First business tenant opens in former Artcraft factory

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The first tenant in Buckingham Commons opened its doors for business Monday, marking a milestone in the conversion of a former office building to a mix of office space and loft apartments.

Avalon Copy Centers of America, a Syracuse-based company that provides printing and copying services to businesses, has moved into 4,600 square feet at the former home of Artcraft Optical on Allen Street near the Inner Loop and Frontier Field.

Chief Executive Officer Jon Denney said Avalon currently employs five people and could add 10 more before the end of the year.

Denney said he was impressed by the quality and location of the space in the building.

"Geographically, it’s perfect," he said. "Every one of our orders includes free pickup and delivery, so proximity to downtown and highways is key."

Avalon also has an operational office in Utica.

"They’re a new business coming in from outside Rochester, and obviously that expansion is good," said Buckingham principal Larry Glazer of Avalon.

Artcraft Optical moved from the seven-story building in late 2000. Artcraft

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Owner Tom Eagle had considered turning the property into lofts but eventually sold to Rochester developer Buckingham Properties.

Buckingham is converting the building’s first two floors into office space and the top five into 36 loft apartments. The project is expected to cost about $4.8 million.

Financial terms of the five-year deal were not disclosed, but Buckingham Properties has been asking $14 per square foot for leases, according to a listing for the building on Loopnet.com.

Glazer said renovations are on schedule and renting of the residential units could begin by June or July. Another business tenant, KAFL Insurance, expects to move in by June, he said.

A rooftop deck that looks down into Frontier Field is also planned.

Buckingham Properties has signed an agreement to buy a large portion of the former Genesee Hospital. It owns more than 6.5 million square feet of real estate from Syracuse to Le Roy, Genesee County.

Buckingham’s downtown holdings include the 150 State St. headquarters of the Rochester Business Alliance, the Michaels Stern lofts on North Clinton Avenue and Water Street Commons lofts on North Water Street.