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Richmond's Interactive Resources Completes Study for \$121 Million Stimulus Funded U.N. Plaza Federal Building Rehab

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The following recent article from the San Francisco Chronicle describes the \$121 million project to rehabilitate the historic Federal Office Building at 50 U.N. Plaza in San Francisco. The project, which will utilize stimulus funds, is based on a Program Development Study (PDS) performed by Richmond-based architecture-engineering firm [Interactive Resources](#). [Charles Beavers](#) AIA, LEED® AP, was the project manager and was assisted by a team of six other Interactive Resources staff members and three outside consulting firms.

The PDS serves as the technical foundation for the project's construction authorization/funding request, including defining the scope-of-work for the design team, developing a business plan that explains and justifies the project, defining the project's space assignment impacts, identifies goals and functional requirements, identifying stakeholder requirements, defines milestones, delivery methods and funding responsibilities, defining design directives that address how the project is to be implemented, estimating the construction cost and establishing project schedule.

The project consists of 350,213 gross square feet and has five principal floors, plus a basement and an attic. It was originally constructed between 1934 and 1936 and represents a fine example of the late Beaux-Arts architectural style that was prevalent in the US. The building was placed on the National Register and the California Register in 1987. Architect Arthur Brown Jr. designed the building as part of a seven building complex comprising the San Francisco Civic Center. Many architectural features on the exterior are unique to the Beaux-Arts style. The goal of the project is to create energy efficient office space and a comfortable modern working environment for federal workers. Aged building systems and components will be replaced to meet current GSA and construction standards. Sustainable design principles will be utilized within the context of preserving a historically significant building to achieve LEED® Gold Certification.

The project includes Seismic structural upgrade, installation of a photovoltaic (PV) system, refurbishing historic exterior windows, roof replacement, realignment of interior office and support areas, restoration of historically significant interiors, replacing plumbing systems, providing new heating and ventilation system (no air conditioning), upgrading fire sprinkler and fire alarm systems, upgrading electrical distribution systems, upgrading with energy efficient lighting, modernizing telecommunication equipment and remove existing hazardous building materials.

The PDS took Interactive Resources six months to complete, just in time to begin the next phase of design and construction with stimulus funding.

Selection of a design team to implement the project is underway.

Source for the following article:

Selna, Robert. "Federal Office Building in S.F. Gets Stimulus Funds." *San Francisco Chronicle*.

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Federal Office Building in S.F. Gets Stimulus Funds

Robert Selna, Chronicle Staff Writer

Sunday, May 22, 2009

An infusion of federal stimulus funds to repair the Depression-era Federal Office Building will put people back to work at San Francisco's U.N. Plaza in the coming years and may achieve a second goal: helping the area reclaim a central role in the city's civic life.

The \$121 million investment will go toward seismic repairs, new energy-efficient heating, electrical systems, the removal of asbestos and other repairs at the office building, which was designed by famed local architect Arthur Brown Jr. and completed in 1936.

The improvements to the grand, Beaux Arts structure also represent a new chapter in the decades-long effort to push the plaza closer to its intended purpose, rather than allowing it to remain a magnet for loitering, drugs and alcohol.

An art school recently decided to lease additional space in nearby 10 U.N. Plaza and the city also has focused more attention on the area. Lights and plants have been added and bunker-like cement barriers around nearby BART entrances were removed. Other initiatives in the works include transforming part of nearby Taylor Street into an arts district.

The U.S. General Services Administration recently invited architectural engineers to submit proposals to restore the office building, which has been empty since 2007. When the work is completed around 2015, the six-story building will house the GSA regional offices now located at 450 Golden Gate Ave.

"The plaza will always be a vast amount of space, but it was really out of control in years past ... people were selling drugs and stolen goods," said Jim Haas, a lawyer who has advocated for the betterment of the plaza for more than 25 years. "Improving it has been arduous and has involved more police and having more people around, but I think we're finally on the upswing."

Until last year, the government considered selling the office building to a private developer. But that idea was ditched after Washington directed the GSA to more actively work to preserve its stock of historic buildings, according to GSA spokeswoman Gene Gibson.

"We get to ensure that we will keep a real gem in the federal inventory," Gibson said. "We get to make this building more energy-efficient and we have an opportunity to put more people back to work."

The stone-clad structure and its architect have an interesting history. The building was the first federal administrative building built in San Francisco and once housed offices of the Navy Department, Veterans Bureau, Water Department, Weather Bureau, Forest Service and other agencies.

For a time, Adm. Chester Nimitz had an office there - one used recently to shoot scenes for the movie "Milk."

The building's architect, Brown, graduated from UC Berkeley in 1896 and was a protege of the legendary Bernard Maybeck. Brown also designed scores of other San Francisco landmarks, including City Hall, the War Memorial Opera House and Coit Tower, as well as several buildings on the Berkeley campus.

The adjacent plaza has not matched the grandeur of the building, however. In 2001, then-Mayor Willie Brown had the area's 24 benches removed to try to discourage vagrancy and drug dealing. In 2003, the city fenced off the plaza's fountain, which people had been using as a bathroom and a place to get high.

Nonetheless, the plaza shows potential. It has hosted a popular Wednesday and Sunday farmers' market for many years now and the fountain is flowing again. On a recent afternoon, it appeared to attract all types, from school kids racing thorough on a field trip to people with shopping carts and dogs, who looked like they'd been there a while.

Staff writer Heather Knight contributed to this report. E-mail Robert Selna at rselna@sfchronicle.com.

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