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Nationwide to build more offices near arena

Most of 1,000 who'll work there will move from suburban sites

By Marla Matzer Rose

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Nationwide said yesterday that it will build an office building near Nationwide Arena to house 1,000 employees it plans to relocate Downtown.

The \$26 million building, 10 W. Nationwide, is expected to be completed by the end of 2012.

Most of the workers moving to the 200,000-square-foot building are employed by Nationwide Retirement Plans and work in Dublin. By the end of next year, Nationwide expects to have 8,600 workers Downtown.

Last year, Nationwide said it planned to move 1,400 workers from satellite offices in Dublin and Grove City, but that number has grown to 1,900. The company will continue to have a smaller number of employees in those suburbs.

"Bringing additional associates to the Nationwide complex Downtown fosters greater collaboration, which is good for our members," said CEO Steve Rasmussen in a statement. "We are pleased that our investment in the Arena District allows us to bring more of our people together."

The building will go up on the site of a surface parking lot on the northeast corner of Nationwide Boulevard and Front Street. Those using the lot have been notified that it will close this weekend as the company prepares to start preliminary work on the project.

Nationwide's real-estate development arm, Nationwide Realty Investors, plans to present final plans for the five-story building to the Columbus Downtown



The planned Nationwide office building, set to bring 1,000 workers downtown to the Arena District.

Commission at its Sept. 27 meeting and begin "vertical" construction of the structure by November.

The announcement comes two weeks after Nationwide Realty Investors revealed plans to build a \$10 million, 51,300-square-foot office building anchored by the FBI on the south side of Nationwide Boulevard west of Neil Avenue. That project is expected to be completed in October 2012.

Nationwide Realty Investors also plans a \$50 million headquarters for Columbia Gas of Ohio, a project that is to break ground in 2013 and be completed in late 2014.

Office projects by Nationwide Realty Investors planned for the next three years have a combined value of \$86 million.

Twelve years ago, Nationwide unveiled plans for the Arena District on the site of the former Ohio Penitentiary, and it has since invested more than \$1 billion on the mixed-use project.

One thing the new building will not

have is its own parking. Brian Ellis, president of Nationwide Realty Investors, said a long-term lease deal is being sought with the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority for 900 spaces in the authority's parking deck next door. The authority board voted several months ago to move forward with adding 800 spaces to the garage, which has 900. The garage also will be connected to the Hilton Columbus Downtown that is to open next fall.

Ellis said the announcement marks another step in the maturation of the Arena District and Downtown.

"This is a really active time for us," Ellis said. "We have a lot of momentum right now, a lot of really positive energy Downtown. We're still fighting a sluggish economy, but Downtown has become an increasingly attractive place. People want to put offices there, they want to live there, and they want to come down to visit. It keeps getting better and better." ■