

The Columbus Dispatch

By [Mark Ferenchik](#)

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Demolition threatens original Port Columbus terminal

Some hope to save historic structure, but they have yet to find any funding

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The old airport terminal has a leaky roof that is creating a mold problem, but advocates hope to gain funding, repair the building and have offices move in once again. If no other solution can be found, officials have said they will demolish it.

A group working to restore the original Port Columbus terminal continues to knock on doors to seek money for the project.

Renovating the terminal, which was dedicated 85 years ago this week, is estimated to cost \$1.2 million to \$2.4 million. So far, the group has found no funding.

“We’ve been talking to developers, potential users,” said Mike Peppe, a [real-estate developer who is helping to lead the effort to restore the building](#) at 4920 E. 5th Ave.

The terminal [opened on July 8, 1929, the inaugural day of Transcontinental Air Transport](#).

Passengers boarded a Pennsylvania Railroad train in New York City, which whisked them to the new Port Columbus terminal, where they boarded a plane that took them to Waynoka, Okla. There, they boarded another train to Clovis, N.M., and then a plane to Los Angeles to complete their journey.

The terminal served air passengers until 1958, when the current Port Columbus terminal opened. Businesses moved into the old building, but it has been vacant in recent years. A leaky roof has turned the interior into a mold incubator.

In May, [Columbus Landmarks named the terminal one of the area's 13 most-endangered buildings.](#) “There’s nothing else like it,” said Ed Lentz, executive director of Columbus Landmarks. “It is a very strong, sturdy building.”

He thinks it could once again house offices.

Those hoping to save the terminal have contacted William J. Riat, a partner at Columbus developer Casto, about getting involved. Don M. Casto, another partner in the company, is a member of the Columbus Regional Airport Authority board. However, Riat said he couldn’t discuss the project yet.

The Columbus Regional Airport Authority owns the building and land. Officials said they will demolish the building if no solution is found, but they are willing to work with the preservation group.

The terminal is on the National Register of Historic Places, but that doesn’t prevent the building from being razed.

“Hopefully, somebody can come up with a solution,” said Robin Holderman, the airport authority’s chief asset and development officer. “So far, no one’s been able to make the economics work.”

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