

## Grandview Yard's 'buzz' lures UA company, 100 jobs

Willis of Ohio plans to move to the office building  
at 775 Yard St. next month.

By MARK DUBOVEC

Willis of Ohio Inc., a division of the global risk management and insurance broker Willis Group Holdings, plans to relocate its offices to Grandview Heights from Upper Arlington.

The company is anticipated by Nationwide Realty Investors, the developers behind the Grandview Yard project, to be an anchor tenant of the office building at 775 Yard St., occupying most of the second floor and joining current tenants M+A Architects, Schindler Dentistry, the Buckeye Hall of Fame Grill, Jason's Deli and Massage Envy and Spa.

The firm, which has 100 employees, is expected to move into the building Dec. 16, said managing partner Frank McKain.

"We are extremely excited to come to Grandview," he said.

Patrik Bowman, city director of administration and economic development, said Willis will be one of the city's top employers in terms of payroll and number of employees.

"They're clearly going to be one of our major employers," Bowman said. "It's tremendous."

McKain said the company was looking for a more visible location as well as a community "more in tune with our corporate vision."

Willis looked at a lot of places to relocate to, McKain said, but the deciding factor was the energy and visibility of Grandview Yard.

"Whenever we visited, we felt a buzz," McKain said. "We were immediately turned on and knew this would be home."

Last Wednesday, Nov. 16, the Grandview Heights Planning Commission voted 4-1 to approve two signs related to Willis: one that would bear the company logo and hang on the side of the building, and the other a sign for all building tenants, to be placed in front of the main entrance.

Commissioner Bob Wandel dissented, adding he had some concerns about the Willis sign's quality, scale and location.

"I want them to have a sign," he said. "I want it to be the best, and I want it in the right location."

The planning commission also unanimously approved preliminary plans related to Phases 3 and 4 of the development of Grandview Yard. Phase 1 was the construction of the office building, as well as an Urban Active Fitness Club and a Hyatt Place hotel. Phase 2, currently under construction, comprises three apartment buildings that are projected to be occupied in fall 2012.

While the details of Phases 3 and 4 have not been announced, engineering plans for street configuration, public rights-of-way, waterlines and other details needed for future development were approved.

NRI will have to return to the planning commission for site-plan review. ■