

True North plans move to West Side building

RenZone extension needed to relocate

BY CHRIS KNAPE

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GRAND RAPIDS — A Plainfield Township architecture, development and construction firm is laying plans to move its operations to a vacant building on the city's West Side.

True North, via its 607 Dewey LLC, plans to spend \$1.9 million to purchase, renovate and add a third story to a vacant former window distribution center near Third Street and Seward Avenue NW.

The move hinges on securing an extension on the property's Renaissance Zone status, which relieves the owner and tenants of most state and local taxes. The city's brownfield authority already signed off the plans, which also require state approval.

The project would buttress other recent developments along the Seward Avenue corridor by Robert Israels, Parkland Properties, American Seating and Pioneer Construction.

"I've been looking at this building for a couple of years, actually," said Dan Henrickson, chief executive of True North. "With the efforts of Bob Israels and the regentrification of that area, it caught my attention again."

Adding a floor to the building would provide more exposure to traffic on the Int. 196 and U.S. 131 overpasses, and would provide a scenic view of Grand Rapids' sky-

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PRESS PHOTO/NOEL WEBLEY II

New home: True North is buying this building, at 607 Dewey Ave. NW.

MOVE BUILDING WILL BE A 'GREEN' SHOWCASE

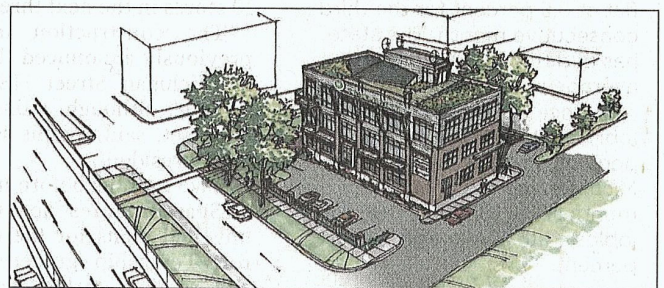
CONTINUED FROM C1 line, Henrickson said.

Residential, retail, office and developments have brought hundreds of jobs and residents and millions of dollars worth of investment to old factories, a school and warehouses that once were the lifeblood of the West Side neighborhood.

True North plans to make the building a showcase of green building technologies and alternative energies. The building will be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, certified for its use of environmentally friendly materials and construction methods.

Solar panels, a green roof, a wind turbine and other green technologies are expected to be on display.

"Part of it is because of our quest to be brownfield professionals," said Henrickson, whose firm has worked on downtown area projects such as Arena Station and the former USXChange building. "This is a proof statement of that; plus, we get the expo-



COURTESY PHOTO

How it will look: True North's architectural rendering of the building near Third Street and Seward Avenue NW.

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sure of moving downtown."

The company hopes to have regulatory approvals for extension of the Renaissance Zone and brownfield tax credits by the end of September.

Henrickson said he hopes to move True North's 12 employees to the building by spring and hire an additional

three to four people.

The lower two levels would be leased for offices and a restaurant or retailer.

The company is trying to sell its Belmont home at 6250 Jupiter Ave. NE.

The age of the Dewey building is unclear, although city directories from the 1930s show the address was home to Vulcanizers Material Co. By the 1970s, it was being used as a base for several trucking operations. In the 1990s, it was home to The Window Center.

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