

ETM Architect

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Cultural arts center renovation envisioned

By Liz Harold

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The Valletown Cultural Arts Center remains a standing accomplishment of the inspired residents who built 1923 as First Baptist Church of Andrews.

Concepts have been drawn and plans in place to revitalize the building as a beacon of activity for residents visitors alike. A report estimates the entire project would cost about \$2,319,200.

The landmark structure was purchased by the Valletown Cultural Arts and Historical Society in 1986, and after it was added to the National Register of Historical Places. The society is ready to continue to preserve enhance the building to make it a complete community hub, lacing sleek contemporary design elements with renovation of original interior and exterior features.

The Andrews Valley Initiative has teamed with the society to bring the concept to a reality.

Bob Ferreira, executive director of the initiative, said they secured funds through the N.C. Rural Center's Step grant to pay for a conceptual design from architect Terry Meek, founder of Edwin Terrel Meek Archi Meek created the study and presented the report in May to the cultural arts board on upgrades needed to t out the structure's potential for public use.

Possibilities include a reception area, audience seating, catering kitchen, classrooms, history center, an elev and gift shop. An elevator was chosen to be put on the exterior of the building so as not to compromise interior structure.

The design scheme also presents income opportunities needed for the society to continue its programming c and supplement project costs. Office space previously has been rented out by organizations, but not considerably profitable frequency.

The ultimate goal would be to provide classrooms for artists who would like to organize workshops for the pul

The vision and design are ready. The management and execution phase are the final steps needed to bre new life into the old building.

Margaret Edwards, president of the cultural arts board, said they are pursuing grants and getting advice

grant writers on the best way to attain funds. Several rural town programs have pledged time and money to the center.

HandMade in America has extended its help to find grant money and individuals trained in renovation to assist in the building's revamp. Handmade previously assisted with Mitchell County's courthouse renovations and is contributing to 13 towns in western North Carolina.

Judi Jetson, director of the small towns program, held a town hall-style meeting for residents Aug. 18 to give them a presentation on the implementation of the Mitchell County Courthouse project in Bakersville.

"We help to rejuvenate both the physical and community infrastructure in all 13 of our small towns," she said.

The Mitchell County Courthouse utilizes geothermal pumps to use the earth's ground water as a heating and cooling source. Geothermal is just one of the options being considered for an efficient system in Andrews.

Edwards also spoke to a professor at the University of North Carolina in Asheville about geothermal, and she was impressed by the option.

The college has put in the system in its newest buildings called the New Hall. According to the college's Web site, the New Hall uses 20 percent of the energy used in classrooms that were built in 1966.

"We have discussed geothermal, and we would like to go as green as possible," Edwards said. "Not because of the grant possibilities, but because it is the right thing to do."



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