

Developers hope to revive downtown area

Renovated Broadway building will include theater, cinema and shops

By Travis Bishop
Emerald Contributor

Eugene's historic Broadway building is in the midst of renovations that could bring sparks of life back to the city's depressed downtown area, said developer Mark Doonan.

Doonan and his associate on this project, Scott Bernet, both graduated from the University's Master of Architecture program in 1982. Since that time, they have cooperated on several projects including the renovation of a similar building in Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1988.

Bernet, a resident of San Diego, is currently out of town and could not be reached for comment. Doonan said his partner has made several three- to four-day trips to Eugene to work on the project and would continue to do so until the renovations were complete.

The two developers originally became interested in the building when they helped develop a new facility for Wings Enterprises, a personal development center, on the second floor of the building. When this phase of the project was completed in January, they turned their attention to the rest of the building.

Doonan and Bernet see the Broadway building as a vital part of the larger project of bringing life back into the downtown area instead of furthering the "urban sprawl" that Eugene has seen.

"Basically, I think our underlying interest in the building is to make some kind of contribution to the urban environment, in terms of using existing buildings and space to make the area a little denser," Doonan said. "It seems like something that the downtown is in need of and is going to be a popular spot for folks to go."

Particularly important to the project has been the involvement of Siuslaw Valley Bank, Doonan said.

"They've been really progressive in terms of really supporting this project and it wouldn't be happening without their enthusiasm behind it," he said.

The building has been renamed Off Broadway and will house several restaurants and shops as well as a 123-seat movie and arts theater. Five tenants, including a pizza-by-the-slice concession and a neon-light shop, have already committed to occupy space in the renovated building.

The Off Broadway theater, owned and operated by Steve Bove, will carry several unique characteristics that other theaters don't offer, including rocking chair seating and a cry room so crying toddlers won't disturb other moviegoers.

Bove said he wants to see the theater become a place where customers can expect to see things that cannot be seen at other cinemas, including live theatrical performances that will virtually split time with the movies. Additionally, the theater will focus on local and regional talent, showcasing local photographers and painters on the walls of the lobby.

The selection of films at the Off Broadway theater will reflect Bove's feeling that many good films simply bypass the Eugene area because they are not shown at one of the chain theaters in town.

"I will always be looking for films that wouldn't otherwise get a chance to show in Eugene," Bove said. "There are a lot of jewels out there that just aren't in the main line so they don't get shown here."

Ticket prices for the new theater will be lower than the chain theaters in town, Bove said. Prices will average around \$4.50, but there will be several discounts including a student rate that could



Photo by Sean Poston

University architecture graduates Mark Doonan and Scott Bernet hope that by renovating the historic Broadway building they can bring back some life to the downtown mall.

drop the price of tickets to about \$3.

Some of the tenants in the building will have a large role in exposing people to Eugene's downtown area that normally wouldn't have that chance, Doonan said.

"I think two major elements are Wings and the theater," he said. "Wings can just bring folks down here that wouldn't be downtown normally, both folks from in town and I think something like 60 or 70 percent of their clients are from out of town."

"The same with the theater. I think it's what brings folks downtown other than folks that are normally working down here and it also extends the hours as well."

Off Broadway is tentatively scheduled to open near the end of September, but Doonan said that could easily change. "We've been shooting for the Eugene Celebration as an opening date," he said. "It's really been dependent on these last three tentative timeline commitments, though, so I think it's going to be tighter."

What the developers would like to see created is a place that could draw people down to Eugene's faltering downtown mall, Doonan said. More importantly, he sees the project as an example of what downtown will need to do more of in the future.

"Generally, it's the kind of thing Eugene needs," Doonan said. "I think there's going to be more specialized kinds of things similar to this, places that really combine the pedestrian and business interests."

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3. Then, add muscles and fat. In this country, fat is usually heaped on in generous amounts, which is why American cartoons are generally not as healthy as foreign ones.

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*Remember, when erasing, be sure to remove all layers.

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