

# Stimulus money fuels PSU's Lincoln Hall renovation

Removal of a heating plant from the basement allows for a project reconfiguration

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A small investment in new windows is paying big dividends as Portland State University overhauls its oldest and arguably most beloved building, Lincoln Hall.

Early plans to catch up on long-deferred maintenance were turbocharged this spring when the state of Oregon awarded \$1.5 million in "Go Oregon" stimulus funds. The money is being used to replace 326 failing and leaky windows in Lincoln Hall, which was originally constructed in 1911.

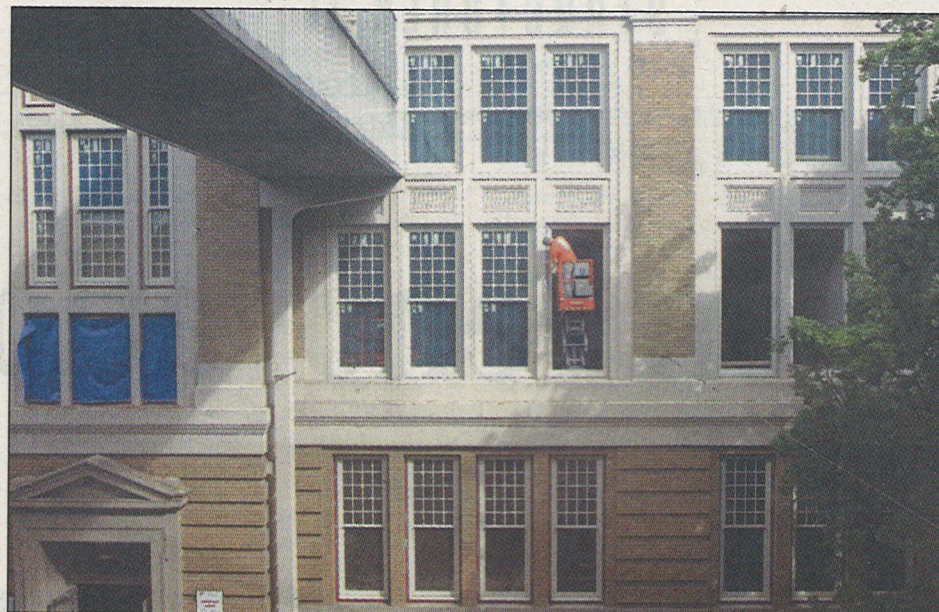
Compared to the original budget of \$29 million, the window money seems like pocket change. It isn't. The new windows, unlike the ones they replace, are so efficient that they altered the building's power requirements.

The efficiency gains invited architects and engineers to re-imagine Lincoln Hall without the massive heating system it needed to warm the building. Instead of keeping the outsized gear in Lincoln's basement and in a secondary location on the top floor, engineers downsized the equipment and shifted much of it to the roof. That freed up space inside the building.

Lincoln was built as the original home of Lincoln High School and became PSU's first stop in downtown when the school relocated from Vanport in 1953.

The renovation, now up to \$34 million, is half way toward a fall 2010 completion. It would cost an estimated \$100 million to build Lincoln Hall from scratch.

In the 40 years since the hall's last update, tight budgets led to deferred maintenance



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Portland State's Lincoln Hall suffered from decades of deferred maintenance

that took its toll on every aspect of the building, which serves the university's theater and music students. The roof was failing, performance spaces didn't accommodate people with disabilities and different performing groups essentially competed for limited space, severely limiting their ability to actually perform.

Removing asbestos has been one of the biggest challenges for engineers, architects and contractors, said Ron Blaj, project manager for J.J. Henri Co. Inc., a Tualatin firm hired by PSU to manage the Lincoln Hall renovations.

Lincoln was last updated in the 1970s

## Lincoln Hall renovation

**Cost:** \$34 million

**Project manager:**

J.J. Henri Co.

**Architect:** BOORA

Architects Inc.

**General contractor:**

Howard S. Wright  
Constructors

before cancer-causing asbestos was banned in the United States. As a result, the material was sprinkled liberally throughout the 145,000-square-foot building. It was in the plumbing, the insulation and the roof. Removing it cost nearly \$2.3 million, or 6.6 percent of the project total. PSU received funds from an asbestos lawsuit that is helping pay for the abatement work.

When Lincoln reopens in a year, it will have two fully renovated performance spaces, one for the opera program and another for a recital hall on the floor directly above.

The new opera theater will have three times more space for musicians than the old one. Barbara Sestak, dean of PSU's School of Fine and Performing Arts, said that means opera students will be able to stage a full range of productions instead of the limited versions now.

Seating is being reconfigured too to better accommodate visitors who use wheelchairs.

The old theater seats, dilapidated and oversized, are gone. New, modern ones are narrower, which means seating for 225 people, 25 more than before.

The band room will see daylight for the first time. The room's old windows were covered for noise purposes. That's no longer necessary, Blaj said.

The overall project will improve the layout and flow of the building, but a pair of light wells carved on either side of the two performing spaces promises to be the most noticeable change. The light wells will bring natural light to the building's deepest recesses. They were there originally, but were filled in over the years to gain floor space.

Before they're sealed in by new skylights, the light wells will play an important role in Lincoln's seismic update, as a series of steel braces will be dropped in place through the wells.

The seismic upgrade also involved excavating tons of material from below the basement. A series of four walls that extend from the basement to the rooftop will also help stabilize Lincoln.

One of the smallest updates promises to be among the most visible.

An elegant but motionless clock over Lincoln's main entrance has been broken for as long as anyone seems able to recall. It's a small thing, but the clock will work again, Blaj said.