

Empire State Development News

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ESD ANNOUNCES RESTORATION PROJECT AT ERIE COUNTY CULTURAL AND ARTS DESTINATION

Roycroft Campus Corporation to Reconstruct Former Power House

Empire State Development today announced plans for the Roycroft Campus Corporation (RCC) to reconstruct and restore the historic Power House at the East Aurora-based Arts and Crafts cultural campus. The Roycroft complex will retain 96 full-time positions and RCC pledges to create an additional 12 full-time jobs in Western New York. The Campus was home to a significant cultural movement that influenced the nation and became a destination for master craftsmen and a gathering place of notable artists, authors, philosophers and powerbrokers.

"The historic Roycroft campus brings tourists and additional revenue to the region," said Governor David A. Paterson. "The campus housed a cultural movement that inspired the nation and continues to influence craftsmanship and philosophy today. As tourism is one of New York State's most important industries, I am pleased to support the continued restoration and programming at this designated National Historic Landmark."

Empire State Development will provide a \$1.5 million capital grant toward the reconstruction and restoration project. For this undertaking to move forward, RCC must match the grant by raising \$1.5 million, or half of the estimated \$3 million cost. The matching contribution may be obtained through any potential sources of philanthropic, public and private funds. The RCC has already raised \$500,000 towards the matching contribution.

The RCC recently took ownership of the former Power House with the assistance of The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation. The Power House, which was almost totally destroyed by a serious fire in 1997 and decay from harsh winters, will undergo a complete reconstruction. The project began with the creation of a historic structure report to accurately document the original architectural details of the building. Last year selective demolition was performed to prepare the site for reconstruction. Original building material has been salvaged and stored to be reincorporated into the structure. The next phase of the project will begin next spring with the historically accurate reconstruction of the Power House.

Once complete the Power House will house the RCC's visitor center, a gift shop, administrative offices, classroom space and flexible meeting and event space that will assist RCC with its fundraising activities. The re-building of the Power House will also provide critical space for artisan demonstrations and classes, and includes the redevelopment and improvement of the existing parking lot.

Doug Swift, President of the Roycroft Campus Corporation (RCC) said: "We are very appreciative of the strong financial support that the RCC has received from Governor Paterson and Empire State Development. These crucial state funds will greatly enhance the RCC's goals of restoring the historic Roycroft Campus as a working community of artisans allowing New Yorkers to celebrate the distinctive architecture, design and craftsmanship of this internationally renowned Arts and Crafts Movement. Over the past quarter century, the Arts & Crafts revival has drawn increasing numbers of visitors to various historic and cultural locations across the country. A thriving and active Roycroft Campus, in the historically rich Buffalo Niagara region, will become a year-round national center for Arts and Crafts education, experiences and celebration."

With its robust community leadership through its board of directors, as well as impressive fundraising track record, RCC presented itself as a viable candidate to secure support from ESD. Additionally, these factors suggested a very strong likelihood of RCC's ability to secure the balance of the needed funds to complete the Power House project.

Senator Dale M. Volker said: "The historical architectural, design and artistic expression located at the Roycroft Campus is of national and international significance. In order to ensure that the structural and historical integrity remains intact, the need for restorations is of the utmost importance. These state financial resources will provide the needed funding to complement additional revenue sources in a collaborative effort to protect and preserve this treasure located in western New York. Governor Paterson understands that public-private partnerships work, and I appreciate his commitment to our region's historical assets."

Legislator John Mills said: "With the Governor recently signing the Scenic Byway law into effect, which includes beautiful East Aurora, the Roycroft Campus and Inn will become even more of a world destination. It is imperative that we continue to support the next phase of reconstruction, which will be the Power House. As additional segments of this magnificent landmark are restored, it will become more and more a place of great interest to historians and tourists alike."

Town of Aurora Supervisor Dwight D. Krieger said: "At times, it may have seemed like a long and arduous journey for the RCC to reach its goal of reconstructing the Power House. But finally we are there. The strong, dedicated leadership of the RCC combined with these Empire State Development funds will make the reconstruction a reality. These state funds will allow the RCC to take another step forward in restoring the Roycroft Campus as a cultural and arts destination. Thank you to all who have contributed so much to this end. The Town of Aurora salutes you."

Village of East Aurora Mayor Clark Crook said: "The Roycroft Campus is no longer just an East Aurora treasure or even a Western New York treasure but today a National treasure. Our Village will continue to make it's stewardship of the Roycroft Campus a priority insuring a return on this generous investment."

Author, lecturer and business entrepreneur Elbert Hubbard developed the Roycroft Campus in 1897 in East Aurora, New York. Modeled after the English Arts and Crafts Movement, Hubbard developed and promoted a "self-contained community," which supported hundreds of craftspeople.

The Roycroft is an identified destination site with the local Frank Lloyd Wright projects, the Darwin Martin House Complex and the Graycliff Estates, along with the Albright Knox Art Museum, and the Chautauqua Institution where Elbert Hubbard vacationed. In just the past four years, these destinations showed a significant increase in both visitors and tourists with the Graycliff up 20 percent and the Darwin Martin House up 100 percent.

Empire State Development is New York's chief economic development agency, encompassing business, workforce and community development. ESD also oversees the marketing of "I LOVE NY," the State's iconic tourism brand. For more information, visit www.nylovesbiz.com.

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