

Architects salute restoration project;

Irving-owned Commercial Properties Limited has been recognized by the New Brunswick Architects Association for the revitalization and restoration of CenterBeam Place.

Jack Irving accepted the certificate of recognition Saturday night on behalf of his son, company president John Irving, who was unable to attend.

CenterBeam Place includes nine heritage buildings located in the Trinity Royal heritage preservation area.

Association president Gaye Kapkin, of DFS Inc. Architects in Saint John, presented the certificate as part of the association's 74th annual general meeting.

Phase one of the CenterBeam project, along Prince William Street and half of King Street, is already complete. Interior renovations have included major structural, mechanical and electrical upgrades, leaving original brick walls and wooden ceiling beams exposed.

Phase two, which includes the second half along King Street and all of the portion facing Canterbury Street, should be ready to accept new tenants in about four months.

Commercial Properties plans to lease office space on the upper floors and continue to lease retail space at ground level.

The buildings were originally occupied by a bank, two dry goods businesses, a hardware store and a variety of mercantile businesses.

They are significant as a collection of Italianate and Second Empire style commercial buildings, all built between 1877 and 1881 after two-thirds of the city was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1877.

Saint John MP Paul Zed has commended John and Jack Irving for their vision, leadership and commitment in "breathing life" into the old buildings.

He contends the project will create employment, foster the renewal of Saint John, enhance the vitality of the city, encourage growth, add economic security to the uptown core and increase the tax base.

Last November, John Irving thanked local architect Tom Johnson for his "guidance, creativity and insight."

He also praised the hundreds of local craftsmen and artisans who have worked on the project over the past couple of years for creating "truly magnificent, outstanding work."

He also thanked his father for making it all possible. "My father has always believed in the importance of the downtown core of cities, particularly in Saint John," he said.

CenterBeam Place is named after its major tenant CenterBeam Inc., an IT solutions company.

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