

||||||| COLUMBIA |||||

MARKET IN THE MAKING

Historic building to be renovated by spring; preview before end of fall



BLAINE SHAHAN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Columbia Borough manager Mark Stivers talks about the major renovations underway inside the Columbia Market House on Oct. 1. The inside of the market house will have a polished concrete floor at the stands and seating area, while the walkways will be brick. The renovation also includes a kitchen for an in-house restaurant. Below, a rendering illustrates how the Columbia Market House will look upon completion of the renovations.

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A reimagined Columbia Market House featuring a full-size restaurant, an event space and vendors will be fully operational by spring following a multimillion-dollar makeover.

The public could get its first look inside the updated 151-year-old market house before the end of fall during a partial opening that will feature the market house's new anchor restaurant.

Construction at the historic building at 15 S. Third St. is scheduled to be completed by Halloween, according to Borough Manager Mark Stivers. It would open soon after with restaurant Gypsy Kitchen as its lone tenant, pending a lease agreement.

The market house was initially scheduled

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Columbia Market House: *Restaurant to open in building this fall*

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to open in July, but the \$3.5 million construction project stalled for several months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Officials decided to hold off a full opening until the spring.

"I think it'd be really hard to open a farmer's market in the fall or winter," Stivers said.

Catholic Health Initiatives St. Joseph Children's Health will manage the day-to-day operations of the market as part of its ongoing Healthy Living initiative, which aims to address food access and nutrition deficits in Columbia, according to CHI President Phil Goropoulos.

"We're excited to get it off the ground," Goropoulos aid.

CHI St. Joseph Healthy

Communities Manager Kelsey Miller, who leads the Healthy Living initiative, said discussions are ongoing for potential vendors for the market. The floor plan includes space for 22 vendors.

A website for the market house offers numerous sizing options for interested vendors, but Stivers said the borough hopes most of the stands are centered around leading a healthy diet.

"We really want to focus on food and crafts," he said, and less on retailers such as antique shops, of which Stivers said the borough already has several.

The event space would host weddings, parties and small concerts.

While the outside of the market house is mostly the same as before, the inside

is undergoing a full renovation.

Old stands were removed, and new restrooms, floors, plumbing and electrical system are being installed, borough Mayor Leo Lutz said.

"The building is beautiful, and the inside is fabulous," Lutz added. "It's a shame that the COVID-19 pandemic slowed things down."

Other new features include air conditioning, new washing stations and a permanent awning for outdoor seasonal vendors and events.

Stivers said \$880,000 of the project's total cost is set aside for its next phase: parking. Ideas that are on the table include parking lots, street meters compatible with smartphones and a parking garage, he said.



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The Columbia Market House at 15 S. Third St. in Columbia Borough is seen in an Oct. 1 aerial photo. A reimagined Columbia Market House featuring a full-size restaurant, an event space and vendors is scheduled to be fully operational by spring following a multimillion-dollar makeover.