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Nampa building to get facelift

City program supports developer's historic renovation

Construction crews peeled away decades as they pulled stucco and wood from the brick front of developer Laurel MacKinnon's one-story 13th Avenue building in downtown Nampa. Underneath is the original brick front dating to about 1910, before Nampa's downtown began to decline.

MacKinnon could barely contain her excitement as she watched Thursday. She plans new windows and doors with a historic feel. She'll add rollout canopies and new sidewalks. She and city leaders hope to provide a model of renovation that other building owners can follow, helping to spark a renaissance downtown.

"Laurel's vision on this thing is going to start generating lots of buzz downtown," said Kirk Morris, an architect from Cole Poe who is working on the project. "Hopefully, it will bring business back to downtown." MacKinnon said she could not have afforded so major a renovation without help, and that's what she got through a new city program that reimburses up to half the cost of facade restoration for qualifying projects that meet historic-preservation standards. MacKinnon's building is the program's first. City officials declined to say how much she could be reimbursed.

At least three or four more buildings will receive help this year, said Heather Richards, project development coordinator, though she declined to name them publicly. "We'll have a lot of projects going this summer. I see the city supporting the program for years to come." The facade renovations big and small should attract larger investment and economic-development projects that in turn should bring higher-wage jobs, she said.

Funding comes from federal community-development block grants and the interest earned on funds from the city's sale of the Kalbus Building, which sold for \$300,000 in 2001, she said.

Design assistance will show building owners what their facades could look like through drawings of major and minor renovations, and will estimate costs. Small projects include painting, awnings, signs. Major renovations may include tearing off nonoriginal materials and replacing portions of buildings. MacKinnon plans new windows and doors with wooden frames. MacKinnon figures the program will let her spend about twice what she had planned originally.

"Because of this program, I'm able to do 100 percent facade renovation, which I couldn't do otherwise," MacKinnon said. "It takes the project to a higher level. It will enhance community pride." "It'll create a visible example of what things can be and should be, which is really needed," Glenn Rummeler of Blam Design, who is working with MacKinnon.

The Nampa program is similar to the efforts of Baker City, Ore., which lasted about eight years and ended when no more facades were left to renovate, said Richards, who was part of the Baker City program. "I think anyone in Baker would say it's a tremendous success," she said.

Residents in Baker City became excited and engaged in their history when renovations started there, and crowds would show up to watch the work and hang out downtown, she said. MacKinnon's building also is being overhauled inside to expose large roof trusses and make it ready for a new used-furniture store, Trading Space. Crews from Radix Construction Inc. and Custom Demolition and More will soon move on to renovations two doors down at a long-vacant furniture store for the new Market Linome food store, and eventually to the Dewey Building, a two-story brick building on the corner of 13th Avenue and 1st Street.

"These buildings have withstood the test of time," Richards said. "They are structurally stronger than what's

built now. We're leaving for generations to come these historic properties, for our children and grandchildren."