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Developers aspire to restore Lebanon Arcade to its glory days

By Deborah Highland • THE TENNESSEAN • January 5, 2011

A Lebanon architect and builder have joined forces to create a new shopping experience in downtown Lebanon based on a 1909 model.

Builder Hal Bone and architect Mike Manous recently purchased the historic Lebanon Arcade with plans to restore the building as closely as possible to its original look.

"We're so excited that it has sold and that it's going to be brought back to its glory," next door tenant Janet Stevens said. Stevens owns The Antique Glade.

Manous and Bone hope to recruit a restaurateur to open somewhere within the 18,500 square feet of leasable space, Manous said.

The two also want to attract small retailers and professional service providers.

Even though retailers or professionals haven't used the arcade for years, former owners Jimmy and Phyllis McCullough took steps to preserve the building's interior physical condition. However, through the years the original structure was radically altered from its original open space concept.

"It changed the building's original intent and function," Manous said. "A floor was added over the two-story space, and all the original storefronts were removed. Our goal is to go back to the original configuration of the building."

Windows that have been taken out and bricked in will once again become windows. Storefronts will be added downstairs. And the downstairs ceiling will be removed to reveal the hallmark of the turn of the century shopping mall, the naturally lighted atrium. The original skylights remain intact.

Manous, who has a passion for preserving historic buildings, was the architect behind the historic preservation of the main Castle Heights Military Academy building that is now Lebanon's City Hall and the historic Mitchell House, which now serves

as office space for some of Cracker Barrel Old Country Store's corporate level employees.

"Rarely can (historic buildings) go back to their original purpose," Manous said. "Most of the time for a historic building to have viability is to create a different use for them.

"This building and the theater are two exceptions to that," Manous said referring to the Arcade and the historic Capitol Theatre, also undergoing rehabilitation.

"We are just incredibly excited about this opportunity," he said.

Lebanon's Arcade is one of only four believed to exist in the state, said Tara Mielnik of the Metro Historical Commission in Nashville. The others are in Nashville, McMinnville and Cookeville.

"Generally speaking I would say that the arcade movement in the United States was right around the turn of the century," Mielnik said.

One the best-known arcades is The Cleveland Arcade in Ohio that was originally built in 1890 and modeled after a similar structure in Italy.

"I think they're important not just to Tennessee and small towns but the country as a whole," Mielnik said. "While they were very common around 1900, there are very few of them left today. They were the forerunners of today's modern shopping mall.

"It's certainly a way to trace architectural history and

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see where the idea of shopping malls came from ...," she said.

If Manous and Bone can complete their business model and gain a couple of serious tenants soon, they could take the package to a financier by spring, Manous said.

"It has the potential depending on the tenant mix, to create the synergy back on the square that has dissipated over the last 50 years," Manous said. "It will be a magnet to bring back people to the downtown historic core.

"It will be a benefit to area merchants, area building owners and the community as a whole," he said.

Stevens couldn't agree more.

"We need a restaurant on the square," she said. "I would stay open at night if there was a restaurant. So many of our customers want to know where to go and eat and are so disappointed that there is nothing on the square."

Bone, who can trace his family lineage back several generations in Lebanon and Wilson County, looks forward to preserving this piece of architectural history.

"It excites me to have the opportunity to preserve part of our heritage," Bone said.



Underneath this metal facade is the historic Lebanon Arcade that will be renovated. The 1909 structure is one of only four arcades believed to exist in Tennessee. DEBORAH HIGHLAND / THE TENNESSEAN



This original skylight is preserved in the Lebanon Arcade. Architect Mike Manous and builder Hal Bone are renovating the downtown landmark. DEBORAH HIGHLAND / THE TENNESSEAN



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Hal Bone, left and Mike Manous are renovating the Lebanon Arcade. DEBORAH HIGHLAND / THE TENNESSEAN



This original door from the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce's first office inside the Lebanon Arcade is one of many of the building's artifacts that will be incorporated into the renovation. Hanging on the doorknob is an old photo of an early Chamber employee. DEBORAH HIGHLAND / THE TENNESSEAN



Lebanon architect Mike Manous was part of the team to restore the Mitchell House in Lebanon. This landmark is now used by the Cracker Barrel Old Country Store for some of its employees who work in the corporate office. Manous also helped restore the Castle Heights building now used as City Hall. DEBORAH HIGHLAND / THE TENNESSEAN



This art deco light fixture is one of several historic features of the Lebanon Arcade that will be incorporated into the renovation. DEBORAH HIGHLAND / THE TENNESSEAN

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Artifacts preserved inside the Lebanon Arcade will be incorporated into the decor of the arcade renovation. DEBORAH HIGHLAND / THE TENNESSEAN



Customers walk through the Nashville Arcade in this April 2007 photo. Like the Lebanon Arcade, the downtown Nashville Arcade was built during the turn of the century. The Nashville Arcade is home to many offices and businesses. JAE S. LEE / FILE / THE TENNESSEAN

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