

Brothers envision grand things ahead for old Armory

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By **Kelly Wilson**

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Scott and Antony Wollaston hope to turn the first floor of the old Armory building at 416 Jersey into premium office space.

The brothers bought the building in late 2004, but just recently began renovations on the first floor in hopes of enticing a tenant, perhaps two, to the 9,000-square-foot space.

"The style of the building is very grand and our plans are to make the lobby look really neat so someone can come in and visualize what it can be like," Scott Wollaston said. "We hope to have something over the next couple months, something that's viewable."

Wollaston said the building isn't suited for retail, but would work well as office space.

"We're looking for the lawyer or investment firm types," he said. "It would help the downtown area in terms of bringing more premium office space in the area and increasing traffic."

Wollaston emphasizes, though, that he and his brother are flexible and may consider other uses.

He says the space would work best for a single tenant — "so they could have this grand lobby for their business ... the lobby itself will be quite unique in terms of its grandeur. We're trying to keep the old charm of the building."

Crews began work this month to revamp the lobby area. The renovation includes new electrical work, a new concrete floor, new paint and various other projects.

"Structurally ... it's built very well. But it's been sitting dilapidated for a long time now, and it needs to be updated," Wollaston said.

The Wollastons are considering turning the second floor into upper-priced condominiums. "But that depends on the type of tenant on the main floor," Wollaston said.

The building was first home to the Fifth Infantry Armory, which was dedicated in October 1915.

According to "Landrum's Quincy, Volume 2," the building housed offices of the commanding officer of the Fifth Regiment, Col. Frank S. Wood, and his adjutant, as well as Companies F and I of the Illinois National Guard and Naval Reserve Unit.

The Fifth Regiment Band had a room in the building, along with the Grand Army of the Republic.

After that, according to Landrum's book, the facility was used for countless basketball games, automobile and poultry shows, dances and musical shows.

The building's history isn't lost on the current owners.

"We wanted to own a building that had some historical significance," Wollaston said, "so we could turn around brownfield into greenfield space."

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