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IMAGINATIVE USE OF STORMWATER, CO-GEN AND EVEN “BUGS” MAKES ONE BRYANT PARK A SHOWCASE FOR GREEN STANDARDS, ARCHITECT FOX TELLS BOMA/NY SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

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NEW YORK, NY ---How do you create America’s first Platinum LEED office building?

“By realizing that the earth is flat and that nature will win,” countered Robert Fox, AIA, co-founder of Cook + Fox Architects as keynoter at the BOMA/NY special conference on sustainability, held April 14th. Before an audience of 275, the award-winning architect and widely recognized guru of green building told the story of how the building team working for the Durst Organization and Bank of America at the **Bank of America Tower at One Bryant Park**, turned previous truths on their heads and broke new ground in creating what is believed to be the most advanced urban green building under construction today.

One key approach that reversed previous practice was to have all consultants on board from the earliest part of design, eschewing the decade-old practice of having the architect creating the building first. “All Platinum features were designed into the structure from the start,” said Fox. “We looked at what we had to work with that comes free.” Wind, sun, rain, earth and biology topped the list. And while it was determined that a wind turbine to self-generate all the power was impractical in New York City, many of nature’s other free features are powering up the building.

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Overall, the crystalline shaped tower—to surpass the Chrysler Building to become New York’s second tallest—will incorporate one acre of green roof, abundant glass to provide natural light deep into the interiors, 300 percent more public space than usual including garden rooms, on-site power generation, and imaginative recapturing of grey water and numerous other by-products of building operation to provide heating and cooling.

Among the pioneering features are:

- Air is leaving the building cleaner than when it came in due to a 95% filtration system
- One of the deepest basements in Manhattan will capture 100% of the storm water, which will be mixed, stored and used for industrial uses such as toilet flushing and for condensate water. None will go into the City’s storm system. The added benefit? The NYC Department of Environmental Protection gave a 25% water reduction charge for this innovation
- The branch bank office on the ground floor will receive its heating and cooling from the water waste products at no additional cost
- 3 million gallons of water will be saved as a result of waterless urinals—still under negotiation with NYC
- With only 27% of the energy originally transported to a location making it to the site, the team developed its own power plant to supply 70% of the building
- Ice will be made at night and melted during the day to supplement HVAC. This practice has the added benefit of placing less strain on the grid—the generating plants that often get pulled in to produce cooling on the hottest of summer days are among the most polluting.
- Food scraps from two corporate cafeterias and shredded paper will be anaerobically digested by insects to generate methane, which will help supply the branch bank’s power as well
- A mix of slag into the building concrete (which generates enormous amounts of CO₂ when being produced) will not only reduce carbon dioxide produced during manufacturing, but will result in a 10% stronger substance

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- Numerous changes to the air circulation system—including everyone getting their own thermostat—will result in greater work productivity. Thermostats placed in the floor near desks generate cleaner, more refreshing air and allows the building to have two additional months of free cooling
- 9-foot 6-inch ceilings and glass walls—partially protected by a ceramic core and insulated spandrels—make for natural light, natural heating and greater productivity. The raised floor will have a minimum of partitions and make for easy reconfiguration of partitions during moves, etc.

At the heart of these and the many more innovations at One Bryant Park is the commissioning system, or ensuring that all equipment is functioning at its optimum performance at all times. In green buildings, this is essential and the building will have two teams dedicated to commissioning and quality control.

For the bottom liners in the audience, the news was equally as refreshing as the thinking behind the design and development: the 1.5 to 2% additional cost of construction will see a payback averaging three to four years, which is industry standard, Fox stated. But the bottom-line benefits of millions of dollars in energy costs being saved over the years stretch far into the future, making for increased profitability as traditional sources of energy become more expensive.

The spectacular tower, which is just a “60-foot deep hole in the ground now”, will start appearing above the foundation works in September, Fox believes. And as New York awaits this masterful project to arise, it will also share in its brilliance—technical data, including cost analyses, will be published and made available to the public as soon as compilation and vetting is complete.

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Photo Credit: Friedman Studio/Dooley ©2005

Betsy Jacobs, BOMA/NY President and Robert Fox, AIA, Cook + Fox Architects.