



Health Sciences Association to occupy new Sapperton building

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Health Sciences Association of British Columbia, a union with 16,000 members, will be the anchor tenant in the Brewery District's third building.

Wesgroup, the project's developer, has applied to the city for a development permit to build a two-storey 27,000 square foot building on the triangular slice of land where Brunette Avenue meets East Columbia Street.

The offices with its 100 employees will occupy one floor while a training facility, which expects to attract about 80 visitors on a regular basis, will make up the other floor.

HSA president Reid Johnson said in an interview the union has been searching for a space that's larger and more functional than its current office near the Joyce SkyTrain station in Vancouver, which often requires them to go off-site to for training and meetings.

"We ran out of functional space about five years ago," said Johnson.

When it went looking to move out of the spot they've been in since 1998, the union sought a location close to SkyTrain as well as one it could own instead of leasing.

"New Westminster is kind of an up-and-coming area, and it's one of many we looked at throughout the Lower Mainland, but Wesgroup offered to build us a custom built building and then we get to own the land," said Johnson.

He pointed out not having to deal with strata fees or paying hotels for meeting space and catering will "save us a pile of dough."

Johnson said HSA's search only found three locations that met their requirements of proximity to SkyTrain and sustainability, and "this was the best of them."

"This is the one that had everything we needed at a reasonable price with a really good developer."

Wesgroup says the building will have "a familiar industrial urban vocabulary with brick-and-steel detailing," similar to that of the first two buildings on the site. It will also have a courtyard in the northeast corner.

The city report said 60 parking spaces will be provided, although regulations require only 50. Although two loading spaces are supposed to be provided, Wesgroup is proposing only one, said the report. However, in evaluating the request, city staff said the proposed variance was minor and there would be no hardship to allowing it.

The next steps for the developer include consulting with the McBride- Sapperton Residents Association and having the plans go before the city's design panel.

Johnson expects HSA will be able to move into the building no later than the summer of 2014.

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