



Downtown buildings land arts tenants

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Two downtown buildings have signed arts organizations to fill vacant street-front spaces.

The start-up Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library Inc. will move later this year into 1,100 square feet of space in the Emelie Building at 340 N. Senate Ave. formerly occupied by the Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art.

The Vonnegut Library, which counts the famous author's son, Mark, among its board members, has been looking for space since it was founded late last year by Julia Whitehead, a medical writer for Eli Lilly and Co.

Whitehead said her group signed a three-year lease for the space and has an option to renew.

The 40,000-square-foot building is controlled by the law firm Katz & Korin, which formed the entity Black Orchid LLC to buy the building in 2003. Black Orchid is named for the business that occupied the building prior to its renovation in the mid-1980s by the architecture firm Browning Day Mullins Dierdorf.

Katz & Korin moved to the building in 2004 and occupies all but the third-floor, which is leased to Indiana University Foundation, and the street-front space the Vonnegut Library will occupy.

That space is essentially an incubator for fledgling arts organizations, said Michael W. Hile, a partner in Katz & Korin, who said the firm donates the space. Hile said the firm enjoyed working with IMOCA and hopes the Vonnegut organization will eventually outgrow the space as the museum did.

The Vonnegut Library will open later this year and will include a gift shop, a reading room, an art gallery and a display about the life of the famous author, who grew up in Indianapolis and died in 2007.

The group will use its new headquarters for small events and exhibits. It will use the Athenaeum, which was designed by Vonnegut's architect grandfather, for larger events.

The Vonnegut Library is consulting with architects, space planners and its board about how to best use the space. But Whitehead said the group doesn't have much of a budget for improvements and likely won't need much because the property is in move-in condition.

She's busy raising money for the organization, a job she says will be made easier by having a physical presence. "There is more interest now that we have a location."

Another landlord with an affinity for the arts community is Buckingham Cos., which is leasing a portion of the 23,000-square-foot Metzger Building at 922 N. Pennsylvania St. to the Arts Council of Indianapolis. The Arts Council will move by the end of May from the Guaranty Building at 20 N. Meridian St.

Natasha Evans, director of leasing for Buckingham, said the Arts Council will occupy 5,400 square feet of space, which represents all of the street-front space and all of the leasable space in the building. The

majority of the 23,000-square-foot Metzger is devoted to indoor parking.

Evans said the Metzger's street-level retail space has been empty since Buckingham bought the building as part of a larger package of properties about two years ago. She said the Arts Council, which will use half the space for offices and the other half for a gallery, is a perfect tenant for Buckingham, whose president and CEO is Bradley Chambers.

"The arts is something Brad is always pushing us" to include in our properties, Evans said.

The Metzger, built in 1928, once housed the Rollerland roller skating rink.

Janet Boston, a spokeswoman for the Arts Council, said details of the group's plans for the space will be released later this spring.