

Denton Record-Chronicle

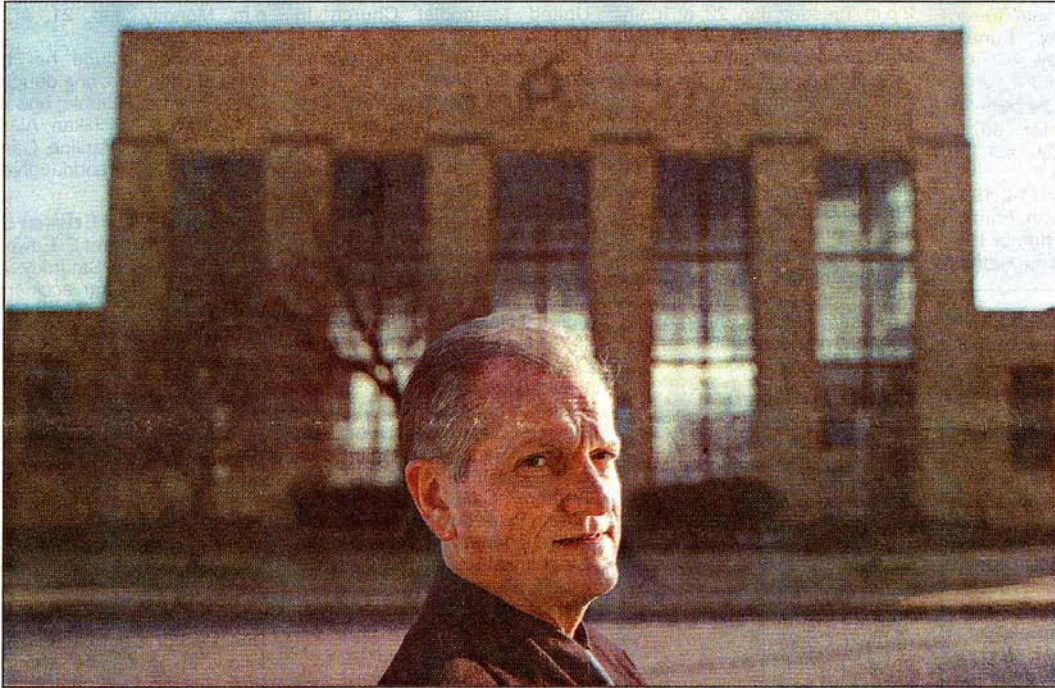
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Denton architect James Kirkpatrick stands in front of the old city power plant at the corner of East Hickory Street and Bell Avenue, a building that will be renovated into a new Central Fire Station under his design.

Project a dream for architect

By Donna Fielder
Staff Writer

The "power house" glittered with lights and rumbled with the sound of powerful engines when James Kirkpatrick was a child. He can't wait to see and hear the building when it lives again.

Mr. Kirkpatrick, a Denton architect, fought to be the man who would design the reincarnation of the old city-owned building on Bell Avenue at Hickory Street. Drawing the plans to turn the yellow-brick shell into a new Central Fire Station has been gratifying, he said.

The rusty steel doors in front will be reworked. The clock above them will again tell the time. The steel windows will remain, though some that are broken will have to be replaced.

Lights again will glitter, this time from the emergency bars

"We've tried to maintain the existing integrity of the building."

**James Kirkpatrick,
architect**

across the tops of the fire apparatus whose powerful engines will rumble through the reborn building.

"We've tried to maintain the existing integrity of the building," Mr. Kirkpatrick said.

"Should we want to go for a national historical designation, we've not done anything to preclude that."

Many builders have bid on the project. The city will open bids Thursday, and the council will

approve the top bidder March 5. Construction will begin immediately thereafter.

Mr. Kirkpatrick, a Denton native, remembers how exciting it was to visit the city power plant when he was small. A few years ago, he tried to buy it with the idea of keeping its historic presence while turning it into an office building.

The city wanted to retain the building. So when he learned it was to become a fire station, he bid on the architectural job. A committee voted to go instead with an architect who has planned many fire stations.

He wouldn't give up.

The project needed a local planner, he absolutely believed, and the city council agreed with him.

Members voted to retain him, and he agreed to use a consultant who had experience with fire stations. He also worked with a committee of firefighters who told him just the way they needed their station to be designed.

The result is a plan that reflects Mr. Kirkpatrick's passion for the building and its history, while turning the old building into a modern fire station. Fire Chief Ross Chadwick said he is excited about the project. He and other administration officers, along with the members of the Fire Marshal's office, will have offices on the second floor of the main structure. "The station has been designed with the future in mind and has the capacity to comfortably hold 14 firefighters," he said.

When it opens, it will house eight firefighters. Four will ride the big ladder truck; three will ride an engine, and the shift boss, the battalion chief, will also live and work there. The building should be ready in March 2003, he said.

Denton has a few female firefighters. One of them served on the design committee, Chief Chadwick said, so privacy issues were addressed. Since firefighters work 24-hour shifts, they sleep at their stations when they're not on a call. The new building will have a full kitchen and quarters for the battalion chief, and the sleeping room will have seven-foot divider walls between cubicles.

The main part of the building will have a 1,900-square-foot training room, with a small kitchen, that will be available to the public as a community room, the fire chief said.

An addition will be constructed on the south side of the new station. It will have five bays to hold the engines and trucks.

Mr. Kirkpatrick credits the firefighters with the design of the bay area that allows the apparatus to drive through. They will enter the building from Mulberry Street, and when they get a call, they will exit onto Bell Avenue.

There already is a traffic light at the Hickory/Bell intersection. Another traffic light will be placed at the Mulberry/Bell intersection. When firefighters leave the station on a call, they will use a remote-control device that will stop traffic in all directions to allow safe entry.

"I am very excited about having a state-of-the-art fire station," Chief Chadwick said.