

Clinton, IA - John David reports

Clinton developers find something new in something old

By John David

More than a century ago, the building at 721 S. 2nd Street, Clinton, was a hub for distributing hardware. But after sitting vacant for several years, it's now the nuts and bolts of economic development.

"Anybody can add on to an existing building," said Dennis Lauver, president of the Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce. "It takes vision to do a project like this."

That vision coming long after the previous occupant, C.E. Armstrong and Sons, vanished. The building is now home to Clinton's chamber and the Clinton Regional Development Corporation. While both agencies keep their identity, they share a similar mission.

"We all have the same goal of growing the greater Clinton region," said Steven Ames, president of the development corporation. "We're trying to bring new jobs and investment while enhancing the quality of life."

Thursday afternoon, visitors got a first look inside the building and its mix of technology and tradition.

That blend of old and new in the building is a way to use the past to build a better future in Clinton. It's a future that's designed in development.

"We've blended the old and new together in a thoughtful way to allow us to do our jobs as good as possible," Lauver said.

Investing nearly \$4 million and taking a year for renovations, the building blends Clinton history with some surprises. In addition to creating a state-of-the-art workplace, workers unearthed a fireplace behind layers of plaster and drywall. A huge safe now serves as storage space.

Two levels upstairs will become loft style apartments. It's new use for vacant space while being a role model and motivator for retail and industrial potential in Clinton.

"We couldn't be more pleased with the space and the way it turned out," Ames concluded.

They're taking a building with hardware history and making it a developer's dream.

