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## Designs For Downtown Manchester Art Gallery Unveiled

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MANCHESTER —

An interior design that reflects the town's industrial past has been unveiled for the new downtown art gallery, MCC on Main.

Work is "going full speed," and a late June completion of the gallery is likely, town General Manager Scott Shanley wrote in an email Tuesday.

The town is working with the Manchester Community College Foundation to renovate the town-owned building, which formerly housed First Niagara bank offices and, from 1941 to 2001, the Regal Men's Shop.

In October, bank officials announced the donation of the building, part of a \$1.3 million gift package that also included \$500,000 for capital improvements and operating costs. Town leaders and a new group called Imagine Main Street have said the first-floor art gallery will be a focal point in the ongoing renewal of the downtown area.

Realistic design renderings by Silver/Petrucci + Associates of Hamden reflect the vision of college leaders and the MCC art department, said Dave Stein, a principal in the architectural, engineering and interior design firm.

Materials were chosen to convey the feel of an industrial loft, Stein said. The first floor had been used as office space "with no interior architectural elements that were appealing," he said.

"We wanted to deconstruct that down to basic, raw materials," Stein said.

Along with the art gallery, the college plans to install classrooms as part of a downtown satellite campus.

When they announced the gift to the town and college, bank representatives said they recognized that Main Street needed a boost after the merger of NewAlliance and First Niagara banks last year. The merger cut deeply into the local economy, eliminating jobs at what had been downtown's biggest employer and raising more worries about the future of an already struggling Main Street.

The 1898 Colonial Revival-style building is best known as the former home of the Regal Men's Shop, which occupied 16,000 square feet on two floors. The Savings Bank of Manchester, which became part of NewAlliance, bought the building in 2001 and did a thorough renovation, according to Roland Graziani, facilities and project manager for First Niagara. About 15 First Niagara employees who now work in the building were to move to the bank's other downtown

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locations, bank officials said.

Shanley has said the building is in good condition, but upgrades are needed before classrooms can be included. College President Gena Glickman has said more money will have to be raised to complete upgrades and changes estimated to cost a total of \$2.9 million

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