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Village of Plain City Unveils Transformative Public Square Project with Purchase of Historic Railroad Depot

PLAIN CITY, OHIO – The Village of Plain City has announced the approval of the first phase of the visionary Public Square project, marking a significant step toward creating a unique community venue that celebrates the community’s rich heritage. The initial phase, known as The Depot at Public Square, involves the relocation of a historic railroad depot from the Upper Arlington, Ohio area to Plain City’s historic Uptown District.

With unanimous support from Plain City Village Council, the Village has closed on the purchase of the depot from the Fromm Family of Upper Arlington, Ohio. The 1,473-square foot depot was originally constructed in the 1880s in Brice, Ohio to serve the Shawnee and Columbus Railway. In 2004, the depot was relocated to Northwest Columbus where it underwent a meticulous reconstruction and restoration by Barry Fromm. Many of the original depot components were retained, including the original wooden walls and ceilings, while others were salvaged from other historical structures. The depot was the centerpiece of a larger rail collection, which also included three historic train cars that Barry restored and preserved. The depot and its rail collection served the community as a museum, meeting and event venue. Since the passing of Barry Fromm in 2018, Barry’s son Jordan Fromm, daughter-in-law Maria Fromm, Barry’s wife Lynda Fromm, Ralph Griffith, and the team at Value Recovery Group carefully set out to find new homes for these artifacts that would prioritize continued preservation of these historical assets.

The Fromm family selected Plain City to acquire the Depot based on Plain City’s vision for the Depot to serve in the Public Square project.

“A goal of staff and Council is to create unique gathering spaces in our Uptown district that complement our local businesses and landmarks of Plain City. I’m eager to see the addition of the Public Square project come to life and help round out our uptown amenities”, said Haley Lupton, Village Administrator.

Upon being dismantled and shipped to Plain City, the depot will serve as the cornerstone of the larger Public Square project, where it will provide space for events, visitor amenities, commercial ventures, and historical displays. Relocation is anticipated to occur in June with the facility opening to the public in early 2025.

When considering purchasing the depot, Village officials cited Plain City’s ties to the railroad industry, which dates back to July 4, 1853, when the first train passed through the community, then known as Pleasant Valley, on the Columbus & Indiana Central Railway (a predecessor of the Pennsylvania Railroad and later, Conrail). It later hosted the Abraham Lincoln Funeral Train in 1865. By the late 1800s, Plain City was one of the leading stations in Ohio for shipping livestock. Large corrals in the community held cattle, sheep, and hogs. Items from all over the country could be shipped in as well, for example, stores in town frequently advertised fresh oysters for sale, brought in from the east coast. In addition to the economic advantages provided by the railroad, it also served as an important link to Columbus and points beyond. After passenger service ended in the 1940s, the Village’s original depot was demolished in the 1960s. The final train passed through Plain City on July 17, 1986.

The location of the depot, and the Public Square project, pays homage to Plain City’s rich history. Historical maps from 1862 and 1875 reveal that the area slated for the Public Square project was referred to as "Public Square." Positioned at the corner of East Bigelow Avenue and Church Street, this site served as the original location for Plain City’s town hall, fire department, school, and other early community buildings. Currently owned by the Village, the site is undergoing preparation, including the addition of a new public parking lot. The name "Public Square" for this project is not only due to its location on the historically recognized public square but also because public squares have always been significant spaces for community engagement.

"The vision for the Depot and Public Square brings excitement to our town and solidifies a place to gather as a community for many years to come", said Mayor Jody Carney.

FUTURE PHASES

Beyond the depot, future phases of the Public Square project will unveil The Park at Public Square. This outdoor gathering space will include a splash pad, children’s play area, trailhead, event space, fire pit, and inviting seating areas. Looking ahead, there are plans to repurpose an existing historical building into The Marketplace at Public Square. This indoor marketplace will offer dedicated space for seasonal vendors, small businesses, and a variety of community events. These phases will occur as funding becomes available.

The Public Square project is a testament to Plain City's commitment to fostering economic growth and community engagement. Recognizing the importance of preserving and honoring history, and building connections to its past as the community continues to grow, Plain City embraces this initiative as a meaningful step towards a vibrant and connected future.

For more information about Public Square and updates on future phases, please visit www.plain-city.com/public-square.



Public Square – Conceptual Renderings

Also available online: www.plain-city.com/public-square





Brice, Ohio Rail Depot - Modern and Historical Photos

