

Restoration ahead for historic Salem depot

By: Beverly Corbell in Scrolling Box September 28, 2015 11:35 am



The old baggage depot in Salem, which has sat vacant for decades, will be restored and have new life as a transportation hub for the city when construction starts in December. (Courtesy of Nathan Good Architects)

After two years of delay, the Salem railroad baggage depot, built in 1889 and salvaged from a fire in 1917, will be given new life as a Greyhound station when construction begins in December.

The building had sat unused for about 20 years, but when state officials complained about its condition, there was no money for restoration.

After that news became public, a local man,

Steve Kenney, pledged \$90,000 toward restoration of the station and for dedication to his late wife, said Kimberli Fitzgerald, historic preservation office for the city of Salem.

"Mr. Kenney came in to the office and asked to speak to me," she said. "He said, 'This is a building me and my wife always loved, so what would it take to restore it?'"

Fitzgerald came back with the figure, but that was just the beginning. The project became much bigger with the decision to make the former railroad baggage depot a transportation hub.

In keeping with Kenney's wishes, a plaque on the front on the building will honor his wife's memory, Fitzgerald said. It will read, "**Dixie's Depot**. Restored in memory of Dixie Kenney, who believed in public transportation all her life."

Kenney's contribution started the ball rolling, and Greyhound and other donors came on board. The owner of the property, the Oregon Department of Transportation, then decided to make the depot the center of a new multimodal hub that would provide rail, bus and pedestrian connections.

Development plans took a long time because of efforts to preserve as much of the old building as possible and requirements such as environmental impact statements, Fitzgerald said.

The 1,200-square-foot building still retains some of the Queen Anne-style architectural elements of the 1880s, and many of its historic features are being preserved, ODOT spokeswoman Shelley Snow said.

For example, the California redwood brackets supporting the roof's eaves will be cleaned and reused. Snow said one of the brackets will be displayed inside the building, as will other memorabilia.

"When doing a cleanout of the inside we found old receipt books from 1912 and 1913 and all kinds of cool stuff," Snow said. "We will have a display area inside the building for some of the stuff we've discovered and rehabbed."

The project is estimated to cost \$1.11 million, Snow said. Also, \$455,000 more will pay for work to reconfigure and improve access for buses, bicyclists and pedestrians; that effort will include sidewalks, fencing, parking and bus canopies.

"The planning and (cleanup) work has been going on for a while, and originally we started out to just rehab a building," Snow said. "But two years later, we're saying let's create a multimodal center with access to different kinds (of transportation) if we do that."

The Greyhound ticket office presently is in the Beaux Arts-style building next to the baggage depot, Snow said; however, Salem-Keizer Area Public Transit will add a bus stop there, and the entrance will be improved to suit bicyclists and pedestrians.

Most of the work up to now has been to remove hazardous materials and preserve historic material, Snow said.

"All the historic material has been rehabbed and stored," she said. "We found old iron work we are saving and trying to save at least one of the rolling doors because of its uniqueness and history."

Old windows have been saved, Snow said, and care was taken to carefully remove old handmade nails to keep the original wood intact.

"Because of the handmade nails it took a longer time for deconstruction crews, and if you tried to take one of the nails like that out today, the board would fall apart," she said. "Now we have beautiful pieces of wood being restored and now in storage, but it's going to be worth it and much of it will be put back for people to enjoy."

Snow said she hopes to see the property become stable enough to accommodate tours, led by a historian, as was done a couple of years ago.

"It's been locked up since because it had to be protected against the elements, but we will start seeing people on the site within the next few months, when we will start grading," she said.

Nathan Good Architects of Portland is in charge of design for the baggage depot, under the direction of lead architect Leah McMillan.

"The design idea was to improve on what was still remaining," she said.

Plans call for three restrooms, a ticket counter, new flooring over the existing concrete floor, new lighting and accessibility for disabled persons.

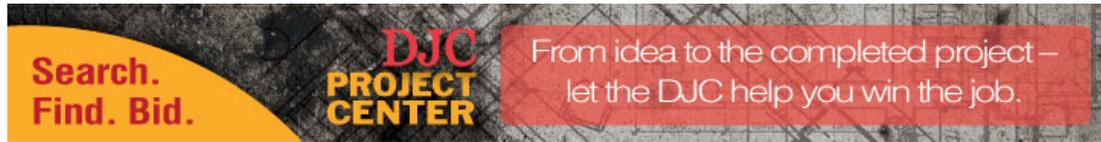
"Seismic loads and wind loads had to be evaluated, and new walls will have new materials, but we will use the original material as much as possible," McMillan said. "We just have to make sure all the lead paint has been removed."

McMillan said that many design aspects are still being hashed out, such as whether to use old-fashioned-looking light fixtures; plans won't be complete until the end of the year. ODOT will then put the project out to bid, she said.

"It's a very interesting project because it's very complex because some things need to be historic and some things need to be new," she said. "And there are a lot of parties involved."

State and federal transportation dollars are the primary funding sources. The project also is receiving money from the State Historic Preservation Office and Greyhound, as well as Kenney.

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