

Three-story addition proposed for Pagoda

The landmark on Mount Penn would gain amenities under the plan, which also calls for the creation of a foundation to oversee the city-owned icon.

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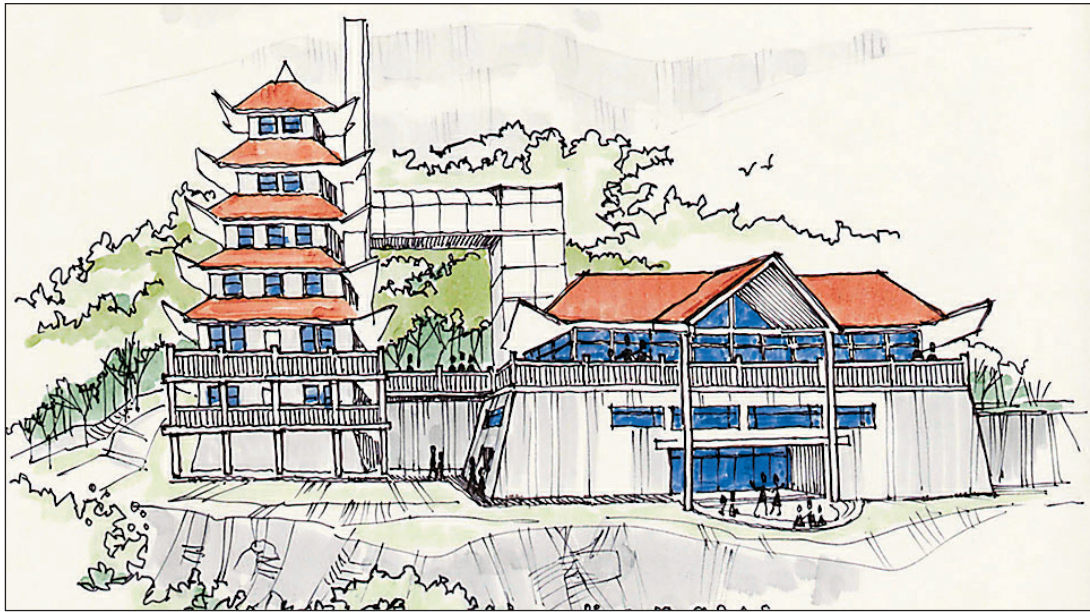
The groups that created the Pagoda Pennies Campaign to repair the city-owned landmark atop Mount Penn said Thursday that it's time to take the next step — a \$3 million, three-story addition featuring a restaurant and a glass-enclosed elevator to the Pagoda itself.

But they also want to create a new foundation, using the Reading Public Museum Foundation as a model, to oversee the 97-year-old Pagoda. The city would still own the Pagoda, but the new foundation would operate it.

"It's time for us to think big about this," said Reading Mayor Tom McMahon, who unveiled the new strategy at the Pagoda. "And this is the perfect time. People in the community are interested in saving our heritage.

"To make this a viable entity for the long term, we have to add something to it."

What is envisioned is an addition on a bluff just to the east so it wouldn't obstruct the



Courtesy of Olsen deTurck Architects

A drawing by city firm Olsen deTurck Architects shows a proposed three-story addition to the Pagoda that would include a cultural center, retail shops, a restaurant and an outdoor amphitheater.

Pagoda's main views to the west and south.

Its ground floor would house a cultural center and amphitheater and the first floor would contain retail shops.

But the emphasis would be on the second floor, which would feature a restaurant with indoor and outdoor dining, said Lee C. Olsen, president of Olsen deTurck Architects, Reading, which designed the addition.

Footbridges would connect the restaurant to the parking lot and to the same level of the Pagoda, where a sushi bar is planned.

Also, a glass-enclosed elevator would rise through the addition's roof up to the level of the second highest floor of the Pagoda.

A glass-enclosed walkway would lead visitors to the Pagoda.

The 72-foot-high Pagoda was built in 1908 by William A. Witman Sr., who intended it as a luxury hotel. It wasn't successful, and was given to the city on April 21, 1911.

Pagoda Skyline Inc. was formed in 1970 to oversee it, but President Michael Reinert said the volunteer group wants to be part of a larger organiza-

tion that can improve the Pagoda.

The Pagoda Pennies Campaign, launched last year by a committee composed of the city and a dozen businesses and community groups, so far has raised \$20,300 for various repairs.

The new foundation would take over the restoration of the Pagoda, as well as oversee fund-raising and construction of the addition.

McMahon said those funds would be raised through private and corporate donors.

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