

THE DAILY ORANGE

**Abandoned train station
platform in Syracuse to be
given \$1.5 million
renovation**



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The abandoned train station platform in downtown Syracuse alongside Route 690 is being renovated for the first time since its closing in 1962.

The project, which is scheduled to begin in mid-March, is an effort to revitalize the historical landmark. The Department of Transportation has dedicated \$1.5 million to the renovation.

The significance of the project is linked to the history behind the train station. Matt Driscoll, former mayor and Department of Transportation commissioner, told Syracuse.com that it is a “gateway” to the community and follows New York state Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s plan to improve living conditions across New York state.

Some of the most well-known aspects of the station are the white statues of people waiting for a train that never arrives. The statues can be seen by the platform on Route 690. The question about what to do with the white statues has yet to be answered.

“Either we’re going to have put a hardhat on them or we’re going to move them,” Driscoll said in an interview with Syracuse.com. “It’s doubtful they’ll stay there. We want it to go back to the historic look.”

The statues, which were created by public artists “Duke” Epolito Sr. and Larry Zankowski in 1982, according to Syracuse.com., deserve to be in a better place, said Sarah Kozma, research specialist at the Onondaga Historical Association.

“If they need to be moved to preserve them, that would be the best thing,” Kozma said.

Michael Fong, sculptor and digital fabrication adjunct professor at Syracuse University’s School of Art, said the removal of the statues from the platform in favor of new renovations would strip the statues — and the platform — of their historic value.

The statues are narratives that tell the story of the post industrial history of Syracuse, Fong said. To Fong, the platform should be protected, not restored.

“In some sense, it’s like it would be polishing out our history,” he said. “It seems like a sanitization, to clean up something that has been there for so long, and that’s not what’s been happening (to the city).”

Kozma said the platform is a unique aspect of Syracuse’s history. In its heyday, it was one of the only elevated subway terminal stations left in the country since other states had already phased out the train in favor of highways and other modes of transportation, she said. This makes the platform a direct link to the industrial age of Syracuse’s past, she added.

The renovation could increase the city’s moral, Kozma said.

“When the city is taken care of, the people take notice,” she said. “It gives a boost to the people who live there.”

Some community members do not agree with Cuomo’s view of the project, though.

In letters to the editor at Syracuse.com, many said the money being used to renovate the train station platform could be used to help the city instead.

One Onondaga citizen wrote that Cuomo should use the money to repair the sewers and water lines in the city instead. Another citizen wrote that the state’s priority should be on the living conditions for the citizens of Syracuse.

The platform is being renovated for aesthetic and safety purposes, as well. Kozma said it has been an “eyesore” and added that it is not the best way to welcome the number of cars that drive on that highway per day, which is 127,000 on average, according to the DOT. She added that she would like to see it dressed up, as if it were a welcoming sign to the city.

Alternatively, because of the platform’s current dilapidated state, Kozma said it could become a danger to those who travel on Route 690 and live near the platform if it is not renovated.

The majority of the renovations include cleaning and repairing the existing steel structures and replacing the tin roof over the station with fiberglass, according to Syracuse.com. The chain link fence will also be replaced with ornamental fencing. In addition, because the station is so close to the highway, the grass is also being replaced by gravel, Driscoll said.

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