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## INDIVIDUALS FROM ACROSS THE STATE TOUR FORT PLAIN

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*Joshua Thomas*

*During Friday's tour of the village, Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank Executive Director Tolga Morawski outlines preliminary plans for the revitalization of East State Street.*

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By JOSHUA THOMAS  
C-S-E Editor

FORT PLAIN — Friday afternoon, representatives from state, county and local boards, agencies and organizations toured several locations in the village, learning about upcoming projects, repairs and plans.

The day was all about making connections, said Fort Plain Mayor Thomas Quackenbush, noting that the gathering was a huge success in that respect. He stated of the meeting, which was spearheaded by the Governor's Office of Regional Affairs, "I think we did an excellent job of raising awareness of the needs of Fort Plain."

He explained, "the village is limited financially, but not limited in the way we can make connections."

Continued Quackenbush, "To have that many people" — the day's attendance totaling between 25 and 30, including local land and business owners, and officials from the town, village, school district and neighboring municipalities — "represented from so many different agencies from across the state, as well as the county, is remarkable in itself."

One of the day's main goals was to make the Department of Economic Conservation aware of ongoing concerns surrounding the Otsquago Creek, Quackenbush stating, "We're trying to get some help mitigating future problems." Since the meeting, Quackenbush has been in touch with DEC representatives and Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara's office, requesting information about the village's potential to obtain state funding aimed at emergency mitigation.

Representatives of the State Historic Preservation Office also attended Friday's tour, visiting the former Masonic Temple on Mohawk Street, the owner of which is interested in possibly utilizing historical credits in transforming the building into senior housing.

SHPO representatives also visited Diefendorf Hall, at 47 Main St., being made aware of significant rehabilitation work that must take place at the building — including the installation of a heating system and restoration of a wall — before the space's occupants, The Friends of Fort Plain, can reconstruct the Erie Canal store facade they were gifted from the New York State Museum last year.

Also discussed was the overall potential for revitalization of the village's downtown business district, encompassing

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Canal and Main streets.

Representatives from the Empire State Development Agency toured the NY Bake Factory, LLC, viewing the progress that's been made at the facility and connecting with the business' owner.

The first location visited on Friday's tour was Erie Canal Lock 32, located on private property at the end of East State Street.

Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank representatives provided a drawing of a tentative plan for the land surrounding the still-standing stone locks, outlining the capacity for the expansive area to house parks, active spaces and an Erie Canal-focused informational center.



Joshua Thomas

Representatives from state, county and local boards, agencies and organizations, officials, land and business owners walk East State Street Friday, hearing plans for its potential future use.

GMVLB Executive Director Tolga Morawski outlined potential future plans for East State Street, which runs parallel to Hancock Street, noting that five of the eight flood-hit homes located there (some constructed in the 19th century) are in foreclosure. The GMVLB, he said, is looking to acquire and rehabilitate them, the plan also facilitating flood mitigation measures.

Morawski said the opportunity exists, "to take what we see as one of the hardest hit areas, economically, in the village and turn it into something that's really an attraction for younger people moving in."

Stated Quackenbush of the goals for East State Street, "I think it's a great plan," adding of the drawing, created by David J. Dardzinski, of Preconstruction Consulting, LLC

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— which included camping sites, a fishing area, and a bird sanctuary, all accessible from the bike path — “we at least have something to look to,” in creating a blueprint for the area’s future.

“We don’t know where it’ll go,” Quackenbush concluded of the plans, still in the preliminary stages, “but we know we want to continue to move Fort Plain along.”



Joshua Thomas

David J. Dardzinski, of Preconstruction Consulting, LLC, describes the various potential future uses of land along East State Street.

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Webmaster

The Courier Standard Enterprise - newspaper