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Vacant offices to become low-income apartments

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COVINGTON - A nonprofit organization will convert a vacant building on Greenup Street in Covington into apartments for low-income people.

Welcome House, which provides social services for individuals and families that are homeless or at risk of being homeless, bought in December 2008 a former Healthpoint Family Care doctors' office at 1132 Greenup St. It plans on converting the building into eight apartment units to rent to people going through Welcome House's case-management program that fall under a certain income level.

The tenants must not make more than 50 percent of the average median income based on family size.

The building will house people with a range of financial issues, said Linda Young, executive director of Welcome House.

"They may be people on a fixed income, a senior citizen on Social Security, someone on disability income, a young mom with children earning a pretty low wage," Young said. "A person employed making minimum wage is not making enough to rent out a market-rate apartment."

A person needs a wage of \$12.85 an hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment in Kenton County, Young said.

The new apartment complex, to be called Kings Crossing, will help meet demand for affordable housing, Young said. It will be Welcome House's second housing complex.

The nonprofit group also owns the 20-unit Gardens at Greenup complex near Kings Crossing. That complex has a waiting list.

"It is critical," Young said. "There is not near enough affordable housing. If you are making \$9 an hour and can't afford the market rate, that means you are constantly struggling to pay rent. It is not just a matter of budgeting money."

Welcome House will use grants to fund some of the \$1 million in renovations to the Greenup Street site. It has already received \$418,000 in Neighborhood Stabilization funds and \$280,000 in a Federal Home Loan Bank grant. The organization has requested \$200,000 from Covington's federal HOME funds.

Young said she hopes to start construction in the next two months. Welcome House will use the first floor for some of its administrative offices.

"It is in good condition," Young said. "It is a structurally sound building. The second and third floors will be reconfigured into the apartments."