

## Chugging right along

Beaver Station donations, renovations on track

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BEAVER -- Donations and renovations involving a former passenger rail station in the borough are moving forward like a locomotive.

The Beaver Area Heritage Foundation is renovating the structure along East End Avenue into the Beaver Station Cultural & Event Center, and the nonprofit announced Wednesday it received a \$500,000 pledge from the Pittsburgh-based nonprofit Allegheny Foundation.

That means commitments exceed more than \$2.45 million, and the event center may now be reserved for civic and corporate events, wedding receptions, reunions and more.

The building has been under renovation since 2013, where a waiting room is being transformed into a 2,500 square-foot event room, dubbed the 1897 Event Center.

“We will restore it to its original grandeur,” said David O’Leary, chairman of the Beaver Station Steering Committee for the nonprofit Beaver Area Heritage Foundation. “This... was once, and will be again, a very elegant space.”

The Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad Co. constructed the train station in 1897, and it had passenger service until 1985 and was then converted into Beaver County’s first 911 center, according to the foundation.

Despite the renovations, there's the original terrazzo floor as well as a box-beam ceiling, stained glass windows and brass fixtures. A baggage room will be converted into a catering kitchen for the event center, O’Leary said.

The lower level cultural center will have multiple tenants, including the Beaver Area Heritage Museum’s Collections & Research Center, where more than 30,000 local historical artifacts will be. The collections and research center is currently located at the Beaver Area Heritage Museum next door, which used to be a freight station until the foundation converted it and opened the museum there in 1998.

Also downstairs is the Beaver County Genealogy & History Center, who has been a tenant there since 2013. The library-like center has everything from microfilm to computers and is run by volunteers.

The downstairs also features two multi-use classrooms, so groups like the Sweetwater Center for the Arts can have a local branch in the building.

As part of the renovations so far, the foundation had a light fixture designed to emulate the ones the station likely had. The foundation found a photo of a light used in a Beaver Falls station, where electric lights were on the bottom and gas lights were on top in case of emergencies, O'Leary said. One of the lights is already installed ... with LEDs.

The cultural and event center is scheduled to open in September, and the first public event will be held over Labor Day weekend. Site work will continue into 2016.