

WEB DESIGN FIRM BUYS PART OF FORMER KOPLAN'S BUILDING

By Cami Joner, Staff Reporter

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The former Koplan's Home Furnishings building in downtown Vancouver sold on Tuesday to a Web design firm that has moved into the structure's upstairs loft.

Gravitate Design Studio purchased the two-story portion of the vacant furniture showroom at 1012 Washington St. A one-story annex building was purchased by a different buyer, downtown developer Ryan Hurley. The total transaction price was between \$1.7 million and \$2 million, according to the parties involved.

The former Koplan's was originally built in 1920 for Clark County Motors, one of Vancouver's earliest car dealerships, according to Columbian archives. The 20,000-square-foot building has been owned by the Koplan family, most recently brothers Keith and Rich Koplan, since the early 1960s. Koplan's Home Furnishings closed in April 2009, after 50 years of operation in Vancouver.

Gravitate is also a local company, said William Roskowski, who founded Vancouver-based Web design business Unifusion, which merged with Vancouver's Gravitate in July.

"With that, we decided to move into a new building," he said.

Roskowski said about 24 people work for the company, which offers Web design services, branding and Internet marketing. Gravitate was founded by Michael Parker, sales and marketing director, and Cyndi Parker, creative director, husband-and-wife entrepreneurs.

The company plans to start work soon on a \$1 million renovation project to update the interior of the former Koplan's building to accommodate other small technology-oriented startups.

"We're trying to make it the creative hub of downtown Vancouver," Roskowski said.

Like Gravitate, more local companies are opting to purchase their buildings and spaces. They are taking advantage of lower prices and loan programs through the U.S. Small Business Administration, said commercial real estate broker Jim West, of the Vancouver-based office of Coldwell Banker Commercial.

West and his colleagues, Bob Bernhardt and Wally Hornberger, brokered the transaction to sell the Koplan's building to Gravitate and Hurley.

"We're very happy to have that done, both for the Koplan family and to bring Gravitate to downtown Vancouver," West said.

Hurley said he plans to market and sell the 5,500-square-foot Koplan's annex building as office space. The building and its small parking area are adjacent to 11th Street.

Hurley also owns adjoining downtown Vancouver buildings at 806 and 808 Main St., which he plans to renovate through Vancouver's Downtown Association's facade improvement program. Hurley recently developed The Source Climbing Center, a \$1.5 million rock-climbing gym that opened in November at 11th and Main streets.

He is also working on other downtown projects, including plans to bring an outside law firm into the downtown community.

