

TRAVERSE CITY STATE HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT, Traverse City, MI

The Minervini Group, Redevelopers

The Traverse City State Hospital Site (Northern Michigan Asylum) is comprised of 60 buildings on 480 acres of steep wooded slopes, rolling meadows and wetlands surrounding a central campus, located on the southwestern perimeter of Traverse City. At the midpoint of the complex is Building 50, which dominates the hospital landscape with 386,740 square feet, rising to a height of three stories.



The Traverse City State Hospital is one of the state's best surviving examples of the Kirkbride approach to mental health. The original asylum building, designed by Gordon W. Lloyd of Detroit in 1885, documents the approach to psychiatry through architecture which was developed by Dr. Thomas Story

Kirkbride. Kirkbride theorized that patients who were allowed to live in beautiful and sanitary conditions could be cured at a higher rate. Protected from the negative influence of the society, their physical isolation was part of the therapy. E.H. VanDeusen furnished the renowned landscape plans. By 1910 the institution contained fourteen cottages, the north and south infirmaries, and a series of additions to the original central structure.

The Traverse City Regional Psychiatric Hospital, organized in 1881, opened in 1885 with 43 residents. After 1885, as the population of the "asylum" continued to grow, it became necessary to construct "cottages" and other buildings. Dr. James Decker Munson was the facility's medical superintendent for its first 39 years. By 1959 the facility had 1.4 million square feet of floor space, housing 2956 residents. The institution's farms and its processing and manufacturing facilities covered over 1000 acres and made it nearly self-sufficient.

Starting in 1901, Dr. Munson, who appreciated botany and medi-



GTCRC #5, Building 50 with white fences (painting)

cine, brought trees from his travels around the world for landscaping. For four decades, Dr. Munson provided an environment where at one time, thousands of patients lived in restful, tranquil surroundings. Believing in the benefit of personal relationships and the dignity of the human being, he encouraged patients to feel useful by helping with the farm and caring for the ground. He built up a herd of dairy cows, which won international recognition, and planted an arboretum. Farm operations were discontinued in 1957 due to the rising costs of labor.

Over the years, with changes in thinking about institutionalizing patients and modern medication, the asylum was rendered obsolete. Local concerns about the future of the complex led to the hospital's 1978 listing in the National Register of Historic Places. When the State closed the Traverse City State Hospital in 1989, all buildings were to be demolished and the land sold to the highest bidder. The community started a grass-roots effort to stop the demolition.

In 1991, the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield formed the Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation (GTCRC) to oversee the redevelopment of the former hospital site, renaming the property "Grand Traverse Commons." In 1993 the State of Michigan transferred (with historic covenants) approximately 480 acres of land and vacant buildings to the GTCRC, who then defined zoning rules to attract a developer who would preserve most of the visual character and environmentally sensitive areas of the site. The City and Township also received a portion of the 480 acres to be dedicated as public parkland, never to be developed.

In 1995 the first developer went bankrupt and left the Grand Traverse Commons in a deadlock. It was concluded that the GTCRC overestimated the private sector's capacity to finance the commons and did not provide the adequate incentives. Zoning rules, while representing the community's vision, failed to integrate potential developer's vision.



The site was designated as a Planned Redevelopment District (PRD) for local zoning purposes, and within that PRD is broken out further into sub-categories such as Medical Campus, Core Campus (mixed use), Community Services, Wetlands, and Recreational.

In 2001 The Minervini group proposed a Redevelopment Agreement for "Sub-Area 2" was approved by a vote of the GTCRC. In 2002 The Minervini group formally acquired Sub-Area 2. Their plan calls for rehabilitating the blighted, historic buildings to create a walkable mixed-use, village-type environment with a town square at its center. Characteristics include:

- > Self-contained amenities that will welcome surrounding neighborhoods, providing a balanced range of activities, (shopping, workplaces, schooling, recreation and dwelling)
- > A prominent central plaza with a fountain, benches, and public art, opening to the historic arboretum in front of Building 50
- > A full range of options in housing and commerce
- > A variety of business types
- > Walkways and paths that encourage pedestrian traffic
- > Preservation of the Commons'



The Village is located in Sub-Area 2 (olive and brown buildings)



- public, open spaces
- > Mass transit-friendly design
- > Special public-oriented buildings and spaces that foster human interaction and a sense of community
- > In-fill of the community rather than urban sprawl
- > Grand Traverse Pavilions — new health care and human services complex on the north end of the Commons (long-term skilled nursing care, Alzheimer's care units, a sub-acute care unit, respite care residences, an intergenerational community center)
- > New parking structure
- > Redevelopment of Building 50 in phases, with commercial tenants on the lower floors, multi-purpose professional offices on the middle floor, and a variety of residential spaces on the upper floors.
- > Preservation of the lawn and grounds as public park land
- > New Medical Campus Drive - access to west side

To date, all residential condominium and over 75% of the commercial space have been reserved .

New Funding:

- > April 17, 2003: CIS Energy Office \$24,000 grant will affect The Village at the Grand Traverse Commons' 24 buildings totaling 750,000 square feet for energy efficient retrofits and redevelopment.
- > Sept. 24, 2003: \$1 million Brownfield Redevelopment Grant to Grand Traverse County. Will cover environmental response activities required to redevelop the former hospital area. The Minervini Group will redevelop the property into a mixed-use commercial and residential development. This new development will result in private investment of \$73 million. Much of the grant will be used for lead paint and asbestos-contaminated waste removal in Building 50 and to address contaminated soil and remove old underground storage tanks, making the site safe and usable for residential and commercial development.
- > Partial federal award to do a tree survey and target which trees need care. Another grant will be applied for to continue the work. The Friendly Garden Club is helping to organize and coordinate volunteer effort.



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