

Fri December 21, 2007

Renovations booked for former library

By *Steve Lackmeyer*

Business Writer

Work is set to begin next month on conversion of Oklahoma City's former downtown library into a mix of housing and retail.

Judy Hatfield, who bought the building at 131 Dean A. McGee Ave., earlier this year from Oklahoma City, received unanimous approval for an extensive makeover to the building's facade Thursday from the Downtown Design Review Committee.

"It's a fantastic adaptive re-use," committee member Anthony McDermid said. "It's very nicely executed. I just can't wait for it to be completed."

Hatfield said asbestos removal starts next month, with Nabholz Construction starting renovations soon after. She estimates renovations will top \$10 million. Occupancy is set for spring 2009.

New look is planned

The renovation, overseen by Beck Design, calls for a new facade with windows added to the west side of the building, balconies, enclosed parking on the second floor, a rooftop patio and a fitness center.

The first floor would be marketed toward office and retail users (Hatfield already has a letter of intent with an unidentified bank), Hatfield said, and the third and fourth floors would be converted into 18 condominiums.

Sale prices for the commercial and residential condos will range from \$155,000 to \$756,000.

Building has history

The downtown library has been empty since 2004, when operations moved to the Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library that was among the city's nine Metropolitan Area Projects.

The former library opened in 1953, and replaced the city's original Carnegie Library, which stood on the same site from 1901 to 1951.

The Carnegie Library was considered one of the city's most ornate public structures, designed in Baroque Revival style by Texas architect M.R. Sanguinet.

The \$70,000 building and its contents were funded by industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

"We've named the project 'The Carnegie Centre' to honor the history and signify the central location of the site," Hatfield said. "This is a true urban hub, surrounded by the Bank of Oklahoma, AT&T, and SandRidge buildings, with the Oklahoma City National Memorial as the view to the north."

Hatfield said the design was inspired by The Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts at the University of California at Davis.

Maintaining the look

The old library — a sand-colored brick box — will be kept intact but with added glass and steel canopies and balconies.

Hatfield, already a downtown resident, will be living in one of the units at The Carnegie Center and brings her own experience into the project's design.

"Having lived downtown for the past two years, I knew the importance of having to add windows," Hatfield said. "With the rooftop I know it's important to have an area where residents can relax and entertain."