http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/121312/boernerSM.png**Proposed restoration of former furniture store given OK by Design Review Board on way to Plan Commission**

Plans to restore the facade at the Boerner Mercantile Building — previously known as the Lueptow's Furniture building in downtown Port Washington — got a thumbs up from the city's Design Review Board Tuesday.

The plan, which includes a revamping of the parking lot and alley behind the building, will now go to the Plan Commission for consideration Thursday, Dec. 20.

The public has had a bird's eye view of the exterior renovations as crews hired by building owner Daniel Ewig and his wife Marie-Ann have stripped away a facade placed on the building at 211 N. Franklin St. in 1969 and uncovered the original brickwork.

"We're restoring the facade as closely as we can to the original," architect Mike Ehrlich told the board. "It's a restoration that is probably 99% correct to the original building."

After board member Jorgen Hansen asked if the owner planned to seek to place the building on the National Register of Historic Places, Ehrlich said probably not as an individual structure.

"I believe it will be put on the National Register as a contributing building (to the downtown historic district)," he said.

The front entry is being moved to the center of the building, Ehrlich said. A grid system, perhaps made of wrought iron, will be used to set off the storefronts, which will not only front the building but also wrap around the north corner of the structure.

The first floor will feature a large vestibule that leads to two retail spaces, Ehrlich said. Glass doors will lead to a grand stairway leading to the second and third floors.

The second floor will have three to four offices, he said, and the third floor is planned to be used as one large space.

An artist's studio will be created on a portion of the lower level, he said.

All of the more than 80 windows in the building are being replaced, and many are being expanded to let more light into the structure, Ehrlich said.

“On the inside, it’s going to be very unique, very interesting,” Ehrlich said.

The building’s original maple floors and pine tongue-and-groove ceilings are in good shape and will be restored, he said, and the bricks exposed.

The building is on schedule to be completed by June, Ehrlich said, adding he will be moving his offices there.

“Our building is pretty much gutted already and we’re ready to roll (with construction),” he said.

As part of the project, the alleyway just north of the building will be improved to a pedestrian walkway.

Ehrlich said the city will be responsible for paving the alley with decorative pavers, while Ewig will provide planters and create several pockets of green space along the alley.

Behind the building, where a private alley now runs, a small parking area will be developed by taking the hillside down to grade and moving the retaining wall to a spot about six feet from Vines to Cellar, he said.

Ten parking spaces, including two handicapped spots, will be placed in the alley, which will be one-way heading north.

The main parking lot behind the building — currently a city-owned lot that Ewig is acquiring through a land swap, exchanging it for the former M&I drive-through property to the north — will maintain its current traffic pattern, including access to the Post Office’s mailbox.

However, a landscaped median on the west side of the lot and plantings along a sidewalk leading from the M&I lot to the alleys and ultimately to both Main and Franklin streets will add pockets of green to the area, Ehrlich said.

By reconfiguring the lot and making the parking spaces one foot narrower, the parking lot will accommodate 43 vehicles instead of the 40 it currently holds, he said.

Image Information: THE HISTORIC LOOK of the Boerner Mercantile Building on Franklin Street in downtown Port Washington is being restored, as shown on this rendering. Crews removed the facade placed over the stonework this summer and fall, revealing the brick underneath.