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Covington to close on Iron Works facility

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Covington is set to close on the purchase of the Stewart Iron Works building within the week.

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The city and Kenton County will pay half of the cost of the \$550,000 structure at \$275,000 each. The Stewart Iron Works building is located at 20 W. 18th Street in Covington.

Covington hopes the building will become a one-stop-shop for social service agencies and community activities, as well as the permanent home of the Emergency Cold Shelter of Northern Kentucky, temporarily situated on Scott Boulevard.

"The places who help people in need in the county and Covington can be in one spot rather than spread throughout the city," said Judge-Executive Ralph Drees at the county's meeting Jan. 12.

Kenton County voted unanimously to have its half of the cost ready whenever Covington is ready to close, which City Manager Larry Klein confirmed will happen in the next several days.

Covington first approached the county with the plan to purchase and then remodel the building in the last year.

Klein said the initial plan called for a \$12 to \$15 million retrofitting of the three-story building. An official layout of the building is "yet to be determined," he said.

Once the purchase is complete, the next step is to determine how to pay for the remodeling, Klein said, adding it's likely a combination of private and public financing and tax credits will be utilized.

Covington plans to meet with the neighborhood associations and interested social service agencies in the first week of February to discuss the project further, Klein said.

While Welcome House, HealthPoint and several other agencies will consider a move to the Stewart Ironworks campus, Klein said re-locating the cold shelter to the building is a "high priority" and something that could happen by next winter.

"That's the most pressing need obviously. It doesn't have a permanent home," he said.