



A New Twist on an Old Tale: Historic Phoenix Building Rises From the Flood

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Grand Forks County, North Dakota

Grand Forks, ND - There must be something magical about the name "Phoenix." In mythology, the phoenix bird dies a fiery death every 100 years and a new bird rises from the ashes.

In downtown Grand Forks, North Dakota, a historic structure rebuilt in 1898 after a fire the year before - and renamed Phoenix as a result - is being reborn after nearly being destroyed by the record 1997 Red River Valley flood.



This time, the new Phoenix will be better able to withstand another flood, thanks to disaster-resistance measures being put in place. Considered a significant part of Grand Forks' commercial development in the early 1900s, the buildings were deemed important to save when this city began rebuilding after the 1997 flood.

The project includes an empty lot and three buildings: the Phoenix, which originally housed a dry goods store and was the premier commercial structure at the time, a building built in 1931 for the Red River Power Company and the Panovitz Building, custom-built in 1904 as a furniture store. The empty lot housed a fourth building, rebuilt in 1951 for a department store, which was torn down by the city after the flood because of major damage.

To begin the project, the partners purchased the three flood-ravaged buildings and the empty lot for \$20,000. With the help of a \$1.1 million Community Development Block Grant and another \$1.5 million in cash and loans, the partners will spend nearly \$3 million to recreate the historic block.

To protect that investment and to reduce the damage potential from flooding, several special features are being installed. In the Phoenix and Panovitz buildings, which anchor each end of the project, new structural supports have been added and the existing basements have been eliminated.

Because the buildings are considered historic, local floodplain ordinances do not require they be elevated. Raising the buildings would be cost prohibitive and extremely difficult structurally.

A new building is being constructed on the empty lot to fill the space between the Phoenix and the Red River Power Company buildings. Because the new building has to meet current floodplain requirements, the structure primarily will house a parking garage with a small commercial area in front and two apartments on the second floor. A waterproof membrane will be installed both under the main floor and 24 inches up the walls to floodproof the building. There will not be a basement.

The flood-resistant measures for the historic renovation project have added only about \$130,000 to the overall cost. The majority of that expense is related to eliminating the basements.

When the historic renovation project was completed in January 2001, it joined the ever-growing disaster-resistance efforts in a city that was once brought to its knees by a devastating flood and fire.

And the Phoenix rose yet again.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region VIII**

State: **North Dakota**

County: **Grand Forks County**

City/Community: **Grand Forks**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Flood Control**

Activity/Project Start Date: **03/2000**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

Funding Source: **Local Sources**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$3,000,000.00 (Estimated)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1174 , 04/07/1997**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **<http://www.floodsmart.gov/>**

Reference URL 2: **<http://www.state.nd.us/dem/>**

Main Points

- In downtown Grand Forks, North Dakota, a historic structure rebuilt in 1898 after a fire the year before - and renamed Phoenix as a result - is being reborn after being nearly destroyed by the record 1997 Red River Valley flood.
- This time, the new Phoenix will be better able to withstand another flood, thanks to disaster-resistance measures being put in place.
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