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## Renovated armory could take center stage in green building

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Fully excavated 20 feet below its foundations, the Oregon Armory in the dusty morning light has the cavernous ambience of the Istanbul's Hagia Sophia. But this month the first concrete pours begin to transform it into a new home for Portland Center Stage in what could be the most environmentally green arts facility in the U.S.

The complicated stew of financing has some pundits fearful the city will be on the hook for \$10.6 million in private loans and has City Commissioner Sam Adams calling it the type of insider deal the new City Council won't stoop to anymore. But according to Center Stage's managing director, Edith Love, the theater is halfway to its \$32.9 million goal, \$1.5 million of it from Meyer Memorial Trust.

When completed, the \$28 million facility will feature a 599-seat main stage with a 150- to 200-seat "black-box" theater below. Gerding/Edlen Development and GBD Architects are vying for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design "platinum" rating by using, among other features, a hyperefficient, underfloor heating system powered by the Brewery Blocks' chiller plant and electricity from solar panels atop the neighboring condo tower, The Henry.

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But what provokes some of the newest murmurs of excitement is the 4,700-square-foot lobby, which Love says will be open day and evening, serving light bites and coffee, equipped with Wi-Fi Internet and featuring interactive displays that guide visitors through the theater, the Brewery Blocks and possibly the city beyond.

Teamed with local branding firm The Felt Hat and recently adding Wieden+Kennedy's design director, John Jay, Center Stage has created a new "story committee" to position the theater as a more "civic" facility.

But rumors are afoot that Jay -- known for his groundbreaking collaborations with Tokyo artists while heading Wieden+Kennedy's Japanese office -- may be

helping to write the story to include more of Portland's creative communities in film and music.

Stay tuned for summer announcements and a fall 2006 opening.

-- Randy Gragg

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