

# Central School, Cambridge City, Indiana

## Owners Aiming to Rent, Renovate Central School

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Photos by Millicent Martin Emery

Zach McQueen stands in the renovated Central School gym in Cambridge City.

**By Millicent Martin Emery**

The majestic former Central School along U.S. 40 in Cambridge City has new owners and a new lease on life.

Zach McQueen seeks to rent the renovated gym, locker room and kitchen area for events such as banquets, weddings and reunions for families or high school classes.

It also includes a stage that can be used for a dinner theater or other types of performances as well as many banquet tables and chairs available for use.

McQueen has enjoyed attending La Comedia dinner theater in Dayton, Ohio, and is hopeful that someone might be interested in starting similar entertainment at the school.



A view of the Central School stage, gym floor and room that could be used for food service where chairs are stored.

He'd also like to find sports groups such as wrestling and basketball leagues to regularly use the space. "My ultimate goal is to get people in

because I know they'll come back," the Cambridge City resident said.

McQueen said the shock-absorbing gym floor was installed in recent years by Cincinnati Floor Company, whose clients also include the Indiana Pacers and Butler University. "It's not an ordinary gym floor," he said.



Locker rooms have been cleaned.

2018In the spring, McQueen said he and his partners plan to tackle in-depth renovations of the classrooms and rent those rooms to people seeking space for office suites, child

care, a fitness center, beauty salon or other entrepreneurial purposes.

The classrooms are about 850 square feet each. "It seems there's a need in Cambridge City," he said.

The father of three said local parents could benefit from a day care site, for instance.

Renovating and renting the building is a partnership for Zach McQueen and his wife Kailey McQueen, as well as Zach's cousin William McQueen and William's wife, Deborah.

McQueen said the building is structurally sound and doesn't have any leaks. "The guy who had it before me did a ton of work," he said, noting the building complies with environmental regulations.

The gym area has new heating, air conditioning and plumbing as well as a new roof.



A mural painted by renowned artist Pamela Bliss is on a classroom wall.

New windows have been installed throughout the building with the exception of the basement.

"It's just a beautiful place," McQueen said. ". . . It just needs a lot of cleanup."

Some of those projects include painting walls and removing carpet to find what he describes as beautiful hard-wood floors. He plans to put in air conditioners to help cool the individual rooms and install new lighting.



Carpeting has been removed and new windows have been installed in this former Central School classroom.

McQueen also said he wants to turn custodians' closets into restrooms on the main level and put a directory inside the front entrance to help visitors find tenants.

He's considering adding commercial kitchen equipment in the room adjacent to the gymnasium to help caterers. And, as money becomes available, he'd like to add parking spaces on the front lawn to help tenants serve their clients.

He aims to preserve and restore the building's special assets, such as wood railings.



Murals can still be found on the main hallway at Central School.

Visitors might be surprised to learn some of the building's paintings and murals are still in good shape. One of those is a mural by former Western Wayne resident Pamela Bliss who creates murals

throughout Indiana for clients such as the Indiana Pacers. She even went to Poland to create paintings for the “Loving Vincent” film that has received Oscar buzz.

“People need to get in there – it’s been shut down so long,” McQueen said.

The school closed about 20 years ago. “I’ve always loved the building and wanted to do

something with it,” he said. “. . . There’s a lot of history there.”

McQueen spent his child-hood in Connersville until his family moved to Huber Heights, Ohio, when he was 13. He came back to the area about five years ago and has operated an auto sales company in Pershing.

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