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February 22, 2021

Ms. Julie Smith
Business Development
Great Falls Construction
20 Mechanic Street
Gorham, Maine 04038


**Subject: DRAFT Community Relations Plan
The Edge Redevelopment (aka former Prime Tanning)
20 Sullivan Street, Berwick, Maine**

Dear Ms. Smith:

Enclosed for your use is a copy of the Community Relations Plan (CRP) for the above referenced property. This plan will be reviewed and approval by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (Maine DEP) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) prior to implementation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (207) 828-1272 ext. 30 if I can provide clarification or additional information regarding this CRP.

Very truly,
Credere Associates, LLC


Rick Vandenberg, LG, PG
Senior Project Manager

cc: Mr. Alan Peterson, U.S. EPA
Mr. Rick Currie, Maine DEP
Mr. Chuck Morgan, Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission
Mr. Charles Springer, TRC
Mr. James Bellissimo, Town of Berwick



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DRAFT Community Relations Plan **The Edge Redevelopment (aka former Prime Tanning)** **20 Sullivan Street** **Berwick, Maine 03901**



Prepared for:
JCS 16, LLC
c/o Great Falls Construction
20 Mechanic Street
Gorham, Maine

Funded by:
Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission

February 22, 2021



In Reference to:
Credere Project No. 21001594

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APPENDICES

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1. OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN

The purpose of this Community Relations Plan (CRP) is to describe specific strategies that will be employed by JCS 16, LLC (JCS 16), a wholly owned subsidiary of Great Falls Construction, Inc. (GFC), to inform and engage stakeholders around the property that may be affected by the proposed remediation and redevelopment of the former Prime Tanning Facility, located at 20 Sullivan Street in the Town of Berwick, Maine (Site). The redevelopment of the Site will be referred throughout this CRP as “The Edge”.

This CRP outlines how JCS 16 and GFC have engaged and will continue to engage project stakeholders who include affected residents, business owners, and local organizations. This is being done to include the public in decision-making process regarding redevelopment at the Site.

Active residents involved in neighborhood issues are important resources for the success of this CRP because they have an understanding of the Site and hold positions of responsibility within the community. The long-term success of the redevelopment of the Site will be enhanced by informed citizen engagement in each step of the cleanup and redevelopment process.



2. SPOKESPERSON, INFORMATION REPOSITORY, AND PUBLIC MEETING

The Spokesperson for this project is Julie Smith, who may be contacted at:

JCS 16, LLC
c/o Great Falls Construction, Inc.
Address: 20 Mechanic Street, Gorham, Maine
Phone Number: 207-839-2744
Email Address: jasmith@greatfallsinc.com

The information repository for this project, including the environmental assessments, remediation plans, and other environmental information is located at:

Town of Berwick
Attn: James Bellissimo, Community Development and Planning Department
Address: 11 Sullivan Street, Berwick, Maine
Phone Number: 207-698-1101
Email Address: planning@berwickmaine.org

Hours: Monday and Thursday 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Tuesday and Wednesday 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM

A public meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 to allow interested stakeholders to inquire about the cleanup project. A presentation will also be given by Credere during the meeting to inform and engage the public about the project. The location of the public meeting is as follows:

Selectmen's Chamber
11 Sullivan Street
Berwick, Maine 03901

Due to COVID-19, the public meeting location will be used to stage the presentation only. The Town of Berwick will broadcast the presentation on local network TV (channel 95) and over the internet at https://www.berwickmaine.org/community/berwick_community_tv/ so that interested parties can watch the presentation and ask questions in real time from the comfort and safety of their own homes/businesses.



3. SITE DESCRIPTION, USE, AND CONDITION

3.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The 7.91-acre Site, identified as Map U-4, Lot 146, is improved with four Site buildings. This lot was further subdivided as lots 1 through 7 prior to EPA Brownfields cleanup activities. The four Site buildings are as follows: a 42,250-square foot (sf) building designated as Building A; a 18,930-sf building designated Building B that is partially connected to Building A along a small portion of its southeast corner; an 8,670-sf building designated Building C; and a 19,382-sf building designated the L-Shaped Building. Lot 146 previously contained more buildings, but most have been demolished during the previous EPA Brownfields cleanup work. While all buildings are currently unused, they were previously used to support leather tanning operations that occurred on Lot 146 between the late 1800's and 2009. Previous uses of existing buildings include:

- Building A – shipping and finishing
- Building B – drying and plating/embossing processes
- Building C – offices and test dying
- L-shaped Building – finishing and chemical and general storage

Exterior portions of Lot 146 are currently not in use and consist of primarily open space. Specifically, the southern portion of the property includes a small greenspace that is underlain by a Maine DEP-approved permanent engineered barrier system. A large portion of the northern area of Lot 146 (eastern side of Building A, northern side of Building B, and western side of Building C) is covered with asphalt that was formerly used as a parking lot. The area between the parking lot and green space contains a Maine DEP-approved temporary cover system consisting of crushed asphalt, brick and concrete from the recent building demolition work. Small areas of landscaping remain along the eastern and northern parcel boundaries adjacent to the perimeter fence. There is also a small area of overgrown vegetation in the northeastern corner of the property.

The property is currently surrounded by temporary and permanent fencing. Access to Lot 146 is made through one of four locked gates along the perimeter of the Site (one gate each on Wilson and Sullivan Streets and two gates on School Street). There are no other vehicle access points to the property. Access to the Site via foot is also available through the greenspace in the southern portion of Lot 146.

3.2 FUTURE SITE USE¹

The Edge at Berwick will be a neighborhood-and community-focused development that seeks to transform the former industrial center of Berwick into a vibrant, active contributor to the downtown. JCS 16 and Great Falls Construction have been “Constructing and Developing with a Purpose since 1988”. The purpose for The Edge at Berwick, is to invest in strong, sustainable and

¹ Future Site Use description provided by Ms. Julie Smith of JSC 16 and GFC on January 15, 2021.



suitable downtown growth that will complement both the history and the progress of Berwick, Maine for years to come.

JCS 16 purchased the approx. 8-acre property on October 31, 2019 and has been actively working behind the scenes on design since then. The vision for the redevelopment is a mixed-use, vibrant, appropriate, New England Village center. The approximate 8 acres of land will be transformed into the Village hub for the community and will include approximately 100,000 SF of leased commercial space and a to be determined number/mix of studio, one bedroom and two-bedroom apartments that will be leased and maintained by JCS Property Management, an affiliated company to Great Falls Construction and JCS 16. While they haven't studied the vertical design of each building in detail yet, they anticipate the early determinations of residential units to be approximately ~150 units. Plans are for all existing buildings to be demolished except for the one building ("L-shaped"). This will be done to further the remediation and to create back slate for new buildings. The L-shaped building will be renovated into commercial uses to allow for Village-style storefront offerings along Sullivan Street. In addition to the one remaining building, there will be ~10 new buildings added to the site. These buildings will all essentially include first floor commercial spaces with residential options on the second, third and potentially fourth floors in some of the buildings (vertical elevations are still in design at this point).

JCS 16 and Great Falls Construction and the design team are also focusing hard on a design that accentuates the attributes we all love in today's New England Village Centers such as attractive walkability, comfortable vehicular flow, strong and appropriate streetscapes, variant in architectural design with appropriate historical and contemporary details.

The current draft site iteration also has approximately 106,722 SF or 2.45 acres of open/green/landscaped space throughout. The public will have access to a portion of these spaces.

3.3 SURROUNDING LAND USE

Surrounding property uses include the following:

- North: Residential development, parking lot, and the Berwick Police Department
- East/Southeast: Residential development, Berwick Sewer District, Berwick Fire Department, commercial businesses
- South: Commercial businesses
- West: Residential development and Berwick Town Hall

3.4 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Based on historical investigations performed onsite and recently completed Brownfields cleanup work, the following environmental conditions requiring remediation prior to and during Site redevelopment remain at the Site:

- Surficial soil across the Site containing concentrations of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and metals (specifically lead) exceeding applicable residential, park



user and/or commercial Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Remedial Action Guidelines for Sites Contaminated with Hazardous Substances (RAGs)

- Buried solid waste fill materials identified across the Site including a small area of leather tannery scraps and other debris such as wood chips and railroad ties. Contaminants associated with the fill materials include semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) and metals
- Methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE), vinyl chloride, chromium, and naphthalene identified in groundwater on the Site exceeding applicable drinking water guideline
- Tetrachloroethylene (PCE), trichloroethylene (TCE), 1,3-butadiene, and chloroform identified in soil vapor with the potential to impact indoor air of the existing and new buildings.
- Asbestos-containing roof flashing or asphalt roofing shingles on Site buildings



4. COMMUNITY INFORMATION

4.1 BACKGROUND

Old Berwick, also known as Newichawannok, was originally settled in 1631. The area was covered in large pine trees, resulting in the first sawmill in America to be constructed on the Great Works River in Newichawannok. The community grew with the construction of a total of 18 sawmills until the settlement of Berwick in 1713 as the ninth town in the State, which included the current North Berwick and South Berwick.

The Town of Berwick acquired the Site in 2014, along with the other Prime Tanning Facility parcels in a public-private partnership with the Fund of Jupiter (FOJ; Prime Tanning primary mortgage holder). The Site was then transferred to JCS 16 from FOJ on October 31, 2019 following completion of remedial activities.

The Prime Tanning Facility has a long history of industrial use including as a tannery dating back to the late 1800's. This history has been documented in numerous other environmental reports. Excerpts of the history as they relate to the Site are provided below:

The main tannery building was constructed on Lot 146 in 1850. By 1887, L.R. Hersom & Son Tannery was in full operation in the approximate center of Lot 146, while Rich, Brock, and Co. (a sheep tannery) occupied the southeast portion of the Site. Lot 146 was also developed with residential dwellings along the western edge of the parcel and some small commercial businesses at this time. By 1893, Rich, Brock, and Co. operations had ceased. By 1905, L.R. Hersom & Son Tannery was replaced by the Littlefield Leather Company. By 1912, the buildings on Lot 146 used for Littlefield Leather Company were vacant. By 1925, Lot 146 was occupied by another subsidiary of L.R. Hersom & Son Tannery (Lennox Nagle Leather Company Tannery), as well as an auto repair shop in the eastern portion of the parcel. The auto repair shop was present through 1965, and it is unclear when these operations ceased. It has been reported in previous environmental investigations that a dry cleaner was located on Lot 146, which has been identified as the likely source of the VOC contamination onsite; however, Credere could not confirm the existence of a dry cleaner onsite when reviewing historical records.

The former pre-treatment plant on Lot 146 was constructed in the late 1960s to treat waste generated by Prime Tanning Co. Inc., and was located on its own parcel, Lot 148. The pre-treatment plant consisted of a 900-sf concrete block building with an adjacent lime silo, and a 180,000-gallon vertical reinforced concrete bulk storage tank for process water neutralization. The pre-treatment plant ceased operations in 2008 with closure of Prime Tanning Co., Inc., and the structures were removed in 2016 during Brownfields demolition activities on Lot 146. Lot 148 was then split in half, one half joining Lot 146, the other remaining separate as Lot 148.

4.2 PREVIOUS COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Envision Berwick Committee

The Town of Berwick has engaged the public in the planning of the cleanup and redevelopment of the various Prime Tanning lots on several occasions. The Town of Berwick appointed the Envision



Berwick committee to implement the Comprehensive Plan, which includes the Envisioning Downtown Berwick Vision Report, which includes the Prime Tanning parcels. As the Site is located in the center of downtown Berwick, the Envision Berwick committee has been heavily involved in the Site's redevelopment.

Public Meetings

The Site and adjoining auxiliary Prime Tanning facility parcels have also been discussed routinely at Board of Selectman meetings from 2015 to the present. In addition, former Prime Tanning was the focus of a Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast design planning charrette which was hosted by the Town of Berwick in October of 2015, allowing the community to express their ideas for the Prime Tanning Facility parcels prior to redevelopment.

Engagement Event

A public event was held onsite in the fall of 2018 to inform and engage the public about the Prime Tanning redevelopment project. The event included staff from Credere presenting about the project, and the Site buildings were opened for limited guided tours so community members could see inside the buildings. Lastly, the event included a brush cleanup component which afforded community members an opportunity to improve the property in a small way.

Local News Media

Additionally, this project has been regularly covered in the local news media. A sampling of newspaper articles from August 2008 to November 2019 concerning this project are attached to this plan as **Appendix A**.

4.3 KEY COMMUNITY CONCERNS

To date, public opinion concerning the cleanup and redevelopment of the Site has been generally positive and supportive. The community views the project as vital to the continued revitalization of Berwick's downtown which has suffered since the closure of the Prime Tanning facility in 2008. Input on reuse of the Site has indicated a strong desire that the Site reuse include a mix of housing, green space, and commercial redevelopment.

This project will benefit from a long-term strategy that involves and engages the community about the cleanup and redevelopment of the Prime Tanning properties (including the Site). Negative feedback almost always comes from a lack of communication. Envision Berwick is an instrumental piece to getting the word out about this project and keeping the community at large informed.

4.4 PUBLIC NOTICE

A public notice will be placed on the Town's website and in Foster's Daily Democrat newspaper announcing the intended remediation and redevelopment activities at the Site and to notify residents of scheduled public meeting(s). The public notice will also publicize the information repository for this project, which also includes the environmental assessments and other



environmental information for the Site. Details on the information repository are outlined in **Section 2**.

The notice will also announce the start of a 30-day comment period of the draft Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives and Remedial Action Plan (ABCA/RAP) Amendment, which will outline the proposed cleanup action to be implemented during redevelopment. GFC will accept comments on the ABCA/RAP Amendment during the comment period and will provide written responses that will become part of the administrative record. The information repository will be updated with the inclusion of all meeting minutes, status reports, and other communications.

Comments can be submitted at the public meeting or in writing to the following address via mail or email:

Mr. Richard Vandenberg
Creder Associates, LLC
776 Main Street
Westbrook, Maine
207-828-1272 x30
rickv@crederellc.com

Recognizing the size of the project and wide expanse of public interest, public concerns are also welcome beyond the public comment period and can be directed to Mr. Vandenberg above.

4.5 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

A public meeting will be held by JCS 16/GFC at the Town of Berwick on March 9, 2021 at 6:30 PM as part of the regularly-schedule Board of Selectmen's Meeting in the Selectman's chambers to present the proposed redevelopment of the Site to the community. This meeting will be held to educate the public on the cleanup process and the potential benefits of Site redevelopment, inform the local stakeholders of the results of the previous environmental assessments, describe what remedial measures are to be implemented at the Site, and solicit input from the public on their concerns and desires for the Site. It will also be an opportunity to present the draft ABCA/RAP Amendment for the Site to the public and solicit their feedback prior to commencing Site remediation.

Furthermore, as needed depending on the level of community feedback, JCS 16/GFC will host additional public meetings during the remediation and redevelopment process to provide project status updates and solicit input from the public. These meetings will be timed such to occur along with other public meetings on The Edge. Additionally, to get the word out on important aspects of the cleanup the public will be engaged each quarter during Selectmen's meetings. All public meetings will be aired on Berwick Public Television.

Public notice will be placed in Foster's Daily Democrat newspaper announcing any additional meetings.



4.6 PROPOSED SCHEDULE

The following schedule will be followed for the implementation of the project:

Date/Time Period	Scheduled Activity
February 24, 2021	Start 30-day public comment period for the draft ABCA/RAP Amendment
March 9, 2021	The public meeting will be held at 6:30 pm at in the Selectmen's Chambers in the Town Hall regarding the draft ABCA/RAP Amendment and redevelopment
March 26, 2021	Public comment period ends for the draft ABCA/RAP Amendment
March 29, 2021	Finalize ABCA/RAP Amendment following incorporation of public comments, EPA, and Maine DEP comments.
March 2021	Commence presumptive remedial measure work
April 2021	Commence cleanup work
Quarterly	Public meetings regarding the cleanup and redevelopment progress at the Site. These meetings will be held as part of regularly scheduled Selectman's meetings during the cleanup work to keep the community involved and engaged.



APPENDIX A

Site Related News Media Articles



By Shir Haberman

Print Page

August 30, 2008 2:00AM

150 jobs lost as Prime Tanning closes its Berwick, Maine facility

BERWICK, Maine — Prime Tanning Co. Inc. announced its intention Friday to close the leather-finishing operations at its Berwick, Maine facility and transfer all of Berwick's production to its Hartland, Maine plant.

BERWICK, Maine — Prime Tanning Co. Inc. announced its intention Friday to close the leather-finishing operations at its Berwick, Maine facility and transfer all of Berwick's production to its Hartland, Maine plant.

Approximately 150 jobs will be lost locally. The company has indicated it will work with local social service agencies in order to help the displaced workers make the transition to other jobs.

Robert Moore, Prime's chief executive officer, said Friday that there will be supervisory and production worker positions open at the Hartland facility for any Berwick workers who want to relocate. Hartland is approximately 30 miles north of Waterville Valley, he said.

"There's definitely interest on the part of some workers (in relocating), but we don't know how many yet," he said.

For those who chose not to relocate, Prime has involved state and local officials, as well as consultants, in order to help those workers get new jobs. Prime has also set up a job fair with local employers such as Pratt & Whitney, Moore said.

"We remain committed to the state of Maine," he said. "We are a large employer here and have the support of the governor and state officials."

Movement of leathers between the two facilities has already begun, and the company believes it will have the balance of the leathers transferred by October.

Prime Tanning merged with Cudahy Tanning in Milwaukee, Wis., and Irving Tanning in Hartland, Maine, in November 2007, and since that time has been engaged in a domestic reorganization to improve efficiencies and profitability. As part of the reorganization, the Cudahy facility was closed in May 2008, and its leather volumes successfully transferred into Prime's Hartland facility.

Employment levels at the Hartland facility will rise as a result of the increased production there. Prime will continue to use the Berwick offices as its temporary headquarters while it seeks a buyer for those offices.

"This was a very difficult but necessary decision for Prime as we work to streamline our domestic operations and improve profitability," wrote Moore in a prepared press release. "Like many manufacturing businesses in the U.S., we have been adversely and negatively affected by unprecedented increases in the cost of energy and chemicals and the general economic slowdown.

"These unforeseen developments have hastened our need to eliminate excess costs and overhead, and our success as a company depends upon our ability to act decisively to achieve that result," said Moore.

"We continue to believe the very best way to serve our loyal customers is as a stable, profitable and consistent supplier, and this reorganization will ensure that we continue to meet that objective."

On March 31, 2008, Prime announced its intention to merge with Shanghai Richina Leather Co. Ltd. ("SRL") to form Prime Leather International, which will form one of the leading suppliers of leather worldwide. This transaction is expected to close in the fourth quarter of this year.

Prime Tanning was started in 1910 by a Russian immigrant named Morris Kaplan. In 1921, Kaplan purchased a tannery in Woburn, Mass., and in 1935, citing a need for expansion, purchased a 125,000-square-foot facility at the current Berwick location.

Over the years the Berwick facility has grown to 200,000 square feet of production, research and development, and office space.

Prime is a third-generation family-owned business. Its board of directors is currently co-chaired by Michael W. Kaplan and Morris Stephen Kaplan, both grandsons of the founder.

Maine Gov. John Baldacci announced that the Maine Department of Labor will deploy its rapid response team to Berwick shortly as a result of Prime Tanning.

<http://www.seacoastonline.com/article/20080830/news/808300324>

Print Page

By [Casey Conley](#)
cconley@fosters.com

September 04, 2014 3:15AM

Prime Tanning plan emerges Housing, shops and open space planned for 7.7-acre property

BERWICK, Maine — The company that hopes to redevelop the Prime Tanning complex offered a first glimpse this week of its vision for the property.

Fund of Jupiter, which is a major creditor to bankrupt Prime Tanning, wants to build apartments, shops and commercial space where the tannery currently stands. It also envisions open space, additional parking and other amenities.

“Our vision is for it to be an attractive place for people to congregate in downtown Berwick,” said Roger Clement, a Portland attorney representing Fund of Jupiter.

But the company is looking for help to get the project started.

Town officials and a key Prime Tanning lender are exploring a partnership designed to spur redevelopment of the 7.7-acre parcel, which has sat vacant since the tannery closed in 2008.

There have been multiple studies confirming some environmental issues the property, but Venne said it’s unclear what if any other problems lurk under the tannery buildings themselves. That uncertainty is a major hurdle to redeveloping the property.

“We know it needs a little bit of cleanup, but we need to know what else needs to be cleaned up,” Venne said. “The benefit doing that is, it removes uncertainty and therefore the risk of investing in a property, which makes it more marketable.”

What type of local support is needed?

As proposed, the town would foreclose on the property based on more than \$200,000 in unpaid property taxes incurred by Prime Tanning, not Fund of Jupiter. Doing so would allow the town to seek federal grants unavailable to private companies that would help pay for the future cleanup.

Fund of Jupiter has asked the town to cover the 20 percent local match for the EPA grant program, which offers up to \$200,000 for each affected parcel, Berwick Town Manager Patrick Venne said.

But once any cleanup efforts are complete, the town would sell the property to Fund of Jupiter or another entity to pursue redevelopment. The sale price would likely be no more than the amount owed in back taxes. The property is valued for tax purposes at more than \$800,000.

The town’s involvement in the plan is by no means certain. Venne said the select board lacks authority to enter into such an agreement, which requires voter approval. However, the board has agreed to begin negotiations with the company.

Fund of Jupiter lent money to Prime Tanning before it filed for bankruptcy in 2010 and is a major stakeholder in the ongoing bankruptcy proceedings. It has been working with the town for months on a deal that advances the shared redevelopment goal. Currently, the property is still owned by Prime Tanning.

Clement, of the firm Verrill Dana, said it’s not possible to develop the property without municipal support.

“The economics are telling us that it’s not economically feasible for the owner of the property to spend large amounts of money up front to develop it,” he said Wednesday, adding that market conditions in the town make such a large-scale development difficult.

“The biggest challenge we face now is that it’s still a relatively difficult market,” Clement said. “We do not have a long list of businesses calling us or knocking on our doors to tell us they have to be in that space.

“But we think by doing the environmental remediation, which will probably involve some demolition, that maybe people will start to get a sense for what it can look like if it’s developed and that will attract interest,” he continued.

Once finished, developers believe the town will benefit from the higher property taxes generated from the property and the improved downtown.



PHOTO / JOHN HUFF / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The former Prime Tanning property in Berwick, Maine.

Selectboard Chair Bryan O'Connor said he has and many several unanswered questions about the proposal. But he's also optimistic about it.

"My sense is that Fund of Jupiter is really excited about the opportunity to try and move forward with the site," O'Connor said Wednesday. "I've been on the board three years now and this is the first real, concrete proposal that has come forward."

What happens if the deal falls apart after the town assumes ownership?

For one thing, Venne said the town has no liability for the environmental issues if it takes a property for back taxes. Secondly, he said any contract with Fund of Jupiter would have language protecting the town's investment should the deal collapse.

Although the project needs voter approval to advance, some initial pieces are already in the works. Fund of Jupiter is seeking Planning Board approval to subdivide the main parcel into a handful of smaller tracts that would mirror its future redevelopment vision. Splitting the property also increases eligibility for federal grants.

The board will hear an initial presentation on the subdivision plan tonight. Town Planning Director John Stoll said the meeting will offer an introduction into the proposal, but no votes will be taken.

Although there are big plans for the property, Venne said it's important to let the process run its course.

"That kind of development is tricky because the market is so poor for a potentially contaminated site," he said. "The key is to take this in small increments."

http://www.fosters.com/article/20140904/GJNEWS_01/140909701

Print Page

By [Casey Conley](#)
cconley@fosters.com

[Print Page](#)

September 16, 2014 3:15AM

Selectmen to consider Prime Tanning proposal

BERWICK, Maine — Selectmen tonight will consider asking voters to approve a partnership with Fund of Jupiter aimed at spurring redevelopment of the Prime Tanning complex.

The partnership calls for the town to take the roughly 11-acre tannery property in downtown Berwick for back taxes. Once that's complete, the town would apply for federal grants available to municipalities to offset cleanup costs. Those grants are not available to private developers.

Fund of Jupiter has asked the town to cover the 20 percent local match for the federal EPA grant program, which officers up to \$200,000 for each parcel.

If the grant process is successful, the town would sell the property back to Fund of Jupiter or another entity interested in redevelopment after the cleanup is finished. The sale price would not exceed the amount owed in back taxes.

Prime Tanning closed the Berwick facility in 2008, and the company filed for bankruptcy two years later. Fund of Jupiter was a major Prime Tanning creditor and it has a mortgage interest in the Berwick tannery property.

Fund of Jupiter also has begun the process of subdividing the tannery property into seven parcels, which would make the town eligible for additional federal funds. The subdivision proposal will come before the Planning Board again on Sept. 18 for a preliminary review.

What could be built at the tannery site?

Fund of Jupiter officials say there are several options, including light industrial, retail and loft-style housing, among others. The company envisions construction of a new street between School and Sullivan streets, green space and other amenities.

Selectmen are planning to discuss the issue tonight and could include a question on the Nov. 4 ballot seeking voter approval for the partnership with Fund of Jupiter. The partnership needs voter approval to take effect.



PHOTO/ JOHN HUFF/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The former Prime Tanning property in Berwick, Maine.

By [Judi Currie](#)
jcurrie@fosters.com

[Print Page](#)

February 01, 2015 3:15AM

Berwick land use changes would aid tannery replacement

BERWICK, Maine — Changes are being proposed to Berwick's Land Use ordinances to guide the redevelopment of the former Prime Tanning Site and chart a new course for downtown.

Planning Board Chair Dave Andreesen said the recommendations are driven by the redevelopment of the former Prime Tanning site.

"This allows the town to say what could go in there," Andreesen said. "Building heights and setbacks, it was all updated for eventual development of the Prime Tanning property."

Andreesen said the board will hold a public hearing because the changes impact more than the tannery.

"We extended the downtown urban overlay zone and are now calling it the village overlay zone," Andreesen said. "It goes up to the old elementary school — which we weren't able to use for any town purposes because of the way the land use ordinance was written."

There are a number of residential buildings that now fall into this village overlay zone, and according to Andreesen, homeowners were able to opt out if they wanted to; but only one did.

The changes use "form-based" code, a method of looking at development with a desired outcome such as an attractive and walkable downtown, rather than usage zones.

"You can't build a 60-foot structure, you can't put a drive-through over here. So instead of necessarily excluding businesses it says what kind of businesses we want there," Andreesen said. "It includes updates and changes to lot size and setbacks, how big a lot can be and brings it into 2014."

The changes are in accordance with the Envision Berwick plan approved by voters in June; which updates the comprehensive land use plan.

"Basically we took everything inside of (Envision Berwick) and changed our form based code and zoning ordinances around that," Andreesen said. "We made minor changes to clean up the language and to define what they would allow once the Prime property gets redeveloped and built on, so we would know already what we want to do."

The public hearing is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 5, at 6:30 p.m. in the town hall meeting room.

After the hearing, Andreesen says the changes go to the select board and another public hearing will be scheduled.

The final recommendations will go before the voters at town meeting in May.

Prime Tanning shut down operations in 2008 and is in bankruptcy. The future development of the site depends on a plan by the primary lien holder, Fund of Jupiter, for the town to foreclose on the property and apply for federal environmental cleanup funds. Then the Fund with the town's OK will regain control of the property and develop it or sell it.

If all goes as planned, demolition and cleanup could begin this year.



PHOTO/ JOHN HUFF/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A 2014 file photo shows the former Prime Tanning property in Berwick, Maine.

By Judi Currie
jcurrie@fosters.com

May 30, 2015 7:14AM

Print Page

Berwick to get \$600K for Prime Tanning clean-up

A significant milestone in the revitalization of downtown Berwick was reached Thursday with the announcement by the EPA that the town has been awarded \$600,000 in grants to help clean up the former Prime Tanning site.

The large parcel in the center of downtown Berwick was home to a tannery that closed in 2008, then the company filed bankruptcy in 2010.

The plan to redevelop the property has required many steps already including subdividing the land into seven parcels and applying for the clean-up grants for three. The award means the clean-up can begin.

Planning Board Chair Dave Andreesen said this is a chance for a do-over on shaping the downtown.

"We're inching closer toward the day that a developer comes before the Planning Board with plans to develop that site, and I can't wait for that day," Andreesen said. "Businesses moving into the heart of Berwick village will be great for this town."

Rick Vandenberg, a Berwick resident, is a senior project manager at an engineering firm and lent his expertise two years ago when he helped the Envision Berwick Committee by writing the original Brownfields grant.

"Because I knew the process, it became easier for everyone to understand," Vandenberg said.

Vandenberg said developers would look at the site and say it would be a great location if not for the potential or even likely contamination.

"I'm really excited for the town," Vandenberg said "The EPA money will help remove the hurdles that have been keeping the property from being redeveloped."

According to the EPA, the grants, funded by EPA's Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup grant program, provide communities with funding necessary to assess, clean up and redevelop contaminated properties, boost local economies and leverage jobs while protecting public health and the environment.

"Somersworth is starting to do some things in their downtown and things are improving," Vandenberg said. "For Berwick to be the next domino to fall I think will be exciting to watch over the next couple of years."

Curt Spalding, regional administrator of EPA's New England office, said Brownfields investments typically leverage an average of approximately \$17 for every dollar spent.

"EPA's Brownfields program is a proven asset helping local communities to get abandoned or derelict properties assessed, cleaned up and returned to productive use," Spalding said. "This is a wise investment in cleaning and revitalizing contaminated sites, creating jobs and new economic opportunities, and overall making our communities stronger and our environment cleaner."



The EPA awarded the town of Berwick \$600,000 in grants to help clean up the former Prime Tanning site.

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Maine gets \$2.3M to redevelop industrial sites

6/1/2015

Six Maine communities and groups are receiving \$2.3 million in federal grants to assess, clean up and redevelop contaminated properties.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday six recipients in Maine will receive funding as part of its brownfields program. To date, EPA said, the agency's funding through the brownfields program has helped New England communities leverage more than \$2.5 million in public and private cleanup and redevelopment investment.

The following Maine groups and communities are recipients:

- The Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, which is receiving \$400,000 for community-wide assessment grants.
- The town of Berwick, which is receiving \$600,000 for the cleanup of the former Prime Tanning facility at 20 Sullivan St.
- The town of Lubec, which is receiving \$400,000 for the cleanup of the former Columbian Factory site at 135 Main St.
- The Penobscot Indian Nation, which is receiving \$200,000 for a community-wide assessment grant.
- The Portland Harbor Commission, which is receiving \$350,000 for an assessment of Portland Harbor.
- The city of Rockland, which is receiving \$400,000 for community-wide assessment grants.

"EPA's Brownfields program is a proven asset helping local communities to get abandoned or derelict properties assessed, cleaned up and returned to productive use," Curt Spalding, regional administrator of EPA's New England office, said in a prepared statement. "This is just one way EPA works to make a difference in communities all across New England."

"Our Brownfield investments typically leverage an average of approximately \$17 for every dollar we spend," he continued. "This is a wise investment in cleaning and revitalizing contaminated sites, creating jobs and new economic opportunities, and overall making our communities stronger and our environment cleaner."

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EPA announces \$1.2 million in new funds to clean up contaminated sites in Maine

 www.pressherald.com/2015/09/23/epa-announces-4-3-million-in-new-funds-to-clean-up-contaminated-sites-in-maine/

By Gillian Graham Staff Writer | @GrahamGillian | 207-791-6315

BIDDEFORD — The Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday announced grants totaling more than \$4 million to clean up contaminated industrial sites across New England.

The \$4.3 million in supplemental funds will go to a variety of so-called “brownfield” sites across the region, including \$1.2 million for cleanup and redevelopment projects in Maine.

“The EPA’s brownfields program here in New England has a long history of helping to boost local economies, creating well-paying local jobs, all while protecting people’s health and our communities,” said Curt Spalding, regional administrator of the EPA New England office.

The supplemental funds announced Wednesday are part of \$13.2 million nationally that the EPA made available under its brownfields revolving loan fund.

Also on Wednesday, Spaulding presented more than \$2.35 million in brownfields funding to six communities and groups in Maine for assessment and cleanup of contaminated sites. Those funds were part of a round of grants announced in May.

Spalding announced the new round of funding at a news conference at Biddeford City Hall, where federal, state and local officials also highlighted the role brownfield grants have played in cleaning up contaminated industrial mill properties and revitalizing Biddeford’s downtown.

“If you want to see what this program can do, come to Biddeford,” Spalding said.

Biddeford has received more than \$200,000 for assessments and \$2.6 million in loans and grants for cleanup in the downtown area, where former textile mills are being redeveloped for mixed use. Private developers have invested close to \$70 million in the area since the city bought and cleaned up the site of the former Maine Energy Recovery Co. trash incinerator.

Paul Schumacher, executive director of the southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, said most of the \$500,000 his group received Wednesday will go toward completing the cleanup of the former Lincoln Mill in Biddeford. Developer Tim Harrington is currently transforming that building into a \$50 million hotel, apartment and restaurant complex.

Schumacher said the money previously invested in cleanup in downtown Biddeford has brought new energy to the city.

“It changed the face of the community,” he said. “It’s an amazing transformation.”

The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development received \$700,000 from the supplemental funds announced Wednesday.

The EPA brownfields funding for 2015 will go to:

- Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments: \$400,000 for communitywide assessment grants.
- Town of Berwick: \$600,000 in clean up grants for the Prime Tanning property.
- Town of Lubec: \$400,000 in cleanup grants for the Columbian factory site.
- Penobscot Indian Nation: \$200,000 communitywide assessment grant.
- Portland Harbor Commission: \$350,000 assessment grant for Portland Harbor.
- City of Rockland: \$400,000 for communitywide assessment grants.

“We are pleased that the EPA has once again selected several sites in Maine to receive federal funding through the brownfields program,” U.S. Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King said in a joint statement. “These grants represent a continued and welcome investment in the economic revitalization of Maine communities that will also help protect the integrity of the environment for future generations.”

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Print Page

By Judi Currie
jcurrie@fosters.com

October 06, 2015 9:39PM

Berwick awards contract for cleanup for Prime Tanning site

BERWICK, Maine — Cleanup of the former Prime Tanning site could begin as early as February.

At their regular meeting Tuesday, the Berwick Board of Selectmen awarded a contract to the environmental engineering firms of Credere, of Westbrook, and Wesson and Sampson, of Peabody, Mass.

The firms joined together to submit the lone bid to oversee the cleanup of the 8-acre site which dominates downtown Berwick.

The possibility of contamination at the former tannery allowed the town to qualify for EPA Brownfields grants, these grants are awarded to help clean up potentially contaminated sites. Unlike a Superfund site the contamination has not been identified. The cleanup timeline includes an investigation to determine what is on the site.



The former Prime Tanning property in Berwick. File photo by John Huff/Fosters.com

Selectman Robert Crichton expressed concern about the lack of bids, suggesting that projects like this often require a minimum of three qualified bids before a contract can be awarded.

Town Planner John Stoll said the contract was negotiated by Maine DEP and he felt confident that the lack of bids was not an issue.

Stoll said he also looked into why they only received one qualification package (bid) and learned that it is because it is a low margin, large scale project.

"There is a lot of Brownfields work going on in Maine right now," Stoll said.

The engineering contract is for a maximum of \$150,000. The EPA grants are for \$200,000 each for three parcels bringing the total for the project to \$750,000.

There are additional parcels within the former tannery site that will not be part of this initial cleanup. But the town could apply for additional grants in the next round.

Selectman Mark Pendergast asked when they would start seeing activity on the site.

Stoll ran through some of the key items in the timeline and said cleanup could begin by February. Between now and then there will be many meetings with the EPA and some public comment sessions.

Stoll is making a presentation Wednesday to the EPA for the agency to approve the scope of the project.

The Envision Berwick Committee, created to form a vision for the downtown, has been instrumental in moving the redevelopment of the site along.

Chair Frank Underwood said there is a citizen advisory committee of nine residents that will meet quarterly and follow the process closely.

Underwood said they will use as many local contractors and local laborers as possible.

Dave Andreesen, planning board chair, said he is excited to think that in just a few years the site could look very different.

"This is just one of many steps to the final goal of redeveloping our downtown," Andreesen said. "We will have to go back and apply for more grants, but I am excited to see the timeline."

Town Manager Stephen Eldridge they are all very excited.

"We are all looking forward to tearing down buildings ... and to start moving forward with some ideas on economic development," Eldridge said.

Eldridge said they have formed an economic development committee that he and the town planner will work closely with to encourage developers to look at the site.

Print Page

October 25, 2015 7:01PM

[Print Page](#)

Great Falls Roundup: Berwick looks to define new downtown

On October 14 a workforce housing design charrette was held at town hall in Berwick, Maine. The event was put together by the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast with Envision Berwick. The purpose was to hold an intensive planning session where designers, property owners, municipal representatives, and other stakeholders would collaborate on a conceptual vision for development in the downtown area, specifically the former Prime Tanning sites and the Estabrook School.

A team of volunteers gathered; equipped with maps, site plans, zoning regulations and other tools needed to explore the options. A public listening session was held from 6 to 8 p.m.

On October 16 the results were presented at a second gathering.

The session revealed support for one- or two-story senior citizen housing, small experimental units, housing for single parents, affordable housing for all income levels, combining age groups of people in units and housing for single adults approaching retirement.

What people did not want to see was pre-fab row housing or units with three or more bedrooms.

For restaurants there was support for a mix of options including a micro-brewery, but not a lot of bars or fast food chains; the same went for retail with the focus away from big box stores.

There was support for community gathering spaces both indoors and out, such as a community center, perhaps a bandstand or outdoor theatre; trails, playgrounds and parks.

Under transportation there was interest in public transit and walk-ability.

There were several suggestions to support sustainability like open spaces, community gardens and solar.

For culture there is a desire to grow artistic efforts in Berwick.

As town officials have said this is an important first step in what will be a long process that will benefit by community involvement.

Somersworth needs you

The City of Somersworth is looking for people to work at polling places during the November 3rd Municipal Election.

Election workers are required to be registered voters in the City of Somersworth.

According to the press release, working at the polls is a great opportunity to meet more members of your neighborhood and community. Training is provided and workers are paid "a reasonable stipend for your time."

Election workers are needed for all wards: Ward 1 at City Hall, One Government Way, Ward 2 at the Somersworth Historical Museum, 157 Main St., Ward 3 at the Flanagan Community Center, 25B Bartlett Ave., Ward 4 at Charpentier Apartments, 28 Franklin St. and Ward 5 at Romeo J. Messier Building, 218 Main St. To find out more call the City Clerk at 603-692-9511.

Events this week in the Great Falls Region

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday bagged leaves pick-up in Somersworth. Residents do not need to call ahead for pick-up. Bags must be curbside no sooner than evening before and no later than 7 a.m. on your trash day. Leaves and grass clippings must be in brown paper leaf bags, sold at many local stores.

Wednesday Idlehurst and Maple Wood schools are sponsoring the Somersworth Community Job Fair from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Idlehurst gymnasium.

Also on Wednesday the Rollinsford Budget Committee will meet at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

Thursday the Greater Somersworth Chamber of Commerce is hosting a Candidate at 6:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers in Somersworth City Hall. Residents and business owners/managers are invited to participate in a forum for City Council and School Board candidates running in contested races in the November 3rd election.

Thursday Rollinsford Select Board meets for a public hearing at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.



Judi Currie

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Prime Tanning demolition starting soon

Wednesday Posted Aug 31, 2016 at 7:26 PM

Updated Aug 31, 2016 at 7:26 PM

By Judi Currie / jcurrie@seacoastonline.com

BERWICK, Maine — The walls will soon be coming down at the former Prime Tanning site.

While only subtle changes are visible from the outside, a lot of work has been going on inside to prepare for the demolition of portions of the complex.

The bulk of the former tannery takes up about 8 acres in the heart of downtown Berwick. While some buildings will remain, the first phase of the demolition will effectively cut an opening through the site from Sullivan Street to School Street.

Jon O'Donnell, project manager and hazardous building material specialist at Credere Associates, LLC said all of the demolition permits should be in place by Tuesday and heavy equipment is already on site.

“We have been working inside and have removed asbestos and universal waste such as cans of paint and fluorescent lighting,” O'Donnell said. “Once the demolition starts it should take about two to three weeks.”

Measures have also been put in place to prevent any potentially contaminated soil from spreading, including straw baffles and a tracking pad.

O'Donnell said the site is generally contaminated with low level PAH (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons) a byproduct of combustion that stays in the soil. There is also the presence of solvents and localized heavy metal soil contamination.

According to O'Donnell, the demolition is in some ways the easy phase. As the site is redeveloped any future buildings will have to take in the consideration potential contamination risk once a cap is put in place.

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The property is being cleaned up with the help of EPA Brownfields grants, funded by EPA's Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup grant program, which provide communities with the funding they need to assess, clean up and redevelop contaminated properties.

Berwick has received two rounds of funding totaling \$1.2 million, making it the largest single-site Brownfields grant in the history of the program.

The first phase includes lots 4, 5, and 6, which are covered mostly by one mill building that was constructed over many years with numerous additions.

According to the proposals prepared by Credere Associates, various manufacturing operations occurred at the site from 1877 to 1930. Tannery operations occurred at the site from approximately 1930 until 2008 when the mill closed and the Prime Tanning owners filed for bankruptcy protection.

In 2014, the Town of Berwick acquired the property for back property taxes.

The current redevelopment plans call for the redevelopment of some portions of the buildings and demolition of others. The iconic smokestack is expected to stay.

The redevelopment goals from charrettes and the Envision Berwick, visioning process include mixed use retail, residential, parking and green space.

While the market studies are not final, O'Donnell said the results are looking very positive for reuse of the property and the likelihood that it will be attractive to developers.

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 2 of 3 Premium Clicks used this month

Ex-Prime Tanning property sold in Berwick

Posted Nov 1, 2019 at 8:44 AM

Updated Nov 1, 2019 at 6:04 PM

BERWICK, Maine — Great Falls Construction, based in Gorham, has purchased the vacant Prime Tanning Mill, according to an announcement Friday by Envision Berwick, the group assigned by the Board of Selectmen to implement the town's comprehensive plan.

Great Falls, a family-owned construction and development firm, announced it spent the past year in discussions with the town about the site. Great Falls touted its experience with renovations and new construction in village centers, stating its Station Square project in Gorham Village is a 70,000-square-foot mixed-use development with six commercial units and 33 residential units. Its properties are managed by JCS Property Management, also based in Gorham.

Jon Smith, president of Great Falls, expressed excitement about the Berwick project in a prepared statement. "For years our team has been constructing with a purpose. By that I mean that our goal, since we started in 1988, is to understand the needs of the local community and work with them to formulate a plan to address those needs. It's more than just building buildings." Smith said the Prime Tanning site offers the opportunity to collaborate with the community to cultivate small business and residential spaces.

Great Falls has two listening sessions scheduled in the Berwick area to hear what the local community wants. These will be held on Nov. 6, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Auditorium (11 Sullivan St.). The second session will be held Dec. 5, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at a location to be announced at a later date on the Great Falls and town of Berwick Facebook pages.

Envisioning Downtown Berwick, a report developed by the town in 2014, calls for a community-centered downtown, where residents can walk and bike to stores and businesses. "We see opportunities to support a more vibrant village center by providing services in a walkable setting," Great Falls Vice President Cindy Smith said in a prepared statement. "Currently some of the important places such as the library and post office are quite a walk from the center of the village. We would like to explore bringing those things into the village."

The mill housed various manufacturing operations from 1877 to 1930, when tannery operations began. Prime Tanning closed the mill in 2008, filing for bankruptcy. In 2016 the site was cleaned up with funding from the EPA's Brownfields environmental clean up fund. Jon Smith said the site, about 10 acres in the center of the downtown, has the solid infrastructure necessary for redevelopment.

Great Falls announced it will maintain a suggestion box at 20 Sullivan St. welcoming notes, suggestions, and other input, in addition to the listening sessions.

For information, contact Julie Smith at (207) 839-2744 or jasmith@greatfallsinc.com.

New owner pledges to transform former tannery site in Berwick

pressherald.com/2019/11/04/new-owner-pledges-to-transform-former-tannery-site-in-berwick/

By J. Craig Anderson

November 4, 2019



After a false start in 2017, residents of Berwick are hopeful a new landowner can deliver on promises to transform an abandoned former tannery site at the town’s center into a vibrant mix of businesses, homes and green space.

Great Falls Construction of Gorham said it has purchased the former Prime Tanning Mill property in downtown Berwick – which had employed hundreds of area residents for decades before closing in 2008 – with the goal of redeveloping the nearly 12-acre site into a mixed-use project with commercial, residential and parkland components. The developer said it intends to seek input from community residents in a series of public meetings before finalizing a site plan for the project.

“Our goal ... is to understand the needs of the local community and work with them to formulate a plan to address those needs,” Great Falls President Jonathan Smith said. “It’s more than just building buildings.”

The ownership change comes more than two years after the previous landowner, Mark Kehaya of Florida-based The Fund of Jupiter LLC, made similar promises for the site but failed to follow through.

Thomas Wright, chairman of the Berwick Board of Selectmen, said Kehaya had good intentions but was not an experienced developer and only got involved because he had been an investor in Prime Tanning, which closed the Berwick tannery in 2008, laid off its 150 remaining workers and later filed for bankruptcy.

Located along the Salmon Falls River in western York County, Berwick is home to about 7,000 residents. The tannery opened in 1930 and became the downtown area's focal point, employing more than 600 people at its peak and building a reputation as one of the premier leather-finishing operations in New England.

After Prime Tanning shut down and the company filed for bankruptcy, the buildings on the sprawling property fell into disrepair, leaving an area of blight and inactivity in the center of town.

In 2014, Berwick struck a deal with Fund of Jupiter to take ownership of the 11.7-acre Prime Tanning property temporarily to allow the town to apply for environmental remediation grants to clean up the contaminated industrial site. Private businesses are not eligible to apply for the funds.

That same year, the town formed a community development group called Envision Berwick to focus on downtown revitalization work and plan for the cleanup at the Prime Tanning property.

The town ultimately received \$1.4 million in federal and state environmental grants, and the cleanup work is virtually completed, but there has been no redevelopment.

“Development wasn’t their primary business, so things were languishing,” Wright said about Kehaya and the Fund of Jupiter. “He talked a lot about what he wanted to do, but nothing ever came to fruition on that.”



Before closing in 2008, Prime Tanning in Berwick was considered one of the best tanneries in the country. Here, Dan Toland and Ron DeCourt grade and sort leather sides. A new owner has purchased the nearly 12 acres the plant sat on and intends to redevelop it with input from the community. *John Ewing/Staff Photographer*

Wright said the town specifically sought out Great Falls to buy the former tannery site from Kehaya after a Berwick official became aware of the work it had done on the [Station Square project](#) in Gorham Village, a 70,000-square-foot development that includes a mix of businesses and residences. The properties are managed by JCS Property Management, also based in Gorham.

“They came down and met with several of the town officials down here, and we explained what we were looking for,” Wright said. “It’s a chance to develop a brand new downtown. Not many places have an opportunity to do that.”

Smith, the president of Great Falls, said he envisions a village center with one- and two-bedroom residences perched above shops and restaurants in a vibrant, walkable area surrounded by grass and trees. Ideally, the town would relocate its post office and library to the new town center, he said.

Smith said he doesn’t know what the project will cost, but that he plans to begin assembling a planning and development team immediately. He declined to say how much his company paid for the land.

The first of two meetings to solicit residents’ comments and ideas for the project is scheduled for 6 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in Berwick’s Town Hall Auditorium at 11 Sullivan St., Smith said, adding that a second meeting is scheduled for Dec. 5.

“We’d love to be doing some construction in 2020, and ideally in the spring of 2020, but there’s a lot to do between now and then,” he said. “We are going to get moving right away.”

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The Prime Tanning Co. in Berwick in 2001. *Staff photo by Gregory Rec*