



GUILFORD PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

Newsletter

Fall 2006

GPA gains significant funding from area foundation sources

The Guilford Preservation Alliance has recently received two significant grants from area funders. The first, awarded in May by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, is a Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant. This grant is helping the GPA build capacity; in particular by creating a part-time executive director position. The second grant, awarded in late October, is from the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven. This grant is aimed at our efforts to preserve the historic train station buildings in the Town Center South area.

Through the generosity of these funders, the GPA is pleased to announce the promotion of Ann Hollingsworth Weeden to the Executive Director position. Ms. Weeden, a long-time Guilford resident, has served for over a year as the GPA



ANN WEEDEN AND HER TWO SONS, SAM (7) AND ALEC (9)
PHOTO BY ELLEN EBERT

Administrative Assistant. She has been a great support for me and my colleagues on the board. In this new role, she will be more directly involved with preservation projects,

advocacy, and implementing the GPA strategic plan. We are delighted to have her on board and are grateful to the CT Trust for this grant. Ann is second generation GPA; her father, Al Hollingsworth, served as GPA president in the '80s. Ms. Weeden lives on historic Fair Street with her husband, Peter, and their sons, Alec and Sam.

In addition, the campaign to "Save the Guilford Depot" has received a real boost. The Community Foundation of Greater New Haven has awarded the GPA a grant for \$20,000 to help in its efforts to stabilize, restore and revitalize the historic train station buildings. This ongoing project has the potential to be the catalyst for positive change in the Town Center South area. The membership of the GPA has already raised \$30,000 toward this project. With this grant, the GPA is in a position to capitalize on the investment the members have made and begin the stabilization of the water tower. It is the hope of the GPA board to seek further grant assistance with this project, eventually restoring and revitalizing both the water tower and engine house.

Coming on the heels of the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism grant to fund the Village Walkway feasibility study, these two new grants demonstrate the success the GPA has had in communicating its vision and results to area funders. The completion of a strategic plan and the building of organizational capacity helped convince funders we are on the right path, with a serious mission. The grants demonstrate the promise for historic preservation activities and education on the horizon for the GPA. It is exciting to have the support of larger organizations as we endeavor to undertake major projects in Guilford.

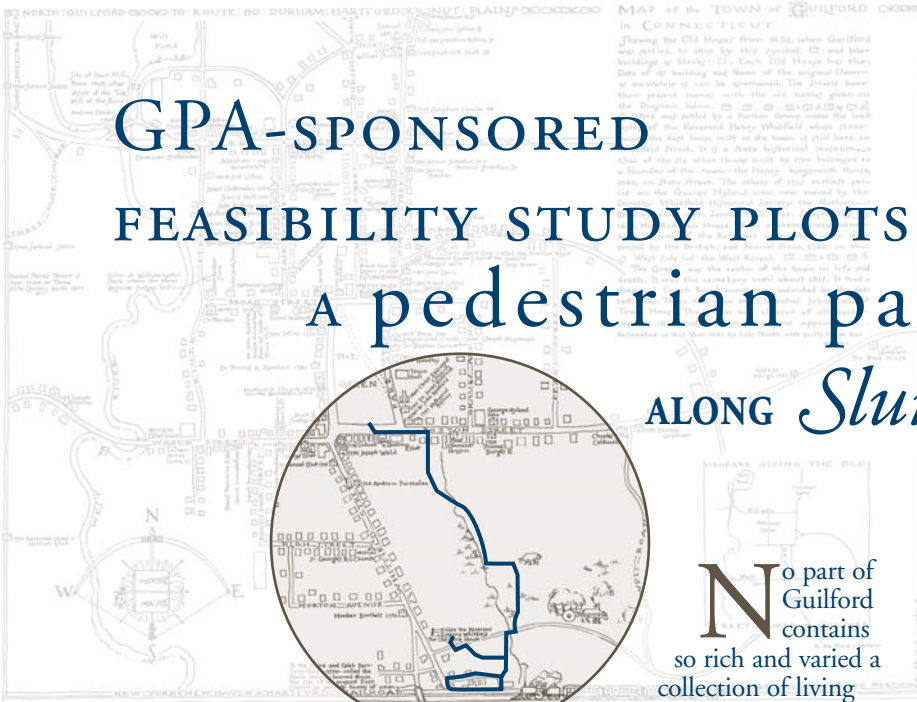
— Preston Maynard

GPA Traffic-Calming Subcommittee competes with other interest groups

With the population of the United States piercing the 300 million mark in October of this year and expected to cross 400 million by mid-century, planners in towns like Guilford have plenty of grist for their mills. Further, the East and West coasts and particularly, areas within the catchments of large cities on the coasts, such as New York, are expected to experience more accelerating trends. This may increasingly pit drivers against a growing volume of bicyclists and walkers. While the Guilford Preservation Alliance can, and has, taken credit for stimulating action on planning for the future of the town center (see our Summer Newsletter: TCS—A Voyage of Discovery), the Alliance has been a late comer to the community's effort to advocate for the lowly pedestrian. But as Town Engineer Jim Portley, the czar of traffic calming in Guilford, says of that effort, "You have to strike a balance" among competing interests, so the GPA joined the competition.

As the Town itself focused on managing growth in the village proper, our Village Center Committee (see centerfold article in this issue), seeking to coordinate efforts with those of the Town, set up a Traffic Calming Subcommittee to secure a place at the conference table. The subcommittee in 2005 picked up the banner of a pedestrian-friendly town center that had been raised at the GPA's 2004 brain-storming charrette by some 100 local participants, and ran with it. We shortly met with Jim Portley and were soon won over to three initiatives already undertaken by the Town, namely construction of sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks and traffic islands respectively. *continued on page 4*

GPA-SPONSORED FEASIBILITY STUDY PLOTS A pedestrian path ALONG *Sluice Creek*



THE BARN OF ROLLWOOD FARM/V

No part of Guilford contains so rich and varied a collection of living

monuments to the town's history as the neighborhood from the Town Green to the train station and between Sluice Creek and Whitfield Street on the east and west side respectively. The area embraces the town center, the splendid parade of 19th-century residences on Whitfield Street, the 1639 Henry Whitfield State Museum, the historic Rollwood Farm (otherwise known as the Woodruff Property) and the two landmark 19th-century railroad buildings on the north side of the tracks east of the town's new rail commuter depot. The properties bordering Sluice Creek, by contrast,

include an expanse of meadowland in the northeast corner of the Rollwood Farm, the beautiful lawn maintained by the Guilford Agricultural Society on its

sweeping Fair Grounds, the varied wetlands and water course of Sluice Creek itself, the remnant of the Lombard family's pasture behind the houses on the south side of Boston Street and, finally, the Hyland House and Thomas Griswold Museum just a few paces east of the Creek on Boston Street. A pedestrian path

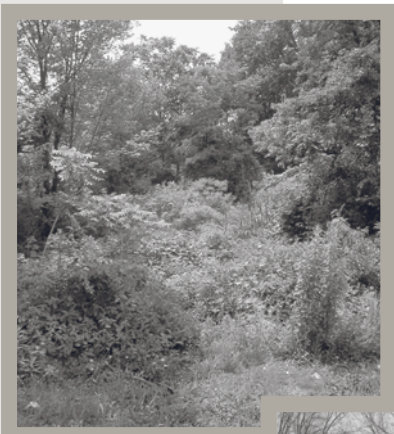
through this wonderland, in short, would offer both an historic architectural feast and a rare taste of nature in the very center of the village.

A PEDESTRIAN PATH THROUGH THIS WONDERLAND WOULD OFFER BOTH AN HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL FEAST AND A RARE TASTE OF NATURE IN THE VERY CENTER OF THE VILLAGE.

That so much open space escaped residential development in the very heart of town was a curiosity that became apparent several years ago when the Rollwood Farm was put up for sale and threatened with subdivision. As our Summer Newsletter pointed out, the Guilford Preservation Alliance and other interested groups organized to save the Farm as open space and the Town in 2003 stepped in and purchased the tract.

In 2004 the Town decided to establish a select committee to study the future needs of the so-called Town Center South neighborhood and to propose means to address them. The GPA's own Town Center South Committee, renamed the Village Center Committee to avoid confusion with the official body, thereupon decided to lower its voice and let the official body proceed under its mandate to develop a plan for future development between the Green and Town Dock.

However, we did not disband. Instead, seeking a project that would sustain our momentum without interfering with the work of the Town's committee, we fastened on the idea of just such a pedestrian path connecting the town center and the train station. The idea had emerged at the GPA's 2004 brainstorming charrette, at which some 100 self-selected town planners had simultaneously recommended that such a link



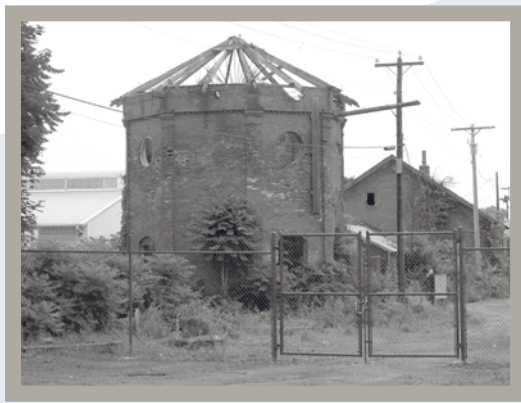
ABOVE: SLUICE CREEK WETLAND AREA
RIGHT: SLUICE CREEK AT THE CULVERT WHICH RUNS UNDER STONE HOUSE LANE



THE SLUICE CREEK WETLAND HAS BECOME OVERGROWN WITH EXOTIC NON-NATIVE, INVASIVE PLANTS.



WOODRUFF PROPERTY



THE HISTORIC WATER TOWER AND ENGINE HOUSE AT THE TRAIN DEPOT



THE HENRY WHITFIELD HOUSE

be part of the overall design for the future of the area. After testing the response of the TCS Committee through our representative on that committee and finding no opposition, we went to work.

Our first step was to seek the help of knowledgeable people. This included members of the Woodruff Farm Committee—most importantly, Harvey Smith, past Selectman—which had been established by the Town in 2003 to determine the best use for that property. We also sought advice from the Town itself and found an enthusiastic partner in the Town’s extraordinarily dedicated environmental planner, Leslie Kane. Next, we partnered with the Town for a Certified Local Government grant from the Historic Preservation and Museum Division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. We were awarded \$8,000, with matching funds to be provided by us and the Town equally. The Town provided “in kind” services. We provided both funding and “in kind” services. We then gathered at the Library with neighborhood property owners to ensure that our work would be entirely inclusive and transparent. And, finally, we began our feasibility study work.

First, we began our search for a design firm, one that could address the extraordinary character of this near-wilderness in the middle of town. As it

happened, one of the contestants combined expertise in landscape architecture and environmental science—the collaborating team of Landscape Elements LLC of Pawcatuck Connecticut, and Applied Bio-Systems Inc. of West Kingston, Rhode Island, headed by Elena M. Pascarella and Linda A. Steere respectively. Their initial presentation to our committee upended the competition and they and we, joined by Leslie Kane, began the search for a feasible plan.

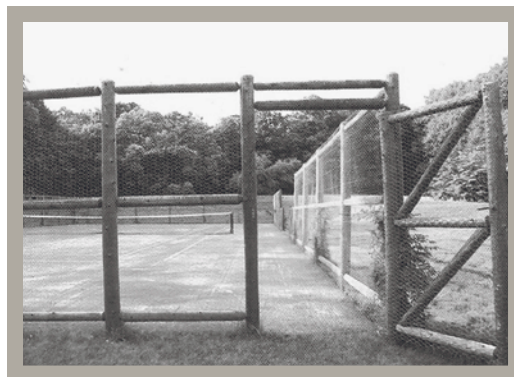
The result, after a half-year of study and projection, was presented to the public this past October 18th at a Community Center forum and contained in a handsome 32-page, four-color brochure, from which the accompanying illustrations are drawn. What exactly the eventual footpath will look like is anyone’s guess, but the elements of a stunningly beautiful in-town recreational resource are already in sight.

– Corinne McManemin



TOP: ARIAL SKETCH OF BOSTON STREET SHOWING WALKWAY ROUTE ALONG SIDEWALKS
BOTTOM: CURRENT VIEW DOWN BOSTON STREET

The full brochure may be viewed on our web site



FAR LEFT: THE GUILFORD FAIRGROUNDS

LEFT: RUSTIC WOODEN POST AND RAIL FENCING WITH WIRE MESH OR CHICKEN WIRE FABRIC CAN PROVIDE SECURITY FOR OWNERS OF PROPERTY ABUTTING THE WALKWAY WHILE ALLOWING THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE AREA TO BE VIEWED.



REMINDERS

- DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.
- FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT GPA ACTIVITIES CONSULT OUR WEB SITE AT:
www.guilfordpreservation.org

Traffic-Calming

The first of these initiatives had already borne fruit in the ongoing construction of a sidewalk on the east side of River Street between Broad Street and Route 1. Theoretically, sidewalks serve to define town centers, giving increased coherence to urban precincts as well as attracting pedestrians, who discourage automobile speeding on accompanying streets. The River Street project has demonstrably increased pedestrian traffic there, although it remains to be seen what impact it is having on the speed of vehicular traffic. Portley hopes to extend the sidewalk southward to Water Street.

At the same time, urged by the GPA subcommittee, the Town decided, after lengthy discussion, to build a pedestrian crosswalk across River Street at its intersection with Broad, effectively extending the north sidewalk on Broad Street into the Guilford Land Trust's property along the West River. This should encourage visitors to cross this increasingly fast moving street and enjoy this park, which is a true jewel of the village district.

In the meantime, with our enthusiastic support and that of a number of other

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organizations, Portley has overseen the design and prospective placement of seventeen pedestrian crosswalks around the Town Green. If all goes according to plan, the crosswalks will be in place by next



spring. Their design will resemble that of the crosswalk recently placed on Whitfield Street just south of the train tracks.

Finally, work on the third initiative, traffic islands, has already progressed to a point where mixed feedback can be heard—and attended to. As Portley concedes, some of the islands, especially those in rural areas,

have not worked out as anticipated and, accordingly, may be removed. But he defends the new island placed at the new crosswalk on Whitfield Street (photo at left.) That island was designed – neighbors say well designed – to discourage speeding in an increasingly residential neighborhood and to facilitate pedestrian crossing of Whitfield Street. However, just a few months after construction, it has been the scene of several minor traffic accidents despite signs at the approach and on the island itself. Undeterred, Portley points out that the first three accidents, according to the police, involved driving while under the influence and thus tend to support the case for some kind of traffic-calming intervention at that location. Still, as with other islands recently placed in town, he is studying this particular one's effectiveness and contemplating "tweaking" it through lighting or road-surface markings to alert drivers to its presence. He is specifically not planning to erect new street signs. Says Portley, signage, especially in the village proper, has already passed the point of diminishing returns.

– Patrick Smith