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Broadway towers to get facelifts

Energy savings a deciding factor

By: Murray McNeill
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Ron Suzuki of Smith Carter Architects and Engineers Inc. and Karen Lund of Morguard Investments Ltd. hold samples of outside panels that will be installed at 363 Broadway.

One of the most prominent office towers on Broadway is getting a \$4-million facelift that will not only make it more energy-efficient, but dramatically alter its appearance.

"This is going to be putting a new face on Broadway," Karen Lund, general manager of the Winnipeg regional office of Morguard Investments Ltd., said of the renovations to the 16-storey, glass-panelled building at 363 Broadway. Morguard manages the building, which is owned by a pension fund.

"We kind of think (when it's done) people are going to look at it and say, 'When did they build that building?'" Lund said.

The renovation is to get underway next month and is expected to take nine to 12 months to complete.

It involves replacing the building's curtain wall, or exterior. That means removing all of the copper-coloured glass panels, re-insulating and resealing the walls, and then installing 80,000 square feet of new glass panels, some transparent and some not.

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An artist's conception of the finished reno at 363 Broadway.

The new panels will have a special glazing that makes them more energy-efficient than the old ones and allows up to 60 per cent more daylight into the building. They'll also be in a variety of colours -- mainly blue, green and grey -- which will dramatically change the look of the building.

"The energy savings are going to be a big component of this," Lund said in an interview, although they don't have a final tally yet on how big the savings will be.

"But it's also an opportunity for us to rebrand the building. If you're going to do an upgrade, you don't want to put up the same glass."

Ron Suzuki, a project manager with the architectural firm working on the project -- Smith Carter Architects and Engineers Inc. -- said some really innovative and interesting buildings and structures are starting to pop up around Winnipeg. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the new airport terminal, and the Esplanade Riel bridge are some examples that come to mind.

"Winnipeggers have become more open to new designs," Suzuki said. "Morguard felt that was a good sign, and thought this was an opportunity to do much the same."

Although Morguard is going for a new look, the owner of a neighbouring Broadway office building is taking a different approach with its renovation.

The Workers Compensation Board is in the midst of a \$7.5-million-to-\$8.5-million upgrade of the exterior of its 51-year-old, six-storey office building at 333 Broadway. But its goal is not to alter the look of the building, which has been described as one Manitoba's finest examples of 1960s modernist architecture.

Suzuki said the two renovation projects are part of a national trend that has seen a lot of 1960s- and '70s-era buildings undergo major exterior renovations in the past decade.

That's because commercial buildings have a life cycle, he said, and the common thinking is that the interior should be upgraded every 10 years, the mechanical systems every 20 years, and the exterior every 40 years.

He and Lund said their design team considered more than half a dozen colour combinations before settling on the blue-green-grey combo for the glass panels.

"We wanted to create interest, but we also wanted it to be timeless," Suzuki said, noting the panels are likely going to be up there for close to 40 years.

To further enhance the building's pedestrian appeal and reduce solar-heat gains, they're installing sunshades on the south and east sides of the ground floor. They're also installing highly transparent, low-iron glass to let in more light and give pedestrians a better view of the main-floor retail tenants.

Lund is also hoping the building upgrade will help attract a new anchor tenant for the building. The previous anchor-- Inspyre -- had been downsizing its call centre operations for some time, and moved out altogether in January. That left four floors (52,000 square feet) of vacant space, including the top two floors.

Lund said Morguard's leasing specialists are talking to a number of firms who have expressed an interest in becoming the new anchor tenant, which includes getting the naming rights to the building.

Know of any newsworthy or interesting trends or developments in the local office, retail, or industrial real estate sectors? Let real estate reporter Murray McNeill know at the email address below, or at 697-7254.

murray.mcneill@freepress.mb.ca

Reno became research project

MORGUARD Investments Ltd. is helping to advance energy-efficiency research in Manitoba with its building-envelope renovation project at 363 Broadway.

To get the biggest bang for its energy-saving buck, the property management firm sought the help of Manitoba Hydro in planning its building upgrades. That led to the building becoming the subject of an air tightness testing demonstration project being conducted by Hydro and Red River College's Sustainable Infrastructure Technology Research Group (SITRG).

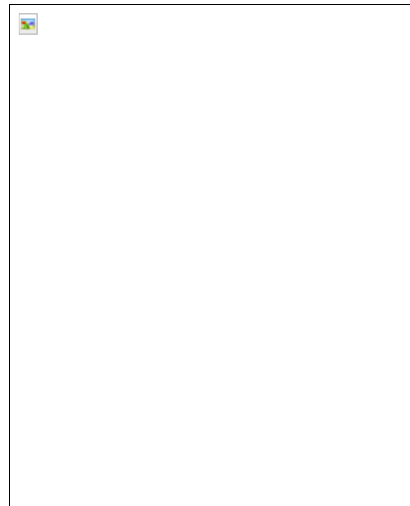
Manitoba Hydro spokesman Glenn Schneider said air tightness in commercial buildings is still an emerging field with limited data compared to what's available for residential buildings.

He said Hydro and SITRG will be conducting air leakage tests on the building before and after the renovations. That will provide them with valuable feedback on how to improve the design, construction and operation of commercial buildings from an energy perspective.

They're hoping they can also develop models that can be used in other commercial-building projects.

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