

Public radio station to start \$5 million renovation

KPBX to move late this year to historic firehouse

Judith Spitzer

April 10th, 2014

Spokane Public Radio, the nonprofit station that operates as KPBX-FM, plans in early May to start a \$5 million renovation at the historic Spokane Fire Department Station No. 3, at 1229 N. Monroe, on Spokane's North Side.

Walker Construction Inc., of Spokane, is the contractor on the project, and Copeland Architecture & Construction Inc., of Spokane, is designing the improvements.

Once finished, the two-story, 11,250-square-foot structure will have updated broadcast studios, new production facilities, and a performing and recording studio to serve as a community hub for broadcasts, concerts, lectures, forums, debates, and other events. The building will double SPR's working space and triple its production capacity.

The project is slated to be built using environmentally friendly materials and practices sufficient to attain the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design's silver rating. Washington state requires some projects to be built to LEED standards to receive grant funding.

The station has occupied its current building at 2319 N. Monroe for more than 30 years.

Cary Boyce, the organization's president and general manager, says Spokane Public Radio has secured more than \$3 million of the \$5 million needed for the project and has launched a campaign, called Moving to a Sound Future, to raise the balance of \$1.6 million needed.

SPR bought the building last October for \$575,000 with a low-interest loan from a benefactor who wishes to remain anonymous, Boyce says.

"The station has to raise the remaining \$1.6 million to complete state matching funds, through private gifts and from listeners," he says.

Funds of \$1.75 million have been awarded from the state of Washington, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and a grant from the M.J. Murdock Trust. The State grant mandates the project's completion by June 30, 2015.

SPR needs to raise the remaining capital as soon as possible to complete the project in accordance with the requirements, Boyce says.

"The math is simple, but powerful," Boyce adds. "Every private dollar for this project is worth about half again as much. It's an amazing return on investment dollars and a clear economic impact—all while growing a truly great public broadcast service."

Immediate plans also include growing the news service, increasing arts coverage, more local programming, and establishing and growing internships in journalism and public broadcasting.

“SPR will take a more active role with NPR in the national dialogue with more stories and features from our region. Spokane Public Radio serves 20,000 square miles, 750 communities, and 750,000 citizens,” Boyce says.

Boyce says with the station’s extensive coverage area requires a growing service to meet what he calls an “increasing demand for news, information, music, culture, and more.”

The vintage Fire Station No. 3, which appears on the national registries of historic buildings, was built at the southwest corner of Monroe and Sharp Avenue in two stages.

The first part of the structure, which faces Sharp and was constructed in 1912, originally housed a machine shop that built and repaired fire equipment and vehicles. The east-facing part of the building, constructed in 1917, replaced a late-1800s wooden structure and the two brick structures were joined.

When first looking to move, SPR proposed a move to a historic building located at 19 W. Pacific. In 2007, the station’s board approved a purchase option for the building but given the recession, SPR decided not to buy the building, says Guy Byrd, an agent with Cornerstone Property Advisors LLC.

SPR then began another search with the assistance of Cornerstone Property.

Byrd says the building on North Monroe Street has historical character and is well preserved.

“It was built in 1912 and wasn’t remodeled until 1998,” he says. “It was used as a firehouse up until the 1990s.”

- North Side



- **Judith Spitzer**

-  [e-mail](#)

-

Reporter Judith Spitzer covers technology, mining, agriculture, and wood products for the Journal. A vintage-obsessed antique collector in her off hours, Judith worked as a journalist in Colorado and Oregon before joining the Journal.

[Read More](#)