

Towson TIMES

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Fired-up little girl

Addy Branson, 7, of Towson, hit the street to raise funds for fallen firefighters **3**

Raising the bars

Developers of old Towson jail hope to lock up interest in property's local lore **13**



BUSINESS

History going to market at former Towson jail

By Loni Ingraham
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Marty Azola has a small, nameless dilemma.

Azola, president of the Azola Companies, announced in June that financing and agreements with Baltimore County have been finalized for his company's reuse of the Old Towson Jail on Bosley Avenue.

Work is well under way to convert the 160-year-old, three-story stone building with its central tower into office suites.

Azola has appointed Towson-based Latshaw Commercial Real Estate Advisors as the brokers for the project and given its president, Bob Latshaw, the green light to seek tenants.

But the dilemma for Azola and Latshaw is giving the building a name that will capitalize on its peculiar cachet — without its negative connotations.

After all, one can hardly expect attorneys, business people and — especially in this day, financial folks — to list their address on a business card as a "jail."

"We haven't selected a name yet," said Latshaw. "For now, the working title is 'Historic Towson Executive Suites.'"

In truth, said Azola, the building was the warden's house, not the jail. However, the warden and his family co-habitated with the dozens of prisoners who occupied the cells, which were stacked three floors high at the rear of the house.

The building, on the corner of Bosley Avenue and Towson Boulevard, will be converted into office and solo suites, with a shared conference room, kitchen and media center.

A large skylight and chandelier over the walnut staircase will illuminate the entry foyer, and many offices will feature hardwood floors, high ceilings and fireplaces, he said. In addition, cells on the ground floor will be leased for "fine wine" storage, he said.

Latshaw said rents will likely range from \$375 per month to \$2,000, depending on

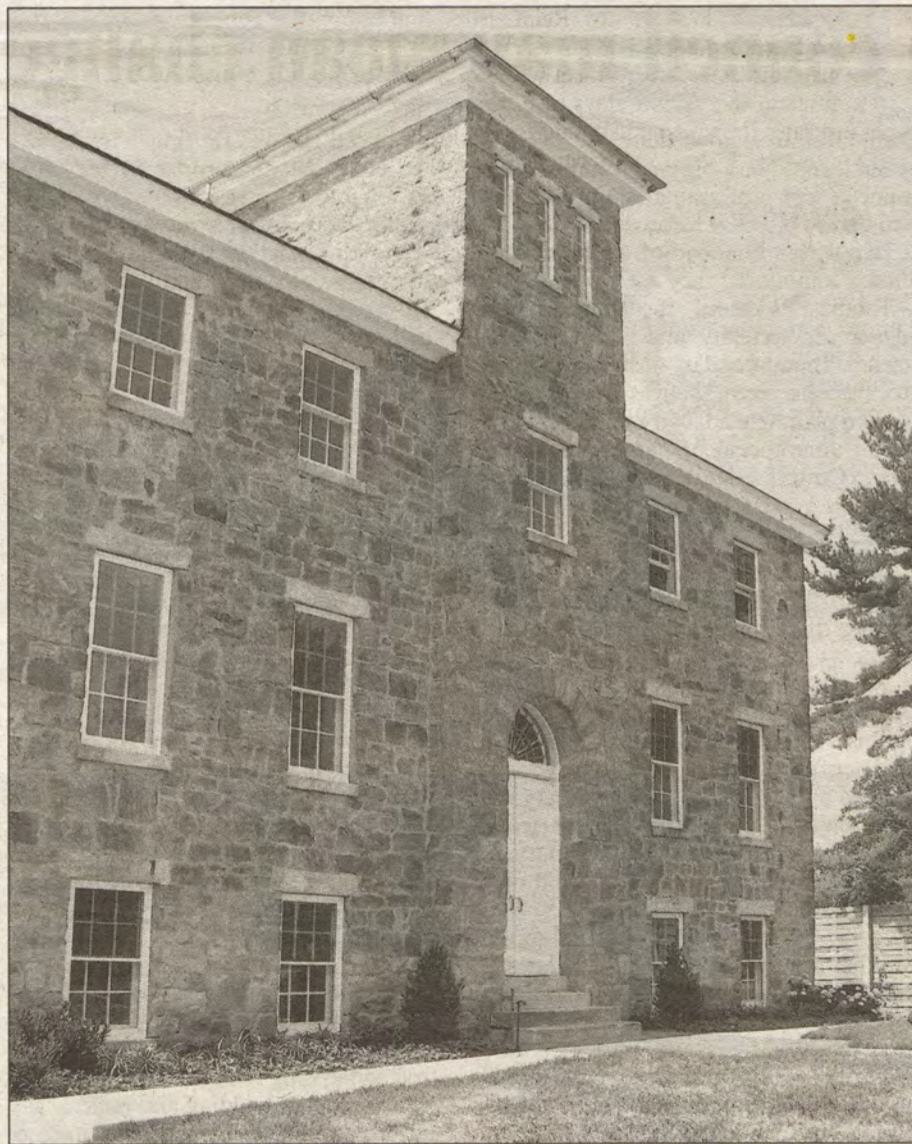


PHOTO BY JIM JOYNER

With county approvals in hand, developer Marty Azola hopes to begin leasing converted office space soon at the 160-year-old former Towson jail property on Bosley Avenue.

the number of rooms, windows and other amenities.

"Somebody might want a whole floor," he said.

The building is not only a local landmark, it's listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Azola plans to tap into that history — he says he'll display the handcuffs and billy club used by the then-county sheriff, Thomas Jenifer, in 1891.

They've been donated by Jenifer's great, great, great-granddaughter, Lillian Jenifer, of Long Island Farm, Cromwell Valley.

Azola said he's also searching for more mementos. Workers are excavating dirt in the common airshaft for the 36 cells.

"You've got to believe things were

thrown down there," he said.

The building has had at least one famous occupant. It briefly "accommodated" Arthur Bremer in 1972. Bremer was the would-be assassin who shot Democratic presidential candidate and former Alabama governor George Wallace in Laurel, and left him in a wheelchair.

Bemer's stay was short — just overnight — but it's a plus to the overall history of the building, according to Trish Bentz, executive director of the Baltimore County Historical Trust, which works to see that the county's historic or significant buildings are preserved.

"It's always nice for a building to have some notoriety," she said.

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