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Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

William Hicks waters plants around the new centerpiece of the space at the Abeco building in downtown Astoria.

A RETAIL MARKET WITH ROMAN AMBIANCE

Astoria Court will take over Abeco building

By JESSICA DOUGLAS
The Daily Astorian

Astoria Court, a new mini shopping mall, has transformed the former Abeco building downtown. The only familiar remnant is the Abeco sign on the storefront facade.

William Hicks, who owns Hollywood Vintage in Portland, has been renovating the interior of the building since October. The building has been stripped clean and reconstructed from the ground up.

Aspects of classical Roman architecture and design elements from the 1940s are Hicks' main inspirations for the space.

Black-and-white checkered tile floor dominates the exposed room. Original to the building, the tile was hidden by carpet in the Abeco store. After Hicks discovered the floor, the tiles served as a springboard for ideas.

"This floor is very Roman," he said. "When we were tearing it up, I felt like I was in Pompeii, excavating and digging in dirt and revealing this."

It wasn't an easy task. For Hicks, it was "most unpleasant thing I've done in my life," he said. "We just kept persevering."

Walking through the entrance, a water fountain, accompanied by two large, stained-glass windows on either side, draw attention to the center of the room.

On each side of the fountain, rows of marble-like Roman columns, constructed out of a dark wood, divide the space into small sections. These slots will be leased out to diverse businesses.

Behind the stained glass windows is a new grand staircase that was built to provide access to the basement.

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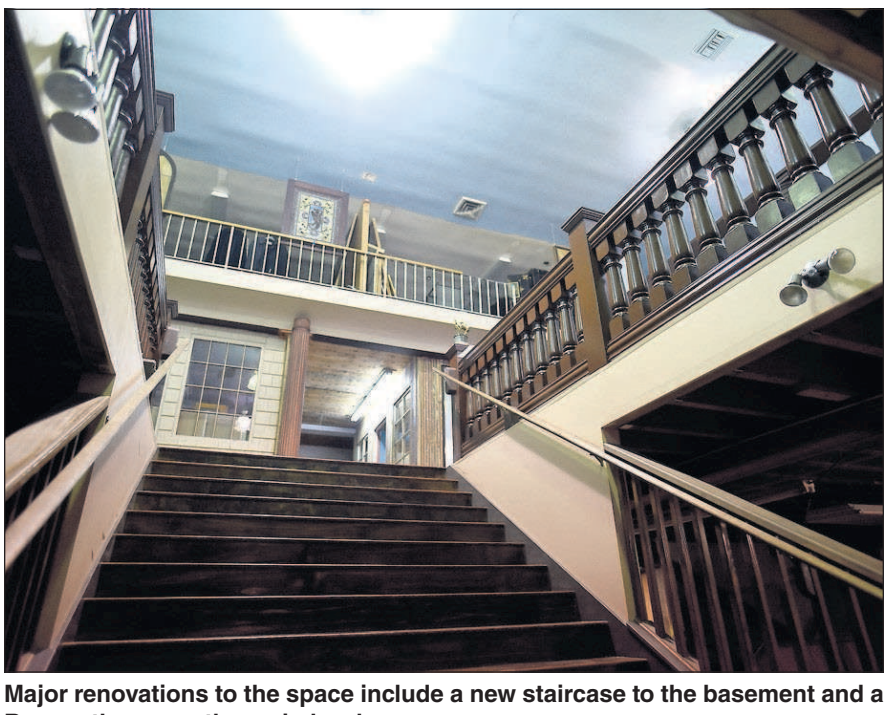
The only remaining distinguishable feature from the old Abeco building is the facade, which Hicks said will come down at some point.



Major renovations to the space include a new staircase to the basement and a Roman theme on the main level.

Astoria backs enterprise zone expansion

Tax incentives for development

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Astoria's plans to join the Clatsop Enterprise Zone and expand the boundaries are beginning to crystallize.

City councilors approved a map Monday that showed what an expansion of the zone's boundaries could look like in Astoria.

The map added North Tongue Point to the enterprise zone, as well as the Port of Astoria's East Mooring Basin and some nearby property, a cluster of parcels not far to the south of the Old Youngs Bay Bridge, a section of downtown and a long stretch from downtown, through Port property, around Smith Point and over to Tapiola Park's border along Youngs Bay.

A few more steps remain before Astoria is officially part of the enterprise zone and the proposed boundaries are finalized. The three entities that established the zone in 2015 — Clatsop County, the Port and Warrenton — must approve of any modifications.

Enterprise zones are a tool to encourage development, offering property tax exemptions for new businesses or businesses looking to expand. Oregon has 69 enterprise zones, most of them in rural areas. The zones do not supersede existing city codes and zoning restrictions.

Astoria city councilors rejected the enterprise zone in 2015 over qualms about partnering with the Port. But times have changed.

The City Council reconsidered joining the enterprise zone in March after a presentation by Hyak Maritime, a tug and barge-building company with plans to create a marine fabrication and repair facility at North Tongue Point. Hyak CEO Robert Dorn made a case for Astoria to join the enterprise zone and expand the boundaries to include Tongue Point.

City Councilor Cindy Price, who voted against the enterprise zone in 2015, now feels the Port is more stable, with better leadership in place. Two new councilors, Tom Brownson and Bruce Jones, have been enthusiastic in their support of the expansion.

Astoria's decision is an exciting development for the Port.

"Timing is everything and this is the most opportune time to move forward with enterprise zones," said Frank Spence, the president of the Port of Astoria

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Hyak Maritime and WCT Marine & Construction see an opportunity to make North Tongue Point a regional center for skilled shipwright work.

Warrenton food pantry in danger of closing

Church needs about $200 a month to continue

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — A church-run food pantry that feeds an estimated 75 to 100 families each week will close at the end of July if organizers can't find the money they need to keep the doors open.

The pantry, the only one in Warrenton open on a weekly basis, needs an estimated $200 a month to cover office costs and electrical bills associated with running several refrigerators and freezers.

Pastor Morris Guiendon, of Calvary Assembly of God, reached out to other churches in the area for help. On Monday, he heard back from Seaside Assembly of God with news that the church could provide some immediate assistance and, possibly, more regular aid.

If Guiendon is unable to find a solution in the community, representatives of the Clatsop Community Action Regional Food Bank told him they will ensure the services the pantry provides continue in some way.

"This could be a positive thing as well, reaching out to the community," Guiendon added, explaining that some of the people who use the pantry come from other congregations and communities. "Making more of a community effort to keep this thing running could become a positive thing for our community."

Landing consistent money could prove difficult. The food pantry's affiliation with a religious organization limits what kind of aid is available.

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Katie Frankowicz/The Daily Astorian

A delivery arrives at the food pantry at the Calvary Assembly of God church in Warrenton.

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