

Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program

Success Story: Mass Timber Takes Off at the Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium

\$2,465,176

Congressionally Directed
USDA CF Grant

\$149,900

USDA Community Facilities
Grant

\$369,800

USDA Community Facilities
Direct Loan

\$197,000

USDA Rural Business
Development Grant

\$3,900,000

Funding from State of
Vermont & Others

7,600

St. Johnsbury Residents
Benefitting from Annex

Inspiring Wonder to **BENEFIT THE NATURAL WORLD**

Since Naturalist Franklin Fairbanks opened the doors of the Fairbanks Museum in St. Johnsbury, Vermont in 1891, it has been a popular place of learning and wonder for thousands of visitors. In 1961, the Museum built the state's first public planetarium, and in 2018 began a project that would once again create new ideas and widen educational avenues for the explorers wandering its aisles: a 21st-century science annex built with Mass Timber (MT). Using glue-laminated timber beams and cross-laminated panels instead of conventional steel and concrete, MT is a promising construction technology that could redefine the forest economy and reduce CO₂ emissions by up to 60 percent.

Building Capital Despite **SUPPLY & COST DISRUPTIONS**

The Museum approached Philanthropist Oscar Tang—who had taken refuge in St. Johnsbury as a child after fleeing the violent Chinese Communist Revolution—and offered him a legacy namesake that he accepted with an early investment. Rural Development (RD) and the Museum also have a history, including a \$47,000 Community Facilities (CF) grant in 2020 for an exhibit about eco-smart MT tech. The partnership produced yet again with a \$197,000 USDA [Rural Business Development Grant](#) and \$519,700 CF loan & grant package. But this time it wasn't nearly enough: COVID sent costs soaring when the project was just getting underway, more than doubling its original budget.

Creating a Lasting **LEGACY OF COMMUNITY LEARNING**

Though construction projects were stalling throughout the country, the Museum had friends in every nook of the funding universe and wasn't about to give up. Community College of Vermont (CCV) is among them, and bought in for more office space within the Annex. As relationships formed and blossomed, the resulting funding attracted more investments, including \$2.4 million in congressionally directed spending. In early 2024, Kane joined Oscar Tang and USDA RD to cut the ribbon on the new Tang Science Annex, a place to inspire wonder and curiosity for generations to come. Once in peril, the Annex is a shining testament to the power of creative partnerships.

For program regulations and requirements, please go to the [USDA RD CF fact sheets](#)



In February '24 Fairbanks Museum Director Adam Kane (above) invited philanthropist Oscar Tang, USDA and stakeholders to cut the ribbon of the Tang Science Annex, constructed with local Eastern Hemlock Mass Timber and colorful, interactive attractions.

