

Morristown's 'greenest building' on course

Officials say facility will reduce pollution, conserve energy while creating a healthy working environment

BY PEGGY WRIGHT • DAILY RECORD • AUGUST 31, 2008

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MORRISTOWN – Visitors to the town's "greenest" building – expected to open this fall at 14 Maple Ave. – may get the sense they are in an environment of purity that reconnects them to the best the Earth has to offer indoors.

They will walk in some areas on floors that are fashioned of cork or bamboo.

They will breathe air purified by a three-story vertical garden known as a biowall, the largest in the United States.

No odors of bleach or toxic cleaning products will overwhelm the senses; only nontoxic products will be used at the 30,000-square-foot, four-story structure built and owned by the Morristown Parking Authority.

Beyond the authority's offices, the building will house other nonprofit organizations that include the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The Seeing Eye Inc., the Fannie E. Rippe Foundation, the Morristown Partnership and the Arts Council of the Morris Area.

The nine-level parking garage component of the project, with 791 spaces for employees and the public and accessible by DeHart Street, is expected to open by the second week of September.

Seek Platinum Rating

Parking Authority Executive Director George Fiore credited the Dodge Foundation with providing the challenge to build a "green building," one that would receive the highest marks from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design green-building rating system developed by the nonprofit U.S. Green Building Council. The authority hopes to achieve a platinum rating from LEED.

The Dodge Foundation pushed for a "green" building when it was approached as a prospective tenant by the parking authority more than six years ago.

"The entire building is almost seen like a living organism," said David Grant, the Dodge Foundation's president and chief executive officer, on a recent "hard hat" tour of the building.

"Our goals were to create a green building that is both educational and inspirational," Grant said.

Grant is particularly proud of the building's "vegetative roof." This green roof system will be covered with plants and fitted with a special drainage system. The goal is to reduce air pollution, conserve energy and protect against temperature fluctuations that degrade roofs.

The parking garage cost is \$19 million.

The price-tag on the office building is \$8.3 million. While the special environmental designs and energy-saving measures cost more than cheaper alternatives, those involved in the project said there will be significant savings on energy in the long run and gentler treatment of the environment from the start.

"With the direction of the world, the price of fuel and shortages, it's important more than ever to be environmentally responsible," Fiore said.

There is no need for massive heating and cooling units, said Peter D. Maszczak, a member of the Wm. Blanchard Co. project management team. Twenty-two geothermal wells were drilled on the property to a depth of 530 feet, allowing heat pumps to seize the temperature of 55 degrees at that depth to heat or cool the building, Maszczak explained.

Sunshades, or aluminum screens, were installed on the building exterior to block summertime heat and let in solar warmth in the winter. Photovoltaic panels, or solar panels, were installed on the garage roof to supplement the electricity used by the garage and offices.

Even beams from the former Epstein's department store in town were salvaged and are being used as enhancements in some offices.

Expected to be a particular attraction is the biowall, to be located between the Dodge Foundation offices and the roof entrance.

This living wall of plants will be connected to the building's heating/cooling system.

The plant's roots, kept hydrated by a sponge system, are a natural air filter to eliminate toxins from the air, Maszczak said.

Calling the building "a holistic design," Grant said he expects visitors to be heartened by the atmosphere and employees to be motivated by a healthier work environment.

Peggy Wright can be reached at (973) 267-1142 or pwright@gannett.com.



Paul Miller, a coordinator for sustainability programs for the Morristown Partnership, describes the building materials used in the construction of the Morristown Parking Authority's 'green' building on Maple Avenue in Morristown during a 'hard-hat tour' of the building. The four-story building will house the parking authority and a number of nonprofit organizations.

(elbaliz mendez / daily record)



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Robert Goldsmith of the Morristown Parking Authority, right, speaks to David Grant, president and CEO of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation during a "hard-hat tour" of what will likely be New Jersey's "greenest" building, expected to open this fall at 14 Maple Ave. in Morristown. The structure is being built and will be owned by the Morristown Parking Authority.

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George Fiore, executive director, Parking Authority

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