



Published: October 24, 2011

Updated: October 25, 2011 - 9:44 AM

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## City proudly dedicates new Conover Station

By Sharon McBrayer



After years of planning, hoping and a lot of hard work, the first building in Conover Station is officially open.

Conover officials and residents turned out Monday for a dedication of the multimodal center at Conover Station. What now houses the Conover branch of the Catawba County Library, a community meeting area and will soon be the headquarters for Western Piedmont Transit Authority once was Warlong Glove Mill. In later years, the building was part of Broyhill Furniture Company.

During the dedication of the building Monday morning, Conover Mayor Lee Moritz told the crowd gathered on the top floor that it will be a lasting legacy to the property's manufacturing heritage.

"What a wonderful day it is for our city," Moritz said.

Those who have helped the city during the renovation of the property were presented with a slice from a heart pine beam that came from one of the buildings on the Conover Station property that had to be demolished. Each slice had a note of appreciation burned into it.

While the building was renovated and is brand new again, its history has not been forgotten. Conover officials pointed out the indentations in the original wood floor made from female workers' high heels long ago. Moritz gave a short history of the building, saying when it was the glove mill it employed around 100 people who mostly lived within walking distance.

Most of the city's manufacturing history was possible because of the railroad, Moritz said. And the railroad's significance will be honored within the building. He pointed out an old railroad baggage cart and a US Mail delivery wagon, which flanked him during the dedication, that will take up residence in the building.

The cart and wagon are on loan from Dwight Rockett, a resident of the city. Rockett said he bought the mail wagon,

which was made in Conover at Jerome Bolick Sons buggy shop, about 25 years ago. The wagon that was used during the early part of the 20th Century was taking up space at his home so he decided to loan it to the city for display.

The baggage cart was used to haul freight from the train to the depot. The multimodal center, which sits alongside railroad tracks, will serve as a train stop. Conover has been designated as the Catawba County depot for future western passenger rail service, say officials.

The freight cart and mail wagon won't be the only pieces of history the building will hold. In all, it will be home to about 50 items with historical significance, say officials.

While the city will pay homage to the past, it also is looking toward the future and possible jobs that can be created on the 27-acre site of Conover Station.

Council member Janice Herman said after the dedication that she wasn't so sure about the project before she took her seat on the city council. But when she realized the city was getting grants to use on the property, she got on board with the project.

"I think this is just the beginning," Herman said.

Moritz said the transit system is expected to spend about \$360,000 to upfit the main floor of the multimodal center building. The city has received \$6.8 million in grants. Moritz said local taxpayers spent 10 cents for every grant dollar used on the property. Once the transit system moves in, it will be a wash, he said.

Conover Station also is the future home for Manufacturing Solutions Center, an environmental park and offers other development opportunities, according to city officials.

A coffee kiosk and café is expected to open in the building in January, said City Manager Donald Duncan.

Jay Adams with Adams Commercial Real Estate Services will market the Conover Station property. Adams said the oddly-shaped property will take some creative design but he hopes to see business that will support Conover's downtown. He said he would love to get some type of eatery and coffee shop, as well as some type of retail or office space. He also hopes to see a boutique movie theater similar to Our Town Theater in Davidson.

Malinda Primus, a Conover resident, was at the dedication on Monday and said she first thought renovating the property was a dream. She remembered attending a city council meeting when the idea for it first appeared on an agenda.

"I thought I would never see this," Primus said. She said people always say they're going to do this or that but don't follow through.

"It is great," Primus said. "I'm just amazed at what people can do when they set their mind to it. I'm happy. I'm pleased."