

### 3 of 3 articles

The London Free Press

Copyright © 2009, The London Free Press. Unauthorized reproduction or Web posting prohibited.

1 / 1 - Saturday, July 4, 2009

Edition: Final

Source: BY KELLY PEDRO

Section: City & Region Page: A5

## Cornerstone offers opportunities

When it was built 140 years ago, the building at York and Richmond streets was the cornerstone of the city's development.

So it's only fitting its new name, The Cornerstone, links the building's past with its future.

"We loved it (the name). As soon as we saw it, it was automatic," says Steve Cordes, executive director of Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), which has owned the building at 332 Richmond St. for nearly two years and is about to expand it to include extensive services for youth.

The organization ran a contest to come up with a name that would have meaning for the community, he says.

The Cornerstone was nominated twice. Cordes says they got about 50 entries an advisory committee narrowed down to five. Then an executive committee for the board of directors chose one.

The name honours the history of the building as a cornerstone of London's development. But it also refers to the future of the building in helping young people turn a corner in their lives -- and the block itself to turn a corner in development, Cordes says.

The building has 28 affordable housing apartments for youth on the second and third floors.

Construction will begin on the main floor this summer, converting most of it into a mix of services for youth -- a youth centre and an alternative education centre that will open in October. Cordes says about 50 people will call The Cornerstone high school.

The south end of the building will have a cafe, run by young people, which will be open to the public. Revenue from the cafe will support YOU services in the building and community, Cordes says.

The organization also plans to recreate architecture on the outside of the building and turning it into a certified green building, which is partially solar-powered, has geothermal heating and cooling and a water collection system to recycle water and decrease storm runoff.

One project includes creating a rooftop garden with a boardroom --which is not yet funded, Cordes says.

The building was built as a hotel in 1879. First known as American House, it was renamed the Grigg Hotel after the original innkeeper, Samuel Grigg, in 1883.