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(June 1, 2010) A rare formed concrete building in Haliburton County dating back to 1909, will turn into a co-op centre for small contractors and green builders. Once a Standard Chemical distribution centre it has been abandoned for many years. Now **Leora Burman** and the owner, **Jim O'Connor**, are working to prevent it from becoming **Landfill** and save this **Landmark** for the area's small contractor community.

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Posted June 1, 2010 - 10:17 AM



Here are excerpts from an article in the Haliburton Echo detailing the plans. The photos give an idea of the state of the building.

Donald plant to be restored

By Jenn Watt, Haliburton Echo

Sixty-four years after it was abandoned by the Standard Chemical Company, the distribution building in Donald is being reborn as a business hub in Haliburton County. (Donald is between Bracebridge and Bancroft, south of Algonquin Park.)

The extensive work needed to bring the deteriorating building up to adequate standards is well worth the time, money and effort, says Leora Berman, who is heading up the project. *(Leora Berman is also the project manager for **The Land Between Program** which studies and promotes interest in the efforts to enhance the distinct ecological, cultural and economic characteristics of the area between the Canadian Shield and the St. Lawrence Plain. For more information see www.thelandbetween.ca.)*

It is one of the few concrete formed buildings left, she said, "we can't see this building disappear."

Berman, along with the owner of the building Jim O'Connor, are going through the necessary zoning and planning steps to access grant funding, which will help them get the building back in shape.

Then, Berman will start a small contractor and green builder co-op. "There is no real centre for small contractors nor for green building [suppliers]," she said. "It gives them a place to market their services."

Berman envisions the building becoming a permanent Cottage Life show, where members of the co-op will set up booths with their business's information.

Potential customers will come to the centre to browse through contractors and green building suppliers to find what they need, assisted by one permanent staff member.

She plans to call it the Donald Innovation Centre Cooperative.

O'Connor is "essentially donating" the building, which he has owned since 1986, to the project, says Berman. The co-op will be paying a minimal amount of rent. *(There will be an easement - lifetime lease on the building to be donated to the coop once it is formed.)*

O'Connor estimates that it would cost him \$100,000 to tear down the building, and while it may



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cost several hundred thousand more to renovate it, O'Connor thinks it's worth it.

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"We could tear it down for \$100,000 or spend \$600,000 to restore it. Haliburton has very few historic sites," he said. "This is for the smaller guys," said O'Connor, who owns Highland Glass and Window.

Berman is hoping to have the building rezoned for commercial activities this month, the co-op registered within six months.

She also wants contractors and green building suppliers to sign up for the co-op. Berman is looking for donations of money or labour to renovate the place. The Haliburton County Development Corporation will be a trustee for all funds raised.

The first order of business is to save the building from disintegrating in the short term. "If we don't start redoing it, it will fall apart," she said. Last winter's wet, cold weather compromised the outside support beams. The roof also needs to be patched up. Those costs alone will be about \$100,000.

After that, assuming all the administrative pieces fall in place, Berman hopes to approach Fleming College's green building renovation program to see if students might be interested in working on a heritage building as part of their course work.

For those who join the co-op, the membership fee will run about \$40 a month, and will go to building maintenance.

The plan is to have the innovation centre open regular nine-to-five hours so as not to disturb the largely residential neighbourhood.

"This will be beneficial to economic development in Haliburton," Berman said. "Right now there is no one-stop-shop for small contractors." She said it will likely be two years before the centre is up

