

Renovations under way at Coraopolis train station

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December 9, 2015 CORAOPOLIS, PA — Despite not reaching their \$75,000 fundraising goal earlier this year, supporters of restoring the former Coraopolis train station are using money they raised to have contractors stabilize the roof and plug leaks.

Workers from Mardo Masonry of Waynesburg have been at the station, putting in new interior masonry meant to shore up the roof. Allegheny Restoration also is working on the project.

“As it turns out, the building is in much better shape than we thought,” said Chris Rolinson of Coraopolis, one of the project's supporters.

Originally, supporters thought they would have to replace the entire roof at a cost of \$75,000, their goal in a crowd-funding campaign. But a representative of Jenkins Slate Co. in Grove City visited in the summer and told the group the roof was “completely salvageable,” which is a less expensive proposition, Rolinson said.

Designed by architects Shepley Rutan and Coolidge, the station was finished in 1895 for the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad and is an example of Richardsonian Romanesque style. It has been vacant since an auto parts business moved elsewhere in the late 1970s, and subsequent owners tried unsuccessfully to redevelop the property.

Rolinson said the station's parapets atop the building needed to be stabilized. Copper sheathing had been removed from the building, and that allowed rainwater to enter.

Stabilizing the sidewalls around the station will allow contractors to jack the roof up. Eventually, workers also will lift the floor beams. The masonry work is visible on the interior, where some of the original porous brick had to be replaced with modern concrete block and bricks.

Kenneth Faux of Imperial Construction Services, the station owners' representative, estimated the cost of the entire station restoration to be between \$1.1 million and \$1.2 million, with stabilization to run \$50,000 to \$60,000. The group has a \$50,000 budget for stabilization, having raised a total of \$10,000 through the crowd-funding campaign and a mailer sent out to residents of Coraopolis and nearby areas.

Sam Jampetro of Coraopolis, executive director of Coraopolis Community Development Corp., said the group has a line of credit, has applied for an Allegheny County Community Infrastructure Tourism Fund grant, has been invited to apply for an Allegheny Foundation grant and needs “to look at other grant opportunities” to fund the entire project.

“We're paying for it as we go,” Jampetro said. “Time is of the essence (for) getting the station stabilized and waterproofed.”

Faux said the owners are trying to spend money judiciously.

His company has supervised other historic restorations, including work at several Carnegie libraries.

If warmer weather persists, the stabilization portion of the project could be completed by Jan. 1.

“It's going well; I'm very pleased,” he said.

In 2006, four couples joined together as the Coraopolis Community Development Foundation and bought the property, aiming to restore it for a café and reading room where artifacts of Coraopolis history could be displayed.

The café would serve not only residents of Coraopolis and nearby communities, but runners and bicyclists along the Ohio River Trail, which is proposed to run on Third Avenue.

Third Avenue is an unpaved “paper” street parallel to the active railroad tracks that still run through Coraopolis past the closed station.

The trail, if built, eventually would connect to the Montour Trail to the east.

“A tunnel goes under the tracks to Third Avenue and could be used by bicyclists and runners,” Rolinson said. “We're here to get synergy from those trails.”

“I'm really encouraged,” said Jampetro, one of the eight people who bought the station.

He said many individual donors who responded to the mailer soliciting funds enclosed written memories of the train station with their contributions.

“It's a symbol in people's minds of what was,” Jampetro said.

“We want to turn it into a symbol of what could be.”

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