

There's a new Pig in town

Pig'N Pancake breathes life into Newport's historic city hall building

by NIKI PRICE
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Hungry travelers who stop for a bite at the newest Pig'N Pancake restaurant, at Alder Street and Hwy. 101 in Newport, are no doubt expecting more of the same. The same tasty pancakes, the same hearty sandwiches and the same friendly service they've enjoyed in the original in Seaside, or in Astoria, Cannon Beach, Portland or Lincoln City.

They'll get all that, of course, but in an atmosphere that is decidedly different. For their sixth Pig'N Pancake restaurant, the Poole family chose to lease and renovate one of the oldest buildings in town, the former Newport City Hall, circa 1925. The exterior of this historic building, which is part of the city's downtown Art Deco District, now features a peach and terra cotta paint scheme, a custom-made neon Pig'N Pancake sign, and wall murals of "The Professor," a stylish pig with a top hat, posing in front of Newport's Yaquina Bay Bridge.

Inside, this two-story structure has been transformed from small office spaces, old jail cells and fire engine bays into a 2,100-square-foot dining room with adjoining kitchen, lobby and restrooms. The staircase and elevator on the west side were removed, and a new elevator was installed on the north side, near the original Alder Street entrance. It has all new, insulated windows and a covered entrance off the main parking area, to the south. The interior décor features booths in teal, cream and brown, art glass light fixtures and coastal photography by Laren Woolley.

The project, which included upgraded office spaces on the second floor, was accomplished in about nine months. The restaurant opened for business on Jan. 4.

"This has definitely been a new experience for us. We've never taken on a project this complex before," said project director Zach Poole. "But we have always felt that this is a win-win situation. Not only is it the right place for our restaurant, it's an opportunity for us to help revitalize the Deco District and offers jobs for the Newport community. We're very excited to be here."

Breakfast hotspot is just the latest incarnation for this City Hall, which was built with a bond measure and dedicated on Dec. 30, 1925. Remodeled in 1969, it hosted a changing variety of city offices, including police, fire and water departments, as well as the council chamber and jail. Around the turn of the 21st century, the City of Newport finally outgrew its longtime home and migrated north to the larger Naterlin Center. The last city council meeting in the historic Alder Street hall was held on Aug. 19, 2002.

After that, its future seemed uncertain. The Lincoln County School District, from its headquarters just across the street, announced it planned to lease the former city hall and consolidate several county-wide offices in Newport. The Lincoln County Historical Society, located in the Burrows House just across the parking lot, considered turning the city hall into an expanded museum.

But neither arrangement came to pass, and the old city hall stood vacant until May 2007, when Zach Poole

brought his Pig'N Pancake proposal to the Newport City Council.

The Poole family's interest in a central coast location coincided with a renewed interest in the architectural heritage of Newport's City Center, on Hwy. 101 between Fall and Angle streets. This area flourished after the completion of the Yaquina Bay Bridge, in 1936, and contains many buildings with architectural details consistent with the reigning style of the period: Art Deco. With support from the City of Newport, Deco devotees began to recruit business owners to restore their facades using period colors and designs. The City Center Newport Association created a walking tour and hosts a Deco Film Series in the jewel of the district, the restored 1936 movie theater now called The Ark. Starting in 2008, the City of Newport began to advertise the Deco District, along with the Bayfront, South Beach and Nye Beach neighborhoods, as one of its four tourist destinations.

The Pig'N Pancake renovation was a collaboration from the beginning. The City of Newport offered a long-term lease so that it could retain some control over the landmark's design and condition. In addition to working with a professional designer, Cynthia Quade, Zach Poole listened to suggestions from other business owners in the Deco District. In the end, Poole showed three different designs around the community, and chose the one he thought was most universally pleasing.

"And everyone seems to really like it. They like the way it turned out, and so do we," Poole said.

Pig'N Pancake may be a rookie in Newport, but it's a company with more than 48 years' experience serving the Oregon coast. The legacy began in May 1961, when Bob and Marianne Poole took \$100 in cash and \$2,000 worth of borrowed equipment to start a breakfast restaurant in Seaside. The first Pig'N Pancake had seating for 35 and closed each day at 2 p.m., so that the Italian restaurant could open for dinner in the same space.

But their menu — including signature buttermilk, Swedish, sourdough and French batter pancakes — was a big success, and the Pig began to grow. The original Seaside building has been expanded and remodeled a number of times, and today offers a large gift shop, meeting space and seating for 240. The Astoria Pig'N Pancake, located in the Union Town District, opened in 1967. The Cannon Beach location opened in 1997, followed by the Lincoln City Pig'N Pancake in 2006.

All the restaurants feature the same menu, with



Newport's former city hall, built in 1925, is now home to the 18th Pig'N Pancake restaurant on the coast. The project was designed to reflect the architectural heritage of Newport's Deco District, and was planned with cooperation from the City Center Newport Association. On Feb. 23, CCNA board of directors presented Pig'N Pancake project director Zach Poole with a sign of welcome and appreciation. Pictured are, from left: Pete McKelman, Ken Irwin, Stan Flaws, John DeFrancisco, Becky Glenn, Zach Poole, Priscilla Klein and Mike Larsen (contributed photo).

pancakes, waffles, omelettes, burgers, salads and soups, as well as seafood faves like crab and cheese melts, fish and chips and razor clam breakfasts. They specialize in clean, family-friendly restaurants with a varied menu and affordable prices.

The Pig'N Pancake approach, inside a revitalized Newport landmark, has been well-received thus far, Poole said.

"This is such a nice community, with a lot of really nice people. They've given us a warm welcome." ☺

The Newport Pig'N Pancake, on Hwy. 101 at 810 SW Alder in the Deco District, is open daily from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. To learn more, call the restaurant at 541-263-9065 or head to www.pignpancake.com.

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