

# Business Record

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## Creating a neighborhood

*Newton's spacious Maytag campus awaits new occupant*

Just a couple of blocks from Newton's historic downtown stands a neighborhood in waiting in the form of the former Maytag corporate campus.

Maytag has been out of the picture in Newton for a little more than a decade, but pieces of its past — washing machines, a test kitchen, a large conference table fashioned from Iowa walnut still in place in an abandoned boardroom — remain.

The corporate campus, hulking office and manufacturing buildings, and two eye-appealing brick buildings sitting side by side where the company had its origins make up the neighborhood.

Des Moines Area Community College acquired the campus in 2016. The property was a gift from Reza Kargarzadeh, a Grinnell businessman, who picked up the property after it lost its corporate occupants, first Maytag, then Iowa Telecom.

At one time, the campus hosted 2,000 Maytag employees, not to mention dedicated sales people who learned how the company's range of household appliances functioned and then learned to pitch them in a training room more reminiscent of a local theater, complete with a stage and projection room.

These days, DMACC is relying on Keller Williams Commercial to market the property and relying in no little part on Kim Didier, the college's executive director of business resources, to provide the context and suggest future uses for the campus.

Didier is a premier tour guide. She is a former Newton city administrator who later worked as director of training and director of call centers for Maytag. She can point out a corridor that served as an escape route when a former CEO didn't want to meet visitors. She can suggest uses — event catering, a brew pub, maybe a restaurant — for the first two structures erected on the campus. And she can envision the future.

DMACC is encouraging a mixed-use community made up of market-rate housing, retail shops, and a cluster of businesses connected by a courtyard that can be used for neighborhood and citywide events.

The campus offers the full package.

Retail spaces are available in chunks of 500 to 15,000 square feet; office spaces from 500 to 350,000 square feet; and flex space from 500 up to 54,000 square feet. There are rooms with a view to the city and others with a view to the past, all timbered beams and scrubbed brick.

Brad Long, commercial team leader for KW Commercial, said DMACC is flexible on gross leases and willing to work out tenant improvement budgets for the "right" users. Gross rents for a year are advertised at \$7 to \$10 per square foot.

"If it meets our strategic objectives for what we want for this campus, we are open to all kinds of conversations," Didier said.

Housing developers have shown interest in converting some of the large spaces to apartments. In addition, "several deals are in the works" for potential commercial tenants, said Carrie Williams, associate director at KW Commercial.

The hope is that some of the commercial tenants will provide internships and other educational opportunities for DMACC students.

Development of the campus, which is being marketed as Legacy Plaza, would be another step forward in Newton's recovery from the collapse of Maytag.

When the company shuttered operations in the second quarter of 2007, 1,750 jobs were lost. By 2009, the city's unemployment rate was 9.9 percent, said Frank Liebl, executive director of the Newton Development Corp.

Since those days, 12 new companies have come to town and 2,000 jobs have been created. The unemployment rate is hovering around 3 percent.

Last year the city platted more building lots than in the previous 12 years combined, and 10 builders are at work on spec homes, some that have sold before they were completed.

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