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Biz buzz: More than a coffeehouse

BY MICHELLE BRUCH

Elliot Park

The coffeehouse e.p. atelier is looking at a new storefront across the street at the Skyscape Condominiums.

The Elliot Park shop owners are considering space that fronts Portland Avenue as they plan a July 13 fundraising bash for their new nonprofit, Sounds of Mid-America. Sounds of Mid-America (SOMA) would feature a performance venue that holds about 200 people, a resource center for musicians in need, and an educational archive of local music.

Co-founders Shar Kanan and Diane Ingram said they thought about expanding into the space next door, but their building is for sale and they have no guarantee a new owner would allow them a permanent home. About a month after e.p. atelier moved in to the building at 609 S. 10th St., Heritage Development purchased the building and much of the block. Heritage wanted to build condo towers on the site, and cycled through several project designs as the market changed, but the property went into foreclosure last fall. Minnwest Bank recently took control of the site and listed it for \$4.3 million.

The existing shop is 1,100 square feet, and the space at Skyscape, located next to Otho Restaurant, would be 6,000 square feet. Ingram said a move into the year-old Skyscape building would give them a climate-controlled shell space for the archives, making the build out a bit easier.

Another incentive for the move is the extra security that Skyscape could provide. The shop was broken into on June 13, the third break-in for the coffeehouse.

Staff at e.p. atelier would like to open SOMA by the end of the year, if possible.

Doors open at 11:45 a.m. for the July 13 SOMA event, which will take place next door to the coffee shop on 10th Street. The music lineup ranges from "jazz-techno-fusion" to classic rock, alternative bluegrass and world music drumming. Bands include the RAN PROJECT, Surf Dawgs, CROW, Canoise, New Primitives, and Lady Franklin.

For more information, visit <http://virtuallady.net/somasite/index.html>

"We've both worked in business, but rock'n roll is the heart and soul of me," Kanan said.

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