

**DOWNTOWN HARRISBURG** | A branch of Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney will be the main occupant in a building destined for Second and State streets. WCI Partners, the developer, says it has high hopes for a street-level restaurant with outdoor seating.

# Pittsburgh law firm spurs development

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**H**arrisburg's newest downtown office building is ready for liftoff.

Four months after getting final approvals from city officials, WCI Partners announced Monday it will break ground in early April on a five-story building at the southeast corner of Second and State streets.

Pittsburgh-based Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney will be the anchor tenant, moving the Harrisburg branch of its legal and governmental relations business into the top three floors of the new building.

Steve Gierasch, co-managing partner of the firm's Harrisburg office, said that will achieve a goal of consolidating 65 employees who have worked in two locations here since Buchanan Ingersoll's merger with Klett Rooney in 2006.

"We had to find space that accommodated all of us, and each of our present locations really wasn't a great answer," Gierasch said.

Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney's local staff, for example, is split almost evenly between attorneys practicing law in federal, state and county courts, and lobbyists for a wide variety of clients at the Capitol.

"In all of those things, location is important to us," Gierasch said. "It was a priority in our decision-making ... and this sort of presented a pretty unique opportunity for us."

Besides the Buchanan offices, the project will contain additional office space on the second floor, and WCI hopes to bring a cafe-style restaurant to the street level with open-air seating on Second and State streets.

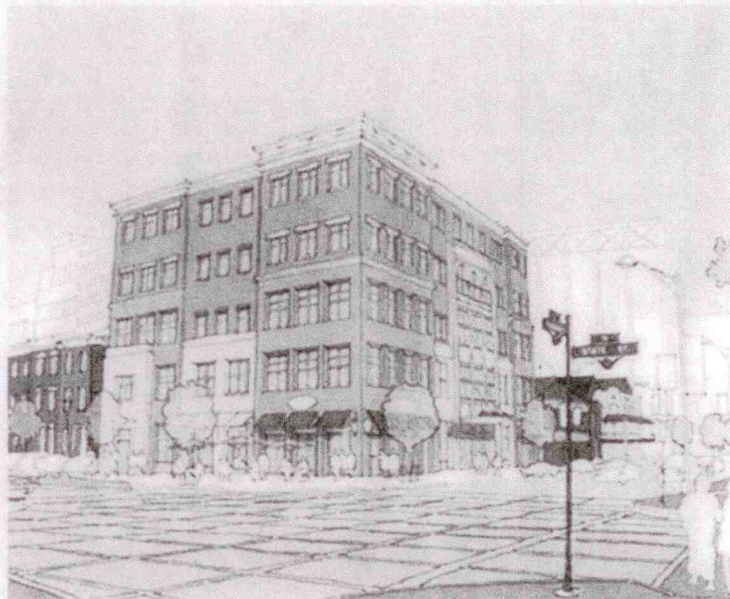
WCI project developer J. Alex Hartzler said he's negotiating with national, regional and local parties interested in the restaurant property, as well as prospective tenants for the second floor.

"We have strong interest for both, and our goal is to open with a full building," Hartzler said. At full occupancy, the developers believe the building will be host to about 110 jobs.

The project received final approval from Harrisburg officials in late October and is scheduled for completion in July 2012.

WCI's gain comes at the expense of two other downtown office buildings: the M&T Bank Building at 1 S. Market Square, where Buchanan Ingersoll had its original office; and 17 N. Second St., where it inherited space leased by Klett.

Mike Murchie, M&T's regional president, said he does not believe finding new tenants will be a problem



Submitted artist's rendering

WCI Partners announced Monday that it will break ground in April for a five-story office building at Second and State streets. Construction is slated to wrap up in July 2012. The cost of the project was not disclosed.

## WHAT IT MEANS

While the immediate result will not be a net gain of downtown jobs, the project makes good news for Harrisburg on several fronts:

- It is the first major commercial construction downtown since the recession and the first to launch since city government began its severe lurch toward possible bankruptcy in the waning years of the Reed era.
- It fills a vacant corner lot at one of the city's more prominent intersections.
- It also shows the powerful anchor that being a state capital can be and affirms institutional reasons why many believe Harrisburg can ultimately weather its current debt crisis.



"Our goal is to open with a full building."

J. ALEX HARTZLER,  
project developer

nancing for the project was nailed down.

That, he said, was a lesson learned from 2007, when WCI proposed a 13-story Aloft Hotel for the site, only to see that deal collapse after the global financial crisis broke out.

The new project will be financed by the Harrisburg office of First National Bank Corp., with assistance from the Commonwealth Finance Authority's "Building PA" program through South Third Development Corp., a Harrisburg affiliate qualified as a conduit for the state financing.

Hartzler would not disclose a construction cost for the project.

at the Market Square location, especially with a nearly a year and a half to market the location.

Owners of the Second Street building could not be reached for comment.

Hartzler delayed making final announcements about tenants or a construction start date until Monday in part, he said, to make sure that the fi-