



Janelle Sou Roberts/The Journal Gazette

From left, Ann Trzynka, Dustin Roach and David Van Gilder will move with Van Gilder & Trzynka PC in October.

Law firm servicing old station

By Jenni Glenn
The Journal Gazette

A refurbished garage in the heart of downtown will become the new home of a local law firm in October.

Van Gilder & Trzynka PC reached an agreement last month to buy the brick service station at 436 E. Wayne St. from John Tippmann Sr. The downtown building is one of two the local developer bought and renovated in an effort to revitalize the Clay Street corridor.



Tippmann

The general practice law firm, which occupies a suite in the Metro Building at 202 W. Berry St., wanted to buy office space it could control, Van Gilder said. He and his partners searched for a downtown location near the courthouse for two years. They were looking for a space with a specific feel where the firm's six lawyers and eight staff members would be inspired by their surroundings, he said. The Wayne Street building's brickwork and arched windows fit the bill.

Moving into a redeveloped structure appealed to Van Gilder, who is board president of the environmental organization ACRES Land Trust.

"We wanted to use a building that otherwise might go by the wayside and not be used," he said.

The tan brick building was being used to store cars when it caught Tippmann's eye. The chief executive of the Tippmann Group, a commercial real estate and construction



Courtesy

The firm is moving into a refurbished service station downtown.

"We wanted to use a building that otherwise might go by the wayside ..."

— David Van Gilder, co-owner

firm, had renovated another aging downtown building at the southeast corner of Washington Boulevard and Clay Street, just north of the former gas station. Motorcycle dealership Woodson Motorsports plans to move into that building by January. Tippmann saw similar potential in the Wayne Street structure.

"Both buildings have nice brickwork on them ..." he said. The Wayne Street building "has parking, and it has everything going for it."

Tippmann bought the building this year and began refurbishing the brick exterior about four months ago. Tippmann said he invested about \$70 a square foot — or about \$420,000 — to renovate the building. He is working with the law firm on plans for the interior of the 6,000-square-foot building and basement.

Windows replaced the service station's overhead doors, letting in light while maintaining the original appearance of the service station, said David Nugent, a partner in the real estate firm BND Commercial. The building was built about 1929, according to the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society.

"It's going to be a reflection of what it was," Nugent said.

Nugent, who acted as Van Gilder & Trzynka's broker, said Tippmann's renova-

► See **Station**/back of section

Station

► From Page 1E

tion work made the building much more attractive to his clients. Van Gilder & Trzynka had looked at the Wayne Street structure early in their search for a new office but did not want to undertake the renovation work, he said.

When Tippmann purchased the building, he had no tenant committed

to moving into the structure. The refurbished property attracted interest from 11 potential buyers, he said.

The former service station is in what Tippmann described as an underutilized area on the east side of downtown. Although he intended to make a profit renovating the building, Tippmann said it was more important to him to make a contribution to improve the downtown area. The semi-retired developer took on the project as "more of a hobby," he said.

Van Gilder & Trzynka plans to

apply to the city for a facade grant to cover part of the cost of a landscaped courtyard and other exterior improvements at the site, Van Gilder said.

The new office should put the law firm in the heart of new development and construction taking place on the

east side of downtown, Van Gilder said.

"We are very hopeful whatever happens with downtown redevelopment will be very exciting," he said, "and we want to be part of it."

jglenn@jg.net