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BUSINESS

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

Little TLC goes into cityplace

\$3-M reno for mall includes new flooring, paint, fixtures

By: Murray McNeill

Posted: 10/21/2013 1:00 AM | Comments: 18 | Last Modified: 10/21/2013 10:11 AM | Updates

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Downtown Winnipeg's cityplace retail/office complex is getting its first major facelift in more than 15



COURTESY MPI

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Cityplace, which is owned by Manitoba Public Insurance, is in need of sprucing up. Its last renovation was in 1997. The escalators will also be replaced.

years.

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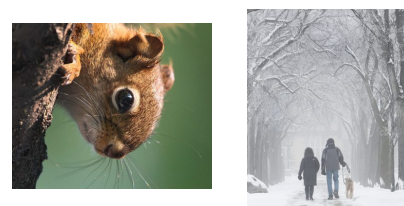
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The owner of the nine-storey complex on the southwest corner of Graham Avenue and Donald Street -- Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) -- plans to spend about \$3 million on refurbishing the retail portion (the first two floors) of the building.



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Cityplace main floor (COURTESY MPI)

MPI spokesman Brian Smiley said work will get underway almost immediately, and will take 35 to 40 weeks to complete.

"The refurbishing will be taking place after business hours to minimize the disruption to our tenants," he explained.

He said the improvements will include a fresh coat of paint throughout the mall, the installation of new flooring and new interior and exterior lighting fixtures, and the installation of three new windows on the second floor overlooking Graham Avenue.

They'll also replace the mall's two escalators, which are about 40 years old and are becoming difficult to repair.

Smiley said it's customary for retail malls to be refurbished every 15 to 20 years, and the last time cityplace had a major upgrade was in 1997.

Because cityplace has been designated a heritage building -- it was built in 1916 and for decades served as the home for the T. Eaton Co.'s catalogue shopping and downtown warehouse operations -- MPI is restricted in what changes it can make to the facade. That's why the bulk of the changes will be to the interior.

Smiley said MPI consulted with the city's urban design advisory committee and the city's downtown development agency -- CentreVenture Development Corp. -- in drawing up its refurbishing plans. He noted cityplace is within CentreVenture's sports, hospitality and entertainment district (SHED).

"There are certain things they are going to be doing in terms of streetscaping and lighting and canopies," he said, and MPI officials wanted to make sure its plans are compatible with those for the SHED.

In the interests of environmental sustainability, Smiley said all of the new lighting fixtures will be energy-efficient, and a lot of the building materials that are removed will be recycled.

With the addition of a major new retail tenant in the summer -- the 17,000-square-foot Shark Club's sports bar and gaming centre -- the vacancy rate in the building's 117,000-sq.-ft. retail mall stands at about nine per cent, Smiley said.

Other key retail tenants include Boston Pizza, a Liquor Mart, a Coles bookstore, a Rexall Pharmaplus outlet and a CIBC bank



[Enlarge Image](#)

Cityplace second floor bridge. (COURTESY MPI)



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Escalators at Cityplace. (COURTESY MPI)

branch.

The seven floors of office space are fully occupied, with MPI's head office taking up about 80 per cent of the space. Other office tenants include the City of Winnipeg's 311 call centre, federal prosecutions and a Department of Veterans Affairs office.

Interestingly, the building's newest office tenant is CentreVenture, which moved into a 3,400-sq.-ft. space late last week.

For the last six years, CentreVenture's offices were housed in a former two-storey shoe store on Main Street, south of William Avenue. President Ross McGowan said they relocated to cityplace because it's in the heart of the SHED.

"We're moving our offices there as a further demonstration of our commitment to developing the SHED, and to the revitalization of Portage Avenue," he said. "We're not going to abandon Main Street, but our focus now is on Portage Avenue and the SHED."

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Shindico Realty Inc. is close to completing the redevelopment of two former TV-studio buildings adjacent

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Bob Downs, the company's development manager, said two more tenants have leased space in the former CTV building, leaving only a 7,000-sq.-ft. space on the ground floor of the former WTN building left to fill.

"We've got a restaurant that's looking at that," he said, but declined further comment.

The two newest tenants are Polo Park Dental and Atmosphere, an outdoor clothing and sporting goods retailer. Both will move into the ground floor of the former CTV building.

The 8,000-sq.-ft. dental clinic is slated to open in November, Downs said, and the 11,000-sq.-ft. Atmosphere outlet is expected to open late this year.

The two tenants already in the buildings, which are connected to each other, are radio station CJOB and a local insurance broker.

Shindico and Cadillac Fairview also own the nearby Polo North retail/office complex, which was built on the former Winnipeg Arena site. That 210,000-sq.-ft. complex is fully leased with this month's opening of the city's first Bed, Bath & Beyond store.

The U.S.-based home-accessories retailer joins Mark's Work Wearhouse and Marshall's on the main floor of the complex. Anchor tenant Western Financial occupies the top two floors, as well as some space on the main floor.

Know of any newsworthy or interesting trends in the local office, retail, or industrial real estate sectors? Let Murray McNeill know at the email address below, or at 204-697-7254.

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HISTORY

Updated on Monday, October 21, 2013 at 10:11 AM CDT: Photos added.



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TYPO Spelling error? Punctuation problem? Send us an email if you've found a typo.



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