



Nationwide[®] Realty Investors

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Nationwide Arena grand opening marks new era for Downtown Columbus

COLUMBUS — Nationwide Arena – the nation’s newest and most innovative indoor venue for major league sports and entertainment and the centerpiece of a major downtown development in Columbus – officially opens today with formal ceremonies and an open house for community organizations and season ticket holders.

“Building the Nationwide Arena for the residents of Columbus was the opportunity of a lifetime,” said Dimon R. McFerson, chairman of Nationwide, which developed the Arena in partnership with The Dispatch Printing Company. “This area’s dramatic transformation; from blight and abandonment to this stunning Arena and the surrounding Arena District, fulfills Nationwide’s commitment to revitalize downtown. We are honored to deliver on this promise for the citizens of Columbus and Ohio.”

The Nationwide Arena is home to the National Hockey League’s newest expansion team, the Columbus Blue Jackets. The team is owned locally by a group headed by John H. McConnell, founder of Worthington Industries in Columbus.

In addition to 40 regular-season NHL games with the Columbus Blue Jackets, the Nationwide Arena will host a wide variety of sports and entertainment. The first sold-out concerts take place Sept. 9 and 10 and feature country superstars Faith Hill and Tim McGraw.

“The opening of the Nationwide Arena just confirms the fact that Columbus is a major league city – a place to be and a place to visit,” said Ohio Governor Bob Taft. “The Arena will impact all of Ohio, as a premier destination point, and home of our only NHL team.”

“The Nationwide Arena and Arena District truly turbo-charges growth and development in our downtown,” said Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman, who also attended opening ceremonies. “The Arena and the Arena District is a new dimension for people who want to live, work and play in an exciting, unique urban setting.”

The Nationwide Arena is surrounded by an emerging Arena District. The District is created as a dense “urban village,” designed for mixed development. Business, entertainment and restaurants, as well as residential and park space will set the stage for a pedestrian-friendly environment. The Nationwide Arena and District are within walking distance to other downtown attractions including the Columbus Convention Center, the North Market, The Short North (arts & entertainment), and Victorian Village (an historical neighborhood).

In May of 1997, after voters rejected a sales tax proposal that would have financed the Arena and other downtown development, Nationwide announced it would privately develop an Arena for the citizens of Columbus. One year later on May 26, Nationwide, in partnership with the Dispatch Printing Company, broke ground on the Arena.

The \$150 million Nationwide Arena was privately financed and developed. It anchors the Arena District, a 95-acre downtown development project which features business, entertainment, residential and park space.

Nationwide Realty Investors Ltd., the real estate and investments division of Nationwide, managed the Arena project and will oversee continued development of the surrounding Arena District. The Nationwide Arena was designed by architects NBBJ of Columbus and Heinlein Schrock Architecture Inc. of Kansas City, Mo. Construction managers were Turner/Barton Malow Sports and Miles-McClellan Construction Co.

“The north end of downtown has long been our home,” said McFerson said. “Over the years, we have grown from a single building to today’s four-building headquarters complex, and we have seen the area blossom with the construction of hotels, restaurants, office space and the Columbus Convention Center.

“By developing the Arena and the Arena District, we believed we could make an even more lasting contribution to our hometown and our downtown neighborhood,” he said.

For seating, visitors to the Arena can expect:

- Seating for 18,500 for hockey, 19,500 for basketball and over 20,000 for concerts and other entertainment.
- Premium seating includes 52 luxury suites and 26 loge boxes.
- Two 80-foot “party towers” include four platforms of special group seating.

The 800,000-square-foot Nationwide Arena includes:

- The NHL’s only on-site practice facility.
- A mixed-used design that integrates office and retail space and an abundance of fan amenities.
- An asymmetrical seating bowl with outstanding sight lines at every level.
- Abundant use of glass providing a visual connection to downtown.
- A 70-foot, glass-enclosed atrium, open lobbies and concourses that draw guests immediately into the action.
- A video and audio system which includes an eight-sided scoreboard with four matrix boards and four video displays. A 200,000-watt sound system will come through 323 loud speakers.
- A red-brick exterior that blends with neighboring historical architecture.
- A 135-foot light tower on the southeast corner that will illuminate the nighttime downtown sky and serve as a beacon to visitors.

More information on the Nationwide Arena and on upcoming events can be obtained by visiting www.nationwidearena.com.

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