

Former Downtown fire station to ignite musical creativity

MICHAEL WADDELL | TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2017



Downtown's historic former Memphis Fire Station No. 3, which dates back to the early 1900s when firefighters still used horse-drawn carriages, will see new life soon, as renovation work is underway for the building's new tenant, the Memphis Music Initiative nonprofit.

MMI signed a lease earlier this month, and developer Orgel Family LLC is spearheading the buildout for them. Orgel bought the 10,000-square-foot building more than two years ago.

In addition to serving as a firehouse in its earlier days, the building was also used as a recording studio, 3 Alarm Studios, in the mid-1980s and more recently in 2015 as a spot for a beer garden, known as the Memphis Firehaus.

MMI focuses on music education for black and Latino youth in high-poverty communities, with an emphasis on sparking excitement about music as an art form and helping them to cultivate their talents.

"Obviously this is a great location at the gateway to Beale Street next to the FedEx Forum," said Jimmie Tucker, partner with Self+Tucker Architects. "We're excited that they're going to use it as both an administrative office and as well as a space for some of the innovative programming that they do."

Self+Tucker Architects created the building designs and Metro Construction is handling the construction work.

The building is scheduled to be ready for move-in by early 2018.

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“We want to respect the character of the historic building but also come in with an innovative use of the interior space,” said Tucker.

The total interior renovation features designs for exposed ductwork in the high ceilings and vibrant use of color. All new mechanical systems, electrical, plumbing and an elevator will be installed.

“We’re also trying to incorporate sustainability where it’s appropriate, such as recycled materials, low-flow fixtures and energy-efficient mechanical systems,” said Tucker. “We’re looking at ways to maintain the historic doors on the front of the building that were there when it was used as a firehouse.”

Right now there is hardly any glass in the doors. Tucker plans to incorporate glass if possible so people can see into the space from the street and allow some natural light inside

“It will have a very open floor plan, with one of the larger rooms available to be subdivided, so there will be a great deal of flexibility with how that space can be used,” said Tucker