

# Burnside site gives Halifax downtown run for its money

By BILL POWER Business Reporter  
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In the battle for commercial tenants, the Hardman Group Ltd. is going toe to toe against downtown Halifax with its \$50-million business campus at the corner of Wright Avenue and Burnside Drive.

"We see our business campus as the second downtown in conjunction with Burnside Park and Dartmouth Crossing and an alternative to downtown Halifax for companies looking for a different format," executive vice-president Colin Whitcomb said Thursday.

Hardman Group will complete construction of the first office building, a three-storey, 60,000-square-foot complex, at the four-hectare site this fall. The building features several environmental and energy-saving features.

The building is already more than 50 per cent leased.

Anchor tenant Dominion of Canada General Insurance Co. is expecting reduced operating costs compared to its downtown Halifax location.

The insurance company will occupy 20,000 square feet, or one entire floor, of the new building and will also have increased free parking for staff and customers.

"This campus style of development is something outlying areas of the city can offer over the downtown," said Whitcomb. "It's really part of the evolution of any city and something that is already popular in places like Burlington and Mississauga, outside of Toronto."

He said easier and shorter commutes to work, free and abundant parking, on-site shower facilities and options for physical activity at break times — such as walking trails in a natural environment — are all examples of things employees are looking for in their workplace.

"They're also all things the new Burnside location will offer."

Company president Bill Hardman said in a news release employers are realizing it takes more than a top-flight benefit package to attract and retain top-level employs.

"There are all the amenities of existing development, such as lots of parking, easy access to highways, less traffic congestion, ample access to shops, restaurants and business-to-business services."

Hardman said the area is naturally landscaped and with residential construction on the rise in the area, many employees can look forward to a really short commute to work.

The Wright and Burnside business campus will sit amid its own ample green space, which Hardman said will provide employees the option of active and passive outdoor activities, including a basketball court, an outdoor aerobic area, lots of space to kick a soccer ball or play catch and areas for quiet reading and gathering when employees want to take a break from work.

An open pavilion for group functions is also included in the campus plan.

"The buildings will go up one at a time, with 18 to 24 months between each construction phase," Hardman said.

The company expects the entire project will be fully developed within eight to 10 years, with a final value in the range of about \$50 million and a total of about 350,000 square feet of commercial space.

There will also be more than 30,000 square feet of retail-service space along the Wright Avenue frontage.

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