

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



Two local companies help with Brantford revitalization

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BRANTFORD – With their gifts to Laurier Brantford’s heritage block campaign, two local companies – The Williamson Group and Vicano Construction Limited – are supporting not only the university, but also Brantford’s redevelopment efforts.

The Williamson Group backed Laurier Brantford with a lead gift of \$100,000 to further the redevelopment of the heritage block and program expansion in areas of leadership within the university. “The Williamson Group is very excited to partner with Laurier Brantford, as we are firmly committed to the re-development and expansion of Brantford. We see this venture as not just an opportunity to provide the university with buildings, but also to take a lead role in expanding the intellectual reach of our educational facilities,” says Paul Williamson, owner of The Williamson Group. “We have always been a leader in supporting our community, and see this gift as a further commitment of this support.”

In addition to The Williamson Group gift, another local company, Vicano Construction Limited, pledged \$50,000 towards the heritage block campaign. “We are very pleased to be working with Laurier Brantford again. The revitalization of the heritage block is an important project to us,” says Peter Vicano, president of Vicano Construction Limited. Vicano Construction Limited was the developer and facilitator of both the Post House student residence and the Odeon

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building, which includes faculty offices, two large theatre lecture halls, several tutorial and seminar rooms, and student lounges.

Laurier Brantford is one of Canada's fastest growing campuses, fueled by the development of attractive and innovative programming, which will see 146 different courses offered in the Fall/Winter 2006/07 academic year. In 2005, the university completed a strategic plan that could see Laurier Brantford grow from its current 1,400 students to 2,500 students. Currently, the facility limits the university's growth to a maximum of 1,600 students. As the institution continues to grow, there is an ever-increasing need for available space and further development of the campus.

In growing the campus, the university wishes to respond to the need, expressed by students, faculty and staff, for a Laurier Brantford with a campus feel. To accomplish this objective, the university needs a set of contiguous buildings which incorporate the different functions of the university. The heritage block development is an important step forward in helping to create this campus feel. Located midway between the two ends of the campus, the Odeon building has significantly facilitated this direction. The Post House residence, the new student centre and the much-anticipated new Wilkes House have also helped, creating a heritage block of university buildings on George Street, close to Victoria Park.

“The heritage block revitalization projects, in partnership with the Brantford community, showcase many remarkable examples of downtown redevelopment which have brought buildings with a proud and active history back to life,” says Scott Hayter, assistant vice-president: university development.

The university wants to provide students, faculty, visitors and staff with destinations, welcoming meeting places, student spaces in which to socialize, study and relax, and support services that allow them, as much as possible, to pursue the different facets of their lives in the downtown campus area. A key component of the university's planning, this development will enable Laurier Brantford to remain competitive and continue to attract students – by providing facilities comparable to those available on other university campuses.

In the future, Laurier Brantford plans to develop a new academic centre to complete the heritage block. This multi-storey heritage-concept building would include food services, a community bookstore and a lounge. There will also be two floors of academic space to accommodate classrooms, lecture halls, tutorial rooms, and research and office space, as well as the potential of two floors of residences to provide approximately 84 beds for first-year students.