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## The West Onondaga Street Green Corridor and Gateway: A Grassroots Vision



**E**xciting things are happening on the West Side of Syracuse, specifically on West Onondaga Street where the ASLF office is located. Within the past year we have made significant progress with our Environmental Benefit Project (EBP), and this has evolved into a larger vision for the entire street. The

EBP is part of the settlement from ASLF’s cornerstone 1988 litigation against Onondaga County for violation of the Clean Water Act, and the main purpose is to make green infrastructure improvements to the ASLF headquarters as a showcase of how a historic property can be retrofitted with this important technology.



# WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOOD

*"The Magnet" design concept for the Leavenworth Circle created by NOMAD studio promotes complete streets*

Another part of the EBP is to revision the intersection of West Onondaga Street, Onondaga Avenue, Tallman Street, and Delaware Street. We accomplished this in partnership with NOMAD studio, a design firm located in Brooklyn, NY. NOMAD presented their final design concept, "The Magnet", on October 18, 2016, and it is available online at [www.leavenworthcircle.com](http://www.leavenworthcircle.com). We have reimagined the awkward intersection into a vibrant public space with a permeable surface paved plaza, gardens, trees, sculpture, and a water feature. There are also bike lanes and traffic calming features. This space will be the "gateway" into the West Side of Syracuse, and the beginning of the West Onondaga Street "green corridor" into downtown.

This corridor and gateway concept is what has grown from the EBP. Additionally, the recently revived West Onondaga Street Alliance (WOSA) has partnered with ASLF and proved ready and willing to assist in this grassroots urban revisioning project. WOSA members own property in the corridor and actively support improvements such as gardens, trees, litter cleanup, and more.



*A revision of the rail bridge area will be part of the Green Corridor*

Other components of the corridor include the ASLF urban tree nursery, tree plantings, an ASLF urban forestry project on Midland Avenue, GI gardens along parts of the street, a potential urban orchard, a redesign of the rail bridge area with features such as green walls, and some sort of intersection with the creekwalk. The corridor would terminate at the recently restored Hotel Syracuse. There is a lot of potential, and we are very excited to advocate for this vision in the coming months and years.



*The rail bridge area near the Onondaga Creek*



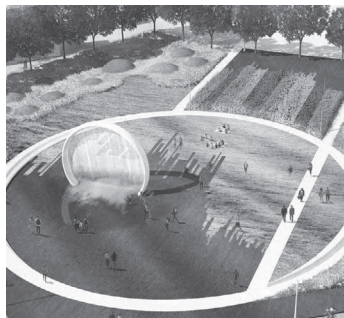
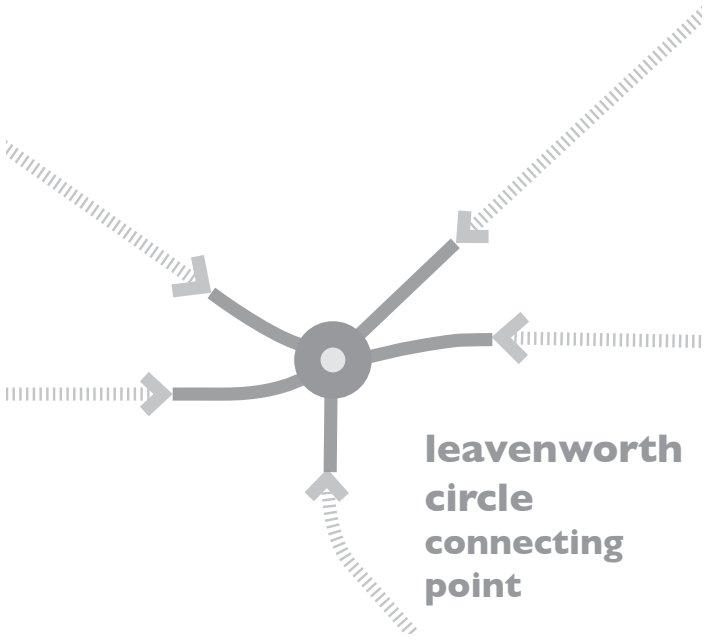
*Potential site for an urban orchard*

More details from NOMAD Studio's study appear below. The complete document is available on our website

# Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: ASLF Urban Forestry in Oswego County, New York

Created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in partnership with other federal agencies, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) is an effort to protect and restore the largest system of fresh surface water on the planet – the Great Lakes. The USDA Forest Service has been administering a considerable portion of this federal money, with a focus on the improvement of the forest ecosystem in the Great Lakes Basin. Our expertise in urban forestry and water resource protection has earned us multiple grants from the Forest Service in the last few years. So far all of the GLRI projects we completed have been in our home city of Syracuse. The most recent and ongoing GLRI project that we are executing, however, is taking place in neighboring Oswego County.

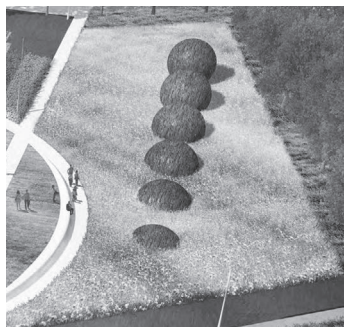
ASLF established a partnership with the Oswego County Department of Community Development, Tourism, & Planning (OCDCTP) back in 2014 to prepare a GRLI application that proposes to plant 600



LARGE VERSATILE OPEN SPACE



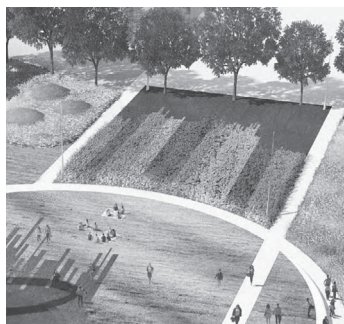
INTERACTIVE FOUNTAIN



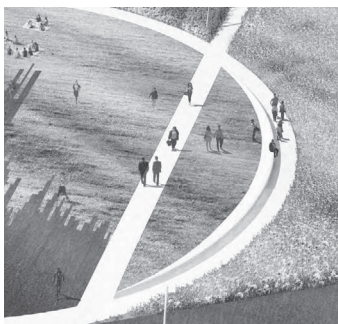
LAND ART



RAIN GARDEN



SEASONAL PLANTING



SEATING AREAS



GLRI tree planting in Oswego

native trees and shrubs on brownfield sites across Oswego County. The goal is to reduce stormwater runoff and groundwater migration from these contaminated sites into Lake Ontario. OCDCDTP received the grant in fall 2015. ASLF is responsible, with assistance and oversight from the OCDCDTP, for the implementation of this project. For the past year ASLF has been working closely with OCDCDTP as well as many other municipalities and public agencies in Oswego County to prepare for planting. After a prolonged process of research, site selection, public outreach, plant selection, and planting design, we finally began our first tree planting this November.

239 trees and 95 shrubs were planted on four sites this fall: Van Buren Park in Fulton, the former Fulton Terminals in Fulton, the former Hammermill site in Oswego, and the East Side Wastewater Treatment Plant in Oswego. All of these sites were selected because of their past history of industrial contamination and/or proximity to a waterbody directly connected to Lake Ontario. The trees and shrubs we used for this project were grown by Forrest Keeling Nursery in Elsberry, MO using their patented Root Production Method

(RPM) technology, which vastly improves the root system of each individual plant and in turn results in higher survivability as well as improved growth rate. Catholic Charities of Onondaga County was selected as our subcontractor for the planting and all other onsite work such as mulching, staking, and watering. We have successfully wrapped up all of the planting related tasks for this year.

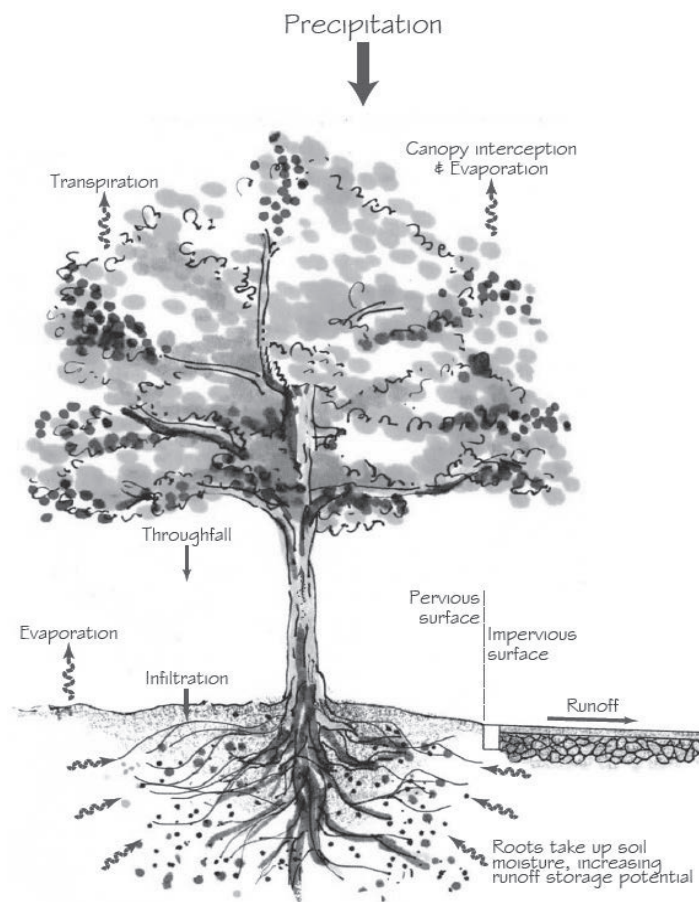


*Rootball treatment*

More is coming next year. Three potential sites located in the city of Oswego are under consideration to receive trees and shrubs: Schuyler Street, Lagoe Oswego Corporation, and Oswego Speedway. A second round of planting will hopefully happen in the spring of 2017. We expect this GLRI project to be concluded by July 2017.



*Rootball treatment*



*Trees help manage stormwater*

# Green Infrastructure Demonstration Projects to Continue in Spring 2017

In 2016, ASLF completed two projects on the Environmental Benefit Project (EBP) list: the establishment of the urban tree nursery and the redesign of Leavenworth Circle. The third project on the EBP list, green infrastructure (GI) demonstration projects at ASLF headquarters, is partially done and the remaining construction will be completed in 2017.

The GI demonstration planned for this project includes two green roofs, porous pavements for the driveway and parking lot, and a rain harvesting cistern system that supplies water for a fountain that will sit at the center of a Victorian style garden restored using all native plants in the front yard. The two green roofs were installed before winter 2015. The upper roof was planted mostly with sedum, which is commonly used in many green roofs today. We are experimenting with native herbaceous plants on the lower roof. This native planting is to test and demonstrate the use of natives for green roofs. We hope to discover suitable species to add to the design palette so that the ecological function of this

innovative type of GI can be improved. This year we witnessed the planting on both roofs progressively establish. Since we had an extremely dry season this year, supplemental irrigation and weeding helped the plants to develop. We expect full plant cover after two growing seasons.

The demonstration projects at the ground level, which include the porous paving, rain harvesting cistern and the Victorian style rain garden, will be constructed in Spring 2017. In recent months ASLF has been working with the design contractor, Maxian and Horst, to develop detailed final plans, submit for design reviews by the city, and acquire the construction permit. The design plans approved by the city include 10 different porous materials for the paving of the driveway and the parking lot. The ten different porous paving materials are provided through donation or at discounted prices by seven participating paving companies in this demonstration project. Three paving materials have been delivered to ASLF, awaiting installation in the spring. During the installation, two paving companies will host training workshops on site to show contractors the proper installation procedure for their materials.



*Upper Green Roof*



*Lower Green Roof*

## Updates on the Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP)

ASLF was selected to receive up to \$1,100,000 in funding for the implementation of green infrastructure practices on vacant lots in Syracuse, New York through New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation's (EFC) Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP). Approximately 12 vacant lots will be repurposed with green infrastructure (GI), and existing stormwater catch basins will be modified to capture and redirect stormwater flow from the adjacent street into the GI. Each lot will be designed to infiltrate, evapotranspire, and store as much stormwater as is appropriate in an urban neighborhood setting (i.e., without flooding). The project will emerge over three years. In 2016, ASLF will finalize the design and construct the four pilot phase projects. The second phase will commence in late 2017 and include activities such as final site selection, design, community outreach, and construction. ASLF anticipates completing four projects in 2018 and another four in 2019.

ASLF welcomes the opportunity to build partnerships through this exciting project and has been collaborating with the City of Syracuse, Onondaga County, the Greater Syracuse Land Bank, Syracuse United Neighbors (SUN), and researchers from SUNY-ESF and Syracuse University, among others. Researchers at SUNY-ESF and SU were recently awarded a complementary EPA STAR grant to study the social and hydrological impacts of ASLF's project. In addition, an SU stormwater design course is preparing conceptual designs for a pilot site.



GIGP Pilot Site on Herriman Street (Image from Google Maps)

## ASLF Presents at the 3rd Annual Water Resources & Wetlands Conference in Tulcea, Romania

For the second time, ASLF officially presented a paper at the "Annual Water Resources & Wetlands Conference" in Tulcea, Romania. The conference is hosted every two years by the Romanian Limnogeographical Society, and brings together academics, professionals, graduate students, and NGOs from around the world to discuss and share ideas. The topics covered included water pollution, wetland restoration, policy, and much more. ASLF last attended in 2014, and presented a case study paper on Onondaga Lake water policy.

This year, ASLF President Samuel H. Sage and Program Director Paul Harris attended and presented a paper titled: "Advocating and Implementing Urban Forestry as a Method to Reduce Stormwater Pollution of Nearby Water Bodies". The paper was authored by Harris, Sage, and Hongbin Gao, ASLF Landscape Projects Manager, and outlined a strategy and model that could be useful for NGOs attempting to implement urban forestry programs in their respective contexts. Building upon the theoretical framework of "adaptive management", the paper stresses the importance of versatility, and the unique role of ASLF as both "advocacy agent" and "delivery agent" when it comes to urban forestry and other green infrastructure projects.



GIGP Pilot Site on Hoefler Street (Image from Google Maps)

## ASLF Helps Maintain ‘Save The Rain’ Green Infrastructure

ASLF, in collaboration with various partners including the Onondaga Earth Corps and Project Joseph of Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, responded to an Onondaga County RFP for green infrastructure project maintenance for the County’s Save The Rain program, and became one of the subcontractors working with Onondaga Earth Corps to perform maintenance for three Save The Rain GI projects in the Near Westside. The three projects are the West Onondaga Street Green Corridor, Otisco Street Green Corridor, and the Skiddy Park Rain Garden. ASLF provides technical instruction, and coordinates and supervises the site maintenance operation, while our partner, Project Joseph, performs the site work.



*Project Joseph crew working on W Onondaga*

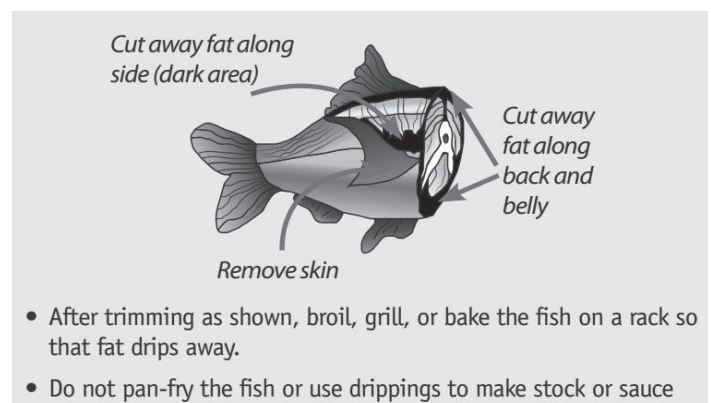
Project Joseph is a property management program of Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, consisting mostly of new immigrants coming from rural areas with agricultural experience. Their background makes them very capable to perform the landscaping maintenance work. Although a good level of instruction and demonstration often needs to be provided to teach the workers how to provide certain maintenance properly, such as weed identification and weeding techniques, this training-working process perfectly matches Project Joseph’s mission which, by putting people to work, helps them develop work skills, overcome language barriers and eventually find a job.

2016 is ASLF’s first year of the GI maintenance with Project Joseph. While we expect the contract to be continued in the following years, we are also exploring further collaboration with Project Joseph in relation to green job training and GI work force development.

## Outreach to New Americans on Consuming Fish from Onondaga Lake

ASLF has been, and continues to be, involved in environmental communication and outreach. One issue in particular has been communicating the risks associated with Onondaga Lake fish consumption to at-risk groups, particularly refugees and “New Americans”. The Onondaga Lake Watershed Partnership (OLWP), a community group based in Syracuse whose purpose is to serve as a “neutral clearinghouse for lake and watershed dialogue and decisions”, has taken the initiative during the past year to push forward efforts at communicating with refugee groups about this issue. ASLF is a participating member of the OLWP, and we serve on the fish advisories subcommittee. To date the OLWP has taken steps to create signage that will be installed in key fishing locations around Onondaga Lake and the Inner Harbor. The Onondaga Nation has generously offered to fund the signs, which will be placed on Onondaga County property. The sign will present a simple graphic advising against consumption of fish from “these waters”, particularly for children or women of child-bearing age. The message will be in English, Spanish, Burmese, and Nepali.

OLWP and ASLF are also working on upgrading brochures and a poster that can be distributed in key locations. These would include: refugee resettlement agencies, social service agencies, clinics, schools, places of worship, grocery stores, or community centers. These materials would be part of a larger education initiative sponsored by ASLF, OLWP, and other locally involved NGOs.



*How to reduce PCBs in fish by nearly half*



# ASLF Urban Tree Nursery: A New Resource

In Spring 2016, the arrival of 950 native tree and shrub seedlings at the ASLF urban tree nursery opened the nursery operation. Located at 663 West Onondaga Street, the ASLF urban tree nursery was created in 2015 thanks to funding support from the US Forest Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant and the DEC Environmental Benefit Project fund. The function of the nursery is to 1) serve as a staging area for the trees to be used in ASLF's green infrastructure and urban forestry projects, 2) provide the community with affordable native nursery stock in support of the community's tree planting effort, and 3) promote tree planting and use of native species for ecological restoration in this area.

The nursery stock includes 17 different native species and was grown from seed by Forrest Keeling Nursery in Elsberry, Missouri through its patented "Root Production Method" (RPM) which is renowned for producing seedlings featuring a survival rate of over 95%, lifetime accelerated growth rate, and earlier maturation that benefits, in particular, planting for fruit/nut production. RPM plants are widely used in wetland restoration and other large scale installations for any application. All trees arrived in 3-gallon containers, and will be up-sized in the nursery before being used for out-planting.

The first year operation of the nursery was challenging due to the severe drought this past summer, but we were able to manage to keep the trees irrigated, with labor assistance from Project Joseph of Catholic Charities of Onondaga County and water supply from the neighbor. Most importantly, ASLF received \$5,500 of grant funding from the Gifford Foundation and installed a drip irrigation system for the nursery late in July. This makes the operation much more efficient and provides trees with more reliable irrigation. We expect the trees to be thriving in the coming season.



*ASLF urban nursery on W Onondaga St.*

If you need trees or have questions about our urban tree nursery, please contact Hongbin Gao at 315-475-1170 or hgao@aslf.org.



*ASLF receiving 950 trees*



*ASLF urban nursery on W Onondaga St.*

# ASLF Questioning Middlebury, VT Rail Tunnel

A historic rail corridor traverses the downtown of Middlebury, Vermont, passing by homes and businesses. In 2007, a train derailed and the contents of a gasoline tank car poured into the ground and Otter Creek. Luckily, there was no explosion or fire, which would have devastated the town. The soils, however, are now contaminated.

Two downtown bridges cross the tracks – and are in disrepair. Pieces of concrete fall onto the track and the Town has been trying to find a way to fix the bridges.

Now the State of Vermont wants to help the Town fix the bridges – but only if the Town agrees to lower the tracks to allow double-stacked freight cars, and is proposing a \$50 million tunnel that will take 4 years to construct and will remove from public view the historic rail corridor. Contaminated soils will be dug up in the middle of the Town and contaminated runoff will enter Otter Creek. Many local merchants fear they will go out of business during the construction.

Vermont’s Agency of Transportation (VTrans) has refused to conduct an Environmental Assessment or

Impact Statement, claiming the potential impacts are insignificant.

ASLF is joining with local businesses and residents to question whether the \$50 million project is necessary, safe and lawful. Simply replacing the two bridges would cost \$5 million and would allow time for careful environmental review of the project and of the alternatives, such as a rail bypass around the center of town, leaving the historic rail corridor in place while avoiding potential calamities from daily rail tank car shipments. Their attorney submitted a lengthy critique to VTrans in October, seeking an EIS. VTrans has promised a response in December.



*Bridge & track conditions*



*Vermont State Statute Rail Clearance Standards Review*

# Updates on Funding Appeal for Building and Roof

ASLF is located in the Hahn House, built in 1883, and is a cornerstone in the historic character of the West Onondaga Street neighborhood. The NGOs that are housed within, particularly Atlantic States Legal Foundation, play very important roles in developing environmental and social justice strategies for some of the most impoverished inner-city communities in Syracuse.

We have managed to maintain this beautiful house for decades without any assistance, but adaptive reuse of a historic building requires a significant investment of resources. To repair the roof (damaged in the '09 earthquake) and front porch (damaged during the February '16 windstorm) will require taking out a loan, while at the same time seeking supplementary funding (which we are actively doing).

It is crucial that the Hahn House is preserved as an example of our commitment and dedication to the inner-city. The programs housed within will surely benefit. West Onondaga Street is currently experiencing an awakening as the newly resurrected West Onondaga Street Alliance has become very active in reshaping the character of the neighborhood in a positive way. Preserving the Hahn house will fit well within these larger efforts, and we welcome the financial support of our new and old friends as we strive toward our fundraising goal of eighty thousand dollars.



Please visit <http://eepurl.com/OiYjP> to subscribe to our newsletter, or contact us and ask to be added to the list. You can also subscribe through scanning the QR code to the right.



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YES! I want to contribute to ASLF's important work!

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Sign me up at the following level:

- "Supporter" (\$50)
- "Sponsor" (\$100)
- "Protector" (\$250)
- "Benefactor" (\$500+)
- "Patron" (\$1000+)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

YES! I am interested in volunteering with ASLF by:

- Doing research in my area
- Helping out in the ASLF office
- Providing a place to stay for ASLF associates working in my area
- Send me \_\_\_\_\_ newsletters to distribute
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# About us

## *Who we are*

**Atlantic States Legal Foundation (ASLF)** was established in 1982 to provide affordable legal, technical and organizational assistance to individuals, community groups, and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and as a way to effectively remediate threats to the natural environment. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, ASLF was the principal NGO utilizing the citizen suit provision of the Clean Water Act as a means of forcing polluters to cease the desecration of America's waterways.

## *What we do*

In the early 1990s, ASLF became the lead NGO in the national campaign forcing industries to disclose the extent and volume of toxic materials stored at individual facilities. Our previous efforts resulted in a vast number of industries becoming accountable to their residential neighbors in relation to potential risks to otherwise uninformed communities.

## *What we care about*

As ASLF grew, and as the nation's environmental problems and solutions have become more complex, we have been focusing a greater portion of our time participating extensively in stakeholder negotiations, scientific and technical review and consulting, and community education programs. Our staff scientists work in conjunction with leading experts in the fields of wastewater and mechanical engineering, GIS mapping, chemistry, biology, geology, hydrology, toxicology, and risk assessment, in order to provide affordable, accessible technical expertise to communities in need. Currently, a major portion of our work portfolio is related to the protection, restoration, and conservation of our urban water resources. Many of our on-going projects have a focus on stormwater and combined sewer overflow (CSO) management. We use green infrastructure installations such as rain garden, bio-swale, and urban forestry to control non-point water pollution in the urban area. We work locally in Syracuse, NY, as well as in surrounding areas in New York State.

Donating to ASLF online is easy with "Razoo" or by mail. Visitors to our websites now have the ability to donate simply by clicking the Donate Now logo. Of course, we still enjoy opening mail to find a donation by check, too! Please support your favorite environmentalists! All contributions to ASLF are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Copies of ASLF's financial report may be obtained from the New York Department of State in Albany.



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