

Rivers station mission on track

By: Charles Tweed

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FILE PHOTO

A Canadian National train pulls into the Rivers station in July 2013. The Rivers Train Station Restoration Committee — which earlier this year signed a lease to restore the building with the owner, Via Rail — has raised \$8,000 and secured a matching contribution from the province to help identify economic opportunities presented by a restored station.

The Rivers Train Station Restoration Committee has taken another step in turning the local train station into a pillar of economic growth for the community.

The committee, which is headed by Donna Morken, has secured \$8,000 from Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

The money, coupled with an additional \$8,000 that was raised by the group through a series of fundraisers, will be used to assist in identifying economic opportunities

presented by a restored train station.

"We're very excited," Morken said, adding that the group will partner with Bridgman Collaborative Architecture from Winnipeg to draw up plans and identify room for growth in sectors such as tourism.

The committee has been working to secure the building for more than a decade and a half. Earlier this year, it signed a long-term lease to restore the station with Via Rail, which owns the building.

The committee is working toward gaining charitable status.

The former Canadian National Railway station is a one-and-a-half storey building, located at the southern edge of Rivers. It was built in 1917 and was designated a national historic site in 1992.

Morken knows it is going to take a lot of time and money to restore the building, but also believes it's imperative to protect the history of the community.

She also sees it as a focal point for tourism moving forward.

"We've been gathering artifacts and materials that relate to the station and our history here because we're hoping to have a museum there," she said. "We need a place to hold our history, from the air base that was here to rail and agriculture."

According to a federal government heritage website, "The station served as the focal point of the community, as well as the economic engine as the nucleus of its extensive repair and staff facilities."

Morken and the committee will try to turn back the hands of time by not only restoring the building, but by making it relevant again.

The building is still used by Via Rail, but lacks many amenities associated with a train station.

"It still stops every day but Wednesday, and there's two trains on Thursday," Morken said.

A call was made to Bridgman Collaborative Architecture, but wasn't returned by press time.

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