



A 300,000-square-foot urban office development (artist rendering above) is under construction at 2030 NW 17th Ave. in Portland, financed by the National Electrical Benefit Fund. Representing construction trades at an Oct. 26 groundbreaking ceremony are, from left: Iron Workers Local 29 business agent Shane Nehls. IBEW Local 48 union rep Bob Carroll, Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council executive secretary treasurer Willy Myers, Roofers Local 49 business manager Russ Garnett, IBEW Local 48 union rep Jon Jensen, and retired Local 48 union rep Joe Esmonde.



## Union pension fund invests in new urban office campus in NW Portland

An electricians pension fund is financing construction of an urban office campus at Northwest Front and 17th Avenues in Portland, assuring that it will be built with all union labor.

A ground-breaking ceremony was held Oct. 26 for Field Office, a two-building, six-story development that will offer 300,000 square feet of office

and retail space.

Project developers envision a campus hub for high tech and creative companies that will provide office space with connections to the natural environment. The buildings will be clad in dark brick, and feature green roofs and other sustainable amenities. There will be 17 outdoor spaces, an underground

parking garage for 355 cars, communal areas, and a commuter lounge.

The \$100 million project is being financed by the National Electrical Benefit Fund (NEBF), a pension fund of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the National Electrical Contractors Association. Developers are Port-

land-based project and National Real Estate Advisors, a real estate investment firm out of Washington, D.C. National is wholly owned by a subsidiary of the NEBF. This is their first project in Portland.

Lease Crutcher Lewis is the general contractor on the all-union project.

Willy Myers, executive sec-

retary of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council told the Labor Press that union pension funds currently have more than \$1 billion in play in Oregon, financing 28 projects (Field Office is the 28th.)

Field Office is expected to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2017.

## Daimler unions ratify new contract

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union trust on the same terms.) Daimler will continue to contribute \$4.47 an hour toward the Machinist-sponsored multi-employer pension plan, plus a \$6.15-an-hour rehabilitation surcharge meant to forestall insolvency. [The plan lost assets in the 2008 financial meltdown and has had trouble recovering, in part because there are fewer active employees than there used to be at Daimler and other employers.]

The new contracts also stipulate a tobacco-free workplace by 2018. Employees won't be allowed to use tobacco of any kind on the premises, and given the distance from the plant floor to the street, it's unlikely they'd be able to use tobacco during breaks.

The contracts also provide a measure of job security. While Daimler isn't guaranteeing it won't close the Portland truck plant, it committed to a generous severance package, suggesting it's not planning to close: In the event of a permanent plant closure, workers will get two weeks of pay for every year they've worked there.

The Portland truck plant, located in the Swan Island Industrial District, employs about 500 workers (350 Machinists, 85 Teamsters, 50 Painters, and 18 members of SEIU). It produced Freightliner trucks until 2007. Production of Western Star Trucks is down, and layoffs earlier this year led some workers to worry about the future of the brand, but Kear says Daimler has a goal of increasing the company's market share to 8 percent, up from 2 percent currently.

Three years ago, contract negotiations at the Portland plant were much more acrimonious. Machinists and Painters members struck for 22 days — and still gave up company-provided MediGap coverage for new retirees. This time, Kear said, management seemed to listen better, and came up with contract offers that workers were happy with.

The four contracts were ratified by lopsided margins. Machinists voted 248 to 15 to approve it (a second Machinist bargaining unit called Custom Truck Services also approved it 10-1.) Teamsters approved it by 79-1, Painters by 44-2, and SEIU by an unspecified margin.

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