

Old Heppner Gazette Times building remodel

-Continued from PAGE ONE
be handicapped-accessible.

One front portion of the building, the part that housed Heppner City Hall once upon a time, will become office spaces. Cutsforth said it will be something of a community spot, with a small lobby surrounded by six offices. The old city hall safe will stay put, built into the wall of the lobby. Some of the offices will house existing organizations; Cutsforth, who also sits on the boards of the Bryant foundation and HCF, will have an office there. The Heppner Chamber of Commerce and WCVEDG will also find homes there.

The rest of the offices will be flex space for people who need office spaces but don't need them all the time.

"If, for instance, you want some kind of business but only need an office one day a week," Cutsforth said, adding that the cost for those flex offices will be lower than renting traditional office space.

Aside from the space for an office, small business owners and startups will also have access to professionals who can help them with services like setting up websites, branding, creating business plans and finances. There will also be business classes.

"It gives people an opportunity to start up without a huge investment up front," she said.

Teaming up to help with that part of the project is Reinventing Rural. Reinventing Rural is an initiative whose goal is to help community organizations create strong rural economies. The virtual community was launched in

2020 to help rural businesses in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest adapt to evolving economic conditions. They partner with entities like Rural Development Initiatives, Oregon's Small Business Development Center, Foundry Collective and others to offer tools, training and guidance for startups and small business-

chased Ida Farrah's old shop on Main Street a while ago, converting part of it into Flood Town Books and part of it into a small Airbnb apartment. She said she planned from the beginning to make the garage portion into an art studio. She even spent time talking to Roberta Lavadour, Executive Director of the Pendleton

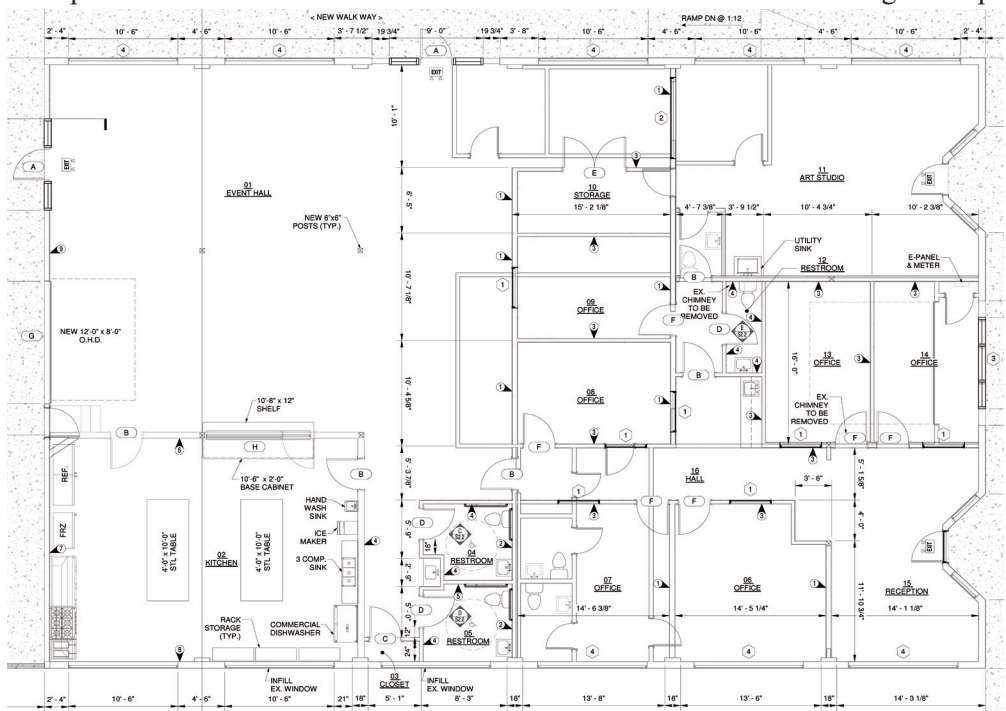
space in the old Gazette building will be a place for community members to create fine arts and crafts.

"It's going to be set up so people can go in there and do any number of art projects," said Cutsforth, adding that they plan to install special lighting.

Plans also include a sink for cleaning art sup-



Toward the back of the building will be an L-shaped event area, separated by breakfast bar from a certified kitchen. A roll-down door over the bar will allow the two spaces to be separated. The roll-up door in the back will remain—in a way. It will be replaced by a glass rolling door and will open onto a patio area edged by a retaining wall. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo



Some of the building plans created by Engineering Northwest. -Contributed

es. One thing they will do is train Heppner staff to train others in business.

Another portion at the front, the long-ago sheriff's office, will be an art studio.

Working with Cutsforth on the art studio portion is local woman Andrea Nelson. Nelson, who teaches art and STEAM in Heppner schools, has a long-seated passion for developing more of an arts community in Morrow County, beginning with Heppner.

"I would like Morrow County to have more art and cultural opportunities for all ages," said Nelson.

She said she already had plans of her own for an art center. Nelson pur-

chases the arts, about ideas and resources.

"It always came down to space and funding," said Nelson.

She said she was looking into grants when Cutsforth approached her about her plans.

"She came to me and said, 'I'm buying the old Gazette building and I'd like to put an art studio in there,'" Nelson remembers.

Nelson is continuing with plans for her own space, as well as the Art in the Park program she started last year, but now she's also partnering with Cutsforth in making plans for the arts portion in the new community space. The

Center for the Arts, about ideas and resources. She already has been busy buying large supplies like easels and painting stools, as well as pricing out cabinetry and rolling carts for art supplies. Smaller supplies will have to wait until they get an idea of what the finished space will look like.

"It's a waiting game right now," Nelson said.

She says she is hoping the art center will have space for a studio to display art, not just create it, but that detail will also have to be worked out later.

Meanwhile, plans for the space by Flood Town Books include a pottery studio and kiln. Right now, that space looks just as gutted

as the building on Willow Street; the drywall has been pulled off, and the next step is to redo the electric to meet the requirements for the kiln and other equipment. Nelson will still own the space and is working on funding separately from the Heppner Community Foundation, but she will partner with the foundation to include the pottery studio in the community art space. She hopes to have that portion of the project done and ready by May, though the old Gazette building remodel probably won't be done until June or later.

The rest of the Gazette building will be an event center, Cutsforth said, more flexible and less formal than Gilliam & Bisbee. It will form an L shape, taking in part of the Gale Street side and the back of the building. There will be a certified kitchen with a breakfast bar separating it from the main event space. The spaces can be used together, but a roll-up door over the bar will provide the option to keep the spaces separate.

Cutsforth says the event center portion will be able to handle larger events with more foot traffic than Gilliam & Bisbee and, unlike venues like the fairgrounds, will keep community events downtown. At around 1,800 square feet, the event center will be slightly smaller than the Gilliam & Bisbee Event Center, but the building's concrete and timber construction makes it sturdier.

"Gilliam & Bisbee is a nice place to do nice things," Cutsforth said. "This will be a fun place to do fun things."

The space will be available for rental on a sliding scale, with smaller fees for non-profit groups like 4-H clubs who are willing to do setup and cleanup themselves. That fee would most likely be only enough to cover basic janitorial services.

"It's just going to be a lot more casual space," Cutsforth added. "It's going to be really pretty. I'm excited to see how it's going to look."



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