

Winnipeg Free Press

 **PRINT THIS**

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

Construction rolls on in city

Property firm, tech college on the grow

By: **Martin Cash**

Posted: **1:00 AM** | Comments: **0g**



JOHN WOODS/WINNIPEG FREE PRESS [Enlarge Image](#)

John Woods / Winnipeg Free Press Archives The Hudson's Bay Co. is not showing any of its cards regarding the future of the downtown Zellers store.

Even though a new round of hand-wringing is about to commence over the fate of the Bay building at the gateway to downtown Winnipeg, the pace of construction and development in the city continues to be strong.

Among the projects that got underway last week was the \$46-million, 100,000-square-foot Active Living Centre at the University of Manitoba, across the street from the Investors Group Field where the Winnipeg Blue Bombers will take to the field next summer.

Statistics Canada's latest building permit report showed construction activity throughout the province up to the end of August was up 33.5 per cent, with \$1.55 billion worth of permits.

Non-residential work was much stronger than the housing side with a 64.9 per cent increase for the year to date over last year with \$651.9 million worth of work permitted.

And although total permits were down 4.5 per cent in August compared to July, non-residential work was still up 14.5 per cent to \$65.4 million, showing there is still plenty of pent-up demand on the commercial, institutional and industrial front.

Here are a few projects that are making news on the good and the bad side of that ledger:

Zellers downtown

Widely rumoured and not surprising, the Hudson's Bay Co. has officially announced the Zellers store in the basement of the downtown Portage Avenue Bay building will close March 14, 2013.

Tiffany Bourré, spokeswoman for the Hudson's Bay Company, could not have been more circumspect in the words she chose regarding the company's plans for the basement space or the building in general.

"When we announced the closure of the banner we did say we were looking at options for some locations which included potentially rebranding some of those locations," she said. "But we still have not determined which, if any, we would do that at."

The bottom line is that the company is not showing any of its cards regarding the future plans for the basement, or the entire building for that matter, if indeed it actually knows what those cards are.

"It (the downtown Bay building) is owned by HBC, it's not leased, so it's an interesting location and we are certainly looking at it. But in terms of the future it has not been determined what will happen with the space," she said.

As for the building itself, the decade-long discussion and hard deal-making continues.

"I know that there are talks going on about it," Bourré said. "But we have not determined anything yet."

Over at CentreVenture, the downtown development agency that has a tool box it can bring to the table to impact developments of certain downtown properties, the Bay building remains an active file.

But as for details, Ross McGowan, CentreVenture's CEO, was not prepared to say much more.

"It is an iconic building. We have a number of irons in the fire, including everything," McGowan said.

Globe General Agencies

Ten years ago, the Winnipeg apartment owner and property management firm moved out of its downtown offices into a small, out-of-the way office building tucked in at the foot of St. James Street with the Assiniboine River across the street.

It was a departure for the firm that owns and manages about 5,000 apartment suites in Winnipeg and

another 1,000 in Edmonton, Saskatoon, Ottawa and Montreal. But according to Ron Penner, the company's vice-president of operations, the company has not looked back.

"We owned the land immediately north of our building and for many years we had a sign up saying we were willing to build to suit a tenant," Penner said.

But when it looked like it was outgrowing the 8,000-square-foot building, Penner said they realized they would have to move if they didn't do something for themselves.

And they did not want to leave their little enclave. So the company is in the process of building a \$4-million, 12,000-square-foot expansion to its west Wolseley hideout.

"Our staff love it here," he said.

"It's such a great atmosphere."

Winnipeg Technical College

This week, the skills-based institution that provides technical education to post-secondary and secondary students officially moved into its new 50,000-square-foot space at 7 Fultz Blvd., across the street from the main campus on Henlow Bay, which also benefited from renovations to 25,000 square feet.

The \$2-million renovation of the building that WTC will share with Firestone, which had previously been used as a warehouse, opens up all sorts of new opportunities for the college.

Most prominent will be a new partnership with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2085. In addition to all the classroom training for electrical apprentices, the new WTC facility will be headquarters for interim training and new code work for IBEW members.

The IBEW contributed \$166,000 to the project.

[**martin.cash@freepress.mb.ca**](mailto:martin.cash@freepress.mb.ca)

Find this article at:

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/construction-rolls-on-in-city-174142391.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.