

Renovators take aim at Delphi's 1882 opera house

Journal & Courier - Lafayette, Ind.
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Date: Nov 5, 2006
Start Page: B.6
Section: REGION
Text Word Count: 370

Document Text

For the Journal & Courier

DELPHI -- With the project to restore City Hall's facade under way, members of the Delphi Preservation Society met with representatives of KGJ Architecture, Inc. to start planning the \$2.3 million renovation of the main structure and the Ruffing Opera House, which occupies its third floor.

In October 2005, the society was awarded an \$18,375 matching grant by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Fund. The facade restoration should be finished by this coming summer.

"We are here tonight because of a lot of hard work that has been done in the past," said society president Anita Werling. "Now we are ready to move forward on our dream to turn the opera house into a performing arts center."

Jeremy Duff, a structural engineer with KJG, reported that the structure, built in 1864, is in exceptionally good condition.

"There are some issues but they can be addressed in the course of the restoration," said Duff. "We recommend that repairs to the roof be completed first as several leaks have developed."

Duff explained that his main concerns would be bringing the building into compliance with current building codes while retaining its historic integrity.

"The floors will need additional support to meet the current load requirements," Duff said.

Currently, there is a single-story addition adjoining the rear of the City Hall structure. The renovation plans call for the demolition of this structure and its replacement with a three-story addition to house an elevator to transport patrons to the third-floor opera house, a theater lobby, stairwells, building mechanicals and storage.

KJG architect Kelly Good described the four phases of the project.

"We have completed the schematic design portion of the project," he said. "Now we need to move into design development."

Good suggested the building committee meet and develop a wish list and consider how various spaces should be used.

The society has indicated that it does intend to maintain some retail space on the first floor and office space on the second floor to lease to tenants to help defray the costs of maintaining the building.

"We have a long way to go," said Werling, "but at least now we have an idea of which direction."

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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