

Thank you for using our printer friendly story page.

[Return to story](#)

## Atwood Center Buys Kupfer Ironworks

The Capital Times :: BUSINESS :: 1E

Thursday, April 21, 2005

By Susan Troller The Capital Times

One of Madison's oldest and largest neighborhood centers has taken the first step in an ambitious expansion program with the purchase of the historic Kupfer Ironworks site and industrial building at 149 Waubesa St. on Madison's east side.

Atwood Community Center, which serves more than 6,500 households and has an annual operating budget of \$1.3 million, paid \$1.3 million for the property, owned by developers John Martens and Milton Gripp. The Ironworks site is a roughly 2-acre triangle bounded by Waubesa Street, the East Isthmus Bike Path and a Union Pacific railroad track and park.

"We're bursting at the seams, and have been for some time," said Becky Steinhoff, director of the 50-year-old community center, which has a staff of 29 and hundreds of volunteers.

"Our current set-up with programs all over the place is not just inefficient, it also doesn't provide the focus or serve the community nearly as well as it could," Steinhoff said. "We love the potential of this wonderful site with its access to the bike trail and its great Madison history. We've been seriously exploring options for expansion for some time. As we researched possible expansion sites, this was our number one choice."

Mary Kasperek, vice president of the community center's board and an attorney who helped put the purchase deal together, said that the closing would likely take place in the fall.

"We agreed to the asking price of \$1.3 million, based on several contingencies," she said. These include an updated appraisal, surveys, additional environmental studies and a more fully developed financial plan for the entire building and redevelopment project, among other things.

The estimated total cost for consolidating and expanding the community center over the next several years is projected to be between \$8 million and \$9 million.

"Obviously, securing the site is just the beginning of a much larger effort. But it's the culmination of a huge amount of preliminary work and research over a couple of years, including financial feasibility studies and lots of input from the community and our supporters. We're looking forward to a project that will benefit the entire east side," Kasperek said.

The site features a 34,000-square-foot cream city brick structure with high ceilings, clear span space and clerestory windows that bathe the interior of the historic building in natural light.

The Ironworks was the site of several historic Madison metalworking businesses that manufactured a broad range of products, including guns and decorative steel. Examples of work produced by the Kupfer Ironworks, which was the last manufacturing business on the site, include decorative castings for the Mount Horeb Opera House and the monkey cages at the Henry Vilas Zoo.

Steinhoff noted that the plan for the redevelopment will honor the site's architectural and historic character as it brings all of the community center's programs under one roof. Currently, the center owns or leases four different sites to accommodate a wide range of programs that serve toddlers to teens and new parents to seniors.

Steinhoff said that a number of sources for support for the project are being explored.

"Of course, fundraising is an important part of the picture. Now that we have a site and a preliminary plan, that can begin in earnest," she said.

\ E-mail: [stroller@madison.com](mailto:stroller@madison.com)

[Return to story](#)

**madison.com** is operated by Capital Newspapers, publishers of the Wisconsin State Journal, The Capital Times, Agri-View and Apartment Showcase. All contents Copyright ©, Capital Newspapers. All rights reserved.