

Manchester rebrands shared work space

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Journal Inquirer | Posted: Wednesday, August 30, 2017 11:49 am

MANCHESTER — The town hopes to build on the success of Axis 901, the town-owned shared work area on Main Street, with a new name: Work [Space], town staff said.

The move comes with changes to the town's lease with Manchester Community College. MCC will continue to operate the storefront art gallery, but the town will have more control over the use of other space.

Chris Silver, director of leisure, family, and recreation, detailed the rebranding effort last week at a meeting of the Board of Directors.

The offices are at 901-903 Main St., above MCC on Main. Rebranding work, including new signs, will be implemented before the end of November.

As of Aug. 22, Silver said, the building is getting \$148,100 monthly in rent, out of a possible maximum of \$192,500. That doesn't include meeting space rentals.

According to Silver, that's slightly above the operating cost of \$142,000 per month, which includes part-time staff.

However, as Work [Space] is soon to add resident Stacy Zackin as a full-time operations manager, the goal is to bring in \$217,000 monthly to cover operational costs and her salary, assuming its fully rented.

Zackin's responsibilities, Silver said, will involve supervising part-time staff, building relationships with users, and seeking new clients for the space.

"This is the only space like this on this side of the river," Silver said. It provides private rooms, a 3-D printer, office equipment, and workstations for various businesses and small business owners. Clients include web developers, marketers, consultants, nonprofit employees, and technology workers.

Silver said the town negotiated with the Manchester Community College Foundation to further its involvement with the Viscoglosi Entrepreneurship Center, its gallery wall space, and meeting room priority access.

Both parties signed that lease Monday after lengthy discussions, Town Manager Scott Shanley said.

"Very little will change, and MCC will continue to have an active presence on Main Street," college spokesman Michael Jordan-Reilly said. Jordan-Reilly said MCC would continue to use the site to further the school's relationship with the downtown community.

One change will involve art on display at the MCC gallery, Jordan-Reilly said. While the art shows there have been curated, a new proposal would use the galley for student-created work.

Additionally, Shanley said, the MCC Foundation will become “less of a player” in the space than it has been, but he thanked the school and foundation for their investment and dedication to helping revitalize downtown Manchester.

“The new lease is very specific for space,” Shanley said, and it allows the town new authority to rent out office and meeting space.

For the rest of Work [Space], four of the building’s nine offices and five of its nine desks are currently rented, he added, with some open space remaining.

Further revenue comes from agreements with University of St. Joseph graduate programs to rent meeting space and Westmark Marketing, a New York City company, to lease the building’s loft.

Efforts to continue growing Work [Space] have two intentions, Silver said — to bring new vitality downtown and to cover the town’s costs or make a profit on its operations.