

COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

2014 Newsmaker: Yard, Northstar show Ellis picking up building pace

By Brian Ball | Columbus Business First | Friday, December 26, 2014

A dive into the news archives at Columbus Business First in any of the past 15 years will find Nationwide Realty Investors Ltd. President Brian Ellis driving a big piece of the region's commercial real estate development.

But in the past 12 months, Ellis has stepped on the gas pedal at the real estate arm of Nationwide Mutual Co. he heads, making news in nearly every corner of Central Ohio.

On the housing side, Ellis and co-developer Robert Weiler Co. opened up land surrounding the Northstar Golf Club in southern Delaware County to homebuilders. The project also won the Building Industry Association of Central Ohio's nod to host the area's annual Parade of Homes at the golf course near Sunbury next June.

Miles to the south in downtown Columbus, Nationwide Realty continued development of its signature Arena District, unveiling plans to reshape the former Buggyworks industrial complex into 133,000 square feet of offices.

"2014 has been an outstanding year and one of our most active," Ellis said. "More importantly, it has set the stage for a huge amount of construction."

And less than a mile west of downtown, Ellis and Nationwide Realty in May outlined plans to buy the 8-acre Byers Chevrolet showroom and car repair complex at 555 W. Broad St. for redevelopment following Byers' relocation to Grove City in January.

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The bulk of development plans involving Nationwide Realty this year were rolled out at the 115-acre Grandview Yard a little more than a mile from the Arena District. Nationwide Realty will build a



Brian Ellis, president of Nationwide Realty Investors

major office campus there for Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co. The project comes as the developer's parent prepares to move thousands of workers from leased offices in the suburbs.

News of those jobs overshadowed the debuts of a Market District-anchored retail center and an OhioHealth urgent care medical office center in Grandview Yard. The developer also saw its Keystone office and apartment complex open west of the Nationwide Insurance campus site there, as well as the Hofbrauhaus beer hall and restaurant.

Meanwhile, Nationwide Realty's office building at 800 Yard St. signed the Northwestern Mutual family of insurance companies as a tenant for a 75,000-square-foot building it began to erect in early 2014. Ernst & Young in late 2013 signed as the building's initial tenant.

All told, Ellis expects \$150 million in projects at Grandview Yard, including a hotel, to get under way in 2015.

Construction of the first 330,000-square-foot office building for Nationwide is due to start in the spring with a 160,000-square-foot project beginning a few months later. Street and utility work also will commence in 2015.

"We'll have a lot of activity in 2015," Ellis said. ■