

532 Hill: The Back Story

Ready. Set.

Let's go!

2025:

Select Design Build Team

Renovate Space

Review/Update Operating Plan



The space in action: Grafton Beautification Committee's Community Wall Mural Painting Party August 2024

In late 2021, the Red River Regional Council (RRRC) identified the potential of securing federal funds to support the long-held dream of converting of a vacant building into a business incubator to energize entrepreneurship and provide hub for innovators, creators, makers, and the community to gather - together in an intentional, low risk, programmed space.

The space would include shared use commercial kitchen, conference spaces, gathering space, co-work space, mini retail shop spaces, and offices.

This was one of those rare opportunities to potentially leverage 80% federal funds through the US Department of Commerce: Economic Development Administration (EDA) due to the COVID disaster.

The RRRC team developed the feasibility analysis and business plan, environmental review, and grant application; rallied letters of support and partnership; and Prairie Centre Architecture completed a preliminary architectural report.

Over a four-day span in January 2022, the RRRC, the Walsh County Job Development Authority, City of Grafton, Marvin, and Polar Communications made commitments in excess of \$600,000.

And the federal ask was submitted near midnight on January 28, 2022.

In early fall 2022, the EDA approved the request for \$1.6 million.

Next Steps

The building was purchased by the City of Grafton and donated to the RRRC. Building design was completed by ICON Architecture and **the project was bid twice in 2023**. The first bid far exceeded the budget. Only a mechanical bid was received the second round. **Back to the drawing board. Again.**

In mid-2023, the **RRRC became a partner in the North Central USDA Food Business Center as part of a three-state initiative** aimed at local foods development for the next five years. Meanwhile, the RRRC applied for several additional grants and was **awarded \$250,000 from the U.S. Bank Foundation** in early 2024 and featured in a national newsletter. An alternative location was reviewed but sold before a feasibility analysis could be completed. Work continued to develop a viable plan to proceed as there was a risk of losing the \$1.6 million grant. In November 2024, **EDA issued a rare approval to proceed with a design-build contract** where the designer and builder are identified and create a project within budget. **The RRRC also hired Brenda Baumann, Envision Consulting and Planning, to assist as Project Manager, given her similar, successful work in Warroad, MN.**

2025: A year of activity

Q1 Solicit and Select Design/Build Team

A Request for Qualifications will be released in Dec/Jan with the intention of selecting the team late January. Proceeding promptly in design, estimating, seek EDA's review and approval of the plans/budget. Create list of alternates if necessary to keep project within budget.

Q2-Q4 Renovate Space

Enlist construction advisor to assist with renovation oversight on behalf of the RRRC and other subject matter experts as needed. Weekly/bi-weekly meetings throughout the construction period with RRRC, project manager, construction advisor and design/build team.

Q2-Q4 Refresh Operational Plan + Hire Leader

Review existing plan for any shifts. Research, potential client gatherings and co-creating, establish programming partnerships, consider additional hubs in the region, identify potential additional funding sources, community education and project updates, and naming and branding.

Contact: Dawn Mandt, Executive Director, Dawn@redriverrc.com, 701-352-3550
or Brenda Baumann, Project Manager, Brenda@redriverrc.com