



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

MidFlorida to Fix Up Lakeland's Old Federal Building

By [Rick Rousos](#)

The Ledger

Published: Monday, February 15, 2010 at 12:57 p.m.

LAKELAND | The old, vacant and originally beautiful Federal Building in downtown Lakeland appears headed for a return to its past glory, 1919 style. But not circa 1931.

MidFlorida Federal Credit Union will spend at least \$800,000 to renovate the building.

Without taking a formal vote, commissioners approved MidFlorida's plan Monday at City Hall. They had all given the project a thumbs-up Friday.

Construction of the building at Tennessee Avenue and Lemon Street began in 1917 and the building, about 4,000 square feet, was dedicated in 1919.

The building's size was doubled in 1931. But the addition wasn't built nearly as well as the original. The add-on area of the building has been badly damaged by water, with its floor bucking. The damage to the addition made the cost to renovate it unmanageable.

So the 1931 addition will be demolished.

Historic Lakeland President Roger Haar, a former city manager, said his organization was disappointed that the 1931 section would not be renovated, but pleased with the plans for the original building.

"If all the requirements are met, the building will be an asset to downtown," Haar said.

The building, the city's first post office, encompasses some Roman architectural features.

MidFlorida competed with Arabellas Ristorante for the Federal Building, which is owned by the city.

Under the terms of tentative agreement, MidFlorida will pay the cost of the renovation, estimated at about \$1 million. In return, the city will lease the property to MidFlorida for at least 40 years for \$1 per year,

About 1,000 square feet of the building will be a catering kitchen and bathrooms, and 3,000 feet for meeting space. The plans call for other downtown business to use both the meeting space and catering kitchen, but catered food must come from downtown restaurants.

Knocking down the 1931 addition will create 30 or 40 parking spaces,

The city and Kevin Jones, MidFlorida's president, are discussing making the Federal Building a showcase “green” building.

[Rick Rousos can be reached at rick.rousos@theledger.com or 863-401-6967.]

Copyright © 2010 TheLedger.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.