

A positive and innovate approach to land use planning



George Theborge AICP
427 Gray Rd.
Windham, Me. 04062
(207) 221-3124
www.geoplanconsulting.com
gtheborge@roadrunner.com

MEMO TO: Deborah Cabana, Gray Town Manager
FROM: George Theborge AICP
DATE: November 28, 2008
RE: CDBG Grant Pre-Applications 2009

STATUS OF 2008 CLARK BLOCK PROJECT

Last year, the Town successfully applied for and received a grant to fund revitalization work on the Clark Block, a set of three commercial buildings on Main Street adjacent to the former Fire Station. \$135,000 in CDBG funds and \$110,000 in local matching money are being used to restore the front facades of the three historic Main Street buildings, to place electrical services underground and install ornamental street lamps, a brick sidewalk, and handicapped accessibility (Figure 1).



Figure 1—Improvements funded for Clark Block in 2008 include façade upgrades, underground utilities, ornamental street lamps, brick sidewalk, and handicapped access ramps.

The Town has contracted with Builders @ Sandy Creek for completion of the façade work on 5 Main Street and 7 Main Street and the contractor has fabricated wall panels for the 5 Main Street façade that will be installed over the next two weeks, weather permitting. The contractor will also be replacing all of the second story windows on that property. During inclement weather, Mr. Pettigrew will continue work by fabricating the panels for 7 Main

Street, which is the building housing Goody's Pizza. The contract calls for all façade work on the two buildings to be completed by the end of January except for final painting that will occur in the early spring.

I am continuing discussions with Mary Colangelo, owner of 3 Main Street, and masonry contractors for removal of the paint and restoration of the brick façade on that building. The paint will be chemically removed and the mortar re-pointed as needed. Ms. Colangelo is also looking at replacement of windows and the building's front door. Once the final details of that work are nailed down, we will enter into a contract for the façade work on that property. The chemical process for removing the paint requires that the removal process also occur next spring.

Once the façade work is completed on all three buildings, work covered by the contract for construction of the public sidewalk and utility work with Southern Maine Siteworks will be done to ensure that no damage occurs to the public improvements by staging for the private façade work. The work shown in Figure 2 will be completed prior to the end of the fiscal year in June of 2009.



Figure 2—The private façade work is being coordinated with the public sidewalk and utility work and all work should be completed by late spring of 2009.

2009 CDBG PROJECT PROPOSAL 1—CLARK BLOCK MASTER PLAN

The improvements currently underway on the Main Street façades and sidewalk will dramatically improve the appearance and marketability of these commercial buildings, but their long-term economic viability is threatened by a serious lack of parking and access that results in high vacancy rates and limited private investment. The adjacent former Fire Station is even more limited by parking and septic facilities that may preclude its redevelopment for private retail or office space. The side and rear facades of the Clark Block buildings are also in dire need of repairs and improvements to prevent their continued deterioration into slum and blight conditions (Figure 3). I submitted a request for additional funding in this year's CDBG program to remove a row of tall pines that is destroying the siding and roof on the north wall of the 7 Main Street building and to replace the siding.



Figure 3—The rear and side facades of the Clark Block buildings are in significant need of repairs and improvements to protect the integrity of the buildings and to improve their marketability.

To address the long term needs for continued private investment in Clark Block, I have also been working on a conceptual master plan for improved access, parking, and wastewater disposal for the Main Street buildings, including the former Fire Station. I have been in discussions with the Scrivanos Group of North Reading, Massachusetts, owners of the Dunkin' Donuts on Shaker Road in Gray. The Dunkin' Donuts site has nearly an acre of land that is underutilized and could serve some of the needs of the Main Street properties for expanded parking and septic. The Scrivanos Group has agreed in principle to submit

with the Town an application in the next CDBG funding round to pursue the following components of a Clark Block Master Plan:

1. Construct expanded parking on the Dunkin' Donuts site and the Town Cemetery to serve the Clark Block buildings;
2. Improve vehicular access to the block by installing a left turn lane into the Dunkin' Donuts site and a driveway connection between Dunkin' Donuts and the Cemetery;
3. Upgrade the northerly drive of the Cemetery to a commercial driveway standard and install new fencing and a driveway arch along the Cemetery side;
4. Construct a new road connection from the northwesterly corner of the Cemetery out to Shaker Road; and,
5. Install new or expanded common septic systems for the Main Street buildings on the Dunkin' Donuts property and/or on Town-owned land behind the Cemetery.

The Master Plan could be implemented in three phases. Phase 1 would include installation of the parking and access improvements on the Dunkin' Donuts site and the Main Street end of the Cemetery as well as the septic system improvements. Phase 2 would upgrade the Cemetery road and install new fencing and an arch and a temporary driveway across Town property to an existing access road. Phase 3 will construct the new permanent connector road out to Shaker Road.

PROJECT PHASE 1



Figure 4—Proposed Phase 1 improvements include improved access to the Dunkin' Donuts site and expanded parking and septic for the Main Street buildings under a shared parking and septic approach.

The first phase of the proposed Master Plan will install a center left turn lane for westbound traffic on Shaker Road into the Dunkin' Donuts site. One of the motivations for Dunkin'

Donuts to participate in the public/private partnership is to improve access to their property. The installation by Maine DOT of a center median along Shaker Road has had significant negative impacts on the store to the point that the owners have been seriously exploring alternative sites to relocate to. If they continue at the Shaker Road location they will be required by the franchising corporation to upgrade the existing building, and before making that substantial investment they must be convinced that the long term prospects for the store are viable. Providing for left hand turns into the site from Shaker Road would be a major consideration in that important decision.

The Town also has a vested interest in the modification of the Shaker Road median. Vehicles heading to the Dunkin' Donuts drive-through currently use the Town driveways into Stimson Hall and the Town Offices to reverse direction on Shaker Road. Workers repaving the parking lot this summer counted 60 vehicles making the through movement to Dunkin' Donuts in one hour. This traffic creates hazardous pedestrian and parking conditions on the Town properties. Although the Town Offices will be moved to Pennell in the near future, their interim use and future marketing of the Town-owned sites will be negatively impacted by the drive through traffic.



Figure 5—The recently installed median on Shaker Road diverts Dunkin' Donuts drive-through traffic through the Town properties on the north side of the roadway.

I explored the possibility of installing a left turn lane into the Dunkin' Donuts site with traffic engineer Tom Gorrill of Gorrill-Palmer Associates this past summer, and he gave his opinion that the turn lane was workable and could be accomplished with minor widening of the roadway.

If the Town of Gray will work cooperatively to improve access to the Dunkin' Donuts site, Scrivanos Group will work with the Town to expand parking on its property and to make that expanded parking available to the Main Street buildings on a leased, shared parking basis. They will also work with the abutting land owners to upgrade the septic systems that are currently located on the Dunkin' Donuts property on easements. When the store was opened in the 1990's the restaurant's septic system was greatly expanded in anticipation of food service wastewater volumes that have never been present at the site. The existing septic system may have adequate capacity to service much of the building space on Main Street. Another alternative would be to use the 9 acres of Town land on the west end of the Cemetery for one or more common septic fields. Dunkin' Donuts has agreed to explore these options and to pursue the most cost effective outcome(s).

The fourth component of the proposed Phase 1 improvements will be to extend an existing truck turn around on the Dunkin' Donuts site through to connect to the access road along the north edge of the Gray Cemetery to provide direct vehicular access for Clark Block properties to the expanded parking. Parking will also be expanded along the Cemetery edge on both sides of the new connecting driveway from Dunkin' Donuts (Figure 6).



Figure 6—Proposed Clark Block Master Plan connects road along north edge of Gray Cemetery through to proposed expanded Dunkin' Donuts parking and adds spaces along the property line.

PROJECT PHASE 2

While left turn lanes into Dunkin' Donuts and the expanded Clark Block parking may be accomplished at the Shaker Road entrance, the modified driveway entrance will still prohibit exiting left turns onto Shaker Road, the major cause of accidents that led Maine DOT to install the median. In order to accommodate westbound traffic from the Clark Block onto Shaker Road, the Master Plan proposes upgrading the drive along the north edge of Gray Cemetery to a commercial driveway status that will convey vehicles west along the Cemetery edge to a future connection out to Shaker Road. To preserve the sanctity of the Cemetery and enhance the aesthetics of both Cemetery and drive, an ornamental fence will be installed along the Cemetery edge of the drive with low walls and an arch located at a central access drive through the Cemetery as illustrated in Figure 7 below.

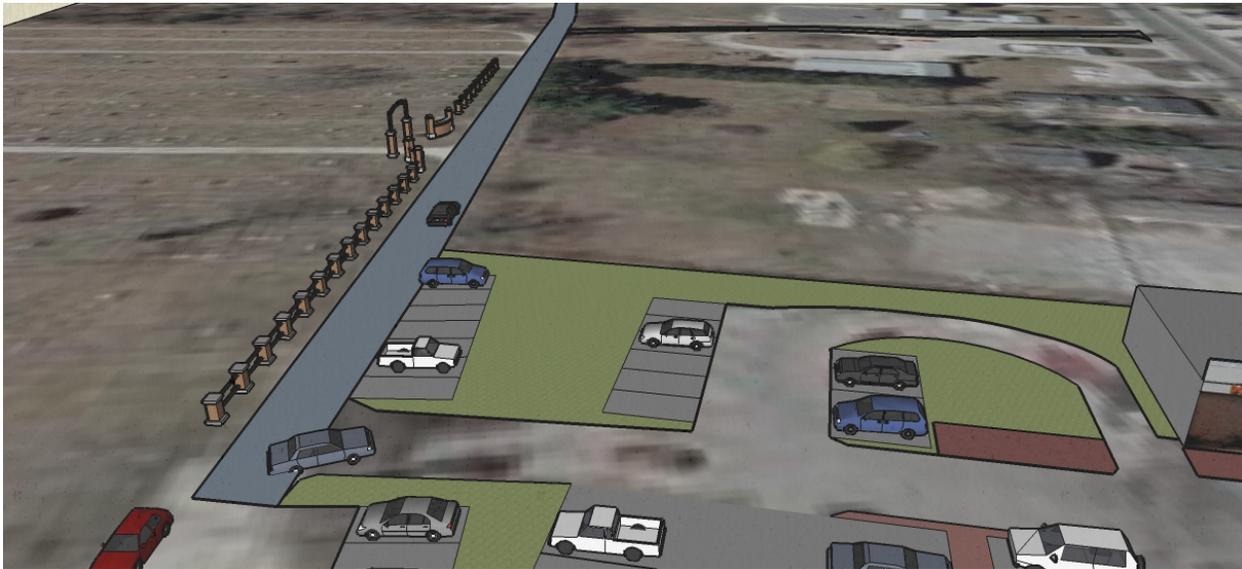


Figure 7 A—To convey westbound vehicles, the northerly Cemetery drive will be upgraded to a commercial driveway status along the Cemetery to a connection out to Shaker Road.

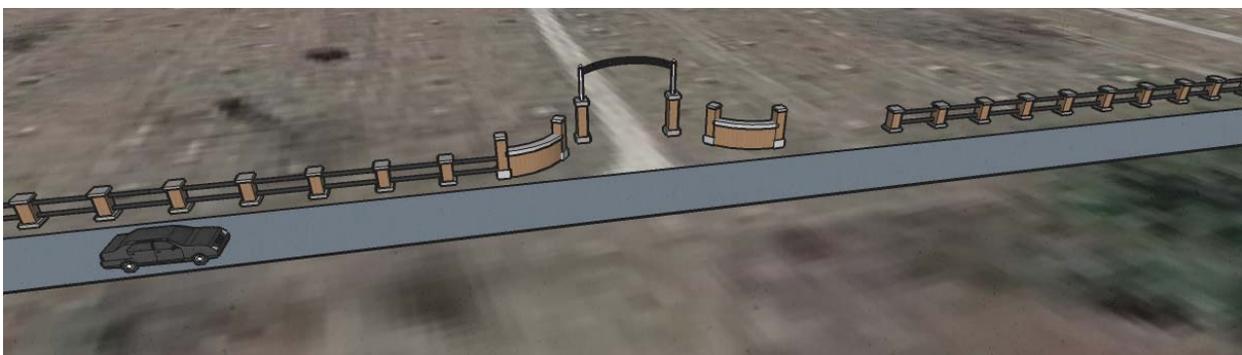


Figure 7 B—To preserve the integrity of the Cemetery and to improve aesthetics, a fence will be installed along the Cemetery/road edge and a central wall and archway feature added.

The proposed Range Road Connector along the Cemetery will also provide expanded access to the rear of other lots along Shaker Road and may provide expansion potential for those lots if they are developed or expanded for commercial purposes (Figure 8).



Figure 8—Clark Block Master Plan provides access from rear of Shaker Road properties for future expanded parking and development (Yellow). Two alternatives exist for a connection out to Shaker Road (Blue).

PROJECT PHASE 3

Two options exist to bring the proposed Range Road Connector out onto Shaker Road at the northwest corner of the Gray Cemetery. There is an existing dirt road in a 30 foot right of way that accesses a gravel pit near the Maine Turnpike and also serves Town vehicles that dump snow onto the Town-owned pit behind the Cemetery (A in Fig. 8). The Town would need to acquire expanded use rights in order to establish use this driveway as an outlet for the Range Road Connector. A second option would be to create a new right of way and access road across property owned by Gorrill-Palmer Associates (B in Fig. 8). Gorrill-Palmer Associates has agreed in principle to pursue development of this connecting road across their property subject to assurance that the road will not reduce the development potential of their property. If this new access is developed, we would discuss with the owners of the existing driveway relocation of their access along the new connector and elimination of the current access. Driveways to the Gorrill-Palmer and Pine Tree Networks buildings would be relocated from Shaker Road to the new connector.

PROPOSED FUNDING REQUEST TO CUMBERLAND COUNTY CDBG 2009

Implementation of the proposed Clark Block Master Plan will be a multi-year effort requiring multiple funding sources and grant applications. Based on anticipated funding levels

for the 2009 CDBG program, I recommend submitting a pre-application for Phases 1 and 2 of the Master Plan proposal. Although we do not have engineering estimates for the proposed construction, the Town might be able to obtain up to \$200,000 in Cumberland County CDBG funding for the project in the next grant round. To make the application competitive and to increase resources to implement the Plan, I recommend that the Town make a matching investment of \$50,000 (possibly from TIF revenues) and that it propose another \$50,000 to be contributed by the Clark Block property owners. The combined total of \$300,000 should be adequate to fund the proposed Phase 1 improvements (turn lane, parking, & septic) and could begin or make substantial progress toward completion of Phase 2 (upgrade cemetery road & install fencing, wall, & arch).

I have prepared a Pre-Application proposal contained in Appendix 1 of this report that must be submitted by December 12, 2008 if the Town of Gray desires to pursue funding in the next program round. Submittal of the Pre-Application does not commit the Town to the project. The Pre-Application is a screening process that enables the Cumberland County CDBG Manager to review possible projects to ensure that they meet CDBG guidelines before a formal application is prepared and submitted. A final decision to pursue the project would not be needed until February of 2009. Before submitting the Pre-Application, however, I felt it advisable to brief the Town Council on the opportunity and verify that they are comfortable with pursuing this initiative.

2009 CDBG PROJECT PROPOSAL 2—MAIN STREET SIDEWALK TO PENNELL

I also recommend that the Town submit a parallel Pre-Application for a second project. The current Clark Block Project will install a brick side walk from the old Fire Station up to Shaker Road. The Town is upgrading the crosswalks at the Shaker Road/Main Street intersection. The sidewalk along Main Street on the east side up to Pennell is in very poor condition and should be upgraded to accommodate anticipated pedestrian traffic along Main Street up to the new Pennell Community Center. An example of the typical sidewalk condition is shown in Figure 9 on the next page. Storm drainage is in place on that side of Main Street, but road curbing is needed to convey road drainage to the catch basins. A small esplanade could be added as is present on the west side of Main Street, and a brick sidewalk installed to match the construction along the front of the Clark Block to present a unified Gray Village design approach that could be expanded on future projects.

The length of the proposed sidewalk improvements along Main Street (734 ft.) makes this a substantial project, and based on the costs of the sidewalk improvements for the Clark Block, I anticipate that we could be looking at construction costs in the vicinity of

\$270,000. That amount could be adjusted significantly if the sidewalk in front of Pennell (184 ft.) is included in the community center project or deferred to a later date.



Figure 9—The easterly sidewalk on Shaker Road lacks curbing to direct road drainage to the catch basins, resulting in drainage problems on the road and sidewalk. The lack of proper drainage and grade change from the State highway to the sidewalk creates hazardous conditions for pedestrians using the Town facility.

I recommend that the Town submit a second CDBG Pre-Application for \$200,000 to fund the Main Street sidewalk to Pennell for several reasons. In addition to the obvious need for the sidewalk improvements, the Pennell sidewalk project presents a fall-back option in case the request for Clark Block funding does not get support from the Municipal Oversight Committee of the CDBG program. That more ambitious plan involves the participation of at least five different property owners and approval of Maine DOT for the Shaker Road median change. Getting actual legal agreements, State approvals, and private financial commitments will be even more challenging than the current Clark Block project. Despite the challenges of the Clark Block Master Plan, I do strongly recommend that the Town pursue that initiative over the Pennell sidewalk project as the Master Plan has more significant opportunities for economic development and will do more to stimulate private investment in the Village.

Another reason to pursue both applications despite the fact that Gray would not receive funding for both projects under normal conditions is that talk is currently underway in Washington D.C. about an economic stimulus package that would channel new federal funding through the Community Development Block Grant Program. If that course is pursued by the next Administration, the CDBG program will be looking for ready to build projects, and it is remotely possible that Gray could see funding of both projects in the next year or two. Appendix 2 of this report contains a Pre-Application for the Pennell sidewalk project.

APPENDIX 1

Cumberland County Community Development Block Grant Program

General Program Town of Gray Clark Block Pre-Application

2009

Pre-Applications Due -- 4:00 PM, Friday, December 12, 2008

Pre-applications may be submitted electronically or by fax:
E-mail Shapiro@cumberlandcounty.org
Fax: 871- 8292



Cumberland County
Community Development Office
142 Federal Street, Suite 102
Portland, Maine 04101
Tel. 207- 699-1905
Fax 207- 871- 8292

CUMBERLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

2009 – CDBG PROGRAM -----TOWN OF GRAY CLARK BLOCK PRE-APPLICATION

Due – December 12, 2008, 4:00PM

Community Contact Information:

Applicant Town of Gray Phone 657-3112
Address 6 Shaker Road E-Mail planning@graymaine.org
City/Town Gray, Maine

Contact Person George Theborge, Economic Development Director

Project Type:

Housing Public Facility Public Infrastructure
Public Service Economic Development

Prove a Clear, Concise Description of the Project: The scope of work should be specific identifying how CDBG funds will be used to meet a National Objective (low/moderate income persons; eliminating slum/blight conditions)

The 2008 CDBG program included a grant to the Town of Gray for downtown revitalization. \$135,000 in CDBG funds and \$110,000 in local matching money was used to restore the front facades of three historic Main Street buildings, to place electrical services underground and install ornamental street lamps, a brick sidewalk, and handicapped accessibility. These improvements will dramatically improve the appearance and marketability of these commercial buildings, but long term economic viability is threatened by a serious lack of parking and access that results in high vacancy rates and limited private investment. The adjacent former Fire Station is even more limited by parking and septic facilities that preclude its redevelopment for private retail or office space. Actions are needed to prevent slum and blight conditions and to create employment opportunities for low/moderate income persons living in the Gray Village.

To address these long term needs, the Town of Gray has developed a master plan for improved access, parking, and wastewater disposal working in partnership with abutting property owners. The master plan will be implemented over three to five years and will accomplish the following improvements:

1. Construct expanded parking on the Dunkin' Donuts site and the Town Cemetery to serve the Clark Block buildings;
2. Improve vehicular access to the block by installing a left turn lane into the Dunkin' Donuts site and a driveway connection between Dunkin' Donuts and the Cemetery;
3. Upgrade the northerly drive of the Cemetery to a commercial driveway standard and install new fencing and driveway arches along the Cemetery side;
4. Construct a new road connection from the northwesterly corner of the Cemetery out to Shaker Road; and,
5. Install new or expanded common septic systems for the Main Street buildings on the Dunkin' Donuts property and/or on Town-owned land behind the Cemetery.

The master plan will be implemented in three phases. Phase 1 will include installation of the parking and access improvements on the Dunkin' Donuts site and the Main Street end of the Cemetery as well as the septic system improvements. Phase 2 will upgrade the Cemetery road and install new fencing and arches and a temporary driveway across Town property to an existing access road. Phase 3 will construct the new permanent connector road out to Shaker Road.

Estimated Phase 1 & 2 Project Cost: \$ 300,000 Estimated CDBG Request: \$ 200,000

APPENDIX 2

Cumberland County Community Development Block Grant Program

General Program Town of Gray Pennell Sidewalk Pre-Application 2009

Pre-Applications Due -- 4:00 PM, Friday, December 12, 2008

Pre-applications may be submitted electronically or by fax:
E-mail Shapiro@cumberlandcounty.org
Fax: 871- 8292

Cumberland County
Community Development Office
142 Federal Street, Suite 102
Portland, Maine 04101
Tel. 207- 699-1905
Fax 207- 871- 8292



CUMBERLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

2009 – CDBG PROGRAM ---TOWN OF GRAY PENNELL SIDEWALK PRE-APPLICATION

Due – December 12, 2008, 4:00PM

Community Contact Information:

Applicant Town of Gray Phone 657-3112

Address 6 Shaker Road E-Mail planning@graymaine.org

City/Town Gray, Maine

Contact Person George Theborge, Economic Development Director

Project Type:

Housing Public Facility Public Infrastructure

Public Service Economic Development

Prove a Clear, Concise Description of the Project: The scope of work should be specific identifying how CDBG funds will be used to meet a National Objective (low/moderate income persons; eliminating slum/blight conditions)

The Town of Gray has been implementing a downtown revitalization plan following the 2005 Comprehensive Plan and the 2006 Gray Village Master Plan. In 2008, the Town received \$135,000 in CDBG funding through Cumberland County and added another \$110,000 in local funding to revitalize the streetscape of the historic Clark Block on Main Street. That money was used to upgrade the facades of three commercial buildings, to place electrical service lines underground, to install ornamental street lights, add handicapped accessibility ramps to the store fronts, and build a brick sidewalk. In addition to the Clark Block improvements, the Town is also redoing cross walks at the Shaker Rd. /Main St. Intersection.

In November of 2008, Gray voters approved a bond issue to invest \$2.4 million to redevelop the historic Pennell Institute as a new Town Hall and community center. This investment by the community will stimulate additional redevelopment in the Village and will attract pedestrian traffic in the Main Street corridor. The sidewalk on the east side of Main Street is in a state of serious disrepair due to the lack of curbing to conduct road drainage to the catch basins of the storm drains. Stormwater from the street floods over the sidewalk in major storm events and has undermined the sidewalk base. The sidewalk is at road grade level next to the major State highway creating an additional hazard to pedestrians.

The Pennell Sidewalk project will rebuild the sidewalk along the east side of Main Street from the Brown St. /Main St. intersection up to Pennell Institute to connect the Clark Block historic revitalization with the Pennell Institute both physically and visually. New curbing will be installed along the roadway and an esplanade and brick sidewalk will be added that will serve low and moderate income households in Gray Village.

Estimated Project Cost: \$ 250,000 Estimated CDBG Request: \$ 200,000