

Small Community Award: Heartwood Center



When

Mark and Susie Kubiak decided to purchase the historic 1908 St. Joseph Catholic Church in Sandpoint, they were faced with the difficult task of deciding how to adapt the very distinct layout and space of a church into another use.

The layout made residential reuse impossible, and the couple felt that downtown Sandpoint would not be well served by the addition of another commercial building. Their goal was “to save the building from demolition, to save the trees, and save the feeling and history of this community building for the future residents of Sandpoint.” To that end, it eventually became apparent that the best use for the old church would be to maintain it as an assembly space for Sandpoint. And thus the Heartwood Center was born.

In renovating the building, great care was given to maintaining its historical aesthetic. The image of the original chapel interior and exterior was maintained, and a new entry lobby was built to reflect the original architecture. The final plan also preserved all of the large trees and open space that surrounds the building while implementing





new landscaping features—such as a storm-water management system—to make the building more energy efficient and environmentally friendly. Jeremy Grimm is the planning and community development director of the city of Sandpoint, and a member of the awards jury. He recused himself from deliberation but later said, “The resulting remodel of the facility provides a stunning example which leaves both visitors and passersby breathless, and in awe of the transformation of both the natural space and physical structure.” Other jury members noted that this is a project that makes no conventional economic sense, yet creates great value for the community.

Today, the Heartwood Center serves as a community gathering place, just as it did for the 100-plus years prior to its renovation. The center routinely hosts theatrical groups and business seminars, and is the premier space for Sandpoint weddings and holiday parties.

Additionally, its location on the city’s main east-to-west bicycle route and its proximity to Sandpoint’s main commercial street is a major boost to the level of activity in the neighborhood, making it a more walkable and bikeable space that encourages community involvement.

