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Accounted For Arbor Gate

Wipfli To Move To Todd Dr. Space

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By MIKE IVEY The Capital Times

One of the region's largest accounting firms is the second major tenant to lease office space in the new Arbor Gate development at Todd Drive and the Beltline.

Wipfli LLP announced Thursday it will relocate its Madison office when the twin six-story buildings are ready for occupancy in the fall of 2008.

The Wisconsin Heart and Vascular Institute announced in October it would be leasing space at Arbor Gate. "We've got two anchor tenants now so we're getting pretty excited," said Brad Hutter of Mortenson Investment Group which is developing Arbor Gate.

The \$55 million, 215,000 square-foot project includes two six-story office/retail towers on six acres. The buildings are under construction, with concrete stairwells in place and the steel superstructure going up this week.

Wipfli, which has about 110 employees here, will rent two floors or about 40,000 square feet of space in the East building. It currently rents about 28,000 square feet of office space in another building owned by Mortenson Investment Group just west of the Arbor Gate site.

"That should give us enough room to continue growing," said Jim Butler, regional partner with the Madison office of Wipfli. "It's going to be a beautiful building."

Wisconsin Heart is taking two floors in the West building. The institute is currently located in the Meriter Hospital campus.

With the two leases, about 80,000 of the 180,000 square feet of office space are rented. Hutter is hopeful the buildings will be close to occupancy by the time they open.

"If everything pops by mid-March, then we'll have 75 percent office leased with more than six months of construction still to go, which would be great," he said.

The developers are also seeking tenants for the first floor retail space and have letters of intent from interested parties, said Hutter, who declined to name those businesses until final leases are signed.

Wipfli has 15 offices across the Midwest, with about 750 employees. The firm was founded 75 years ago in Wausau and has been growing through acquisition, including the 2003 merger with the Williams Young accounting firm of Madison.

The Arbor Gate project is aimed at revitalizing the Todd Drive area of the Beltline, the busiest stretch of highway in the state outside of urban Milwaukee.

The two six-story office and retail towers will be joined by three floors of glass skywalks, with views of the UW Arboretum and the Capitol.

The developer is Arbor Gate Development, LLC, a partnership between Mortenson Investment Group and Westwind Associates. The project is being helped with \$2.7 million in tax increment financing from the city of Madison and \$15 million in federal New Market Tax Credits jointly through M&I Bank and Johnson Bank. Parking for the project includes 875 private stalls on site, including 625 in a secured, multi-level ramp and 250 in surface parking.

\ mivey@madison.com