

Restoration complete on Stone Avenue station



The newly restored 1901 Stone Avenue train station in west suburban La Grange. (Joseph Ruzich, for the Chicago Tribune)

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The historic Stone Avenue train station in La Grange, which was built in 1901, has been restored to its original glory, leaving those standing near its sparkling limestone archways in awe at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday.

The \$1.1 million restoration began about 10 months ago, but planning and fundraising began as far back as 2006, according to village officials.

Dozens of village and state officials attended the ceremony including U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski, D-Ill., who helped secure \$700,000 in federal funds for the project.

"It's a beautiful historic station, but it had fallen into a state of (disrepair)," Lipinski said. "As you go along the (BNSF train) line here, this is the station that, thank God, nobody ever knocked down. It is really something special."

La Grange officials also received other grants for the project including a \$385,000 grant obtained in 2006 from the West Suburban Mass Transit District. The village in the mid-2000s paid \$49,000 to Legat Architects of Chicago for design plans.

Marc Rohde, director of governmental architecture for Legat, said that the project was a complete restoration intended to show off the building's original early 20th century designs.

"The goal was to make it look like it did in 1901 or maybe even a little bit better," Rohde said. "The priority was also to fix the station so it would last another 100 or so years."

Rohde said the project included cleaning the limestone, painting, new gutters, roofing and making sure the building would not retain water. The project also included restoring a shelter area on the outbound side of the tracks, Rohde said.

Village officials said many of the station's original designs were altered in the 1960s. Legat officials and the village reviewed the station's original design and construction plans, which were found in 2008 at the La Grange Area Historical Society Museum at 444 S. La Grange Road.

The village also plans to move forward with additional work in the vicinity of the Stone Avenue train station including parking improvements, mobility improvements and increasing bicycle parking on both sides of the tracks.

The village will fund the additional projects using a \$48,010 grant from the West Suburban Mass Transit District and a \$308,100 grant from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

The station was originally designed by prominent La Grange architect John Tilton, according to the Historical Society officials. The structure's limestone came from a quarry not far from the station. Tilton apparently took design elements for the Stone Avenue station from the north suburban Kenilworth train station, which was designed and built in 1891 by architect Franklin Burnham, of no relation to famed Chicago architect Daniel Burnham.

La Grange Society officials said that Tilton, a graduate of Cornell University, also designed the gothic Emmanuel Episcopal Church at 203 S. Kensington Ave., along with several homes in La Grange.

The train station was designated a village landmark in 1971.

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