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S.F.'s Fifth Street center of development plans

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By Andrew Ross

More transformation is coming to San Francisco's South of Market district, this time in the form of a university campus.

University of the Pacific just closed a \$47 million deal to buy the former Wells Fargo building at 155 Fifth St. and turn it into a spanking new location for its Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry.

The seven-story, 395,000-square-foot building, across the street from The Chronicle, is to be completely renovated, both inside and out, to make way for the dental school's classrooms, labs, research space, patient care and future university programs.

The top two floors of the building will be leased separately as office space.

The renovations, estimated to cost \$100 million, should be done by mid-2014, at which time the school will move from its present location in Pacific Heights. Approximately 200 construction and trade jobs will be created.

"This new facility allows Pacific to strategically expand its footprint in San Francisco by providing a highly visible presence downtown," said university President Pamela Eibeck, announcing the deal Tuesday.

The announcement comes one week after the Hearst Corp., which owns The

Chronicle, and Forest City, a real estate development company, filed plans to build new offices, housing, retail shops and public plazas in the same block of Fifth Street.

"One of the benefits of the new location is the close proximity to public transportation for students, faculty, staff and patients," said Dan Soine, the dental school's marketing director. "155 Fifth St., in SoMa is a much more convenient location for patients to access than Pacific Heights."

The school's 14 clinics in the Bay Area provide dental care to approximately 14,000 children and adults a year. The new San Francisco campus will serve 10,000 patients a year.

Academically, approximately 550 students are enrolled in various programs, including a three-year doctorate of dental surgery - the only one of its kind in the country - and the school employs more than 500 faculty and staff. It is ranked at or near the top in various surveys of dental schools.

University of the Pacific bought the building from CDC/TMG 155 Fifth Street Associates. CDC (Continental Development Corp.) headquartered in El Segundo (Los Angeles County), owns the Intercontinental Hotel next door.

"The impressive improvements planned for the building will continue the rejuvenation of the Fifth Street corridor," said CDC President Richard Lundquist.

-- The San Francisco office of SmithGroup is the lead architect on the project. Plant Construction of San Francisco is the general contractor. Nova Partners of Palo Alto is the project manager.

On a roll: SoMa for sure has a lock on the commercial real estate flavor of the year award.

On Monday, San Francisco's DivcoWest completed its purchase of the two-building, 237,000-square-foot Howard/Hawthorne complex at 631 Howard St. Terms were not disclosed, but the price is reported to be \$78 million.

Chief attractions: "close access to public transportation and SoMa's strong amenity base - important factors for younger workforces," the real estate investment firm said in a statement.

That would include the young workforces populating the two buildings, among whose tenants are a number of tech companies, including Quest Software and Innovative Technologies.

DivcoWest said it "will invest significant capital in the buildings, including

cosmetic improvements to the entryways and facades," and build out vacant space.

The company, which describes itself as "an active buyer in the Bay Area, the greater Boston area and other technology markets," recently bought the vacant California State Compensation Insurance Fund building at 1275 Market St., in partnership with TMG Partners. Price tag: \$44 million.

It's not exactly South of Market, but close enough - to, for example, Twitter, which is taking up residence one block away in the Mid-Market area, with more tech companies and young workforces to follow.