Town of Aurora also created and ran a month-long “Scoot-Around-June” program that awarded prizes to participants who replaced vehicle miles with walking and biking.

The existence of developable properties within the target area have been identified, including properties that can be utilized for varying levels of housing affordability and mixed uses. With housing affordability being a priority, the Town of Aurora has taken multiple steps to start addressing equity in housing, including by working with local non-profit The Rural Outreach Center as a part of its Affordable Housing Corporation to identify potential projects for development.

The Town of Aurora received funding from Erie County to develop a comprehensive plan for the future. The Town of Aurora is dedicated to embracing the Climate Smart initiatives that led to its recent Climate Smart Communities Bronze designation. Future public investments include a greenhouse gas inventory, government climate action plan, the installation of EV charging stations, and working with Erie County to introduce a drop-off location for organic waste that will be taken to a county composting facility.

Why West Falls?

There are a number of factors that make West Falls a perfect candidate for NY Forward Funds, including:

- An active main street with historic and cultural attractions that serves as a center for a wider area.
- A dedicated local community that dedicates significant time and resources to the Hamlet of West Falls, including:
 - Colden-West Falls Community Library (fully volunteer)
 - West Falls Conservation Society (fully volunteer)
 - West Falls Center for the Arts (fully volunteer)
 - West Falls Fire Department (fully volunteer)
 - Erie-Cattaraugus Rail Trail Colden/West Falls group (fully volunteer)
 - West Falls Advisory Board (fully volunteer)
- High demand among low- and middle-income families for walkable/bikable areas within the region.
- A town board that has enacted policies to preserve the unique historic and cultural properties of West Falls, promote adaptive reuse, and create a green community.
- The potential to become a real destination for local tourists to enjoy:
 - The multi-use trail (former railroad), with local amenities
 - A stop on the Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway
 - Cultural events provided by the West Falls Center for the Arts
 - A center just north of (and on the way to) two ski resorts
 - The West Falls Conservation Society and events
 - Agribusiness, including the popular Blueberry Treehouse Farm

5 Recent & Impending Job Growth

NY Forward's investment in West Falls will position the Town of Aurora to implement development plans that will further improve the sense of place and quality of life in the community, helping to attract residents and visitors, and in turn new jobs.

Fostering Small Businesses and Non-Profits

Currently, the largest employers within or near the target area are Twinco Manufacturing and the Aurora Waldorf School, with several businesses and offices located to the North of the target area in a separate, less-dense commercial zone. Local businesses such as The Dog Bar and the Blueberry Treehouse Farm (combining both the design and building of luxury treehouses as well as its café and other services) also provide local jobs. The increased traffic to West Falls resulting from the multi-use trail, sculpture park, and increased capabilities of the West Falls Center for the Arts would help all of these places grow. Additionally, a number of other unique mom and pop businesses are planning to open within the hamlet. The receipt of NY Forward funds would accelerate this trend and provide expanded and diversified job opportunities.

Major Surrounding Employers

The Town of Aurora is home to or near a number of large employers, including Moog, Inc. (NYSE: MOG.A/.B) with a satellite office just north of the target area, Fisher Price, the wholly owned subsidiary of Mattel (Nasdaq: MAT), and Steuben Foods. Many employees of these companies and other large Western New York companies and corporations live in the rural hamlet of West Falls. Additionally, the Town of Aurora has identified a large portion of land near the target area that is zoned for industrial uses. The vision for West Falls, if implemented, would result in more regional tourism and local amenities and therefore an increase in jobs within the target area.



6 Quality of Life

West Fall's compact size, access to recreational opportunities, and focus on arts and culture, create a downtown area that would be perfectly suited to support vibrant, year-round development.

Diverse Housing

Housing in the target area is dominated by single- and multi-family buildings, including many rented apartments. One of the region's greatest needs is to provide affordable housing that is within a well-planned, walkable and bikable community. Many lower- and middle-income residents travel from outside the town and region to their employers since they are not able to afford housing within the area. Senior citizens are also often forced to move to other towns due to a lack of suitable options. With NY Forward funding, West Falls would provide a second, dense livable area of housing with more equitable housing options.

Commercial and retail main street businesses

The Town of Aurora's more vibrant commercial districts are concentrated around the Village of East Aurora. Although certain West Falls businesses have proven to be successful, such as the long-time Butterwood's Bakery before its sale in 2009, West Falls has not yet developed as a second option for finding local amenities. With further revitalization, West Falls is well positioned to replace out-of-town trips with local options. Additionally, building on the success of The Dog Bar and the Treehouse Café, alternative food options, such as the planned local farmer's market (currently only a few times a year), local goods store, and general store, would all provide healthy, fresh options for residents along the Rte. 240 corridor whose only current option is a Dollar General, several miles to the south in Colden.

Walkability and Bikeability

The hamlet's historic character contributes to its charm and identity, with a variety and richness in architectural style. Sidewalks and street trees throughout ensure it is very walkable, and there is an authentic neighborhood feel. The NYS Department of Transportation is already designing extended sidewalks throughout the hamlet. The Town of Aurora, with its newly passed complete streets policy, intends to work on providing adequate connections to the 65-acre J.P. Nicely Park and Aurora Waldorf School, as well as to the multi-use trail for additional recreational activities.

Cultural, entertainment, and recreational amenities

The West Falls Center for the Arts serves as a regional host to local, national, and international artists. Its vision is to increase access to a variety of cultural and artistic programming for a diverse, rural community and audiences, including services for youth, veterans, refugees, and caregivers of loved ones with dementia, Alzheimer's, and intellectual disabilities. Nearby, the Blueberry Treehouse Farm also hosts outdoor concerts. Both organizations have teamed up to pursue a sculpture park for West Falls that would connect to one of its newest features – a multi-use trail connecting West Falls to larger population centers and to two nearby ski resorts.

7 Supportive Local Policies

The Town of Aurora has proactively been embracing policies that increase livability and quality of life in West Falls and the surrounding areas. The Town Board has committed to developing a new comprehensive plan by allocating funds and recently received a Smart Growth Community Planning Grant from Erie County for these purposes. West Falls is a key area of development in the new comprehensive plan, and the Town Board hopes to create a more walkable/bikable neighborhood, improve green infrastructure, and create a strong sense of place.

The Town Board also updated its zoning laws to preserve the character of the community. Among other things, the Town Board created a West Falls Hamlet Overlay and design standards to specifically target this part of the town and encourage redevelopment of existing buildings and preserve the unique characteristics of the hamlet. The Town Board also continues to pursue environmentally friendly policies throughout the town, including by recently passing a Complete Streets Policy.

The Town of Aurora is recognized as a Clean Energy Community, and within less than one year after it took the Climate Smart Community Pledge, became the only town in Western New York to receive Bronze-level status as a Climate Smart Community. Aurora

will soon be launching a compost collection site that could also see a drop off within the hamlet and is working diligently to install four new charging stations for electric vehicles throughout the town, including in West Falls.

The board has also passed laws to permit residential, commercial, and utility-scale solar energy systems. The Town Board is working with a team of volunteers via the Rural Outreach Center to explore low-income housing projects and how the town can improve in this area and has appointed a fair housing officer to ensure the enforcement of federal and state laws.

The Town of Aurora has also partnered with the Village of East Aurora to create an industrial development agency so that the community can target and implement projects that comply with its goals. The town recently passed a memorandum in support of the Rails-to-Trails project in West Falls and is actively working with this community organization to ensure that the full community benefits from this project. Town representatives have also met with GoBike members to explore options of improving biking connections throughout the town with a goal of connecting the new multi-purpose trail and the Hamlet of West Falls to the Village of East Aurora.

8 Public Support

West Fall's vision reflected in this application is the result of numerous public outreach opportunities, including public surveys, a series of public meetings, and online engagement via social media.

The Hamlet of West Falls has always had very strong community engagement. In early 2020, this active group of citizens was made official by creating the West Falls Advisory Committee (WFAC) to the Aurora Town Board. There is an active membership group of 60 residents and growing. The WFAC meets quarterly and provides feedback to the Town of Aurora.

The Mission Statement for the West Falls Advisory Committee is “To expand opportunities for West Falls residents to collaborate with Aurora town officials and provide recommendations to the Town Board regarding issues pertaining to the West Falls region of the Town of Aurora.”

WFAC has been a driving force to have the town apply for this NY Forward grant to provide the hamlet with the opportunity to work with professional planners to engage the community in a strategic planning process so that everyone is heard and a plan for the future is formalized - along with the much-needed financial push for our property owners and businesses. This will allow larger, more transformational projects to happen, allowing the hamlet to thrive. The municipal updates to green spaces also help the community by improving public assets for outdoor activities.

WFAC facilitated the installation of a new West Falls welcome sign on Davis Road and also created a logo for West Falls “The WF” which is now on baseball caps and other apparel that the residents are proudly wearing!

The community is overwhelmingly in support of the NY Forward grant opportunity. A community engagement session was held in September 2022 and again in June 2023. Over 40 people attended the first session and over 60 people were in attendance for the second. Many residents responded to an online and hard copy survey about their visions for West Falls and their ideas for revitalization. We have many letters from the community in support of the grant opportunity. Also included in our application are many letters of support for our application from friends and supporters.

The WFAC's 40-60 active members meet periodically and report to the Town of Aurora their input, and the Town provides updated information to be shared with the WFAC.

Previous WFAC projects include surveying residents for feedback on the Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail and for an upcoming NYS DOT project on Route 240. WFAC also facilitated the installation of a new West Falls welcome sign, which is now being duplicated into a larger sign of similar design on the opposite entrance to West Falls.

Over the last several years, the Town of Aurora has also worked to improve communication and has active Facebook and Instagram accounts. Additionally, residents are encouraged to sign up to Code Red, which the Town is using to inform West Falls residents of upcoming WFAC meetings and other important notices. In addition to social media, the Town Board often talks about the NY Forward initiative at board meetings, which are all live via our YouTube channel.



9 Transformative Project Opportunities

The Town of Aurora is requesting \$4.5 million to address \$7,223,488 of transformational projects. These are projects that have been planned for and are ready to move forward. With NY Forward funding, the Hamlet of West Falls will truly be transformed into a rural, walkable/bikable hamlet with cultural and recreational amenities that make it a regional destination. The central intersection will have a renovated library and community center near a new, multi-use and diverse housing complex. The nearby parks and dam site will be modernized and truly become recreational destinations. The Main Street will be bustling with a unique general store, coffee shop, and locally sourced grocery store with fresh food and baked goods. Concerts and art displays will be all around, with AKG collaborated public art, a studio in the West Falls Arts Center, and

two concert venues. Residents will meander through the peaceful woods with sculptures up to the restored train depot, which will be a new stop on the Southtowns Scenic Byway and the multi-use trail connecting West Falls to nearby Orchard Park and other communities, bringing tourists into West Falls and making it an attractive, modern downtown area for its residents and a model for rural hamlets across the state. In conversations with community members, volunteers, business owners, and government officials, the Town of Aurora, in an effort to maximize the benefits from a NY Forward grant, would like to aim for a 40% matching commitment on private projects and a 10-15% commitment from non-profits.

Project 1 Blueberry Treehouse Farm, Café

Expanding Agritourism Complex and General Store — 1887 and 1897 Davis Rd.

Project Sponsors

Blueberry Treehouse Farm, Jyl and Rico Rivera
(building owner)

Estimated Project Cost

\$389,000

Funding Match Possibilities

Private funds
Construction loan

Project Timeline

1-2 years

On over 11 acres of property between the historic “Main St” of West Falls and the multi-use trail is a unique ecotourism site with seasonal blueberry picking, a treehouse café, and a music venue, that together see over 30,000 visitors a year. The location also houses Buffalo Treehouse, a growing and expanding design and build firm committed to using natural, repurposed, and upcycled materials to create structures, objects, and spaces that transcend the mundane, many of which are located on site and are planned in the future.

The site has become so popular, there is the need to add features and make improvements so that the businesses can grow. With NY Forward funding, the Blueberry Treehouse Farm will be able to restore the historical West Falls General Store (on the Main St.-facing side of the properties) back into a modern general store for the hamlet, a key part to a walkable community. Additionally, the project envisions remodeling of apartments for short-term rentals and making other improvements to allow this site to continue to expand, create more jobs, and grow as a key destination for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Exterior Renovations

- Exterior building finishes - \$21,000
- Renovations back to a general store commercial space - \$50,000
- Permanent landscaping exterior - \$5,000

Energy Efficiency

- Electrical updates to complex - \$18,000
- Solar panels added to exposed barn roof - \$50,000

ADA Accessibility

- Expanded and improved public bathrooms - \$15,000

Health outdoor recreational and cultural opportunities

- \$15,000 Apartment buildouts - \$80,000
- Additional luxury treehouses for short-term rental - \$150,000-\$250,000 each

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Green community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Family-oriented cultural activities Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Family-oriented outdoor activities



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Attracting new businesses with a mix of uses for residents and visitors



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Growing the local property tax



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 2 West Falls Center for the Arts

Expanding Art Center — 1863 Davis Rd.

Project Sponsors

West Falls Center for the Arts (non-profit)
William Panzica (building owner)

Estimated Project Cost

\$500,000

Funding Match Possibilities

Private funds
Erie County grant

Project Timeline

1-2 years

The West Falls Center for the Arts (WFCFA) is a rural nonprofit launched in a historic building that previously was the original West Falls firehall. The building was renovated into a beautiful venue that serves as a regional host to local, national, and international artists. WFCFA's vision is to increase access to a variety of cultural and artistic programming for a diverse rural community and audiences including services for youth; veterans; refugees; and caregivers of loved ones with dementia, Alzheimer's, and intellectual disabilities.

The extraordinary success of the West Falls Center for the Arts, as it serves 10,000 patrons annually and growing, has accentuated the need for the organization to grow with its audiences. To that end, and to accommodate another 5,000 to 10,000 patrons annually, or 20,000 patrons a year, West Falls Center for the Arts must improve its grounds. The proposed project will improve safety, increase audience capacity, improve visibility, increase accessibility for those with physical challenges, and elevate West Falls Center for the Arts profile as a regional cultural institution.

Exterior Renovations

- Replace building façade and street appeal by continuing Hemlock siding
- Improved signage on building consistent with current branding
- Outdoor concert stage and lighting

Energy Efficiency

- Replace windows with high energy efficiency windows
- Update HVAC
- ADA accessible entry to new stage and current building

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Green community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Family-oriented cultural activities Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Family-oriented outdoor activities



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 3 West Falls Depot

Historic Train Depot Conversion to Business and Rail Trail Stop — 397 Old Glenwood Rd.

Project Sponsors

Conor Schneider (building owner)

Estimated Project Cost

\$469,905

Funding Match Possibilities

Private funds
Construction loan

Project Timeline

3 years

The West Falls Depot is a historic train station built in 1917 – an edifice of immense historical significance in West Falls. Acquired in 2022 by its current owner, this project entails adaptive reuse strategies that will restore the depot's original appearance while transforming this historic structure into a versatile mixed-use space that will utilize the entirety of its footprint. The project includes lifting the building and replacing the deteriorating wooden ground supports with a new concrete foundation, effectively doubling the building's square footage and providing a place to neatly conceal the modern utilities that were not considered 106 years ago in the original design. The originally unused upstairs area will also be converted into a studio-style apartment/rental unit. The Waiting Room and Agent's Office will be meticulously restored to their original specifications, ensuring historical accuracy.

The restored West Falls Depot could serve as a community heritage museum and rail trail hub along the developing Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail, complete with parking and restroom facilities for trail users. Likewise, restoring the baggage room and original 300-foot-long brick platform opens up opportunities for indoor/outdoor commercial enterprises, such as a café, bakery, or event venue. Its prominent location along Route 240 atop a broad hillside provides the perfect canvas for creating a welcoming gateway to West Falls. In recognition of this, the Town of Aurora has chosen to place the new West Falls Welcome Sign at the foot of the hill. The adjacent former rail bed presents an opportunity to reinstall a section of the original railroad tracks next to the building to display a railroad car, caboose, or steam locomotive.

Exterior Renovations

- Exterior trim restoration and painting \$8,000
- Replica "West Falls" Station Signs \$2,780
- Brick Platform and Sidewalk Restoration \$30,000
- Landscape Front Hill, Install Retaining Wall and Decorative Fence \$32,000
- Driveway and Parking Area \$16,500
- Landscaping Finishes, Track Re-Installation \$13,000
- Acquisition of Former BR&P Railroad Caboose for Display \$65,000
- Install original-style Slate Roof and Clay Tile Ridge Caps \$136,000

Energy Efficiency

- Interior Electrical \$22,500
- HVAC \$16,000
- Window and Door Restoration \$22,000
- Exterior Electrical Work for Platform Lamps \$6,000

Conversion to Mixed-Use

- Plumbing \$15,125
- Interior Restoration and Finishes \$85,000

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Green community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Family-oriented cultural activities
- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Family-oriented outdoor activities



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Attracting new businesses with a mix of uses for residents and visitors



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Growing the local property tax



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 4 Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail (ECRT)

Multi-Use Trail Connecting West Falls to Surrounding Communities

Project Sponsors

Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail 501(c)(3)

Estimated Project Cost

\$642,000 or \$1,304,000 (depending on limestone vs. asphalt cover)

Funding Match Possibilities

Donations (\$369,800 spent on other projects already)

Project Timeline

1-2 years

Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail (ECRT) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that serves as trail manager for a 27-mile recreational trail built on the Buffalo-Pittsburgh (BPRR) rail line extending through and connecting to five municipalities in Buffalo's south towns, including the Hamlet of West Falls. The ECRT trail system will be a vital, significant community connector. It will link business, cultural, and recreational amenities to each other and to communities north and south of West Falls, encouraging increased visitor frequency and safe access to these assets. It will also provide West Falls residents with an easily accessible, ADA compliant recreational resource. With NY Forward support for the development of the 3.1 mile section of the ECRT trail, West Falls will become a stronger, healthier, more economically vibrant community. ECRT will continue to be a significant economic generator well into the future.

The community has overwhelmingly supported the ECRT in West Falls. ECRT, with the assistance of the Town of Aurora, has worked to mitigate concerns along the trail and achieved a unanimous 5-0 resolution of support from the Town of Aurora as a result. Considerable measures were taken to negotiate and sign an agreement with the West Falls Conservation Society to ensure that both this organization and the trail may co-exist for many years to come.

- Trail Surfacing – Surface existing 3.1 mile rail corridor with 6 inch depth by 10 foot width
 - Option A Limestone surface – use compacted <1 inch crusher run - \$390,000
 - Option B Asphalt – use asphalt with limestone base - \$852,000
- Culvert and Drainage Repair – Three locations requiring new culverts and fill of wash outs
 - Behm Road Culvert (within the target area) - \$35,000
 - Transki Culvert (outside of target area) - \$25,000
 - Hopkins Culvert (outside of target area) - \$25,000
- West Falls Conservation Society – Install 500 feet of protection from birdshot on trail
 - Option A: Fence-based wall with overhang, 12 ft. height - \$150,000
 - Option B: Box culvert, 3 sided with cutouts on West side - \$350,000
 - Option C: Highway sound barrier wall, 12 ft. height - \$300,000
- Old Glenwood Road (North) Trail Access & Parking (outside of target area) – 6 car lot - \$7,500
- Mile markers, road crossings, general signage – \$5,000

Fit with Vision Statement

- Walkable community
- Green community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Healthy living
- Family-oriented outdoor activities



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 5 The Dog Bar

1913 Davis Rd

Project Sponsors

The Dog Bar

Estimated Project Cost

\$480,000

Funding Match Possibilities

Private funds

Project Timeline

1-2 years

The Dog Bar Restaurant located at 1913 Davis Road has been owned and operated consistently by The Schenne Family since 1941. The building, which dates back to 1808, has had many uses over the years — fire hall, first aid facility, dance hall, hotel, residence, stagecoach transfer station, tavern, bar and restaurant. The first floor of the property is designed as a mini-museum devoted to West Falls and the surrounding areas and is used as a full service restaurant. The second floor currently has four apartments.

The Dog Bar is located right on “Main Street” in West Falls and is a historic and cultural icon for the area. NY Forward funding would enable building restoration necessary to restore the building to its historic appearance and also to increase energy efficiency.

Improve energy efficiency

- Replace exterior siding of building and add new insulation
- Replace boiler with energy efficient option
- Various electrical upgrades

Improve ADA accessibility

- Interior renovations of bathrooms for accessibility

Restore historic appearance

- Re-add side porch and railing on front second level porch roof
- Exterior deck
- Replace exterior siding

Diverse housing

- Remodel additional apartment



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Attracting new businesses with a mix of uses for residents and visitors



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Growing the local property tax



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 6 Florence Agora

Local Market Store and Cafe with Bakery — 1929 Davis Rd

Project Sponsors

Jason Kroll, Colleen Stillwell, Butter Block Bakery, Keith Warning (building owner)

Estimated Project Cost

\$122,000

Funding Match Possibilities

Private funds

Project Timeline

1-2 years

1929 Davis Rd. is currently operated as an accessory facility for Butter Block, a successful and popular bakery at 426 Rhode Island Street in Buffalo (project applicants). Located centrally near The Dog Bar, the building's exterior is not consistent with the surrounding buildings or the Town of Aurora's West Falls Overlay and Design Guidelines for West Falls.

With NY Forward funds, the building would be converted into a grocery store/market with a café. With the nearest grocery store over 8 miles away, "Florence Agora" would offer locally sourced goods and produce from the surrounding community and serve as the center of town where residents can meet and gather their provisions on a daily basis. The specialty grocery store would be a healthy opportunity with local, fresh foods with economical prices and a high-end feel. Additionally, Florence Agora would have a small café as a gathering place and for visitors to the area.

The project would provide a healthy option for local residents wishing to benefit from the walkable community we are creating. Additionally, the café would serve as an additional "Main St." amenity. Finally, the building's renovations would bring the building into line with the Design Guidelines and further promote West Falls as a unique destination for visitors.

Exterior renovations

- Full 20' High Glass Garage Door (front only) - \$20,000
- Replace front door with commercial glass door - \$3,000
- Patio install with possible stamped concrete in front to side walk, Awning, Seating - \$35,000
- Paint/Facade/Street Appeal/Siding/Mural (north side of building) - \$20,000
- Branding and Vinyl Decals (windows) - \$1,000
- Street Signage on building (front) - \$5,000
- Resurface floors - \$30,000

Energy efficiency

- Low energy exterior Lighting upgrade to accommodate customers (possible timer system) - \$3,000

ADA Accessibility

- Expand existing bathroom to make handicap accessible and refinish - \$5,000

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Green community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Healthy living



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Attracting new businesses with a mix of uses for residents and visitors



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Growing the local property tax



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 7 West Falls Grist Mill

Historic Mill Coffeshop — 1906 Davis Rd.

Project Sponsors

Scott Bieler (building owner)

Estimated Project Cost

\$288,000

Funding Match Possibilities

Private funds

Project Timeline

1 year

The historical grist mill, long an eye soar on the “Main St.” of West Falls, was purchased by Scott Bieler, who reclaimed and fully remodeled it. Built in 1866, the grist mill housed Arlen’s Old Mill Store in the 1960s and has always been a popular landmark for West Falls.

With NY Forward funds, the grist mill’s interior would be renovated to create a commercial space for lease for a small business, such as a coffee shop. The coffee shop would continue the legacy of the grist mill by providing a comfortable and casual meeting spot for every generation. It will be a welcoming gather spot where the community can share daily conversation, a children’s story time, or an exchange of personal stories, while enjoying a coffee, tea, or other non-alcoholic beverage. The coffee shop would be a unique people hub within a warm and inviting, community embracing, historic landmark. The décor will include artifacts and interesting signage that tells the story of the mill, the creek, and the surrounding history. The coffee shop would be a gathering place for all generations where conversation, coffee, and community come together.

General

- Materials and labor for 1,200 sq. ft. coffee shop on first floor
- Tap into Erie county water street
- Install a sand filter system to accommodate necessary bathroom facilities
- Kitchen area

Energy Efficiency

- Provide all necessary HVAC equipment for heating and cooling

ADA Accessibility

- Two accessible bathrooms

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Green community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Healthy living



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Attracting new businesses with a mix of uses for residents and visitors



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Growing the local property tax



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 8 West Falls-Colden Community Library

Volunteer Library and Community Center — 1966 Davis Rd.

Project Sponsors

West Falls-Colden Community Library (501(c)(3)),
Town of Aurora (building owner)

Estimated Project Cost

\$552,250

Funding Match Possibilities

Grants and public funds

The West Falls-Colden Community Library, located on the “Main Street” of West Falls, has been operating independently by volunteers since 2006 when the Erie County Library Association closed it and a contingent of community members raised funds and resources to save it and keep it open. A central part of the community, the library has many popular children and adult programs and provides much needed computers and wi-fi access to the community. The building itself is unique in that it was built as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) after being housed in several different homes. The original section of the library was of stone construction and is likely the first WPA completed project in Erie County and the only stone building ever erected under the WPA.

NY Forward funds would allow the library to expand as a community center and meeting place and to further its mission of serving all residents of West Falls. Additionally, the library would be modernized to improve energy efficiency with the goal of being fully operated by solar. Located across from the dam site and park, the library’s unique features make it an important part of the downtown area.

Exterior renovations/Historic Appearance

- New exterior community sign - \$8,500
- Permanent landscaping features - \$35,000
- Exterior clapboard siding - \$44,000
- Pointed up exterior stone - \$18,600

Energy efficiency

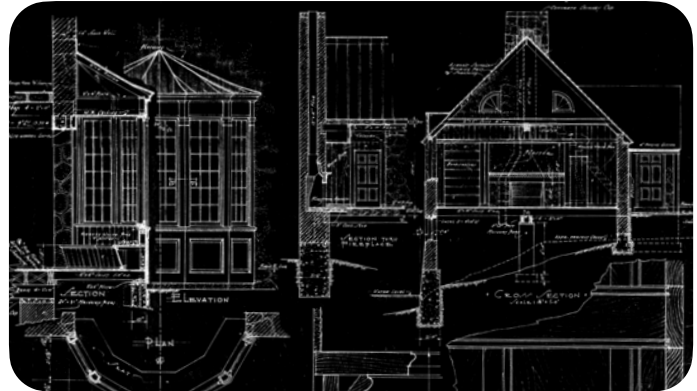
- Install high efficiency furnaces and air conditioning - \$24,300
- Replace hot water heater - \$2,700
- Replace windows, including rebuilding the bow window roof and base - \$38,600
- Install LED lighting (interior and exterior) - \$14,600
- Roof replacement, including installation of solar panels - \$46,750 (solar)

ADA Accessibility

- Install elevator - \$245,000
- New entry walkways - \$11,200
- Changes to and paving parking for ADA accessibility - \$32,500

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Green community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Family-oriented cultural activities



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Attracting new businesses with a mix of uses for residents and visitors



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 9 General Store

Historic Former General Store to Modern Mixed-Use with Diverse Housing — 1963 Davis Rd

Project Sponsors

Chaz Vance (building owner)

Estimated Project Cost

\$875,000

Funding Match Possibilities

Private funds

Project Timeline

1 year

This classic, turn-of-the-century storefront building in the heart of West Falls is a major piece of the historic landscape of the hamlet. The concept for this building is to create a mixed-use property true to its historical roots and look that combines a wellness center, retail space, a bed and breakfast, and apartments that would allow new families to move into an affordable location within the walkable/bikable community.

Exterior renovations

- New Footer / Foundation Walls / Piers \$125,000.00
- Rebuild Front Porch \$55,000.00
- Tower Addition Framing \$45,000.00
- Tower Addition Dry-Out \$25,000.00
- Tower Addition Windows / Doors \$25,000.00
- Tower Addition Roofing / Gutters / Trim \$35,000.00
- Trim / Re-Side Structure \$75,000.00
- Tower Addition Finishing \$65,000.00
- Exterior / Landscaping \$25,000.00
- Plumbing/septic \$25,000.00

Energy efficiency

- Insulation \$60,000.00
- Electrical \$20,000.00
- Heat \$35,000.00
- Slabs \$35,000.00
- Solar roof \$50,000.00

Diverse housing

- Apartment #2 (2 BR) Renovation \$35,000.00
- Apartment #4 (2 BR) Renovation \$25,000.00
- Apartment #3 (1 BR) Renovation \$25,000.00
- Apartment #5 (3 BR) Renovation \$65,000.00

ADA Accessibility

- Lift/excavation \$75,000

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Green community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Healthy living



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Attracting new businesses with a mix of uses for residents and visitors



Growing the local property tax



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 10 Public Improvements

Main St. Streetscape, Playgrounds, and Wayfinding — Davis Road (Main Street)

Project Sponsors

Town of Aurora

Estimated Project Cost

Up to \$2,034,333

Funding Match Possibilities

Grants and public funds

Project Timeline

2 years

Streetscapes are integral to the character and feel of a given area. The NYS Department of Transportation has announced \$4.1 million in improvements to Davis Rd. that will go a long way to improving the walkability of the area (including ADA compliant curb ramp upgrades and new sidewalks on both sides of the street in the downtown area). However, this project is limited and does not include the elements that could be installed with NY Forward Funding. Our vision for West Falls includes three aspects, which will help to make West Falls a destination:

- Improving the look, feel, and safety of the downtown area with 112 lantern post top luminaire ornamental light poles, five type "LS" crosswalks, and a traffic signal pole with a mast arm and R.Y.G. signal, and additional parking
- Improving the connections to the developing multi-use trail, including extending sidewalks that would divert foot and bike traffic from the trail crossing at the West Falls Depot through the hamlet and then back onto the trail at Bridge St., and wayfinding with signs about historic West Falls and the amenities it offers (including a welcome board and map at the West Falls Depot)
- Improving the public amenities, including unique, ADA compliant playgrounds in the small town parks, a Wi-fi access site near the library, lighting on the dam site, and a West Falls-themed sculpture at the central corner

The project costs would consist of (including engineering):

Falls Rd. Site

- Extension of sidewalk to playground site - \$21,523
- Parking - \$11,884
- Playground - \$325,000
- Pedestrian safety features - \$24,343
- Drainage - \$44,753
- Other - \$69,038

Davis Rd. ("Main St.")

- Sidewalk extension - \$175,000 (depends on final NYS DoT plans)
- Park improvements - \$27,068
- Playground - \$325,000
- Lighting - \$728,000
- Pedestrian safety features - \$58,096

Old Glenwood Rd.

- Sidewalk extension - \$19,245
- Pedestrian safety features - \$4,041
- Other, including signage - \$71,251

Bridge St.

- Sidewalk extension - \$49,980
- Pedestrian - \$2,886
- Other, including signage - \$77,225

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Green community
- Healthy living
- Family-oriented Outdoor Activities



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality



Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts

Project 11 Public Art

AKG Museum Collaboration Public Art

Project Sponsors

- Town of Aurora
- Mona Cook (property owner)
- Jason Kroll/Keith Warning (property owner)

Estimated Project Cost

\$85,000

Funding Match Possibilities

AKG matching funds, grants

Project Timeline

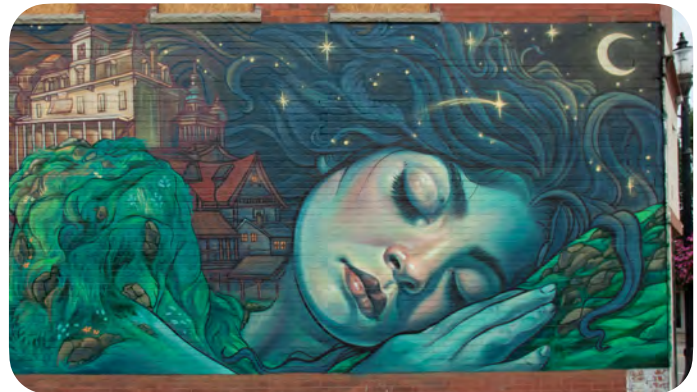
1-2 years

West Falls is a historic and unique hamlet where history is still being made. In addition to the historic buildings and projects, West Falls is also a vibrant community today with residents who are passionate about their area. The West Falls community has identified several potential areas for public art displays and has discussed the opportunities with the AKG Museum and with property owners, who are supportive. If approved, the project costs would be split and the community and the AKG Museum would identify artists and finalize locations. The Town of Aurora plans to heavily involve the West Falls Art Center community and its West Falls Advisory Board on this exciting project.

The imagery at the right is an example project of an AKG Museum collaboration with a rural community.

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Family-oriented cultural activities



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



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Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality

Project 12 Public Nature Trails & Sculpture Park

Collaborative Public Art and Nature Trail Connecting Multi-Use Trail to Downtown
1863 Davis Rd., 1887, and 1897 Davis Rd. (and multi-use trail)

Project Sponsors

West Falls Center for the Arts (non-profit), William Panzica (building owner), Blueberry Treehouse Farm, Jyl and Rico Rivera (building owner), Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail

Estimated Project Cost

\$124,000

Funding Match Possibilities

Private funds, Erie County grant

In a community collaborative project, three of the proposed project applicants are joining together to support a public art and nature trail that would connect three of the community's amenities: the multi-use trail, the Blueberry Treehouse Farm, and the West Falls Center for the Arts. Additionally, this would connect the trail to the "Main Street" as well for additional access. Preliminary conversations about design have been held between the artists at Blueberry Treehouse Farm, the West Falls Center for the Arts, and Griffis Sculpture Park in Ashford, NY.

ADA accessible access from multi-use trail to public art and nature trail - \$35,000

Sculptures and public art - \$89,000

Fit with Vision Statement

- Unique hamlet atmosphere
- Walkable community
- Green community
- Intriguing local amenities
- Family-oriented cultural activities
- Healthy living
- Family-oriented outdoor activities



Alignment with NY Forward Goals



Create an active downtown and sense of place



Enhancing public spaces that serve the existing community and those around the region



Providing amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality

10 Administrative Capacity

The Town of Aurora has full-time professional and administrative staff tasked with the operations of a municipality. The Town has received, administered, and successfully completed many large NYS & Erie County grants for infrastructure and municipal projects. If awarded a NY Forward grant, the Town would enhance its existing staff with the resource of a grant administration consultant, engineer, and project manager well experienced with the requirements and compliance required to implement the grant.

The entire Town Board, including the Supervisor, together with Planning Board Chairman Doug Crow, was involved in bringing the NY Forward grant to completion. The team was led by Councilmember Luke Wochensky, who has played an active role in

similar projects and is also the Climate Smart Community Task Force Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. Councilmember Charles Snyder has experience in construction and brings this background and his experience managing the complete reconstruction of a building for Aurora's town hall to the project. The Town also has a number of very active committees that include residents and volunteers who are responsible for specific areas of concern, including environmental concerns.

Together with the resources of persons engaged specifically to implement the NY Forward grant, our active elected officials and committee members will ensure that the project is completed on time and with maximum impact for the community.



On behalf of the West Falls community and the entire Town of Aurora, we thank you for your consideration of this application.

We feel that the NY Forward program was designed specifically for places like West Falls – a rural hamlet that needs some assistance to become the place that we know it can be.

With your help, West Falls will truly be a new type of rural hamlet that can serve as a model for similar communities throughout the state.

We encourage you to consider the needs of smaller communities like West Falls when making your decision.

11 Letters of Support

1. Hon. Mark Poloncarz, County Executive, Erie County
2. Hon. Nicholas A. Langworthy, Congressman, U.S. House of Representatives
3. Hon. Patrick M. Gallivan, Senator, NYS Senate - 60th District
4. Hon. David DiPietro, Assemblymember, NYS Assembly – 147th District
5. Hon. James Malczewski, Erie County Legislature – 10th District
6. Hon. James J. Bach, Supervisor, Town of Aurora
7. Hon. David M. Gunner, Superintendent of Highways, Town of Aurora
8. Hon. John Farrell, Chairman, Board of Fire Commissioner, West Falls Fire Company, Aurora Colden Fire District #6
9. Douglas Crow, Planning Board Chairman, Town of Aurora
10. Victoria R. Sturman, Executive Director, Greater East Aurora Chamber of Commerce
11. Zach Boehler, Public Arts Projects Coordinator, Buffalo AKG Art Museum
12. Donna Schwarzenholzer (Board President), Carol Happy (Board Vice President), Joanie Long (Board Secretary), John Sacco (Board Treasurer), West Falls-Colden Community Library
13. Deborah Fenn, Director, Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail
14. Bill and Carolyn Panzica, West Falls Center for the Arts
15. Conor W. Schneider, 397 Old Glenwood Rd.
16. Jyl and Ricardo Rivera, Buffalo Treehouse LLC, The Blueberry Treehouse Farm LLC, & Rivera Rentals, 1895, 1897, & 1887 Davis Rd.
17. Linda Schenne, The Dog Bar
18. Chaz Vance, 1963 Davis Rd.
19. Colleen Stillwell, Jason Kroll, Keith Warning, Florence Agora, 1929 Davis Rd.
20. Keith Warning, 1928 Davis Rd.
21. Scott Bieler, Grist Mill



COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

September 27, 2023

Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry Street
Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

Dear Ms. Utz,

I am writing you today to express my support for the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward application for the historic Hamlet of West Falls.

The Hamlet of West Falls is a vibrant community with a strong history, and an ideal candidate for NY Forward funding. Over the past four years, West Falls has been undergoing a wonderful transformation. The vision for West Falls is to capitalize on its unique, small-town, historic character while pursuing economic activity that creates a community which is a thriving, walkable, and equitable place.

Building off recent commercial growth, West Falls seeks to foster new projects that cultivate investment and attract new residents. Initiatives include preserving and adaptively reusing historic buildings, creating new and diverse housing choices, and investing in parks, trails and placemaking. The community of West Falls is becoming a local destination for agritourism, healthy recreational activities for families, and a meeting place for many vibrant community organizations.

NY Forward funding would allow West Falls to continue its momentum in advancing the economic development and revitalization of the entire area, including the surrounding towns of Colden and Orchard Park. I fully support Round 2 NY Forward funding to the Town of Aurora for their work in the Hamlet of West Falls, and appreciate your and the Council's consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark C. Poloncarz, Esq.
Erie County Executive

NICHOLAS A. LANGWORTHY
23RD DISTRICT, NEW YORK

RULES
OVERSIGHT
AGRICULTURE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3223

September 29th, 2023

DC OFFICE
1630 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3223
(202) 225-3161

DISTRICT OFFICES
8201 MAIN STREET
SUITE 13
WILLIAMSVILLE, NY 14221
(716) 547-6844

THE FENTON BUILDING
2-6 EAST SECOND STREET
JAMESTOWN, NY 14701
(716) 488-8111

1 BLUEBIRD SQUARE
OLEAN, NY 14760
(585) 543-5033

89 MARKET STREET
CORNING, NY 14830
(607) 377-3130

Ms. Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry St. Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Regional Director Utz,

Re: NY Forward Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

I am writing to express my support for the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward application for Hamlet of West Falls, to support their ongoing revitalization efforts and projects.

In recent years, West Falls has continued to capitalize on its historic character and unique charm, with sizeable investments in its local infrastructure. Preserving and reusing historic buildings, building new housing, and investing in parks and trails are all ways through which West Falls continues to revitalize their community. But maintaining this promising trajectory now requires external assistance, thereby alleviating the financial burden on current residents. With this funding, the West Falls community may continue on its track to becoming a prominent regional destination for agrotourism: a truly exciting outcome for our local farmers and economy.

I firmly believe that funding the revitalization of the Hamlet of West Falls is incredibly important to the future well-being of Southern Erie County. Please give the Town of Aurora's grant application your full and fair consideration consistent with applicable statutes and regulations. Should you have any questions, please contact my district office at 716-547-6844.

Sincerely,

NICHOLAS A. LANGWORTHY
Member of Congress

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK
SENATOR PATRICK M. GALLIVAN
60TH DISTRICT

September 20, 2023

Ms. Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry St., Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

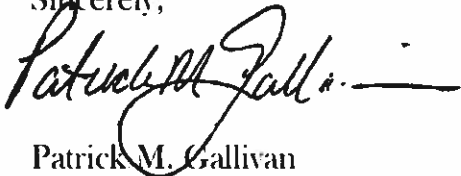
Dear Ms. Utz:

I am pleased to support the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward application for the historic Hamlet of West Falls.

The Hamlet of West Falls is a vibrant community with a strong history and an ideal candidate for NY Forward funding. Over the past four years, West Falls has been undergoing an amazing transformation. The vision for West Falls is to capitalize on its unique, small-town, historic character while pursuing economic activity to create a community that is a thriving, walkable, and equitable place. Building off recent commercial and other growth, West Falls seeks to foster new projects that cultivate investment and attract new residents, including preserving and adaptively reusing historic buildings, creating new and diverse housing choices, and investing in parks, trails and placemaking. The community of West Falls is becoming a local destination for agrotourism, healthy recreational activities for families, and a meeting place for many vibrant community organizations.

Awarding NY Forward funding to West Falls would allow it to continue its momentum in advancing the economic development and revitalization of the entire area, including the surrounding towns of Colden and Orchard Park. Thank you for your consideration. Should you need anything further, please contact my District Office.

Sincerely,



Patrick M. Gallivan
Senator - 60th District



DAVID J. DIPIETRO
Assemblyman 147th District
Deputy Minority Whip

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

COMMITTEES
Banks
Correction
Labor
MEMBER
Legislative Commission on
Government Administration

September 21st, 2023

Ms. Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry St.
Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

Dear Ms. Utz,

I am writing to you today to express my support for the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward application for the historic Hamlet of West Falls.

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Awarding NY Forward funding to West Falls would allow it to continue its momentum in advancing the economic development and revitalization of the entire area, including the surrounding towns of Colden and Orchard Park. Please give the Town of Aurora full consideration for this much needed grant for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Sincerely,



ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

HON. JAMES MALCZEWSKI
10th District Legislator

September 26, 2023

Ms. Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry Street
Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

Dear Ms. Utz,

I am writing to you today to express my support for the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward application for the historic Hamlet of West Falls.

The Hamlet of West Falls is a vibrant community with a strong history and an ideal candidate for NY Forward funding. Over the past four years, West Falls has been undergoing an amazing transformation. The vision for West Falls is to capitalize on its unique, small-town, historic character while pursuing economic activity to create a community that is a thriving, walkable, and equitable place. Building off recent commercial and other growth, West Falls seeks to foster new projects that cultivate investment and attract new residents, including preserving and adaptively reusing historic buildings, creating new and diverse housing choices, and investing in parks, trails, and placemaking. The community of West Falls is becoming a local destination for agrotourism, healthy recreational activities for families, and a meeting place for many vibrant community organizations.

Awarding NY Forward funding to West Falls would allow it to continue its momentum in advancing the economic development and revitalization of the entire area, including the surrounding towns of Colden and Orchard Park. Please give the Town of Aurora full consideration for this much-needed grant for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Malczewski', is written over a light blue circular stamp.

James Malczewski
Erie County Legislator, District 10



TOWN OF AURORA

575 Oakwood Avenue, East Aurora, NY 14052
www.townofaurora.com

September 22, 2023

Ms. Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry St.
Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

Dear Ms. Utz,

I am writing to you today to express my support for the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward application for the historic Hamlet of West Falls.

The Hamlet of West Falls is a vibrant community with a strong history and an ideal candidate for NY Forward funding. Over the past four years, West Falls has been undergoing an amazing transformation. The vision for West Falls is to capitalize on its unique, small-town, historic character while pursuing economic activity to create a community that is a thriving, walkable, and equitable place. Building off recent commercial and other growth, West Falls seeks to foster new projects that cultivate investment and attract new residents, including preserving and adaptively reusing historic buildings, creating new and diverse housing choices, and investing in parks, trails and placemaking. The community of West Falls is becoming a local destination for agrotourism, healthy recreational activities for families, and a meeting place for many vibrant community organizations.

Awarding NY Forward funding to West Falls would allow it to continue its momentum in advancing the economic development and revitalization of the entire area, including the surrounding towns of Colden and Orchard Park. Please give the Town of Aurora full consideration for this much needed grant for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James J. Bach". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish over the name.

James J. Bach, Supervisor
Town of Aurora

SUPERVISOR
James J. Bach
(716) 652-7590
jbach@townofaurora.com



TOWN CLERK
Martha L. Librock
(716) 652-3280
townclerk@townofaurora.com

TOWN OF AURORA

Aurora Municipal Center
575 Oakwood Avenue, East Aurora, NY 14052
www.townofaurora.com

TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS

Charles D. Snyder
csnyder@townofaurora.com

Luke Wochensky
lwochensky@townofaurora.com

James F. Granville
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Joseph M. McCann
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TOWN ATTORNEY
Brigid M. Maloney

TOWN JUSTICE
Jeffrey P. Markello
Anthony DiFilippo IV

HISTORIAN
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historian@townofaurora.com

FAX: (716) 652-3507

September 26, 2023

Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry Street
Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

Dear Ms. Utz,

I am writing to you to express my full support for the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward application for the historic Hamlet of West Falls.

The Hamlet of West Falls over the past 4 years has seen an amazing transformation into a vibrant community. It has the potential to be a showcase community that is not only equitable but walkable. The NY Forward grant would continue the economic growth that has currently started and will result in the Hamlet becoming a desirable destination for the whole area including the neighboring Towns of Orchard Park and Colden.

Please give The Town of Aurora full consideration for this much needed grant for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Gunner'.

David M. Gunner
Superintendent of Highways



**WEST FALLS FIRE COMPANY
AURORA COLDEN FIRE DISTRICT #6**

Phone: (716)652-1353

Fax:(716)652-0111



September 27, 2023

Ms. Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry St., Ste. 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application – Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

Dear Ms. Utz:

I am writing to enthusiastically support the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward Grant Application for the historic Hamlet of West Falls. In my capacity as Chairman of the Aurora Colden Fire District No. 6 Board of Fire Commissioners, serving the Hamlet of West Falls, I have witnessed firsthand the incredible potential that resides within our community. I firmly believe West Falls stands as an exemplary candidate for NY Forward funding, and such support would be instrumental in transforming our hamlet into a thriving, vibrant community hub.

The Hamlet of West Falls holds a special place in the hearts of its residents, offering an unparalleled blend of natural beauty, historical significance, and a resolute sense of community. Over the past four years, West Falls has undergone a remarkable transformation, driven by the perseverance and shared vision of numerous committed local residents. Building upon recent substantial commercial and economic growth, West Falls is currently witnessing the emergence of several exciting initiatives, including the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, the creation of new and diverse housing options, and investments in parks, trails, and placemaking. As a result, West Falls is rapidly gaining recognition as a local destination for agrotourism, offering healthy recreational activities for families, and serving as a lively meeting place for numerous community organizations. With the support of NY Forward funding, West Falls can further capitalize on its unique, small-town, historic character and propel these innovative projects that will attract additional investment and newcomers to our community.

This grant application presents an incredible opportunity to promote positive change and amplify the effects of the momentum already generated by significant recent investments into our community, including the ongoing \$2.5 million capital improvement project by the Board of Fire Commissioners. This endeavor aims to modernize our fire hall, expand its capabilities to better serve the community, and transform our community room into a versatile central space for the benefit of our residents. Enclosed within this correspondence, please find additional information about our capital improvement initiatives.

Furthermore, the Board of Fire Commissioners is actively exploring options to improve upon our facility and grounds, which have been a mainstay of the community for over 100 years, by creating additional green spaces and a community picnic area behind the fire hall along the picturesque banks of the Western Branch of the Cazenovia, which meanders along the eastern edge of the property.

In light of the above, I wholeheartedly support this endeavor and respectfully urge the grant committee to give it the utmost consideration. West Falls brims with untapped potential, and with the infusion of the NY Forward Grant, we can unlock this potential and foster a prosperous environment for all who call this charming hamlet home. This progress will, in turn, further advance the economic development and revitalization of the entire region, including the neighboring towns of Colden and Orchard Park.



**WEST FALLS FIRE COMPANY
AURORA COLDEN FIRE DISTRICT #6**

Phone: (716)652-1353

Fax: (716)652-0111



Thank you for your steadfast commitment to the revitalization of rural hamlets through the NY Forward program. I eagerly anticipate the potential transformative impact that this grant can bring to the Hamlet of West Falls. I kindly request that you give the Town of Aurora your full consideration for this much-needed grant for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Sincerely,

AURORA COLDEN FIRE DISTRICT NO. 6

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Farrell".

John Farrell

Chairman, Board of Fire Commissioners



West Falls Fire Hall as it appeared before renovations.



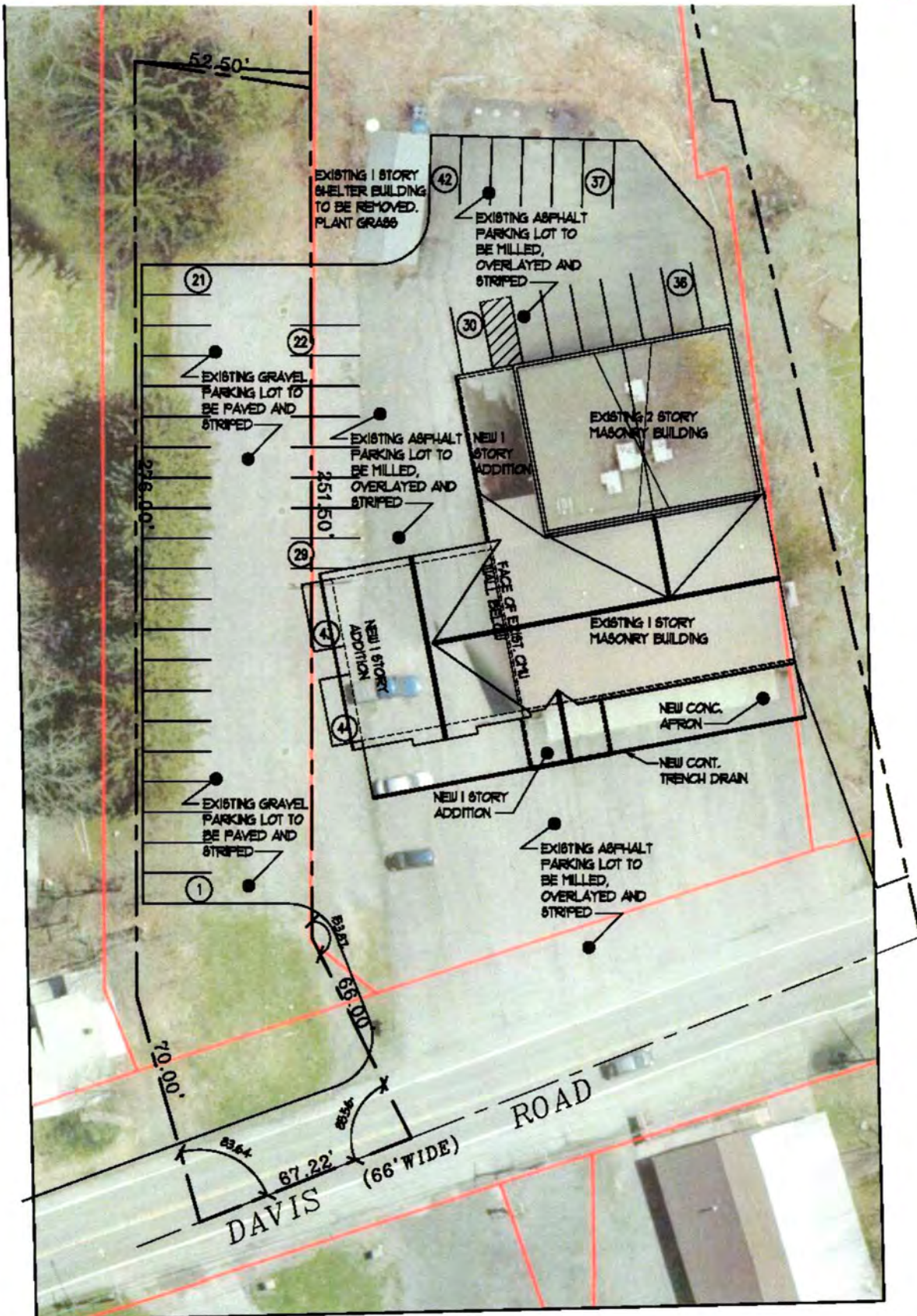
Rendering of West Falls Fire Hall after completion of the ongoing \$2.5 million capital improvement project.



**WEST FALLS FIRE COMPANY
AURORA COLDEN FIRE DISTRICT #6**

Phone: (716)652-1353

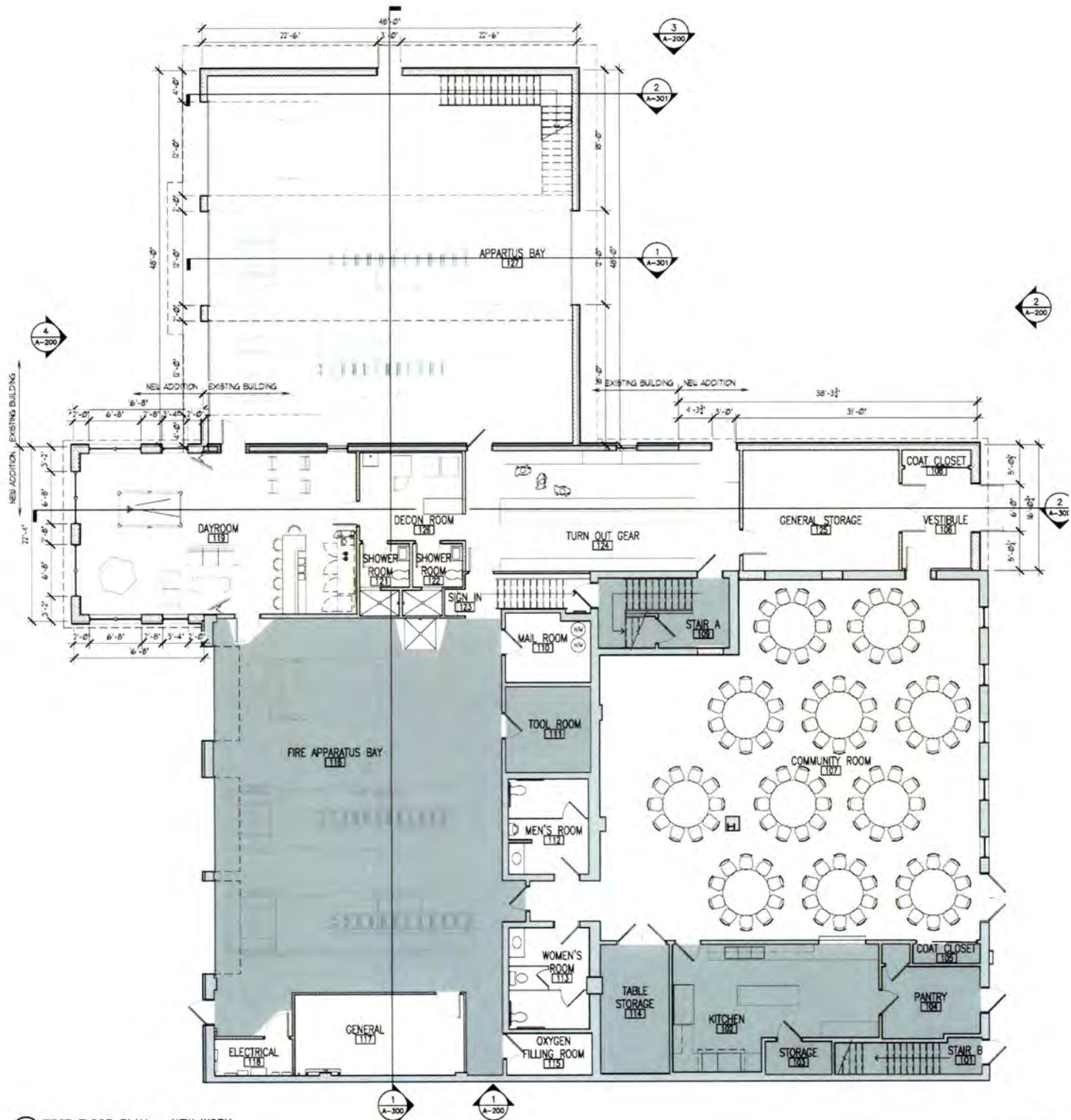
Fax: (716)652-0111



1 PROPOSED SITE PLAN
1" = 40'-0"



WEST FALLS FIRE COMPANY
AURORA COLDEN FIRE DISTRICT #6
 Phone: (716)652-1353
 Fax:(716)652-0111



1 FIRST FLOOR PLAN - NEW WORK
 1/8" = 1'-0"

September 27th, 2023

To: Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry St., Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application
Hamlet of West Falls
Town of Aurora, NY

Dear Ms. Utz,

As both a resident of West Falls and the current Chairman of the Town of Aurora Planning Board, I am writing to you to express my enthusiastic support for the NY Forward Grant Application that the Town is submitting on behalf of West Falls.

I have been a resident of the Hamlet for 19 years and moved here from California because I wanted to raise my family in the wonderful environment that West Falls offers. The combination of a small, close-knit community with a variety of uses (both residential and commercial) that is within an excellent school district, and close to major services (in East Aurora and Orchard Park) has been ideal.

Since I move to West Falls, I have seen significant efforts by the residents to revitalize it to something more akin to its historic character. At this time, those efforts are starting to pay off, but could use some additional push to make those changes persistent.

As a member of the Town of Aurora's Planning Board for 9 years I have seen that the Town cares deeply about maintaining the rural character of the majority of the town, while concentrating denser development within a couple of select areas (West Falls, Olean Road, the Village of East Aurora) consistent with our unadopted comprehensive plan.

A NY Forward Grant would greatly help cement the recent efforts of both the residents and the Town Board. Both the investment of funds and the guidance of regional experts in the form of a steering committee are a critical next step in that revitalization effort.

Please give the Town of Aurora full consideration for this much needed grant for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Sincerely,



Douglas S. Crow
Town of Aurora Planning Board Chairman
Resident of West Falls
1951 Davis Road
West Falls, NY 14170



September 20, 2023

Ms. Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry St.
Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

Dear Ms. Utz,

I am writing to you today to express the Greater East Aurora Chamber of Commerce's support for the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward application for the historic Hamlet of West Falls.

The Hamlet of West Falls is a vibrant community with a strong history and an ideal candidate for NY Forward funding.

West Falls is one of eight communities served by the Greater East Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

Over the past four years, West Falls has been undergoing an amazing transformation. The vision for West Falls is to capitalize on its unique, small-town, historic character while pursuing economic activity to create a community that is a thriving, walkable, and equitable place. Building off recent commercial and other growth, West Falls seeks to foster new projects that cultivate investment and attract new residents, including preserving and adaptively reusing historic buildings, creating new and diverse housing choices, and investing in parks, trails and placemaking. The community of West Falls is becoming a local destination for agrotourism, healthy recreational activities for families, and a meeting place for many vibrant community organizations.

Awarding NY Forward funding to West Falls would allow it to continue its momentum in advancing the economic development and revitalization of the entire area, including the surrounding towns of Colden and Orchard Park. Please give the Town of Aurora full consideration for this much needed grant for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Victoria R. Sturman".

Victoria R. Sturman
Executive Director

tel 716 652 8444 fax 716 652 8384 email eanycc@verizon.net web www.eanycc.com

- Serving -

Aurora Colden East Aurora Elma Holland Marilla Wales

AKG:

Buffalo AKG Art Museum
1285 Elmwood Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14222-1096
buffaloakg.org

September 28, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

The Public Art Initiative was born in 2013 out of a partnership between the Buffalo AKG Art Museum and Erie County, soon after joined by the City of Buffalo. Since then, in more than 80 murals, installations, residencies, and works of sculpture, we have sought to empower artists, inspire viewers, and strengthen a sense of our shared landscape with art that reflects the beauty and vitality of the many communities that shape it.

Through partnerships, the museum fosters work by local ground-breakers and international icons alike, individuals and collectives who are innovating in their practices as they reach out to bring the community in. The Buffalo AKG Art Museum Public Art Initiative supports the Hamlet of West Falls in its desire to include public art in its community and we look forward to collaborating with our partners in West Falls to help realize that mission.

Best,

Zack Boehler

Public Art Project Coordinator
Buffalo AKG Art Museum
1285 Elmwood Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222

zboehler@buffaloakg.org
716-270-8236

September 28, 2023

Dr. Katherine S. Conway-Turner and Mr. Eric Reich, Co-Chairs
WNY Regional Economic Development Council

Re: NY FORWARD Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls submitted by the
Town of Aurora, Erie County, NY

To: Ms. Karen Utz; Regional Director

Please know of our full support of the \$600,000 NY FORWARD Grant application for the revitalization of the Hamlet of West Falls Target Area along Route 240 from Bridge Street to Old Glenwood Road.

The West Falls-Colden Community Library, at 1966 Davis Road, is located along the Cazenovia Creek and sits next to the bridge, directly across Bridge Street. The library became affiliated with the State Library Association on 1929-1930, and then eventually part of the county library when the Erie County Library came into being.

In 2006, the Erie County Library Association closed our library. A contingent of community members gathered together to create the West Falls-Colden Community Library, a 501C run entirely by volunteers. The building itself is owned by the Town of Aurora but we depend entirely on donations from the community to sustain our book, dvd and magazine collections, run children and adult programs, provide computers to the community, and purchase supplies to meet our daily needs.

Our building's history is unique in that it was built as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) after being housed in several different homes of West Fall's residents. The original section of the library was of stone construction, with the boulders coming from the Miller Farm on Knapp Road. We believe our library was the first WPA completed project in Erie County and the only stone building ever erected under the WPA, based on information found in our files.

A NY FORWARD grant for the hamlet of West Falls would benefit our library by helping to make improvements to our building façade, as well as much needed updates to the inside of the building where our community meets (please see attached list). The unique characteristics of our hamlet will greatly benefit if this grant is given to our community. We ask that you please award this crucial NY FORWARD funding for the Hamlet of West Falls to provide planning and implementation funds.

Sincerely,

Donna Schwarzenholzer - Board President Carol Happy - Board Vice President

Joanie Long - Board Secretary

John Sacco - Board Treasurer



September 28, 2023

Dr. Conway-Turner
M. Eric Reich
Co-chairs: WNY Regional Economic Development Council

Preserving History
Connecting Communities

RE: NY Forward grant application for the Hamlet of West Falls,
Submitted by the Town of Aurora, Erie County, NY

EXECUTIVE BOARD:

President

Mary Brummer

Vice President

Gary Koeppel

Treasurer

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Laura Gunderson

DIRECTORS:

Robert Ballard

Mike Conway

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Paul Cramer

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Antonio Miceli

Dale Morris

Steve Musso

Tyrone Palaganas

Gerald F. Reger

Lisa Rood

Jeff Sellers

Deborah Stellrecht

Dorthea Wattles

Lauren Weber, Esq.

Dear Dr. Conway-Turner and Mr. Reich:

This letter is to express the full support of Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail, Inc. of the NY Forward Grant application for \$4.5 million of funding for downtown revitalization in the Hamlet of West Falls, target area along Route 240 from Bridge Street to Old Glenwood Road.

NY Forward supports a more equitable downtown recovery for New York's smaller, more rural communities, focusing on hamlets and villages. This precisely describes the needs in the West Falls community. Its center serves a local economy and has a distinct, attractive, personal character when compared to larger, more metropolitan towns. West Fall's unique character is reflected in its small-scale street scape, architecture design, its quaint, traditional "town square" around which commercial, residential, cultural and recreational amenities revolve. The 27-mile rail-banked Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail runs parallel to these features, connecting them to one another and to villages and towns along the former rail corridor, enhancing and encouraging further economic growth and community well-being.

A NY Forward grant will restore significant building renovations, activate vacant shops, enhance the Hamlet with public art, improve local parks and advance our planned 3.1 mile interconnective trail initiative. These aspects are vitally important and will create the quite economic generator this Hamlet so richly deserves.

A NY Forward grant will facilitate targeted capacity building by consultants, providing guidance and technical assistance. It will have a ripple effect regionally, strengthening the Hamlet of West Falls and its partner, the Town of Aurora in pursuing and implementing complementary funding opportunities.

On behalf of Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail, I ask that you award the crucial NY Forward funding for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Sincerely,

Deborah H. Fenn; Board of Directors
Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail, Inc.

Richard LeFeber, Director Emeritus
Jim Slominski, Railroad Historian

To learn more
To stay connected to our
progress and learn how you can
get involved, visit our website at:
www.ecatrail.org

West Falls Center for the Arts Capital Grounds Project to Meet the Needs of Our Diverse Patrons

Project Description

West Falls Center for the Arts (WFCFA/Center) is a rural nonprofit launched in a historic building that previously was the original West Falls firehall and home to nationally renowned Butterwood Desserts. Through 1000's of volunteer hours and local sourcing of labor, the building was renovated into a beautiful venue that serves as a regional host to local, national, and international artists.

WFCFA's vision is to increase access to a variety of cultural and artistic programming for a diverse rural community and audiences including services for youth; veterans; refugees; and caregivers of loved ones with dementia, Alzheimer's, and intellectual disabilities. This is accomplished by hosting programming at the Center, in outside venues, and during COVID, through various online platforms. The only center for the arts in the surrounding community that did not close during the pandemic, the Center's mission is to combine experiential learning, professional and amateur collaboration, and targeted programming for high need populations that leverages the magic and evidence-based impact of music on special communities. This has been demonstrated through our Musical Memories Café (MMC) which serves caregivers and through an evidence-based assessment, provides interventions aimed at improving mental health and physical health. MMC is in expansion phase and is expected to impact 1,000s of caregivers and the loved ones they care for.

WFCFA attendance has nearly quadrupled from approximately 1,800 (36 concerts/yr-50ppl/ea) in 2018 to over 7,500 (75 concerts/yr-100ppl/ea) in 2022 with 2023 expected to surpass 10,000. Finally, and most importantly, we are now producing one of the highest volumes of performances for a rural center for the arts across the Southern Tier, increasing concerts from 24 in 2018 to 104 in 2019, to over 180 in 2022, a 750% growth. This has culminated in our first significant recognition as a Rising Star by the Arts Services Initiative of WNY.

Through our Musical Memories Cafe program alone we have served over 5,000 free lunches.

WFCFA Annual Programming: Concerts=110, Memory Café Concerts=48, Southtowns Youth Orchestras=24, Veteran Programs=36; Large Annual events=4; Youth Instructional/Performances=24; Jam Sessions/masterclasses=12; Yoga/Meditation=52; Special Joint events with for profit orgs=6; and other concerts/programs. On average, the WFCFA has over 310 concerts and programs throughout the year. This level of activity is unmatched by any other rural WNY center for the arts. Audiences come from all 8 WNY Counties, PA, and Canada.

Programs/Activities descriptions:

- Musical Memories Café for caregivers of loved ones with Alzheimers/dementia, as well well isolated adults. This program helps caregivers to expand their support network, access community resources, and address the incredible stress that comes along with caring for someone with dementia or Alzheimer's. We are replicating this model with the support of the Wilson and Health Foundations throughout Erie and Niagara Counties and looking to expand throughout WNY and CNY.
- Concerts include Jazz, Classical, Blues, Americana and Bluegrass and includes local, national and international artists like Lonesome River Band, Alexis P. Suter, Ghost Town Blues, Bobby Militello, Durham County Poets...as well as hosting over 20 Grammy and Juno award winners.
- WFCFA has spotlighted internationally celebrated artists like pianist Pete Malinverni, Banjo great Tony Trischka, World's best flat pick guitarist Steve Kaufman, Doug Yeomans winner of the North American Rock Guitar Competition, and bassist Billy Sheehan, bringing world class music to our rural community.
- Our Kids Jam pairs young people from 7 - 17, any instrument and any level, with professional musicians. They practice all year on several genres of songs and have 5 performance opportunities in June at different venues and music festivals. We also showcase young artists, having them open the shows for our weekend concerts.
- In collaboration with Power of Song, Inc., Blues for Vets, 211 Vets and the Sportsmen Tavern; WFCFA offers guitar, ukulele and

harmonica lessons for Veterans whose attendance is often their only opportunity for social interaction.

- Our music therapy program, aimed at adult autistic individuals, uses music therapy in a group setting to provide healing, appropriate emotional expression, improved social interactions and interpersonal growth.
- We celebrate a Community Thanksgiving inviting refugees from Buffalo for their first Thanksgiving and offering a sense of community in celebration of diversity in food, music and friendship.
-

Project Description

- 1. Paving and Adding Lights to Parking Lot and demo old buildings: Currently the lot is gravel with limited lighting and poses a challenge for those with physical limitations due to age and disability. Paving the lot and adding lighting ensures access for those with physical limitations and/or disabilities and improves safety for our patrons.**
- 2. Improved Signage: The West Falls Center for the Arts sign is old, outdated, and fails in every way to identify the building and organization. By improving the sign we will enhance the branding and visibility of the Center.**
- 3. Improving building facade and street appeal. Continuing the Hemlock siding and repairing gutters, windows, etc..**
- 4. Outdoor Concert Stage: To address increasing programming demand during spring, summer and fall (and through Covid, learning the value of our outdoor space), WFCFA has cleared its back acreage and created an outdoor entertainment venue. The remaining component of this project is the drainage, landscaping and the construction of a concert stage. Once completed, we will be able to expand program offerings and in the event of another NY Pause or general quarantine/limits on distancing, we will be able to offer outdoor concerts versus indoor.**

5. **Public Nature Trails and Sculpture Park connecting the Rails to Trails and Blueberry Treehouse Farm.**
6. **New sound system for outdoor stage and improving the sound system for the indoor stage.**
7. **Improvements to existing structure including updated HVAC, creating a usable office space, repairing outdoor facade, expanding existing kitchen, opening up the north side of building to add seating/viewing options, removing indoor pillars to improve sightline of patrons, and updating the restrooms.**
8. **Updated AV system**
9. **Handicapped accessible van and golf cart.**
10. **Rehab historic barn to for use in outdoor events; restrooms, concessions...**

Broader Vision for West Falls and Southern Erie County

Over the course of the next year, and in partnership with other cultural venues in West Falls, Aurora, East Aurora, and Southern Erie County, as well as the Erie County Rails to Trails, we will be developing a Southern Tier Cultural Trail. The goal is to promote cultural tourism throughout Erie County, to attract national and international tourism, and to the benefit of other tourist attractions across Erie County and the region. If funded, the proposed project will position West Falls Center for the Arts as a leader in this effort with the capacity and physical plant necessary to accomplish this ambitious goal.

West Falls Center for the Arts Capital Grounds Project to Meet the Needs of Our Diverse Patrons

Public Benefit and Need

The extraordinary success of the West Falls Center for the Arts, as it serves 10,000 patrons annually and growing, has accentuated the need for the organization to grow with its audiences. To that end, and to accommodate another 5,000 to 10,000 patrons annually, or 20,000 patrons a year, West Falls

Center for the Arts must improve its grounds. The proposed project will improve safety, increase audience capacity, improve visibility, increase accessibility for those with physical challenges, and elevate West Falls Center for the Arts profile as a regional cultural institution.

Public Need

Over the past decade, the nation's educational and economic development resources have slowly shifted from cultural and other "non-essential" pursuits to addressing essential needs during the COVID pandemic, enhancing our education system, addressing the drug epidemic, funding recovery from natural disasters, and building our economy. Nowhere is this shift more apparent than in rural America, where communities are dealing with diminishing populations; significant economic decline; and unprecedented challenges like alarming levels of opioid abuse, growing poverty levels, a mental health crisis, and an overall feeling of helplessness and isolation. WNY's rural communities overwhelmingly mirror America's rural crisis. The West Falls Center for the Arts, based in rural West Falls, is determined to become a catalyst for rural growth and economic development through the expansion of music, performing, visual, and other creative outlets for those who need it the most; children, elderly, and those who experience deep isolation. The founders and volunteers of The West Falls Center for the Arts have invested hundreds of man hours, tens-of-thousands of dollars of their personal resources, and an unrelenting determination to build a cultural facility out of an old firehall and bakery that will be at the center of a cultural and community renaissance and replicated throughout rural WNY. The Center hosts weekly performances, jam sessions, instrumental lessons, performing arts programs, target cultural programming, Musical Memories Cafes, and other cultural activities. Finally, we recognize that our board and partnerships with K-12 education, community agencies, and WNY colleges will be critical to our success.

Summary

Prior to the West Falls Center for the Arts, there was an old firehall and bakery, gravel parking lot, and a property with tremendous potential. From the financial investment of its founders and 1,000s of hours of volunteer hours, the West Falls Center for the Arts has become a major cultural institution in Erie County.

The proposed project will complete the original vision of the Center as a comprehensive rural- based center for the arts.



CONOR W. SCHNEIDER

397 Old Glenwood Road | West Falls, New York 14170

September 27, 2023

Ms. Karen Utz, Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry St., Ste. 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Round 2 Grant Application – Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

Dear Ms. Utz:

As a lifelong resident of West Falls, Fire Commissioner of the Aurora Colden Fire District No. 6, and proud owner of the historic West Falls Train Depot, I am writing to express my heartfelt support for the Town of Aurora’s Round 2 NY Forward Grant Application aimed at revitalizing the Hamlet of West Falls.

West Falls is a place of profound personal significance to me, having been my family’s home for nearly 80 years. Four generations later, my family has watched this hamlet evolve, witnessing both progress and challenges that have shaped our community. This grant application presents a unique opportunity to reignite its former and now resurging vibrancy.

The history of West Falls is deeply intertwined with the industries that once thrived here, supported by fertile farmlands, the presence of Cazenovia Creek, and the Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh Railroad (BR&P). While many of the structures and commercial buildings that once drove the community’s prosperity still stand, there remains untapped potential. Recent investment and improvements in landmarks such as the Old Grist Mill, General Store, and Community Library have demonstrated the promise of transformation. With the support of NY Forward funding, these community assets can be taken to the next level.

As such, I am excited to share my plans for restoring life to the West Falls Depot, a historic train station built by the BR&P in 1917 – an edifice of immense historical significance in our region. The depot serves as a tangible link to our past, reminding us of the vital role that the railroad played in shaping our local economy and culture. It stands as a testament to the industrious spirit of the people who built it and the generations of travelers who passed through its doors. It is with a great sense of civic duty that I acquired the depot and embarked on this journey of restoring it to its former glory. Samples of early 1900s photos of the depot are enclosed at **Exhibit A**, along with photos of the depot as it appeared when I acquired the building in 2022 at **Exhibit B**.

My vision entails adaptive reuse strategies that will restore its original appearance while transforming this historic structure into a versatile mixed-use space that utilizes the entirety of its footprint. This restoration project includes lifting the building and replacing the deteriorating wooden ground supports with a new concrete foundation, effectively doubling the building’s square footage and providing a place to neatly conceal the modern utilities that were not considered 106 years ago in the original design. The originally unused upstairs area will also be converted into a studio-style apartment/rental unit. The Waiting Room and Agent’s Office will be meticulously restored to their original specifications, ensuring historical accuracy.

The restored West Falls Depot could serve as a community heritage museum and rail trail hub along the developing Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail, complete with parking and restroom facilities for trail users. Likewise, restoring the baggage room and original 300-foot-long brick platform opens up opportunities for indoor/outdoor commercial enterprises, such as a café, bakery, or event venue. Renderings depicting the potential adaptive reuse of the Depot's interior are enclosed at **Exhibit C**.

Its prominent location along Route 240 atop a broad hillside provides the perfect canvas for creating a welcoming gateway to our beloved hamlet. In recognition of this, the Town of Aurora has chosen to place the new West Falls Welcome Sign at the foot of the hill on my property. **Exhibit D**. Likewise, the adjacent former railbed presents an opportunity to reinstall a section of the original railroad tracks next to the building to display a railroad car, caboose, or steam locomotive. Copies of property surveys, historic site plans, and original building blueprints are enclosed at **Exhibit E**.

To fully realize this vision and accomplish all I have outlined, I estimate an investment of approximately \$778,000. To date, I have already committed over \$143,000 of personal funds to this project over the past nine months, with plans to invest at least an additional \$95,000 by the end of the year. The detailed breakdown of estimated costs and projected completion dates is enclosed for your reference at **Exhibit F**, as well as photos of recent improvements since December 2022 at **Exhibit G**.

While this project represents a substantial financial commitment, the preservation of our heritage, stimulation of economic development, and instilling a renewed sense of pride in our hamlet are all invaluable outcomes that will result from this endeavor. Notably, restoring the West Falls Depot is pivotal for several compelling reasons:

1. **Preservation of Heritage:** The depot is a valuable piece of our heritage, and its restoration will ensure that future generations can learn about and appreciate our local history. Historic preservation is an investment in our identity and culture.
2. **Tourism and Economic Development:** Once restored, the West Falls Depot has the potential to become a tourist attraction, drawing visitors to our community, bolstering local businesses, leading to job creation, and stimulating economic growth in the area.
3. **Community Hub:** The restored depot could serve as a community center, providing a space for local events, gatherings, and educational programs. It can become a focal point for community engagement and a source of pride for residents, as it once was decades ago.
4. **Aesthetic and Architectural Improvement:** The Queen Anne Style architecture of the West Falls Depot is not only visually appealing but also historically significant. Its restoration will enhance the hamlet's overall aesthetic and serve as a testament to our commitment to preserving our architectural heritage.

My personal belief in the importance of this project is also mirrored by the sentiment of countless others within and outside our community. Notably, the Town of Aurora recently adopted a resolution in support of my ongoing application to list the Depot on the National Register of Historic Places. **Exhibit H**. Furthermore, my recent investments into the Depot have garnered substantial attention across social media and local news sources, reflecting the shared enthusiasm for revitalizing this cherished landmark and eagerness to know what the future holds for the building that has sat idle for the last 40 years. **Exhibit I**.

While my passion for this project is unwavering, my financial circumstances as a recent law school graduate and newly admitted attorney impose certain limitations. Through the infusion of NY Forward funds, this restoration, preservation, and adaptive reuse project could realize its maximum potential, profoundly impacting the community by finally reopening the depot's doors to the public for the first time in seven decades. However, without the assistance of additional resources, I find myself at a crossroads in deciding

how to proceed with the restoration as I am not yet in a position to economically or feasibly restore the depot for complete public use while also affording a separate residence for myself, which is where the NY Forward grant program can make the most significant impact on this project.

In alignment with the NY Forward guidelines, West Falls unquestionably stands as an ideal candidate for the NY Forward grant, meeting all the criteria and embodying the essence of a rural hamlet on the brink of a renaissance. With the support of this grant, we can breathe new life into our historic buildings, reinvigorate former storefronts, introduce captivating artistic landscape installations, and enhance our parks and community walkability – all essential elements for the well-being and prosperity of West Falls residents and visitors. The positive impact of a NY Forward grant award would extend beyond our hamlet, strengthening not only West Falls, but the Town of Aurora as a whole, including the Village of East Aurora and our neighboring Towns of Colden and Orchard Park.

Therefore, I respectfully request that you consider awarding this critical NY Forward funding for the Hamlet of West Falls. Such an allocation would provide the much-needed boost to catalyze our community's transformation. On behalf of the entire West Falls community, I extend my sincere gratitude for this opportunity and thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Should you require any further information or wish to discuss the importance of this grant application in greater detail, please do not hesitate to contact me at westfallsdepot@gmail.com or (716) 345-6598. Your commitment to fostering economic development and preserving the unique character of the hamlets in our region is deeply appreciated.

Thank you once again for your dedication to our community's betterment.

Respectfully,



Conor W. Schneider, Esq.
Fire Commissioner, Aurora Colden Fire District No. 6
Owner, West Falls Depot

Encls.



CONOR W. SCHNEIDER

397 Old Glenwood Road | West Falls, New York 14170

EXHIBIT LIST

- A. Historic Photos of the Depot from the early-mid 1900s.
- B. Photos of the Depot as it appeared when I acquired it in 2022.
- C. Renderings depicting the potential adaptive reuse of the Depot's interior.
- D. Rendering of the Town of Aurora's "West Falls Welcome Sign" to be installed at the base of the Depot's front hill.
- E. Surveys, historic site plans, and original blueprints for the Depot and parcel.
- F. Summary of Estimated Project Costs.
- G. Photos of the Recent Improvements and \$143k Investment since December 2022.
- H. Copy of the Town of Aurora's Resolution in Support of the Application to List the Depot on the National Register of Historic Places.
- I. East Aurora Advertiser News Article featuring the Depot.



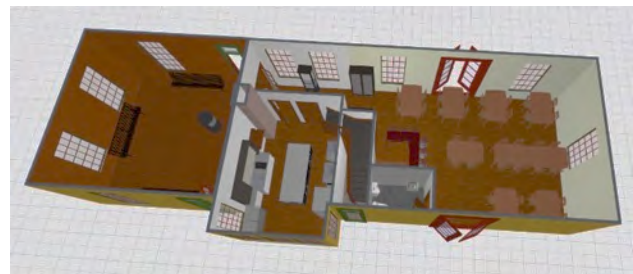
A. Historic Photos of the Depot from the early-mid 1900s.



B. Photos of the Depot as it appeared when I acquired it in 2022.



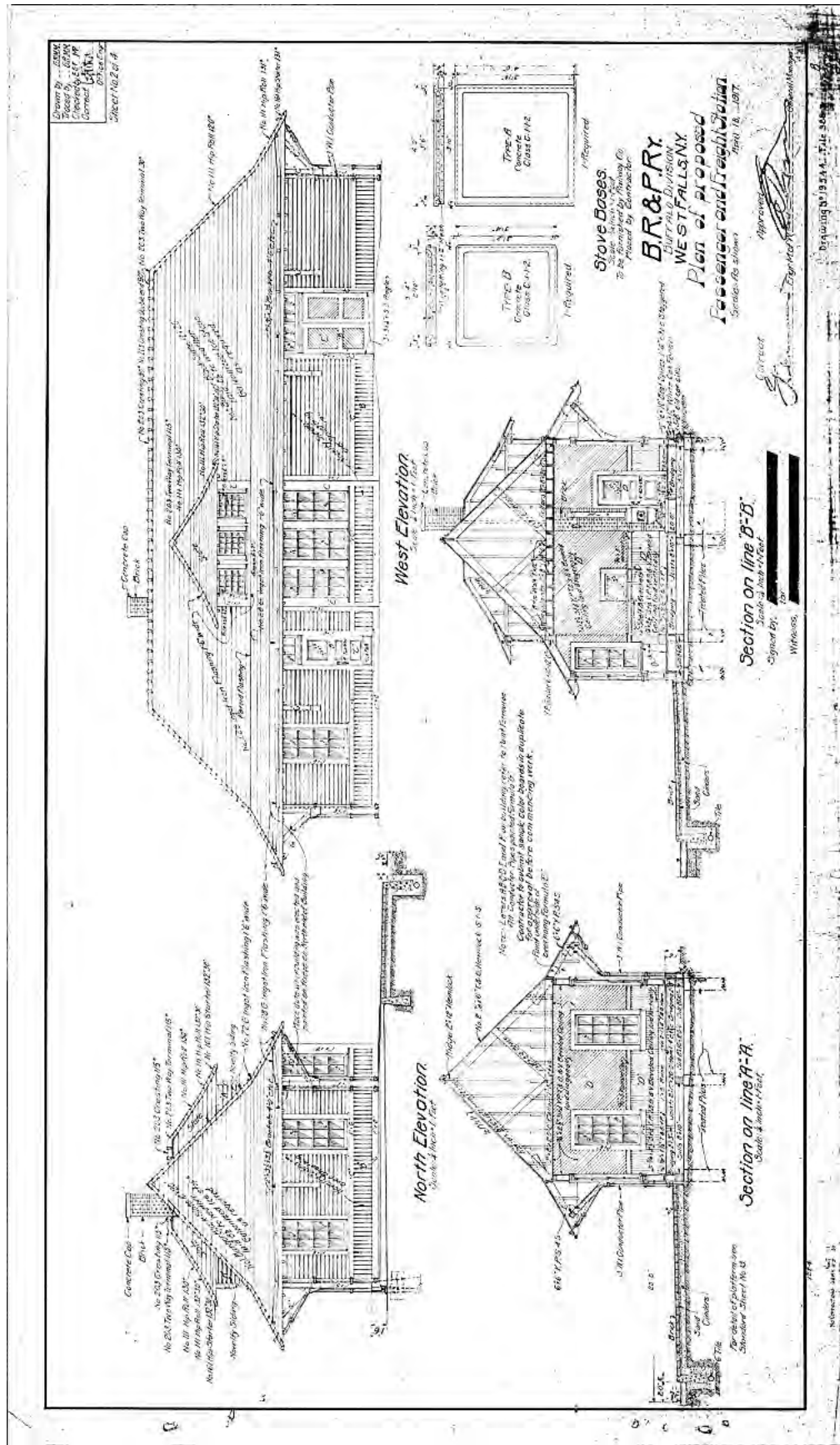




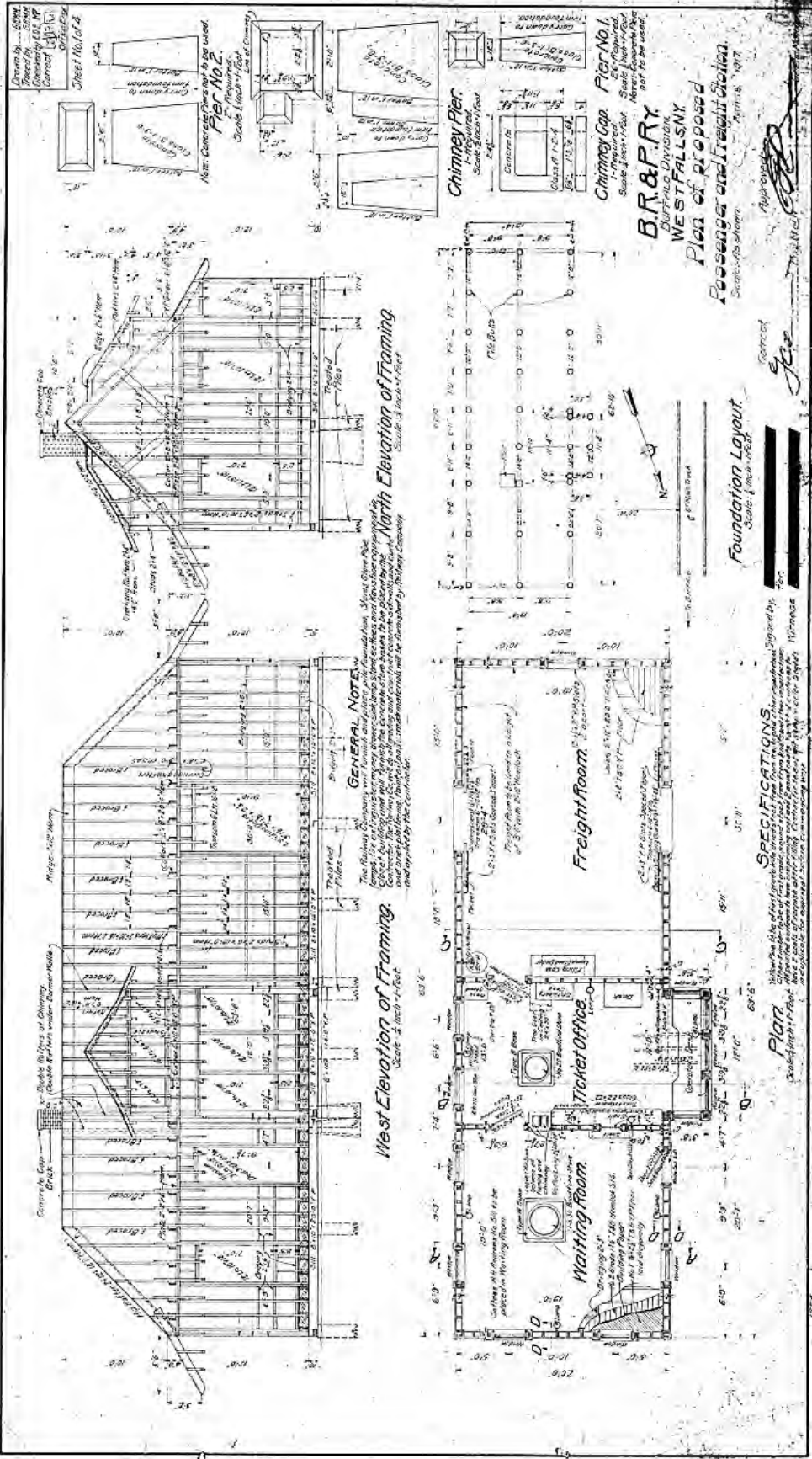
C. Renderings depicting the potential adaptive reuse of the Depot's interior.



D. Rendering of the Town of Aurora's "West Falls Welcome Sign" to be installed at the base of the Depot's front hill.



E. Surveys, historic site plans, and original blueprints for the Depot and parcel.



B.R.&P.R.
 BUFFALO DIVISION
WEST FALLS, N.Y.
Plan of proposed
Passenger and Freight Station.
 Approved by
 J. H. ...
 Chief Engineer
 Buffalo, N.Y., 1917

Specifications
 The work shall be in accordance with the specifications for the construction of buildings and structures published by the Buffalo Division of the Buffalo, Rensselaer and West Falls Railway Company, and shall be subject to the approval of the Chief Engineer.

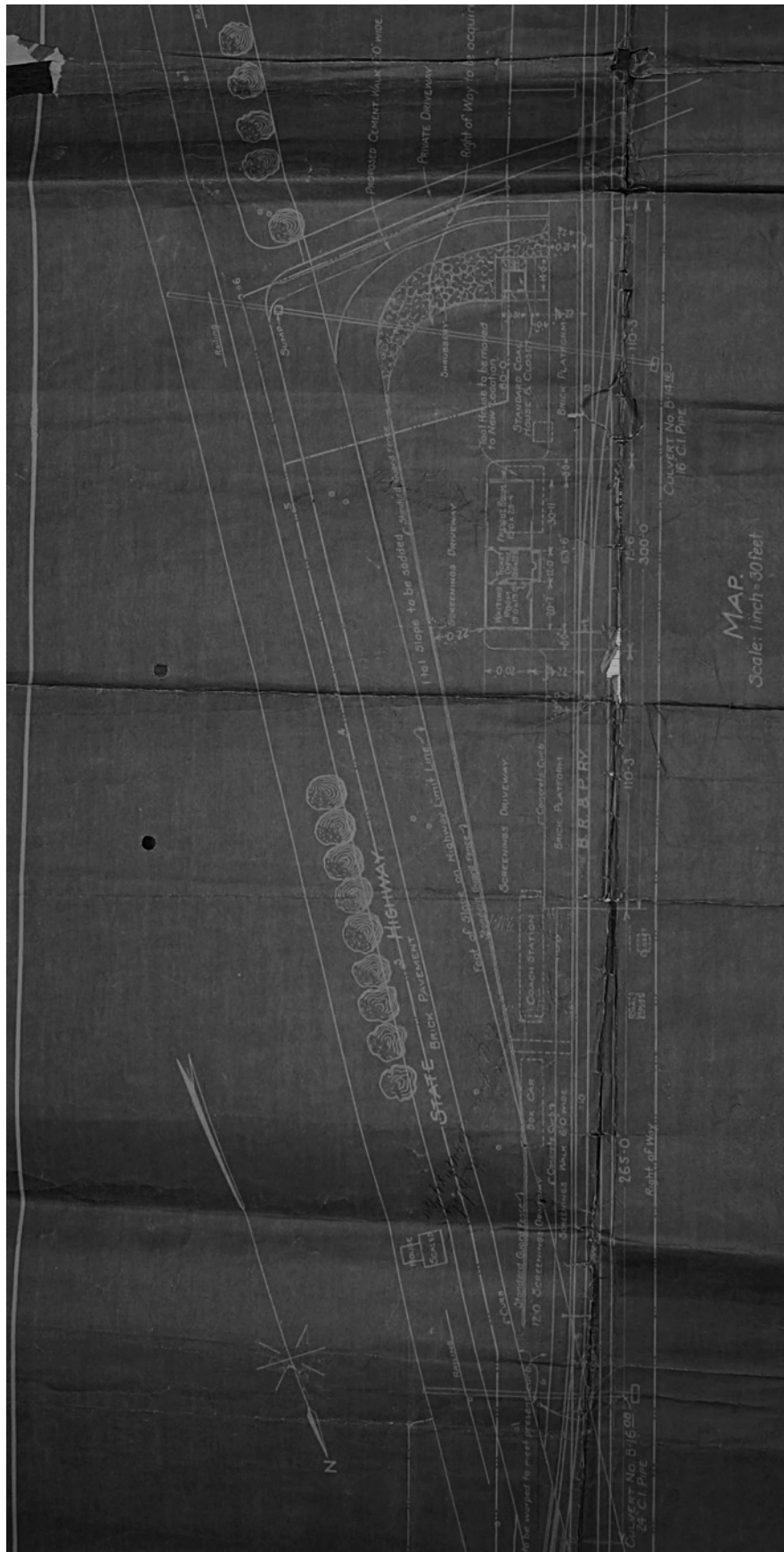
GENERAL NOTE
 The Railway Property, including the ground on which the building is to be erected, is owned by the Buffalo, Rensselaer and West Falls Railway Company. The Contractor is to erect the building on the ground shown on the plan and to provide all materials and labor necessary for the construction of the building and to be approved by the Contractor.

West Elevation of Framing
 Scale: 3/8" = 1'-0"

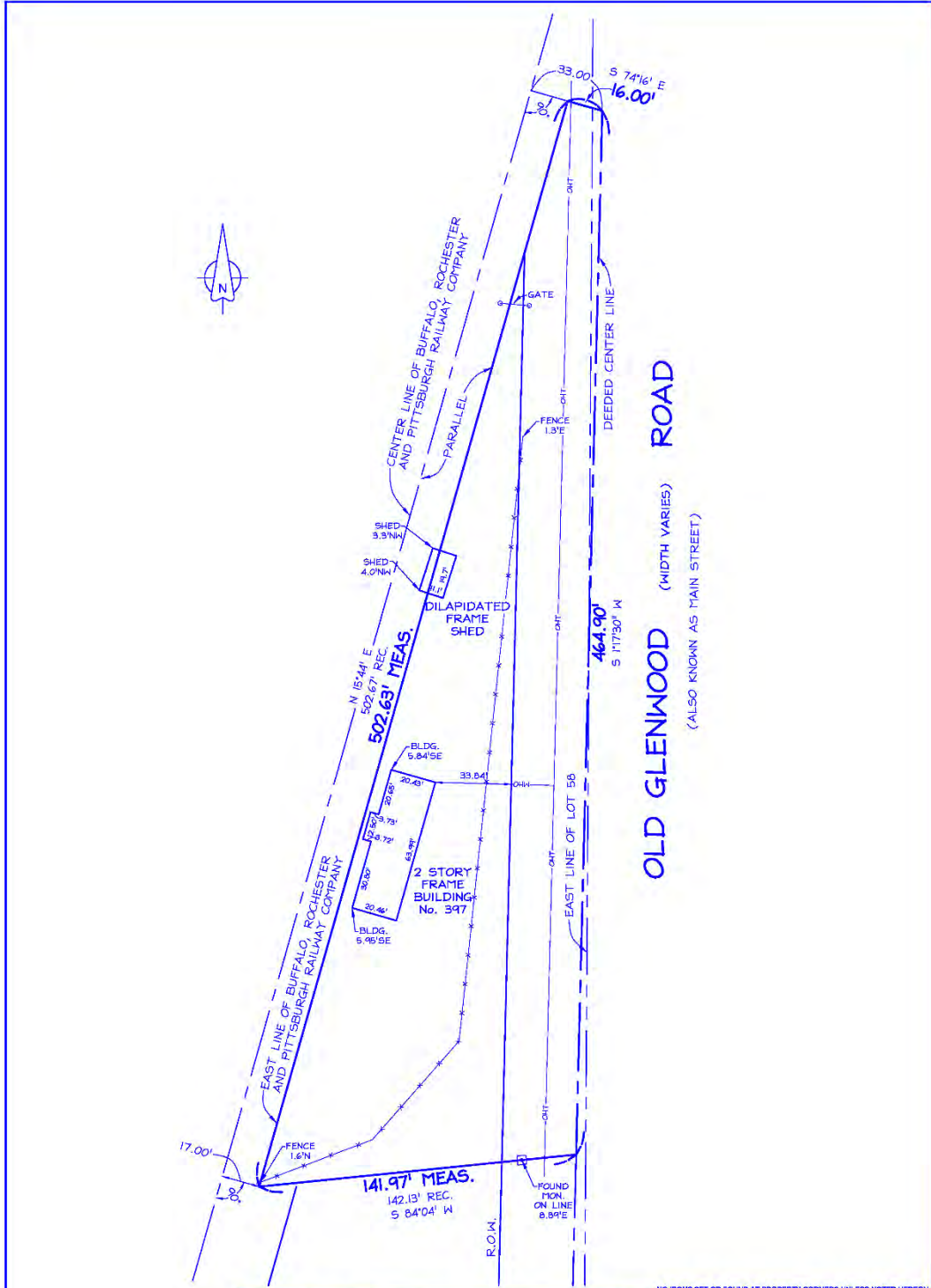
North Elevation of Framing
 Scale: 3/8" = 1'-0"

Foundation Layout
 Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

Plan
 Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"



MAP.
 Scale: 1 inch = 30 feet



509 Main Street, P.O. Box 516, East Aurora, NY 14052
 p (716) 655-1058 f (716) 655-1964 www.nussclarke.com

This survey was prepared without the benefit of an abstract of title and is subject to any state of facts that may be revealed by an examination of such.

Unauthorized alterations or additions to any survey, drawing, design, specification, plan or report is a violation of section 7209, provision 2 of the New York State Education Law.



BOUNDARY SURVEY
397 OLD GLENWOOD ROAD
 Part of Lot 58, Township 9, Range 6
 Holland Land Company's Survey
 Town of Aurora
 County of Erie, State of New York

Thornton A. Kenyon

Date of Survey: 10/11/2022 Scale: 1" = 40' Project No.: 2233-0658



CONOR W. SCHNEIDER

397 Old Glenwood Road | West Falls, New York 14170

Summary of Estimated Project Costs		
(*indicates stage completed and amount invested to date)		
Item	Cost	Projected Completion Date
Temporary Emergency Roof Repair	\$3,125	10/13/2022*
Property Acquisition	\$70,000	12/5/2022*
Structural Repairs to Overhangs and Roof	\$36,500	4/13/2023*
Exterior Siding Mill Work	\$4,324	5/5/2023*
Chimney Restoration	\$4,700	5/30/2023*
Upgrade Underground Electrical Service	\$2,860	6/20/2023*
Standing Seam Metal Roof (Interim Solution)	\$18,300	6/27/2023*
Tree Removal and Sitework	\$4,567	8/28/2023*
Architecture, site engineering, and permit fees	\$7,500	11/15/2023
Replace Former Railroad Drainage Culvert	\$6,500	12/1/2023
Lift Depot, Excavate Underneath, and Install Basement	\$95,000	12/31/2023
Septic System	\$20,000	1/15/2024
Interior Electrical	\$22,500	1/31/2024
HVAC	\$16,000	2/15/2024
Plumbing	\$15,125	3/1/2024
Window and Door Restoration	\$22,000	4/15/2024
Interior Restoration and Finishes	\$85,000	6/1/2024
Exterior trim restoration and painting	\$8,000	7/15/2024
Replica "West Falls" Station Signs	\$2,780	7/15/2024
Exterior Electrical Work for Platform Lamps	\$6,000	8/1/2024
Brick Platform and Sidewalk Restoration	\$30,000	8/31/2024
Landscape Front Hill, Install Retaining Wall and Decorative Fence	\$32,000	8/31/2024
Pave Driveway and Parking Area	\$16,500	9/30/2024
Landscaping Finishes, Track Re-Installation	\$13,000	4/15/2025
Acquisition of Former BR&P Railroad Caboose for Display	\$65,000	6/1/2025
Restoration of Railroad Items for Display	\$35,000	5/30/2025
Install original-style Slate Roof and Clay Tile Ridge Caps	\$136,000	8/15/2026
Estimated Total Cost:	\$778,281	





G. Photos of the Recent Improvements and \$143k Investment since December 2022.









TOWN OF AURORA

575 Oakwood Avenue, East Aurora, NY 14052

www.townofaurora.com

STATE OF NEW YORK)
COUNTY OF ERIE)
TOWN OF AURORA)

I, Martha L. Librock, Town Clerk of the Town of Aurora, Erie County, New York, do hereby certify that at a regular meeting of the Town Board of aforesaid town, on the 9th day of January 2023, at Aurora Municipal Center, 575 Oakwood Avenue, East Aurora, New York, the following resolution was adopted, every member present voting therefore, to wit:

TOWN OF AURORA, NEW YORK

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE NOMINATION OF THE WEST FALLS DEPOT TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

WHEREAS, historic properties and buildings in the Town of Aurora contribute significantly to the visual character, quality of life, and culture of the community; and

WHEREAS, the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places are the official lists of buildings, structures, districts, objects, and sites significant in the history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture of New York and the nation which are worthy of preservation; and

WHEREAS, the 1980 New York State Historic Preservation Act and the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act provide municipalities with the ability to nominate historic resources to the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, the former Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway West Falls Passenger and Freight Station (“West Falls Depot”) located at 397 Old Glenwood Road, West Falls, New York 14170, has been deemed eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places by the New York State Historic Preservation Office; and

WHEREAS, Conor Schneider, the current owner of the West Falls Depot, has submitted an application with the New York State Historic Preservation Office on December 13, 2022, to list the West Falls Depot on the State and National Registers of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, the West Falls Depot is of primary historical significance to the Town of Aurora and the Hamlet of West Falls for its association with the region’s growth and development and its role related to the expansion and operation of the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway Company during its period of significance from 1883 to 1955 during which time the West Falls Depot served as the nerve center of the community and principal link to the rest of the country; and

- H. Copy of the Town of Aurora’s Resolution in Support of the Application to List the Depot on the National Register of Historic Places.

WHEREAS, the West Falls Depot is an exemplary model of the distinctive architectural characteristics of a Queen Anne Style Train Station and is also the only remaining wooden train depot on the Buffalo Division of the former Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway Company and is one of two remaining wooden train depots built by the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway Company on its mainline track between Buffalo, New York and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, the West Falls Depot is prominently located directly between the New York State Route 240 section of the Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway and the developing multi-use Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Aurora recognizes the many benefits listing the West Falls Depot on the State and National Registers of Historic Places will have for the preservation and restoration efforts of the West Falls Depot and the positive contribution the West Falls Depot adds as a resource to the development of the multi-use Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Aurora supports the application to nominate the West Falls Depot to the State and National Registers of Historic Places because of its architectural significance, historical value, vital contribution to the growth of the Hamlet of West Falls, and its ability to serve as a reminder of the former importance of railroad transportation to the life of residents in the Town of Aurora.

Adopted this 9th day of January, 2023.

* * * * *

I do further certify that I have compared the foregoing with the original minutes of the regular meeting of the Town Board of said Town held on the 9th day of January 2023, and the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of said original minutes and the whole thereof, and that the resolutions duly adopted by the said Town Board are on file in my office.


I do further certify that the following members of the Town Board were present at such meeting, namely:

Charles D. Snyder _____, Councilman
Luke Wochensky _____, Councilman
James F. Granville _____, Councilman
Joseph McCann _____, Councilman
James J. Bach _____, Supervisor

Being the persons constituting said Town Board of the Town of Aurora, Erie County, New York.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and the seal of the said Town of Aurora, Erie County, New York, this 10th day of January, 2023.





Martha L. Librock
Town Clerk



Submitted Image

Conor Schneider holds the sold sign after he finalized his purchase of the West Falls train depot on Old Glenwood Road. He plans to repair the building while also working on other ideas for its future use.

Historic West Falls Train Depot to Gain New Support From Town Resident

by Shelly Ferullo
Staff Reporter

One of West Falls's strongest advocates just bought a piece of the hamlet's local history.

After several months of research, West Falls resident Conor Schneider purchased the former West Falls train depot on Old Glenwood Road. He may move into it, he may restore it for the public to access or he may do both.

"The possibilities on it are endless. I can live in it or restore it and there are some commercial opportunities I am considering as well," Schneider said.

This is the first property that the West Falls resident has purchased. Schneider recently graduated from law school and is working as an attorney full time, and ran for public office in the Town of Aurora in 2021. He did not win a seat on the town board, but he was appointed by current board members to sit on a West Falls advisory committee.

Schneider has lived in West Falls his entire life. The property was privately sold to him for \$70,000 without reaching the market.

"If I ever run for office again, nobody can say that I don't own property and I don't pay taxes," he said.

The structure, which sits on a half-acre lot, was built in 1917 to replace a former train

depot that burned down near that location several years earlier. The depot used to be a stop on the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway corridor for mail, freight and passengers and it was in use for passengers until 1955. The railway line was taken over by the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad in 1931. B&O was dissolved in 1987 and merged into the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, and stopped running trains in the 1990s.

Part of Schneider's research included spending time at the Aurora Town Historian's office on Oakwood Avenue.

"People used to commute to Buffalo every day using the train," Schneider said. "There were no high schools in West Falls so students either took the train to Springville or Orchard Park. When the interstates and buses caught on in the 1950s the railroad took a hit."

Schneider is the third owner since was turned into a residence in the 1960s. At that time, the railroad was still in operation and sold the building to a man named Christian Nagel. When that sale occurred, another department within the railway company had slated the building to be dismantled for scrap and began to take it apart. Windows were taken out and a few other elements

were removed before the process was put to a stop. None of these original elements were returned.

"A lot of original pieces were lost," Schneider said.

From what Schneider has discovered, Nagel wanted to convert it into a single-family home and not restore it, so he didn't mind the missing pieces. He lowered the ceiling on the first floor to add space to the second floor. He turned a portion of the waiting room downstairs into a bedroom and a bathroom. The agent's office was turned into a kitchen. The baggage room became the living room. He added a 3-car garage onto the building as well. In 1967, *The Buffalo News* published a story featuring Nagel and how he turned a train depot into a residence.

Schneider wishes it still had more of its original features but he is grateful to Nagel for saving it.

"He did do a lot of things to mask its original features, but if he had not purchased it, the demolition would have continued and the building would not be here," Schneider said.

The depot was sold to West Falls resident Terry Sprague in 1988. Sprague began to dismantle the modern changes to the building because he wanted to restore it to look as it once did when

Continued on Page 4



Submitted Image
The last passenger train made its way past the West Falls train depot on Oct. 15, 1955. Commercial trains would continue to use the tracks for several more decades.



Submitted Image
The West Falls train depot was first sold to a private owner in the 1960s, who began to turn it into a residence.

West Falls Train Depot to Gain Support from Town Resident

Continued from Page 1
it was built. The garage was removed and the building was taken down to the studs. Sprague collected elements from other railroad depots that were closing in the nearby towns of Freedom, Wyoming and West Valley to purchase pieces from them before they were demolished. Sprague also had the waiting room benches from the West Falls station and he left them with the building.

Now Schneider hopes to finish the work. "My goal is to make it look historically correct so it is preserved for future generations," he said. Schneider recently turned in

an application for the building to be considered for the National Register of Historic Places. In the 67-page document, he argues that the train depot and the railroad were significant to the development of West Falls as a hamlet and he lays out how this building is one of only two surviving wooden structures on the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railroad.

The other one is in Dayton, Pennsylvania. It has been abandoned, looted and is in disrepair.

"That building is in rough shape with big holes in the roof," Schneider said.

Schneider said he will be asking the town board to pass a resolution in support of it being on the National Registry. This will support his application to show that the local government is interested in seeing the building recognized and preserved.

Schneider has also been in contact with members of the Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail to see if the depot could serve a purpose on the trail when the restoration is complete.



Submitted Image
Here is the old waiting room within the West Falls train depot.



Submitted Image
An image showcasing the B. R. & P. Railroad depot in West Falls from around 1900.



9/28/2023

Karen Utz, Executive Director
Regional Economic Development Council

Re: NY FORWARD Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls submitted by the Town of Aurora, Erie County, NY

Dear Karen Utz:

Please know of my full support of the NY FORWARD Grant application for \$4.5 Million of funding for downtown revitalization in the Hamlet of West Falls Target Area along Route 240 from Bridge Street to Old Glenwood Road.

NY Forward supports a more equitable downtown recovery for New York's smaller and rural communities, with a focus on hamlets and villages. These centers serve a more local economy and often have a distinct feel from larger, metropolitan urban centers. Their unique characteristics are easy to recognize. Architecture, building facades, small-scale streetscapes, and the existence of a traditional "town square" around which commercial, residential, civic, cultural, and other amenities revolve. West Falls fits the criteria as a NY Forward community.

A NY FORWARD grant will fund historic building facade renovations, activate vacant shops and upper stories, add public art, improve our parks and other placemaking activities that are so important to West Falls residents and visitors.

A NY FORWARD will facilitate targeted capacity-building by consultants who can provide guidance and technical assistance for the Hamlet. It will have ripple effects regionally, strengthening the Hamlet of West Falls, and its partner, the Town of Aurora, in pursuing and implementing other funding opportunities.

I ask you to please award this crucial NY FORWARD funding for the Hamlet of West Falls to provide planning and implementation funds.

Sincerely,

Jyl & Ricardo Rivera

Owners of Buffalo Treehouse LLC, The Blueberry Treehouse Farm LLC & Rivera Rentals
1895, 1897 & 1887 Davis Rd West Falls, NY 14170



July 1, 2023

Town Of Aurora
Luke Wochensky
575 Oakwood Avenue

East Aurora, NY 14052

RE: NY Forward — Hamlet of West Falls — Letter of Interest

The Dog Bar Restaurant located at 1913 Davis Road has been owned and operated consistently by The Schenne Family since 1941 and the family is planning to operate the business well into the future. Although Covid had us shut down for a period of time in 2020 and 2021, there has been no lapse in the operation of this business since 1941.

We consider ourselves to be a casual fine dining restaurant located in an area museum with the 4 dining rooms representing the history of the four hamlets which make up the West Falls Community — Griffins Mills, Loveland, West Falls, and Jewettville, and the bar which continues to operate in honor of "Man's Best Friends — the dogs!"

The Deed for this property dates back to 1808. The building has had many uses over the years — fire hall, first aid facility, dance hall, residence, stagecoach transfer station, tavern, bar and restaurant. In 1835 it was noted to be the residence of James H. Ward. It opened as the West Falls Hotel and Stagecoach Transfer Station in 1845. In 1939 the property was purchased by Ole and Dorothy Benson who bought the hotel and remodeled it to its present state. In 1941 Gus and Martha Schenne purchased the business with Gus Schenne having been with the Buffalo Hotel Statler for 17 years as Chief Steward.

Over the years the Schenne Family has continued to maintain the property with the first floor being operated as the restaurant and bar. Martha Schenne resided on the second floor with some of the space on this floor being made into apartments, currently there are four apartments on the second floor.

Improvements and betterments to the property over the years have included various paintings of the building, sunroom addition, garage upgrade, electrical and heating

upgrades, new roofing and interior upgrades to the 4 dining rooms with the bar remaining pretty much as it was in the past.

Recent improvements include a \$30,000 blacktop project to our two parking lots and renovations to 3 of the 4 apartments in the building totaling approximately \$10,000. In the next 4-6 months I will be replacing kitchen cooking equipment to the tune of \$20,000. I am also currently getting estimates on insulating and siding the building.

If West Falls is successful in obtaining any of the NY Forward Grant money and if any is allocated to the Dog Bar the following projects are just a few that this money could be used for:

- Exterior siding of the building with the addition of new insulation to improve energy efficiency.
- Addition of side porch and railing on the front second level porch roof to bring it back to what the exterior of the building looked like in the 1940's when the Schenne family purchased the building.
- Installation of a new boiler as the existing one is quite old and this would add to the energy efficiency of the building.
- Electrical upgrades would be another energy efficiency project that is needed.
- Construction of an exterior deck addition would allow for outside dining as occurred early on in the Dog Bar's history.
- Interior renovations would include removal of the existing carpeting to return the floors to their original wood floors with resurfacing of same most likely needed.
- Replacement of the bar room ceiling would be an additional interior project as the ceiling is very old and dated and there is currently some water staining of same.
- Interior renovation of the Men's and Ladies' rooms to make them more ADA compliant.
- There is one remaining apartment on the second floor of the restaurant which could also use some interior upgrades and remodeling.

To date I have not received cost estimates for these projects but am hoping that \$500,000 of this grant money would be adequate allowing for other grant money to be allocated to other beneficial West Falls Hamlet projects.

If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me at 716-983-4764.



Linda R. Schenne, Vice President

9/9/23

Dr. Katherine S. Conway-Turner and Mr. Eric Reich, Co-Chairs
WNY Regional Economic Development Council

Re: NY FORWARD Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls submitted by the Town of Aurora, Erie County, NY

Dear Dr. Conway-Turner and Mr. Reich:

Please know of my full support of the NY FORWARD Grant application for \$4.5 Million of funding for downtown revitalization in the Hamlet of West Falls Target Area along Route 240 from Bridge Street to Old Glenwood Road.

NY Forward supports a more equitable downtown recovery for New York's smaller and rural communities, with a focus on hamlets and villages. The Hamlet of West Falls has several remarkable creative businesses that have grown here organically. They bring culture into the community, and an investment into the heart of our town would solidify the foundation upon which more can grow with confidence. Most importantly, it would help us come together and further work on our community as a team. West Falls fits the criteria as a NY Forward community.

A NY FORWARD grant will fund historic building facade renovations, activate vacant shops and upper stories, add public art, improve our parks and thereby allow our residents to realize their full potential. We have many people here who already offer unique goods and services that are so important to West Falls residents and visitors alike. I like to think of us as the vanguard of what is to come.

I have personally been working on my historical property for nearly a decade, putting all of my time and money into it over the years. It came as a three story turn-of-the-century storefront building with two dingy units on the second floor. We've fleshed out a studio/workshop and offices on the first floor along with our residence, and we've been through one whole apartment upstairs as a full renovation. We're currently remodeling the rest of the second floor into two new units. The grounds have been completely changed with grading, sidewalks, and landscaping. Just this year and last has had me in a rental man lift, scraping and painting the entire facade. My fiance and I just recently closed on a \$200,000 loan and will be putting as much of the proceeds toward this property as possible. The addition of a portion of this grant would come at the perfect time for us to expand our current scope and simply fast track plans we've had for years already.

As a Designer and General Contractor I have the vision and skills to continue this work, but our next big hurdle is a foundation replacement. We're on the corner of Bridge St. (a town road) and State Route 240, both of which have been repaved a dozen times over the years. The building is walled in and stands in a low area now as a result of this. Our structure needs to gain elevation. This will also provide more finished space for a yoga studio and wellness center my fiancee looks forward to adding alongside her massage therapy business. Our building is one of the largest and most prominent in question, and we would very much like to help anchor West Falls. We intend to provide a premier B&B experience, as well as long term lease(s) that bring people from all over to stay with us and patronize our local businesses, and thereby East Aurora and the greater WNY area. This building was built for multi-use, and it's our dream to tailor it to the 21st Century while preserving all of its historical charm.

With a degree in Industrial Design, and growing up on a farm, I'm focused on making this property more green and self sufficient in appropriately disguised ways. I'm interested in a solar roof (not panels) as our south side is a perfect candidate. I have designs for a stainless steel silo inside our building that holds spring water, pumping full from solar energy and releasing the stored energy as water pressure through a turbine over nights or cloudy days, acting as a battery. This property originally had a (four story stick built) tower that was removed decades ago, however the Scenic Byway sign across the street features our property with the tower intact. I have plans to add it back as an addition, fixing the historical silhouette and taking the opportunity to build in the water silo during that project. Making these improvements while tucking them away behind the historical aesthetics of the structure, is extremely important. I've made it this far doing what I can afford as I can afford it, but major work like the aforementioned requires more than good planning.

A NY FORWARD grant will facilitate targeted capacity-building by consultants who can provide guidance and technical assistance for the Hamlet. It will have ripple effects regionally, strengthening the Hamlet of West Falls, and its partner, the Town of Aurora, in pursuing and implementing other funding opportunities.

I ask you to please award this crucial NY FORWARD funding for the Hamlet of West Falls to provide planning and implementation funds. We have dozens of the right people here who will make the most (and then some) of this grant.

Sincerely,

Chaz Vance
1963 Davis Rd.

September 28, 2023

To: Dr. Katherine S. Conway-Turner and Mr. Eric Reich,
Co-Chairs WNY Regional Economic Development Council

Re: NY FORWARD Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls
submitted by the Town of Aurora, Erie County, NY

Dear Dr. Conway-Turner and Mr. Reich:

Please know of our full support of the NY FORWARD Grant application for \$4.5 Million of funding for downtown revitalization in the Hamlet of West Falls Target Area along Route 240 from Bridge Street to Old Glenwood Road.

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Our goal is to bring a grocery store/market to the people of West Falls, NY and adjacent townships. Currently the closest grocery store to West Falls is 8 miles away in East Aurora. We would like to offer locally sourced goods and produce from the surrounding communities of WNY. Our vision is to make Florence Agora the center of town where people can meet and gather their provisions on a daily basis. We want to deliver the finest fresh cuts of local, grass-fed, meats as well as the freshest fish and seafood we can source. We want to pride ourselves on local and globally innovative pantry items, cheeses, oils, condiments, grains, international products and supply local, fresh, seasonal produce. We want to create a specialty grocery and café with economical prices with a high-end feel. We want to stock the finest ingredients to our market shelves and displays in order to offer our potential customers the very best provisions at the very best price.

The following is a breakdown of project costs for Florence Agora grocery & provisions:

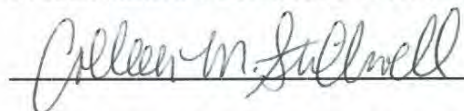
- Resurface entire floor (Finished Concrete/Epoxy/Tile) - **\$30,000**
- Construct free standing product display shelving for provisions/produce - **\$10,000**
- Relocate and install 3 Bay Sink to rear area of building (with pump) - **\$3,000**
- Install Mop sink (with pump) - **\$1,000**
- Install Full 20' High Glass Garage Door (front only) - **\$20,000**
- Replace front door and install commercial glass door - **\$3,000**
- Construct cashier counter with POS system - **\$3,000**
- Patio construction with possible stamped concrete in front of building to side walk - awning, tables, seating - **\$35,000**
- Paint/facade/street appeal/siding (entire building), artist mural (north side of building) - **\$20,000**
- Store branding and vinyl graphics/decals (windows) - **\$1,000**
- Street signage on building and/or at electric pole (front) - **\$5,000**
- Exterior lighting upgrade to accommodate customers (possible timer system) - **\$3,000**
- Expand existing bathroom to make handicap accessible and refinish - **\$5,000**
- Walk-in cooler install outside (rear) with roof, access added to back of building, level/grade/concrete pad - **\$25,000**
- Food production exhaust hood and HVAC system - **\$11,000**

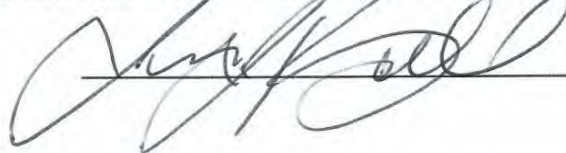
Project Estimated Total: \$175,000

We ask you please award this crucial NY Forward funding for the Hamlet of West Falls to provide planning and implementation of funds.

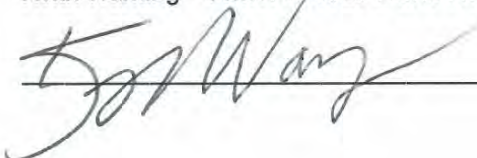
Sincerely,

Colleen Stillwell & Jason Kroll - 9411 Darien Road (Leasing 1929 Davis Road - Florence Agora - grocery & provisions)





Keith Warning - Owner of 1929 Davis Road



September 28, 2023

To: Dr. Katherine S. Conway-Turner and Mr. Eric Reich,
Co-Chairs WNY Regional Economic Development Council

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Dear Dr. Conway-Turner and Mr. Reich:

Please know of my full support of the NY FORWARD Grant application for \$4.5 Million of funding for downtown revitalization in the Hamlet of West Falls Target Area along Route 240 from Bridge Street to Old Glenwood Road.

NY Forward supports a more equitable downtown recovery for New York's small and rural communities, with a focus on hamlets and villages. These centers serve a more local economy and often have a distinct feel from larger, metropolitan urban centers. Their unique characteristics are easy to recognize. Architecture, building facades, small-scale streetscapes, and the existence of a traditional "town square" around which commercial, residential, civic, cultural and other amenities revolve. West Falls fits the criteria as a NY Forward community.

As property owner of 1928 Davis Road, I would like to offer my approx. 3700 sq ft. building for lease to new and upcoming businesses in the future. With improvements to Route 240 and corresponding walkways by the Department of Transportation in 2025, I feel there is a major benefit to the community if 1928 Davis was updated to suite establishments to operate.

The building rests directly on Route 240 and could potentially add economic value to new business as well as existing looking to relocate to the revitalizing hamlet West Falls. As of right now, 1928 Davis Road has a new radiant heated, energy efficient, concrete floor, with the potential for a build out of 2 separate store front businesses in the future. The existing septic system on the property is inadequate to accommodate public attended business and the building is used primarily as a storage unit currently. A NY Forward grant for the hamlet of West Falls would benefit the property by helping make improvements to the exterior facade, interior as well as a much needed upgrade to the septic system. The unique characteristics of our hamlet will greatly benefit if this grant is awarded to our community.

The following is a breakdown of project costs for future development of business owners at 1928 Davis Road:

- Update existing "drive over" septic system to accommodate new business leases for each of the 2 units - **\$35,000**
- Build out the interior of the building to accommodate new store front business in the future - **\$75,000**
- Make exterior improvements to facade and add street appeal - **\$25,000**

Project Estimated Total: \$135,000

I ask you please award this crucial NY Forward funding for the Hamlet of West Falls to provide planning and implementation of funds.

Sincerely,

Keith Warning - Owner of 1928 Davis Road



SCOTT BIELER

360 WEST FALLS ROAD WEST FALLS, NEW YORK 14170

September 29, 2023

Ms. Karen Utz
Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry St.
Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Grant Application for the Hamlet of West Falls, Town of Aurora

Dear Ms. Utz,

I am writing to you today to express my support for the Town of Aurora's Round 2 NY Forward application for the historic Hamlet of West Falls.

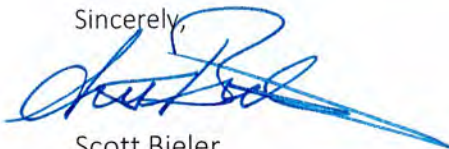
The Hamlet of West Falls is a vibrant community with a strong history and an ideal candidate for NY Forward funding. Over the past four years, West Falls has been undergoing an amazing transformation. The vision for West Falls is to capitalize on its unique, small-town, historic character while pursuing economic activity to create a community that is a thriving, walkable, and equitable place. Building off recent commercial and other growth, West Falls seeks to foster new projects that cultivate investment and attract new residents, including preserving and adaptively reusing historic buildings, creating new and diverse housing choices, and investing in parks, trails and placemaking. The community of West Falls is becoming a local destination for agrotourism, healthy recreational activities for families, and a meeting place for many vibrant community organizations.

I take great pride in the West Falls community and recognize its value for our community.

I also believe in the potential of this unique hamlet. Over the past five years, I have donated \$800,000 for renovations of the West Falls Fire Hall and have invested \$470,000 to reclaim and fully remodel the former grist mill (which I own), a central part of the "Main Street" section of West Falls. Although I did not plan to make any changes to the interior, with NY Forward funding, we could expand the use of this important, historical property and provide a true asset to the community and visitors.

Awarding NY Forward funding to West Falls would allow it to continue its momentum in advancing the economic development and revitalization of the entire area, including the surrounding towns of Colden and Orchard Park. Please give the Town of Aurora full consideration for this much needed grant for the Hamlet of West Falls.

Sincerely,



Scott Bieler



ESTIMATE

653 Borden Rd, Cheektowaga, NY.14227

WESTFALLS MILL – Interior Renovations
1906 DAVIS RD.

9-23-23

GENERAL

Provide all necessary materials and labor to create a 1200 sq. ft. coffee shop on the first floor of the existing mill
Provide all necessary architectural design & drawing
Provide all necessary permits for the renovation

SEPTIC & WATER

Tap into Erie county water at street
Install a sand filter system to accommodate necessary bathroom facilities

HVAC

Provide all necessary equipment and labor for heating and cooling

PLUMBING

Provide all necessary materials and labor to create a kitchen area and two handicap accessible bathrooms

CARPENTRY

Provide all necessary materials and labor to transform existing mill 1st floor area to a coffee shop
As per design

MATERIALS & LABOR
\$ 288,000



Thank You.



NEW YORK
STATE OF
OPPORTUNITY.

NY Forward