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York gets a second co-working space

The Union Shared Workspace offers a haven for freelancers, telecommuters and others in need of an office

By Gary Haber

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Ben Kinner, construction coordinator and head of safety at Royal Square Development & Construction, works from a desk at The Union Shared Workspace, a co-working space developed by Royal Square Development. (Kate Penn — Daily Record/Sunday News)

Royal Square Development & Construction cuts the grand-opening ribbon Thursday on its new co-working space aimed at the growing ranks of freelancers, telecommuters and other office-less folks who don't want to work from their kitchen table or the local Starbucks. 

"We're your home office without the laundry, and your coffee shop without the spilled latte," proclaims the website for The Union Shared Workspace, the co-working facility Royal Square Development has opened at 110 S. Queen St. in the former Bond Sanitary Products building. The Union is part of the same complex as Royal Square Development's Bond wedding and special events venue.

The building, which has been completely renovated, still retains the industrial feel of its past — exposed brick walls, steel beams across the ceiling and HVAC pipes overhead.

The monthly fee at the Union ranges from \$100 a month for part-time desk space to \$350 for a private office with 24/7 access. The price also includes shared use of a conference room, lounge area, kitchen, wifi access and office equipment.

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In addition to Union members, employees of Royal Square Development also work out of the space.

For fans of co-working, spaces like The Union not only offer a low-cost office but the chance to swap ideas with others and an alternative to the isolation of working at home.

Lancaster-based law firm Kegel Kelin Almy & Lord is leasing one of The Union's private offices. When the 11-lawyer firm was looking to open an office in York County, Christine Nentwig, an attorney at the firm, pushed for taking space at The Union.

Nentwig had earlier been a part of two co-working spaces when she worked in Chicago and enjoyed what she calls the "collaborative nature" of the experience.

"The deciding factor was the community feel," said Nentwig, a Spring Garden Township resident who chairs the firm's labor and employment law group. She moved into the Union in early May and expects to use the office about twice a week.

There were 5,875 co-working spaces around the world in 2014, an increase of 118 percent from 2013, according to a report from the Global Workspace Association, a trade group.

The Union is York's second co-working space. CoWork155, which opened in June 2013, at 155 W. Market St., has 25 full or part-time members, said JJ Sheffer, one of CoWork155's organizers.



The lounge and entryway at The Union Shared Workspace, a new co-working space at 110 S. Queen St. in York. (Kate Penn — Daily Record/Sunday News)

Sheffer said CoWork's members have teamed up on a number of business ventures including Tutoni's restaurant, York City Pretzel Company, the Foodstruck food truck rallies and the I Love York City promotional campaign.

"We tend to attract people who are connected and know everybody," Sheffer said. "They end up working together in ways they never thought about before they signed on."

CoWork155 charges \$80 for a part-time membership that allows four visits a month or

\$220 a month for a full membership with reserved desk space. It also has two private offices, Sheffer said.

It was the opportunity for "synergies" with the other members that prompted Community First Fund to lease an office at The Union, said Linda Dang, vice president of community lending for the nonprofit lender.

The fund, which is based in Lancaster, has had a satellite office in York for the past several years. Dang said the nonprofit liked the idea of moving into The Union because it's a more visible location than the space it has been leasing on the second floor of a law firm on East Market Street.

It will also put Dang, who will start working from The Union office in July, in closer touch with the small businesses it looks to lend to.



The Bond, an event space that is part of the same complex as The Union Shared Workspace, has an industrial feel and a long wall of windows. (Kate Penn — Daily Record/Sunday News)

"I'm hoping to take advantage of the synergies here," she said.

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