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Next stop: Northfield Station

By James Jackson
Chronicle Staff

The first two tenants of a major new development in the city's north end have been revealed.

Cineplex Digital Solutions and MNP LLP will occupy nearly half of the space available at the new Northfield Station development located at 137 and 139 Northfield Dr. W. The project is located next to a proposed light rail transit station and just minutes from the expressway.

The total project will cost an estimated \$9 million.

"They always say 'location, location, location,' and I believe we have arguably one of the most interesting and best locations (in the city)," said Don Zehr, chief executive officer of The Zehr Group, the local developer responsible for the site. "If you don't want to be right downtown, this is a really cool space to be in."

Cineplex will be moving from their current Waterloo location on McMurray Road and expanding to occupy the entire 14,600 square-foot office building at 137 Northfield Dr. W. later this year.

MNP plans to amalgamate its two Waterloo offices and move into 22,000 square feet of office space on the third floor at 139 Northfield Dr. W. by next summer. The building will be about 66,000 square feet once complete.

The site is located next to the Nissan dealership Zehr also developed, which got him acquainted with the location. The development was once home to the Laurel Springs water bottling plant and an indoor go-kart track. Zehr will also manage the site through the property management arm of the company.

Zehr bought the two-hectare site back in 2011 for \$2.8 million. Constructed of brick and glass, along with high ceilings, Zehr said he was looking to achieve a loft feeling at the site.

He envisions the area, in conjunction with the redevelopment of the former NCR lands right across the street and the future LRT station, will become a communal meeting place for workers and commuters.

He said the site and the office space will likely appeal to the myriad of tech companies produced in the region.

"I foresee an interesting space where people stop and intermingle," Zehr said. "You just figure what that area will be like in the next 10 years with hotels and more retail, and we anticipate lots of people will be using the light rail service."

The new tenants couldn't be happier with their new home.

"Northfield Station was the perfect choice," said Dave Webb, regional managing partner with MNP for southwestern Ontario, in an email to the Chronicle.

"As a firm, our goal is to stand apart with the services and client experience we offer and this building certainly stands apart from other developments in the area.



Submitted Image

The multi-million development dubbed Northfield Station, located at 139 Northfield Dr. W. The Zehr Group believes the presence of a light rail transit stop will be a boon to the area in the north end of the city.



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"It's really a win-win for everyone and we couldn't be more excited."

For Cineplex Digital Solutions, the design of the site is what helped set it apart.

"From large windows and high ceilings to a wealth of open space, the entire building will serve as a creative showroom of sorts," said Steve Harris, vice president and general manager of Cineplex Digital Solutions, in a press release.

In light of the recent struggles experienced by BlackBerry, Zehr said this development serves as a reminder there are still good-news stories in the city and for the businesses that operate in this region.

"We know all the naysayers think it will be the end of the world with BlackBerry, and I don't believe that to be the case," Zehr said. "The fact is, there's lots and lots of other companies that are expanding like crazy and we're in a wonderful part of the world."

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