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UofL to lease, renovate Portland warehouse space for fine arts

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- The University of Louisville plans to house its master of fine arts program studios in renovated Portland warehouse space near a growing community of arts-related businesses and organizations.

The University of Louisville Foundation will lease 27,000 square feet, which is about a third of the vacant two-story brick building at 1606 Rowan St., for 10 years from Rowan Downstream LLC. Interior renovations will revamp the first floor and second-floor mezzanine, with completion planned by the spring 2017 semester. The 1880s building formerly served as a floor-covering distribution business, storage warehouse and a senior nutrition center, among other uses.

“We are proud to be a university tied closely to its larger community, and this expansion into western Louisville’s revitalization is another example of how we all benefit from working together,” President James Ramsey said.

UofL’s MFA degree in studio arts and design was approved and launched in 2014. The 60-credit-hour program is intended to be selective, rigorous and professional with small classes to ensure participants have substantial access to studios and faculty members. MFA students can participate in a variety of media, moving across disciplines, or focus on one area.

Courses include ceramics, drawing, fiber, glass, painting, printmaking, sculpture, design, mixed media, book arts and interior architecture.

“The location in the historic Portland neighborhood will not only provide MFA students and our studio art faculty members with a ‘home’ but it also will extend our university’s presence in west Louisville,” said Kimberly Kempf-Leonard, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “So this is not just about a new space for us. It’s about giving our faculty and students a way to infuse community into their art and art into the community.”

Rowan Downstream’s partners include Gill Holland, a developer noted for leading revitalization efforts in Louisville’s NuLu and Portland neighborhoods. Other Rowan partners are Jacob Brown and Justin Brown, both of The Marian Group, Chad Middendorf, Ashley Blacketer, Gregg Rochman, Matt Gilles and Jonathan Bevan.

“Adding the University of Louisville program to the neighborhood is key to enhancing the cultural vitality and economic revitalization of Portland,” Holland said. “The MFA students and faculty will enliven the redesigned space and contribute to the area’s positive growth. It shows great



leadership on the part of our state's leading institution of higher education to establish a presence west of Ninth Street."

"We are excited our MFA studios will be part of the larger renewal of a unique community," said Ying Kit Chan, fine arts department chair. "Portland is a meaningful place for Louisville, rich in historic landmarks and in close proximity to downtown and the river."

For more information, check <http://uofl.me/as-mfa-studio>

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EDITORS: Exterior and interior photos by UofL's Tom Fougerousse and preliminary rendering by WorK Architecture + Design are attached.