



Pittsfield

Company buys historic building

Construction firm plans variety of uses

By Tony Dobrowolski

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PITTSFIELD — The Allegrone Construction Co. has purchased the Howard Building in downtown Pittsfield, and plans to use the historic three- story structure for a variety of uses.

"The exact plans are unknown," said company Vice President Louis E. Allegrone. "But it will be a multi-use building. In the long term, we're looking to develop the building by trying to preserve its historic nature."

Allegrone Construction purchased the building for \$400,000 from Meryl H. Joseph of Great Barrington, Louis Allegrone said. The sale closed around Jan. 1, he added.

Joseph, who had owned the building for several years, did not return a telephone call seeking comment.

Once known as the Howard Block, the 10,000- square- foot structure is located at the corner of Fenn, First and Federal streets. It was built in 1916 by the late Frank Howard, a former county commissioner, who used the structure as the headquarters for the agricultural store that he had founded in 1893. Howard's son, Arthur, took over the business after his father died in 1940, but closed the store in 1960. Arthur Howard died in 1976.

Louis Allegrone said remnants of the old Howard Agricultural Store can still be found in the basement. The building currently has two retail tenants on the first floor, although a third tenant, the Storefront Artist Project, has moved out. Allegrone said the first floor will remain as retail space.

He said Allegrone Construction has already begun renovating the first floor, but plans to develop a more detailed plan for the renovation of the rest of the building this year.

" It will probably take the majority of this year to plan out and design the building," he said. A few residential loft studios were located on the upper floors, but Allegrone said they have been moved out for liability reasons.

He said the company was attracted to the building because of its location and historical significance.

"I think restoring it will help pull downtown that way," Allegrone said. " Meryl was a good owner. She took care of the building, but couldn't get anything going."

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