Softstar Workshop

Rural or Agricultural Rehab

Year Originally Constructed or dedication date

1949

Project Completion Year

Mar 2018

Project Address

914 Main Street

Project City

Philomath

Project Zip code

97370

Project budget

50,000

Does the nominated project or landmark have any local, national or cultural designations?

Local Historic Designation in Benton County.

List any federal, state or local tax credits or other incentives received.

This project did not receive federal, state or local tax credits.

Does the project follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties?

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Provide an overview of the project and its historic significance:

In 2015, Softstar owners Tricia Salcido and Larkin Holavarri were facing increased demand for their handcrafted footwear production and decided that they needed a larger space to house the company's daily operations. Along with community investor and experienced contractor Alan Ayres, they decided on a historic 1949 roller rink located in the small neighboring town of Philomath. Previously named the Phil-O-Rink, the building served as a community skating rink for 25 years before closing in the 1970s. It later housed an indoor flea market but closed its doors again in the 1990s. After sitting empty for 20 years, the run-down building housed several blackberry bushes, rotted support columns and was an eyesore in the community. Due to its condition, the building had been deemed a tear-down. However, Alan Ayres, who has a passion for restoring old buildings, saw that the unique wooden trusses were still in great condition. He purchased the building to prepare it to become the next Softstar workshop. The building that was once a hub of activity and a center of joy in the community has now been restored to its original glory along with many green and modern upgrades to make the building's features functional and sustainable. Anyone who wishes to visit the workshop is welcome to explore the historical roller rink exhibits featured in the retail area as well as enjoy tours of shoes being manufactured.

Did the project have any unusual constraints, parameters, and/or challenges. How did you address them?

The main challenge with the building was simply the run-down condition that the restoration began with. The 10 timbers that supported the building sat in soil and were rotted, while the roof was topped with non-friable asbestos. Over the last 65 years, the neighboring Hwy 20 had been built up higher and higher, leaving the building in a hole 5 feet lower than the highway and zoned as a flood plain. The original roller rink floor had been torn out long ago and the remaining cement slab was cracked with trees growing through. Alan began with asbestos abatement and put on a new metal roof with a sandwiched layer of energy efficient rigid insulation. Next, he built 10 new temporary support beams and jacked the building up. He created a cement stem wall where one hadn't existed around the perimeter of the building and replaced the columns one by one with locally milled beams. Every square inch of the ceiling and trusses were cleaned and lighting designed to highlight them.

Describe how this project fulfills the award criteria.

This building exemplifies the best in quality from the natural timbers that make up the walls to the respect it pays to the rich history of the structure. The local community has completely rallied around this building and they are proud to house it in their neighborhood. The building has hosted multiple community events such as Softstar's Grand Opening, a solar eclipse viewing party, and an alignment and shoe making workshop with bio mechanist Katy Bowman. A great deal of research went into the building and its history before the renovation began and Alan made it a priority to maintain many original features. Some of these include maintaining the outline of the roller rink in the retail area, restoring remnants of roller rink wood as the main retail flooring, framed historical photos hung in the showroom, and donated skates and other items that community members brought in from their time at the roller rink in the 1950s.
Sustainability was one of the most important aspects of this restoration. Some of the most notable sustainability upgrades that Alan added during the restoration include the rigid insulation in the roof, radiant heat flooring, LED lighting, double pane windows, reclaimed siding for interior walls and a permeable parking lot. We also restored the original snack counter from the roller rink and have set it up in the front of our showroom for visitors to see and enjoy. Future sustainability plans include solar panels, a garden, and a water reclamation system for the workshop.
Regarding job creation, Softstar initially brought over the same group of employees that had been working at the previous workshop when the building was finished in January 2017. Over the last year Softstar has hired new production employees due to the additional capacity the building allows as well as fueling additional sales growth.
The building has conservatively quintupled in property value compared to 2015 purchase price.

What is the most exceptional aspect of this project and why?

The renovation of this historic building has so many exceptional qualities, but the most exceptional would be how the restoration moved the building to a place that is historically thoughtful while incorporating the best of modern technology in energy efficiency. With a great deal of research and hard work, the previously dilapidated structure has transformed into a source of genuine pride and awe for the surrounding community and all who come to visit. Every day we have people come into the building that comment on the beautiful the blend between the old a sustainable and thoughtful package. We are also proud that this building will last at least another 100 to 200 years into the future and will remain fully functional throughout that time.

What lessons were learned that could benefit others embarking on preservation and reuse projects?

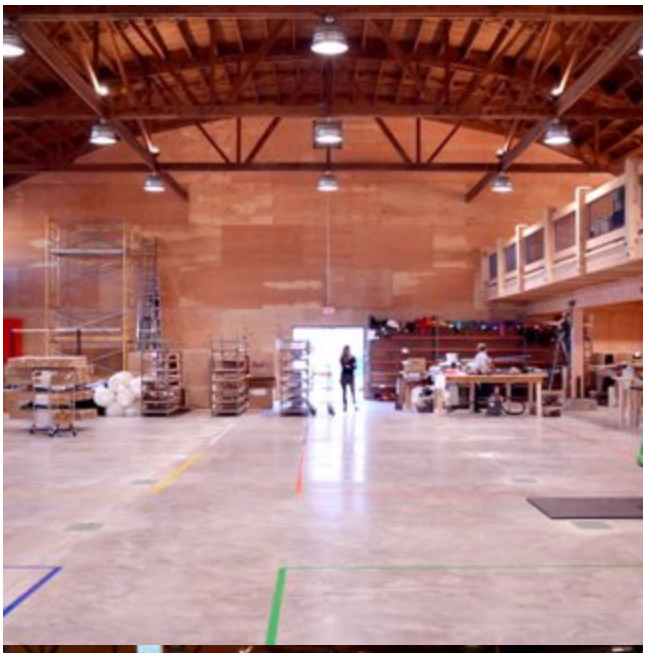
Alan Ayres has restored a number of historical buildings and one of the main recommendations he has is to do research early on as to how the building was used in the past. As a part of the restoration project for Softstar, he and the company's owners did interviews with local people who used to use the rink and asked how they remembered it as well as researched photos at the historical society. Alan tried to save as much of the history as he could so that he and the Softstar employees could teach it to interested visitors. Every detail was planned carefully and intentionally with the building's history in mind.

Another piece of advice from Softstar CEO Tricia Salcido is to be creative with surprises that arise during restoration. After taking off one of the first layers of siding, Alan and Tricia discovered the original siding in beautiful condition underneath. This siding was carefully taken down and repurposed for all of the interior walls. Alan and the Softstar owners also wanted to highlight the beautiful and unique original trusses. To do so, Alan removed the old false ceiling, cleaned the trusses, and intentionally designed upward lighting to highlight them. When people come into the workshop, this lighting brings their eyes to something that is unusual and beautiful.

Team Contact Sheet Upload

Martin Doellinger

Photo Gallery for Application Gallery

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Optional extra credit: A copy of any publications, including newspaper clippings, related to the nomination

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