

Downtown Richmond building to become community resource center

Written by Louise Ronald Staff Writer

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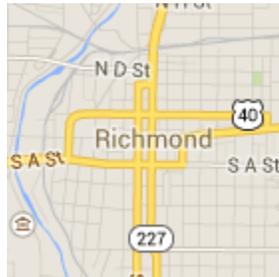
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Pedestrians walk past the future home of the Uptown Center for Community Engagement at 819 E. Main St. in Richmond.

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Pedestrians walk past the future home of the Uptown Center for Community Engagement at 819 E. Main St. in Richmond. / Louise Ronald / Palladium-Item



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Volunteers are needed to help build a new community resource center.

But first, some demolition is required.

Wayne Township Trustee Susan Isaacs has arranged for the building at 819 E. Main St., vacant for more than six years and owned by the county, to be transferred to the township at no charge. She and a group of volunteer helpers plan to open the Uptown Center for Community Engagement at the site.

Isaacs said that as trustee she meets with many people who have ideas for how to help the community but don't know how to make their ideas a reality. The center would provide shared office space, meeting space, Internet access and networking opportunities.

Volunteer Bethany Norwalt describes the future center as a "grassroots incubator," where groups can pool resources and get the training they need.

"We're trying to eliminate doing things the hard way," she said.

The first step is to prep the building for a facelift. That means removing carpet, taking out a drop ceiling and doing lots of cleaning.

"It's going to be a lot of work," Isaacs said.

Hence the call for volunteers. From 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday and during the same hours Oct. 26, everyone is invited to help with the demolition and cleanup. Water and light refreshments will be provided.

Norwalt said volunteers aren't expected to stay for the whole day. One- or two-hour shifts are more feasible "just because there is so much dust," she said.

The center is set to open in February 2014. Isaacs and volunteers will act as staff. She expects no overhead except utilities.

Improvements to the building will be paid for by a grant from the Wayne County Foundation as well as funds from the trustee's office community service and capital budgets.

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