

ABDUL ISLAM'S TOWERING PLAN

While most of us worry about the recession and faltering 401(k)s, people like Abdul A. Islam get busy.

Mr. Islam, a Glastonbury resident and owner of AI Engineering Inc. in Middletown, has plans to build a 12-story, \$40 million office tower on the site of the former WFSB studios on Constitution Plaza in Hartford. Although he's yet to line up most of his financing, he is sure he will. So sure that he's put up \$2 million of his own to buy and tear down the building.

A VISION FOR HARTFORD

» An inspiring development for downtown in troubled times

What accounts for such ironclad optimism? Maybe it's because, as an engineer, Mr. Islam is used to turning obstacles into opportunities.

Yes, the economy has slowed. But Mr. Islam believes the lag in construction means companies are likely to bid more competitively, reducing his project's costs. He also believes AI Engineering's commitment to lease 15 percent of the 200,000-square-foot building will ease lenders' worries.

The building's design — Mr. Islam is shooting for the U.S. Green Building Council's "platinum" rating, the highest for energy and environmental innovation — should appeal to firms specializing in engineering, technology and research. (As will the amenities: a 2,500-square-foot auditorium, open floor plans, natural lighting, a rooftop garden and views over the Connecticut River . . .)

If Mr. Islam succeeds, his tower will be the first major addition of new office space to downtown in more than two decades. His choice of Hartford is rooted in his confidence in the re-emergence of cities as prominent places where people live, work and play.

We're sure he's right.

These are troubled times for the economy. But Mr. Islam reminds us that, for people with vision, determination and the means to make things happen, there are opportunities in every season.