

## Bricktown buildings get ready for new use

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OKLAHOMA CITY – An ailing water tower atop a Bricktown building is set for a face-lift.

The ornamental cylindrical cone-topped water tower on top of a building at 2 E. California Ave. has been there since 1994. Prior to that, a functioning water tower sat on top of the building for several decades adorned with a logo for Red Ball Transfer Storage.

The water tower repair and renovation is part of a larger project to take two adjoined buildings that have sat largely vacant and turn them into a retail, restaurant, office, and residential project.

The second building is at 12 E. California Ave. and houses Zio's Italian Kitchen.

But the rest of the structures east of the restaurant have sat mostly idle and decaying even as the district and the canal have thrived.

Leading the design and planning of the project is Martin Goldstein, of Denver-based Venture Architecture.

As the project has moved forward, Goldstein has faced several hurdles trying to secure historic tax credits for the property and gain approval from the Bricktown Urban Design Committee.

The 2 E. California Ave. building is on the National Register of Historic Places as is the J.I. Case Plow Works Building. Records show that the three-story red brick building was constructed in 1909. The two-story brown-red brick building at 12 E. California Ave. was built in 1929. No tax credits are being sought for the rehabilitation of that building.

Goldstein said the owners, Diversified Historic Properties, which includes Harding & Shelton LLC, are working through the final stages of approval with the preservation architects.

John Calhoun, with the city Planning Department, said as an income-producing property it is eligible for a 20-percent federal income tax credit and a 20-percent state income tax credit.

To get those credits, the project must be approved by the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

But one of the first projects will be the water tower, which is painted white and adorned with advertising. The tower is topped with a broken clock from the Penn Square Bank.

Plans call for re-cladding the tank in galvanized aluminum in medium to dark gray, repainting the platform where the tower sits, repainting 'Bricktown' signs on all four sides, and replacing the neon advertising logos. The clock will also be replaced.

Additional plans could include an electronic sign on the water tank tower.

Another hurdle is the current U.S. financial situation, but the developers remain optimistic.

"I don't think there's a project in Oklahoma or anywhere in the country that hasn't been affected," said Ted Keeney, chief financial officer of Diversified Historic Properties and director of business development for Harding & Shelton. "Our desire is to keep the project moving forward."

Goldstein said the project will take some time, but he hopes it can help reignite the west side of Bricktown along the canal to Reno Avenue.

"We want to make sure we do it right," he said.

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