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PRESS RELEASE

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“SHOPS ON THE SQUARE”, AN AFFORDABLE RETAIL COOPERATIVE, OPENS DOWNTOWN

WARREN, Ohio--Warren Redevelopment and Planning is offering affordable retail space on Courthouse Square by forming **Shops on the Square**, a cooperative at 124 North Park Avenue. The former radio station building was designed with multiple rooms used as offices, which are now being transformed into 8 individual retail shops between 80 to 168 square feet, rented for approximately \$100-\$250 per month.

Warren Redevelopment and Planning (WRAP) is encouraging businesses such as start-ups, artists and prepackaged food manufacturers to consider the use of the space. Leases will be signed for 3-month intervals, and tenants may join together to create terms of use for the common space. “This concept allows for people with a great product or idea to take a low-capital risk, while benefitting from the support and encouragement of peers. We are creating a setting where people can thrive,” says Melissa Holmes, a consultant to WRAP.

The first tenant will be Manda Bees Headbands, which sells non-slip headbands for women in any situation, be it yoga class or their wedding day. Business owner Amanda Benchwick started making the headbands on a whim, when she was unable to maintain her long hair while teaching a yoga class. “I went from being a yoga and pilates instructor to having seven employees. It was something that just fell into place,” Benchwick recalls. She has created a successful internet shop on Etsy, but wanted a physical presence in downtown Warren, where she has recently relocated to integrate into the emerging arts scene.

The cooperative has space for up to 7 more businesses, which will be chosen on a first-come, first-serve basis. In addition to first floor retail, tenants will be provided a lower level space for storage or to create a work room.