

## Western Reserve Group breaks ground on new offices

By Tami Mosser / Staff Writer

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WOOSTER — The largest commercial construction project in the city this year had its official groundbreaking Wednesday afternoon, even as construction crews were hard at work little more than a stone’s throw away on Benden Drive.

The 81,000-square-foot office building will be the second for Western Reserve Group and will connect via an elevated walkway to an existing building constructed there in 2007.

CEO and president Kevin Day led board members in turning the ceremonial first shovelfuls of dirt, as Bogner Construction workers labored down the slope behind the site.

The company, a fixture in Wooster for more than a century, has been headquartered in a 50,000-square-foot building on Cleveland Road since 1956. That 3.5-acre property is being purchased by Wooster Community Hospital for \$3million.

The new building, which the city’s Building Standards Division has valued at \$25 million, is scheduled for completion on Oct. 1, 2020, according to Day.

“When completed, the new headquarters will allow all employees to be housed at a one-campus-style location with enough space to grow and service our agents and policyholders for years to come,” he said. “Also, it will confirm our long-term commitment to Wooster and the surrounding communities.”

Day also noted the board chose not to seek any abatements for the project “due to its negative impact on our local schools and community.”

The new building will include 49,020 square feet of office space, a 144-seat conference center and a 4,116-square-foot employee fitness center. Day said the facility will improve the employee experience, not only through the inclusion of the fitness center, but also with the additional space that can be used for workforce development and meetings. And some of that square footage will allow the company to host community events, he said.

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