

# Rotary Club: 'Why not this project?'

By Brenden West Assistant Editor | Posted: Tuesday, April 7, 2015 6:00 am

CLINTON — It's hard to miss the enthusiasm when Dee Willoughby — Clinton Rotary Club Fundraising Chairman — speaks about the Eagle Point Park Lodge. To him, it says as much about Clinton as any community asset.

“This is the lodge,” Willoughby said Friday within the lodge's confines. “Everyone knows about the lodge.”

To the east lies the Mississippi River, a scenic annual draw for visitors outside the Gateway area.

Surrounding the lodge is timber that reminds people how Clinton gained momentum as a Midwest intersection of industry.

As for the lodge, Willoughby said it's time the community restore a piece of its heritage. Built as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project under the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, the facility has long served as a tourist driver.

There's enormous potential for more, said Willoughby. On Friday, his audience contained leaders from the business, tourism and government sectors. Willoughby pitched to them Rotary's latest undertaking, celebrating the club's 100-year anniversary.

“It's an old building that just needs a little bit of loving,” Willoughby said. “There are a lot of people who have already caught the vision for this project and have already invested a lot of time and energy in the project.”

It's a \$1 million fund-raising campaign that will deliver upgrades surrounding all sides of the lodge and significant touch ups to the interior. Part of Rotary's project seems ambitious — the club wants to cap off its campaign by June 30.

But until now, Rotary has only quietly sought support. And it has already raised nearly \$100,000 as well as \$90,000 worth of in-kind donations from the city of Clinton, which owns the land. So, Willoughby asked, why wait?



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Brenden West/Clinton Herald  
Clinton Rotary Fundraising Committee Chairman  
Dee Willoughby (left) shares his club's vision for the Eagle Point Park Lodge on Friday to numerous community leaders. The \$1 million campaign is part of Rotary's 100-year celebration.

On Friday, Willoughby was able to showcase numerous mockups that demonstrate exactly what Rotary has in mind for the lodge. And he has recruited interest from contractors and several other supporters who “feel the vision.”

“Dollars follow vision. Vision doesn’t follow dollars,” he said. “The reality is we’re going to get this project done... I’m not going to talk about it for 10 years.”

If the project shapes up as planned, Rotary will cap off the campaign by July and set in motion renovation this coming fall. By next spring, a fresh-look lodge that accentuates Clinton’s lumber history could be unveiled, enhancing Eagle Point Park’s potential.

This will include a new-look fireplace; lighter, newer interior and exterior woodwork; upgraded lighting; remodeled restrooms; space for bridal preparation (for weddings); a modern exterior “lodge” renovation; aesthetic facade improvements; and an expanded stone veranda overlooking the river.

To Willoughby, the need is certainly there. He estimated the lodge is used 250 to 300 times per year. The renovations would create better dining capabilities and revitalize Clinton’s most picturesque view of the Mississippi.

Clinton’s leaders can go a long way generating the support. If the community has a need to advance its prized park, Willoughby asked his audience “why not” do it at the lodge?

“You need some champions for a project like this,” he said. “When (champions) speak, people listen... The reality is, let’s get at it.”

Contributions to the 100-year Rotary Campaign can be made to the Gateway Area Foundation. For more information on the project, contact the Rotary Club at (563) 241-1490.

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