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## Green dreams for a blank slate

### *In West Town, a Water Tower Place for environmental wonks*

By HAYDN BUSH, Managing Editor

Within the vast spaces of the old Frederick Cooper Lamp factory, 2545 W. Diversey, the overwhelming feeling in the air is one of emptiness. Most signs of the building's former life, which ended when the factory closed in August 2005, have been erased—even the sign on the building's distinctive water tower is truncated, and now reads "rederick Cooper." For the most part, the concrete posts holding up the building's foundation are the only dividers from the seemingly limitless expanses of high-ceilinged open space. There are a few graffiti pieces on the walls, to be sure, suggesting occasional use of the building by trespassers, but for the most part the 250,000-square-foot building is fairly pristine.

Eventually, though, those concrete posts will be surrounded by dividers separating retail showrooms and work-live spaces for eco-friendly businesses, with the plans to convert the building into "Green Exchange," a \$35 million "green"-themed business hub that will begin bursting into life this summer. The developer, Baum Development, is hoping to have at least one tenant in place by December 2007.

On a recent tour of the Logan Square plant, Lizzie Kaplan, a project manager from Baum Development, described how the blank canvas



Photo by Josh Hawkins



*Baum Development hopes to transform the Cooper Lamp factory from an empty space to a thriving 'Green Exchange.'*  
Rendering courtesy of Baum Development

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of a building would ultimately morph into a dazzling new emporium for all things green that boosters hope will resemble an environmentally conscious Water Tower Place. Walking around the four-story factory, Kaplan detailed plans for a "vertical mall" on the building's second floor, with visitors arriving on the floor via escalator from an expansive first-floor lobby, and an outdoor organic cafe.

Once on the second floor, Kaplan says, future shoppers could encounter showrooms for electric cars, and there are talks with one of the nation's largest bicycle manufacturers for a showroom space as well, Kaplan said during the tour. Right now, the developers are discussing potential leasing arrangements with 20 tenants; two groups, Consolidated Printing and Greenmaker, a building supply firm, have already signed on.

There will be 100 parking spaces on the first floor, all of which will be for use by the tenants, and plentiful space for bike racks. The developers are also in talks with the nonprofit car-sharing service I-Go for possible cars on site.

According to Kaplan, the developers are working on a planned development application with the Department of Planning and Development at present, and hope to complete their zoning paperwork in March. Currently, the building is zoned M1-2, for manufacturing but Kaplan says the new zoning would resemble, for the most part, a B2-3 designation, or zoning to allow for commercial use.

At the very earliest, Kaplan says, some tenants could begin to move into parts of the building by December 2007; adding that the development will likely be built out over a longer time frame, as more and more of the space is leased. To date, renderings of what the building will look like haven't been completed yet,

"We're still in schematic design," Kaplan said.

At the same time the developers pursue Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, Kaplan says they are also working with the Department of Landmarks to get historic certification for the factory, which will entail work on the facade and the iconic water tower visible from the adjacent Kennedy Expressway.

Other wrinkles include possible work-live space for small business owners and artists. Kaplan stressed that the spaces will be "work-live" as opposed to the more prevalent "live work" designation, which are designed primarily as living spaces. In terms of actually living in the spaces, Kaplan said that tenants would bargain for raw space, with amenities limited to a kitchenette and a bathroom.

Priority parking will be slated for hybrid cars; for CTA riders, the 76 Diversey bus goes by the front door, and the California stop on the Blue Line is roughly a mile southwest of the building. In the long term, Kaplan says, planners hope that eventually sales on the website, [www.greenexchange.com](http://www.greenexchange.com), will eclipse business done in person, limiting the number of trips to the physical site.



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