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## Can Charles Adler kick-start Goose Island?

By JOHN PLETZ | [Twitter](#) [Google+](#)



That's why he's hired a staff of six.

If they build it . . .

If Lost Arts succeeds, it could help jump-start the transformation of Goose Island from industrial to tech and R&D. A few developers, such as R2, already have made bets that Goose Island will go the way of Fulton Market and River North before it in becoming a hot new neighborhood. Such transitions happen slowly, and Goose Island is in the early stages. So far, UI Labs, a public-private research hub, is the main new tenant.

*“Our goal long term is that all the great neighborhoods nearby will infill into Goose Island,” Garrison says.*

Adler did a test run of Lost Arts a year ago in a temporary space in Fulton Market, not far from Google's new headquarters. He invited 60 people to set up shop for a month. “At the end, we had a party, and the first thing they asked was: ‘Are you going to stay open?’ People are hungry for this.”

So he spent a few months tweaking the idea. The new space is more than twice the size, and it's got much better technology—fiber instead of Wi-Fi, thanks to help from Comcast. There are other maker co-working spaces, such as Pumping Station One and Catalyze Chicago, both of which are nonprofits.

Adler says he's been working on Lost Arts pretty much full time for the past six months. He's run the numbers to figure out how to make it work, but he isn't saying exactly how many tenants he'll need. Part of it depends on the mix of part-timers and full-timers, and part of it is the unknown of launching a new venture.

R2 plans to begin renovating the building that Lost Arts now calls home into office space sometime next year and will start work on another building at 1200 North Branch late this year. The firm owns 15 acres and four buildings totaling about a half-million square feet in and around Goose Island.

“Our goal long term is that all the great neighborhoods nearby will infill into Goose Island,” Garrison says. “It's the most central place in Chicago left where you can get a pretty big piece of space or chunk of land for a decent price. Right now, the whole neighborhood is underexposed.” It's a classic chicken-and-egg challenge.

“To make them visible we need to make Lost Arts visible,” Adler says. “To do that we need to make Goose Island visible.”

The first flare just went up.

Charles Adler could have done a lot of things when he left Kickstarter in Brooklyn and returned to Chicago a couple of years ago.

He decided to launch a co-working space for people who do their hacking in wood, plastic or cloth instead of code. It's called Lost Arts. Imagine 1871 focused primarily on workshop space for 3-D printers, precision computer-controlled cutters, standard power tools and sewing machines. If you like the smell of sawdust or solder, this will be a place for you.

Adler set up shop at 909 W. Bliss St., just off Halsted Street and Chicago Avenue, in an old warehouse used for document storage. He's got about 10,000 square feet of space, outfitted with tools, tables and broadband access for creative types who want to make stuff.

Some tenants will be hobbyists working on personal projects but who don't have the space, tools and expertise to build things. Others will be trying to get businesses off the ground. Membership costs for Lost Arts range from \$80 for weekend use, \$200 for nights and weekends, to \$500 for full-time use. Lost Arts is a lot like Kickstarter in Adler's eyes. “We gave them access to capital and unlocked their ability to make something and bring an idea to life,” he says.

It's also enabling what he sees as “the future of work: the blurring of lines between disciplines.”

“I'm a generalist,” says Adler, 42, who dropped out of Purdue University, where he was studying engineering, in 1995. He later spent nine years working on crowdfunding platform Kickstarter, where he was head of design.

The genesis of Lost Arts goes back even further. Adler was trying to build a piece of furniture 15 years ago at his father-in-law's place in Skokie. “I didn't have access to the necessary tools,” he says. “I later realized I also needed mentors. I didn't need schooling, I needed guides. Working alone doesn't provide you with much support.”