

## NORTH END WELLNESS CENTRE

PHOTO CREDIT: PETER GROSE WITH WESTLAND CONSTRUCTION LTD.



ROOF DECK GOING UP



THE LAST OF THE EARLIER STAGES OF THE MASONRY WALL GOING UP



THE WESTLAND-BUILT CONCRETE FEATURE WALL

# The Living Room of the North End

## THE NEW NORTH END WELLNESS CENTRE OFFERS CHANGES TO WINNIPEG'S NORTH END, INCLUDING SOCIAL, HEALTH AND RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING

By Andrea Danelak

**F**or over a decade, the property at 365 McGregor Street remained tenantless, just another empty building standing in Winnipeg's North End. But over the past few years, the neighbourhood has seen the old building demolished and a new one being constructed, a development expected to bring major changes to the area.

Construction of the North End Wellness Centre is well underway, meaning residents will soon have access to recreational, social and health programming that is comprehensive and close to home. The multi-service centre, located on the former North End YMCA-YWCA site, is slated to open in early 2009.

"We're looking forward to completing a good quality project that will be a valuable contribution to the community," says Peter Grose, President of Westland Construction Ltd., the project's general contractor.

While construction only began in March, planning for the centre has spanned several years and involved community organizations like the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC), one of the centre's proponents. To find out exactly what kind of services were needed in the facility, a significant portion of the planning consisted of consulting local residents and receiving input from the Aboriginal community, who ensured cultural spirit was integrated into

the centre's design and programming.

The centre's other proponents and future occupants – the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and SPLASH Child Care – were also consulted, as well as the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the fourth tenant who is participating in the programming but not the planning of the centre.

Andrew Wach of Andrew K. Wach Architect met with the groups and discussed their intentions (i.e., how they wanted to use the space, who they saw as the people who would visit, etc.) but notes it was still challenging to merge all of the organizations' requirements during the design stages.

## NORTH END WELLNESS CENTRE

"There are four very distinct personalities with very distinct needs in this building," he says. "They are all providing community-based services, but they are all doing it in a different fashion."

Because the centre is essentially the first of its kind in the city, designing it from scratch also proved to be a challenge.

"We really had to invent everything from the beginning, and when you do that you have to guess a lot," says Wach. "But so far, things have worked out. We expect it to be a very interesting building and to impact the everyday quality of life in the North End."

And designing the 26,000-square-foot facility was not the only part of the process done from scratch. The original plan was to restore as much of the existing YMCA-YWCA gymnasium as possible, but according to Grose, when the building was demolished in 2006, the only pieces salvageable were the open web field joists, which were eventually used in the gymnasium, and some glulam beams that matched the new ones being installed.

Despite having to build from the ground up, construction on the centre has moved quickly. With a construction budget of \$4,629,000 (plus the more than \$1 million in tenant improvements), the centre is expected to open this spring. As of October, the roof and concrete floors were nearly complete, after which Grose and his team planned to start on the

interior finishing. "And once the shell is complete and the finishing begins, there will be a lot of detailing coming into play," he says.

Some of the new facility's features will include the gymnasium and an accompanying change area, a youth centre with a climbing wall and indoor skateboard park, a state-of-the-art child care centre and shared community use space, including a kitchen and meeting place. It will also house office space for the community agencies, which will provide a plethora of support services from health care to employment and life skills training to community development.

"We want the centre to be a focal point in the community where people can gather and pursue healthy lifestyle options," says Kent Paterson, General Manager of Planning and Project Development for the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg. "It's a place for people of all ages."

Financial support for the project came primarily from the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program in 2004. Under the infrastructure program, the centre received funding that consisted of equal shares from the federal, provincial and project proponents – the project proponent being the NECRC, representing the community and partner organizations. In March 2008, Premier Gary Doer also announced funding through the Aboriginal Participation component of

the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement, a program that builds upon health and wellness opportunities for Aboriginal citizens.

According to Paterson, some additional backing came from the province and a fundraising campaign led by John Loewen, a campaign that saw contributions from several companies. And not all of the assistance came in monetary terms – the city offered its support by transferring the property to the NECRC and waiving outstanding property taxes.

With all those involved working diligently to complete the centre, North End residents should see the finished product in next to no time, with an expected completion date of late February 2009. Grose is hoping for a mild winter, as his biggest challenge with the project so far has come courtesy of Mother Nature. "There was a lot of rain this year," he says. "We hope for more favourable weather for completion."

**Owner:** North End Community Renewal Corporation Joint Venture, with Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Inc., YM/YWCA of Winnipeg, and SPLASH Child Care Inc.

**Cost Consultant:** Leskiw & Associates

**Architect:** Andrew K. Wach Architect

**Structural Engineer:** Wolfrom Engineering

**Mechanical Engineer:** Epp Siepman Engineering

**General Contractor:** Westland Construction Ltd.

**Mechanical:** Jets Plumbing & Heating Co. Ltd.

**Electrical:** Allco Electrical Ltd.

**Foundation:** Subterranean (Manitoba) Ltd.

**Structural Steel:** Mid Canada Reinforcing Inc.

**Roofing – Metal Deck:** Tri-Clad Designs Inc.

**Roofing:** Oakwood Roofing & Sheet Metal Co. Ltd.

**Wood Framing:** Western Archrib

**Glass & Glazing:** Border Glass & Aluminum

**Flooring:** Antex Western Ltd.

**Tile:** The Fabris-Milano Group Limited

**Masonry:** Euro-Can Enterprises Ltd.

**Millwork:** Vantage Woodwork Inc.

**Drywall:** Custom Drywall Manitoba Ltd.

**Elevators:** Otis Canada Inc.

**Hardware & Doors:** Allmar International

**Painting:** Fuchs & Maier Ltd.



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