

Local developer has 'grand ideas' for Grand Piano building

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Smithsburg resident and local property developer Mike Fitzgerald has purchased the former Grand Piano furniture building at 20 W. Washington St. in downtown Hagerstown.

Fitzgerald acquired the 35,613-square-foot building known as the Grand Piano building from Aristaeus LLC for \$600,000, with additional closing costs of \$47,000.

Fitzgerald said he plans to renovate the five-story building into luxury office spaces.

"I have grand ideas for the Grand Piano building," Fitzgerald said. "I believe strongly in the development of downtown Hagerstown. I believe the Grand can be a business center and catalyst to help downtown Hagerstown succeed and thrive."

Ash Azadi, managing partner of Aristaeus LLC, said: "We are very excited to sell the property to Mr. Fitzgerald. He is a smart young man who will take the property in the right direction."

Fitzgerald said he was "born in Washington County, and it is a place I want to be proud to raise my son."

"The Grand Piano's building currently boasts some of the best office space layouts of any downtown building. With some modern additions, this already beautiful building will be an asset to downtown. This project is a \$1 million investment," he said.

Andrew H. Sargent, Hagerstown's downtown manager, said city officials "have offered Mr. Fitzgerald assistance as he goes through the process, and it is possible that he could apply for some of our incentive programs to help make this project successful."

The property has been only partially occupied since 2007.

"I have started marketing to companies with less than 30 staff" throughout Washington and Frederick counties, Fitzgerald said. "I believe this building, once renovated, will attract more employers and employees to Hagerstown. This is the biggest investment the downtown area has seen for many years, and I am excited about the future of this project."

The building obtained its name from Grand Piano & Furniture Co., which operated in downtown Hagerstown from 1976 until it closed its doors in May 1997.

Renovations on the building will take 10 to 12 months, according to Fitzgerald.

"I saw the property downtown, and I saw the potential, so I reached out to the owners to purchase the location. Currently, the building is approximately 15 percent occupied. I hope to fill this property with new businesses in the near future," he said.

"Plans for the building include marble-inlay flooring in the lobby area, top-of-the-line finishes throughout, and some of the areas will need to be built out for office spaces," Fitzgerald said.

"There has also been interest by several national chain restaurants to take up the space that was formerly Roccoco restaurant, but as yet there is no firm offer in place," he said.

Fitzgerald has purchased and renovated more than 250 properties in and around Washington County, more than 130 of which are residential properties.

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