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### Summer opening still planned

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By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

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The transformation of an 86-year-old former tobacco warehouse at 1016 Allen St. into the high-tech Centre for Business and Research is on track to be completed by midsummer, Malcolm Bryant said Wednesday.

And Madison Silvert, vice president of the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corp. and executive director of its eMerging Ventures Center for Innovation, said he's hoping the first tenants will be ready to move in by fall.

Bryant owns the 37,000-square-foot brick warehouse and is renovating it for modern offices and 8,000 square feet of research lab space.

"This building will be unique to this region and to Kentucky," he said. "Every day we're exposing more cool architecture in the building."

Bryant said the wood has been sandblasted to its original color, bricked up windows are being reopened to let in more natural light and a drainage cistern was discovered beneath the building.

The warehouse was built in 1923 for the Southwestern Tobacco Co.

Silvert said he's talking with several possible tenants for the space.

"We don't have any signed leases yet," he said. "But I am hopeful that we'll have something by this summer."

Plans call for the Centre for Business and Research to include research space for biotech companies as well as office space for a "business accelerator," a place where new businesses can rent as much space as they need until they're ready to move out on their own.

Four finalists were announced last week for EDC's first \$15,000 eMerging Ventures Challenge -- a business plan competition. In addition to the money, first place includes a free six-month lease at the business and research center.

Finalists are Dalisha's Desserts, a dine-in high-quality dessert company; Fluent Universe, an Internet-based translation business; Agent511, a mobile technology company; and Stay-Dri, a continence solutions firm.

Silvert said the center is designed to have lab space for clients of Kentucky BioProcessing who need research space in Owensboro.

He said he is talking with both private companies and educational institutions who are interested in space in the building.

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