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Business

Audi revs down to Kenaston

Picks hot retail area for luxury-car outlet

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Posted: **08/13/2015 3:00 AM** | [Comments: 0](#)

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An artist's conception of a current Audi dealership, similar to the one to be built on Kenaston Boulevard.

Another local luxury-car dealership is relocating to southwest Winnipeg.

Auto Canada plans to move its St. James Audi dealership on Century Street to a large building that will be built on a three-acre parcel of land in the Outlets of Seasons development at Kenaston Boulevard and Sterling Lyon Way.

The dealership hopes to begin construction later this year and to move into the new facility in either late 2016 or early 2017.

Mark Warsaba, the dealership's principal and general manager, said the new

facility will boast nearly 70,000 square feet of useable space spread over three levels -- the basement, the main floor and a mezzanine floor.

'It's no secret that when you talk about that location (southwest Winnipeg) it's an affluent part of the city. It is also a key corridor from south to north, and development in the area is very prominent'

Although it will be roughly the same size as its existing facility at 670 Century St., Warsaba noted the Audi dealership shares that building with Auto Canada's St. James Volkswagen dealership.

So when the Audi operations relocate to Kenaston, both dealerships will essentially double in size because they'll each have their own facilities, he said. The only thing they will still share is their stand-alone autobody facility, which will remain at the Century Street location.

Warsaba said Auto Canada officials are thrilled to have not only acquired a site in the Outlets of Seasons development, but one that faces onto Kenaston Boulevard.

"It's no secret that when you talk about that location (southwest Winnipeg) it's an affluent part of the city," he said. "It (Kenaston) is also a key corridor from south to north, and development in the area is very prominent."

He also noted with the IKEA-led Seasons of Tuxedo development on the southwest corner of Kenaston and Sterling Lyon and the Outlets of Seasons developments on the northwest corner, that area is evolving into a major retail hub.

"So we felt it would be great exposure for us and for the right market."

The Winnipeg office of Cushman & Wakefield helped secure the site for Auto Canada, and its senior vice-president also described it as a perfect location for a luxury-car dealership.

"It (southwest Winnipeg) has by far the most affluent demographic in all of Winnipeg," Ken Yee said, noting it includes such neighbourhoods as Bridgwater Forest, Linden Ridge, Linden Woods, Whyte Ridge, River Heights, Tuxedo and Charleswood.

"So obviously it suited them to be down there," he added.

He said the dealership was also looking for an iconic site to showcase the new design concept for all new Audi dealerships. Warsaba noted, for example, the new Winnipeg dealership will be very similar in appearance to a new Audi dealership in Edmonton.

"They (all new Audi dealerships) are working toward having the same design," he added.

Yee said being across the street from Winnipeg's IKEA store and close to the new Outlet Collections at Winnipeg fashion outlet mall, which will be the centrepiece of the Outlets of Seasons development, also appealed to Auto Canada officials.

"They knew they were going to be in very, very, good company."

Having a new Mercedes-Benz Winnipeg dealership on nearby Rothwell Road also doesn't hurt, because it helps draw luxury-car buyers to the area, he and Warsaba added.

"There is a tendency to always want to be in a little bit of a cluster," Warsaba said, noting two of Auto Canada's other Winnipeg dealerships -- McNaught

Cadillac Buick GMC and Midtown Ford -- are in the nearby Waverley Auto Mall.

He said St. James Audi needs a bigger site and a larger, state-of-the-art showroom/service centre so it can carry a larger selection of vehicles and an expanded service offering.

For example, the new location will have a number of indoor and outdoor charging stations for Audi's new A3 Etron electric car that will be coming out soon. It will also feature a 12-car showroom, a full-service car wash and detailing station in the basement and 18 service-bay hoists, which is twice as many as it has in its current facility.

He said with a larger selection of vehicles, the dealership thinks it can nearly double its new-vehicle sales, to about 650 units per year.

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Republished from the Winnipeg Free Press print edition August 13, 2015 B5