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First-of-kind offices boast 'green' decor

Palm Beach County's first "green" office buildings are under construction, including one at **Centrepark West** in West Palm Beach and the new headquarters of law firm **Romano Eriksen & Cronin** in Lake Worth.

Both will include features that minimize the buildings' effects on the environment.

At the 100,000-square-foot **EcoPlex** at Centrepark West, there'll be bike racks and showers for workers who commute by bicycle. Hybrid cars will get the best parking spots. Rainwater that lands on the roof will be funneled into cisterns and used to flush toilets.

"We're probably never going to use city water to flush toilets," said **Frank Navarro** of **Navarro Lowrey Properties**, the building's developer.

Other green features include big windows to provide plenty of natural light and a concrete shell that's partly made from recycled materials.

Navarro said the green building tactics add only about 5 percent to the cost of the \$25 million project, and he's telling prospective tenants that they'll save on their electric bills as a result of the building's efficient design.

Romano Eriksen & Cronin likewise will capture rainwater at its buildings at 1005 Lake Ave. The firm plans two structures totaling 100,000 square feet, with part taken by the law firm and the rest leased to tenants.

The buildings also will include solar panels, rooftop gardens, elevator pistons lubricated with vegetable oil and bathroom counters made in part from recycled glass.

"We've asked our contractor to make it as green as it possibly can be," said **John Romano**, a partner at the firm.

Both projects are being built by **Hedrick Brothers** of West Palm Beach, and both owners have submitted plans to the **U.S. Green Building Council**, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that certifies environmentally friendly properties.

And in spite of the bike racks and other ecologically friendly features, Navarro stresses that his building, with its \$23-a-foot rents, will look like any other suburban office.

"This building's going to look like a Class A building," Navarro said. "The green building concept is so new to this area that we wanted to dispel any thoughts that it's going to look like a treehouse."

Navarro Lowrey has yet to sign any leases at the EcoPlex, but it's considering green buildings at other sites at Centrepark, which is just west of Interstate 95 and just north of Palm Beach International Airport. The company last year sold eight buildings at Centrepark to **TA Associates Realty** of Boston for \$91 million.