

Fenton: Building is vital to downtown revival

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the brown building, a descriptive some began using after a paint job.

"We rebranded it to improve its marketability," Community Development Director Kevin Cronin said. Roberts and Maize "will come up with a design. It's a pretty large building and they're proposing an extensive exterior renovation over and above new

siding."

"Going forward depends on that grant," Roberts said. "We want to repaint everything (using) an approved color scheme. Install cooler exterior or light fixtures – old school-house lighting. Replace the awning on two sides."

The upstairs shutters will be removed and replaced with nicer window trim, he said. Flower boxes are probable, too.

The coming week is expected to be the last with cooperative weather; the rest of the restoration will have to wait for early spring, Roberts said. There are six apartments upstairs, one downstairs and three potential retail spaces downstairs. They'd like to see a brew pub or café take all or some of it.

Allen Fenton's dad, Ames, owned Fenton's Grocery, but

it was his grandfather, J.J. Fenton, who opened Warrenton's first grocery store. It was on Harbor Drive, just west of the Skipanon Bridge. Francis "Doc" Wilson owned a pharmacy next door.

A fire in about 1930 destroyed both, Allen Fenton said, and both relocated into the large new building at South Main and First Street. The building was owned by Jake Bosshart, a logging company owner who had quite a



Weston Roberts stands in the alcove in front of the original doors leading to the second floor.

bit of property in Warrenton.

Fenton, who administers the "Memories of Warrenton" Facebook page, said his aunt lived in one of the apartments upstairs and worked in his dad's grocery store, as did his brother, a sister and his mother, Lulu.

Back when it was Fenton's Grocery, the building also was home to Doc Butler's dental office (upstairs behind the Coca Cola sign), Wilson's Pharmacy was on the north end and also served as a terminal and ticket office for Oregon Motor Stages bus line.

At the south end of the building was Warrenton Meat Market, owned by Larry Lenhard.

Fenton's was in the middle along with an approved state liquor outlet that Ames Fenton operated.

"It was quite a sight on Friday nights when workers from Prouty Lumber Company – Warrenton's biggest lumber mill and probably its biggest employer -- lined up for whiskey," Allen Fenton said.

It hasn't been used as a grocery since his dad closed the business in 1956. In the 1960s, the building was home to a Coast-to-Coast Hardware store.

Other grocery stores, including Maize's Market, Main Street Grocery/Busy Bee and Shaw's Grocery also found a home in downtown Warrenton.

Warrenton's Urban Renewal Agency is expected to consider the façade grant at a meeting in November.

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