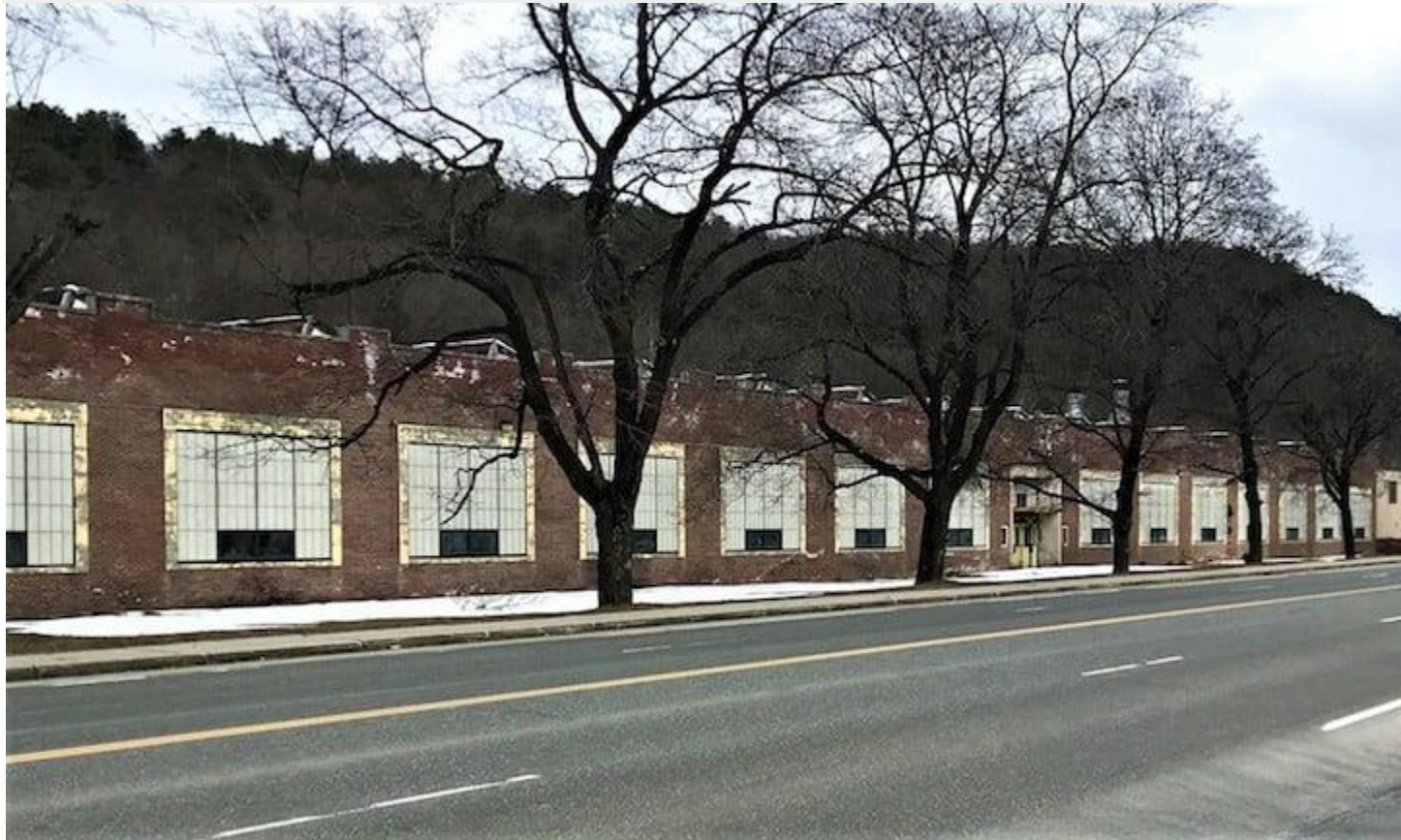


Historic tie to Springfield's affluent past to be demolished

BY JO ROBBINS, The Shopper

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J&L Plant I for demolition. Photo by Jo Robbins

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – One of Springfield's historical icons and a symbol of the prosperous days of the Precision Valley's industrial past is scheduled for demolition by the end of the calendar year.

The Selectboard, at its regular meeting Feb. 10, voted to appropriate funds to begin the process of demolition of the Jones & Lamson Plant I, a massive brick structure of approximately 270,000 square feet that fronts on Clinton Street.

Article 3 of the 1999 Correctional Facility Agreement provided the town with \$1,000,000 to be used toward the J&L site. The current balance of that reserve fund is \$755,066. An appropriation of \$25,000 is to be taken from those reserve funds for the project management of the bid documents for the demolition and to cover the application fee for a \$1,000,000 Community Development Block Grant.

Stone Environmental Inc., a firm out of Montpelier, has been working on the site for years and will provide the project management of the bid process, and the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission will write the grant application. The \$25,000 appropriation will pay for both.



J&L office to remain. Photo by Jo Robbins

To better identify the beginning and end of this enormous structure, it incorporates all of the real estate between 140 Clinton St. – the Edgar May Recreation Center – and 200 Clinton St., which is occupied by LBL Fabrications, a stone-cutting operation that opened for business late last year in the 60,000-square-foot most southerly part of the connected buildings. The former 10,000-square-foot office area at the northern end, which still has the vine-covered Jones & Lamson sign above the door, will remain.

According to Bob Flint of the [Springfield Regional Development Corporation](#), the entity that has owned the property since 2003 when it purchased Plant I following the bankruptcy of Goldman Industrial Group, “The building has been empty since 1986, has not been heated, the roof is falling in, and it is contaminated.”

At the time of the purchase, Goldman owned J&L, Bryant Chucking Grinder, and Fellows Gear Shaper, and the bankruptcy closed down the operation of almost 800,000 square feet of industrial manufacturing space in Springfield.

The CDBG dollars will be paid to SRDC, and Flint said the combined funds from the block grant and the reserve fund may still not be enough to complete a project of this size with hazardous materials on site.

For nearly 100 years, Springfield employed as many as 3,000 people in a thriving machine-tool industry up until about 1980. These were the heydays

when the town was bustling, employment was strong, and these landmark businesses provided the town with a prosperous economy. According to an article published by [Seven Days](#), “The Rise and Fall of Springfield, Vermont’s First ‘Tech Hub,’” the town was on Germany’s list of bombing targets during World War II because of the innovative production of products too many to name. It included a machine to cut gears, the flatbread turret lathe that used a chuck, interchangeable cutters, an optical comparator that accurately measured screw threads, and machines that drilled gun barrels. All of these designs and more were spawned from the collective genius of the men responsible for J&L, Bryant Chucking Grinder Company, Fellows Gear Shaper, and Lovejoy Tool Company. Lovejoy has been manufacturing standard and special cutting tools on Main Street since 1916. Gear Works Inc. operates in the original Fellows factory on Pearl Street and has been manufacturing gear shapers since 1995. Vermont Machine Tool purchased Bryant in 2002 following the Goldman bankruptcy.

Flint told the Selectboard that a revised Corrective Action Plan has been approved by the state of Vermont, the bid documents and specs have been approved by the EPA, and the SRDC will be ready to solicit bids within the next few weeks. The CDBG application is due in April.

TSCA, a division of the EPA, still needs to sign off on the Site Stabilization Plan, which will address what happens to the site once the building is torn down. Flint said over \$1 million has already been spent cleaning up what he said is one of the most complicated brownfield sites in the state.

When The Shopper asked Flint if the future plans for the site are known at this time, he said there is a lot more to come with this project; and as it unfolds, there will be announcements at a later date.