

# Developer plans \$1 million makeover in Oregon City core

*Redside Equities' \$625,000 building purchase marks the first large downtown investment in years*

By **STEVE MAYES**  
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OREGON CITY — A Portland real estate company plans to renovate a dingy downtown office building, giving city officials hope of a commercial revival.

Redside Equities purchased the building at 900 Main St. last month for \$625,000 and plans a \$1 million makeover to be completed next summer, said Garrin Royer, a Redside principal.

The Redside project marks the first major investment in downtown Oregon City in many years and comes at a time of transition. Clackamas County recently relocated many of its offices from Main Street to a new building in the Hilltop area.

"This, I think, is the beginning of a really sincere interest in Oregon City, both in vacant land and some vacant buildings," said Mayor Alice Norris. "With each new project, Oregon City becomes a more and more desirable place . . . to invest."

Royer, whose company will become a tenant, said the 15,000-square-foot building will feature a couple of street-level retail spaces and offices on the second floor.

"We think Oregon City has a lot to offer (and) . . . a lot of potential," Royer said. Property in Oregon City is relatively inexpensive, Royer said.

"If you look at a variety of factors, especially the historic significance, existing transportation access and demographics . . . you see the immense potential," said Daniel McGinley, Royer's

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business partner.

Redside and other developers are prowling downtown Oregon City for other opportunities, Norris said.

City Manager Larry Patterson added a note of caution about whether this signals the start of a wave of projects. "It's too soon to tell, but you never know what the thing is that will start something like that," said Patterson. "The first (project) . . . is sometimes the hardest one to get."

Oregon City recently changed its land-use plan to encourage a mix of retail, office and housing in the city's core. The change is part of a broader plan that calls for opening the city's waterfront to pedestrians and river users and to use the city's pioneer past to lure tourists and developers.

Royer said that although Oregon City's population has surged, the town has nothing to rival Portland's trendy hangouts, such as Northwest 23rd Avenue, Sellwood or Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard — compact, pedestrian-friendly areas that feature a blend of shops and restaurants.

The 87-year-old building that Redside bought originally housed Oregon City's first automobile dealership and dates to a time when the downtown business district was alive with theaters, restaurants and stores.

As freeways and suburban malls drew traffic away from Oregon City, Clackamas County gradually became the downtown's life support system.

Government workers patronized Main Street businesses by day, but after-hours, there was little activity beyond a handful of bars and taverns.

"One of our goals is to make this a people-friendly place," Norris said.

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