

STAR OF HOPE FOUNDATION

Vinalhaven's Historic Landmark Re-Emerging, Following Major Stabilization Effort

Vinalhaven, ME After almost 12 months of work by a team of architects, engineers, contractors, and historic preservationists, the Star of Hope building on Vinalhaven's Main Street is reappearing. This first phase of a long-term project has been to save and stabilize the building which was in a precarious state.

This historic landmark, prominent in downtown Vinalhaven, was once the Odd Fellows Hall. In the 1970s the building became the home of American Pop Artist Robert Indiana. Indiana, who died in 2018, left his estate to the Star of Hope Foundation. In September 2019, the Star of Hope Foundation obtained Indiana's real estate holdings, allowing work to begin stabilizing the Star of Hope building.

The towering 3-story structure has been covered in scaffolding and wrapped in weather-resistant material. The removal of the staging will begin this week on the south side of the building and will be completely removed over the coming weeks. Because the original building had been enlarged to incorporate a third floor, significant re-engineering of the structure has been necessary for its long-term integrity. The interior building support structure has essentially been rebuilt. Work has included repair to the mansard roof, significant leaks and rotted sills. In addition, restoration of the windows and doors has been underway, as well as replacement of the exterior siding.

Larry Sterrs, Chairman of the Star of Hope Foundation, has led the effort to stabilize the landmark. "This effort has been a huge undertaking, with a number of major constraints along the way. The fact is, there were times when we wondered if the building could remain standing. But kudos to our team of experts who figured out a path forward and whose work has been meticulous, following historic preservation guidelines, and working safely through a pandemic."

Kris Davidson, board member of the Star of Hope Foundation, and a life-long Vinalhaven resident, commented: "This is a very exciting moment for our community as we unveil this important structure. I am excited a piece of Vinalhaven's history is being preserved while we prepare and plan for the future. The building was in rough shape but now, with the building stabilized, we can move ahead to establish something that promotes arts education and fulfills the mission of the Star of Hope Foundation."

The mission of the Star of Hope Foundation is to promote education of the visual arts through various means including exhibitions, a museum, artist-in-residence programs and other outreach endeavors.

While the construction has been underway, the Foundation's board has focused on the data collected during a community engagement phase, which included community meetings and a survey. Ideas expressed during the process are guiding the Board in its strategic planning process and the Board continues to consider the best path forward. Sterrs said, "We have visited a number of artist residencies in Maine to see how others operate educational programs, and we have engaged in a series of facilitated workshops to fully understand how artist-endowed foundations manage art collections, arts programming and community involvement." The strategic planning process will ultimately guide how the Star of Hope building will be renovated. "Now that we have a building that can remain standing, it is important that the space inside be designed in such a way that it provides the opportunity for the Foundation to meet its mission and to collaborate with the community," Sterrs explained.

Sterrs also commented on an effort to document the details of the building's interior. "People have asked, and so we plan to share a slide show on the Foundation's website sometime in September. This way the community can see the inside of the building and the interesting architectural elements." With the exception of the architects, engineers and construction crew, no one has been able to enter the building due to safety protocols.

The timeline to renovate the interior space will be determined by the final plan developed by the Board. Sterrs said, "I expect our planning effort to go through the winter of 2021 and then we can begin to meet with architects and contractors to determine when this next phase can take place. In the meantime, the building is reestablishing its position as an historic gem on Vinalhaven's Main Street."

For more information about the Star of Hope Foundation, the public is invited to visit the website: www.starofhopefoundation.org