

Ceremony scheduled for Universal Life renovation

By Ted Evanoff

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Officials have scheduled a ceremony Sept. 29 to mark the start of renovation on the historic Universal Life Building near Downtown Memphis.

The vacant 66-year-old building will be repurposed to house Self-Tucker Properties LLC and agencies that work with black and minority entrepreneurs.

Memphis city officials have committed more than \$1 million in grants and steered nearly \$2 million in bonds for energy-efficiency improvements to the \$6.2 million renovation planned by architects Juan Self and Jimmie Tucker.

The event is scheduled to begin 10 a.m. Sept. 29 in the building at 480 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue.

Hosting the ceremony will be city officials, Self-Tucker Properties, the Memphis Office of Resources & Enterprise and the Memphis Area Minority Contractors Association.

Scheduled to open offices inside after the renovation is completed are the Black Business Association, Memphis Area Minority Contractors Association, Memphis Office of Resources and Enterprise, the Tennessee Small Business Development Center and the U.S. Small Business Administration's Contractor Assistance Program.

Universal Life Insurance Co. built the building in the Egyptian Revival architecture style in 1949.

The company, founded in 1923 by Dr. J.E. Walker, A.W. Willis Sr. and M.W. Bonner, served as headquarters to one of the nation's largest black-owned insurance companies. It was bought by Chapman Co. of Baltimore in 1998.

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