

DEAL WATCH

Hartford Office Tower Advancing

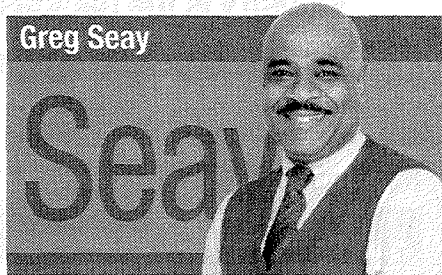
The delay in removing asbestos and finishing the interior demolition of a former TV studio in downtown Hartford's Constitution Plaza won't affect the scheduled fall construction start on the proposed AI Technical Center, the developer says.

AI Engineers President Abul Islam said last week he has teamed with a New York commercial mortgage broker to secure construction and permanent financing for the \$40 million office building that would serve as headquarters for his Middletown company.

In fact, he said, the viability of the project, meant to showcase energy-saving and environmentally friendly features and technologies, has been enhanced amid falling prices for construction materials and services.

In addition, Abul said he has a tentative commitment from a tenant to occupy 1 1/2 floors, or about 22,000 square feet, of the 170,000 square feet of leasable space in the 13-story tower. He would only describe the prospect as "a very solid Connecticut company that, like me, is willing to move to Hartford."

First Commercial Mortgage Inc. of New York, the broker working on financing, was encouraged the building is drawing tenant interest in downtown Hartford, where overall office vacancies are in double digits.



"While this would normally be a major concern," First Commercial President Kevin P. Meehan Sr. wrote to Islam on March 30, "we feel that the overall vacancy issue is somewhat mitigated by the fact that your own company will be occupying almost 25 percent of the building and that you have also received preliminary rental commitments..."

Meehan said his firm is waiting on a market study it will provide to lenders, adding that he anticipates "financing will be secured and that the development will be underway in the forthcoming months."

With interior demolition "75 to 80 percent complete," Islam said exterior demolition of Broadcast House, WFSB-TV 3's former studio, is slated to begin in May and be completed in mid-June. Meanwhile, he is pursuing qualification for upfront reimbursements

from Connecticut Clean Energy Fund and reviewing contractors for the project.

Marine products space

Ocean Accessories has leased 6,000 square feet in a 72,000-square-foot multi-tenant "flex" building at 1 Shoreline Drive in Guilford.

Ocean Accessories, also based in Guilford, will use the space for light manufacturing and distribution of marine products. Bill Clark, senior vice president of the Geenty Group, Realtors represented the tenant. Stanley Gniazdowski, of Realty Concepts, represented the landlord, Russo Real Estate LLC.

Kaestle Boos Contract

New Britain municipal design specialist Kaestle Boos Associates has been named the architect for the \$20 million renovation and expansion of the middle and high schools and campus improvements in southern Rhode Island's Chariho Regional School District.

Chariho serves the communities of Charlestown, Richmond and Hopkinton.

Construction will begin early next year, with completion set for 2011.

Cartus Clarification

The April 20 Deal Watch focused on the



Exterior demolition is next up for the downtown Hartford site of the 13-story AI Technical Center.

Cartus broker network's new relationship with Clemens and Sons Realty. William Pitt Sotheby International Realty has not ended its affiliation with Cartus. It has exited the Hartford market, but continues as a Cartus principal broker serving the Fairfield County and shoreline markets.

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