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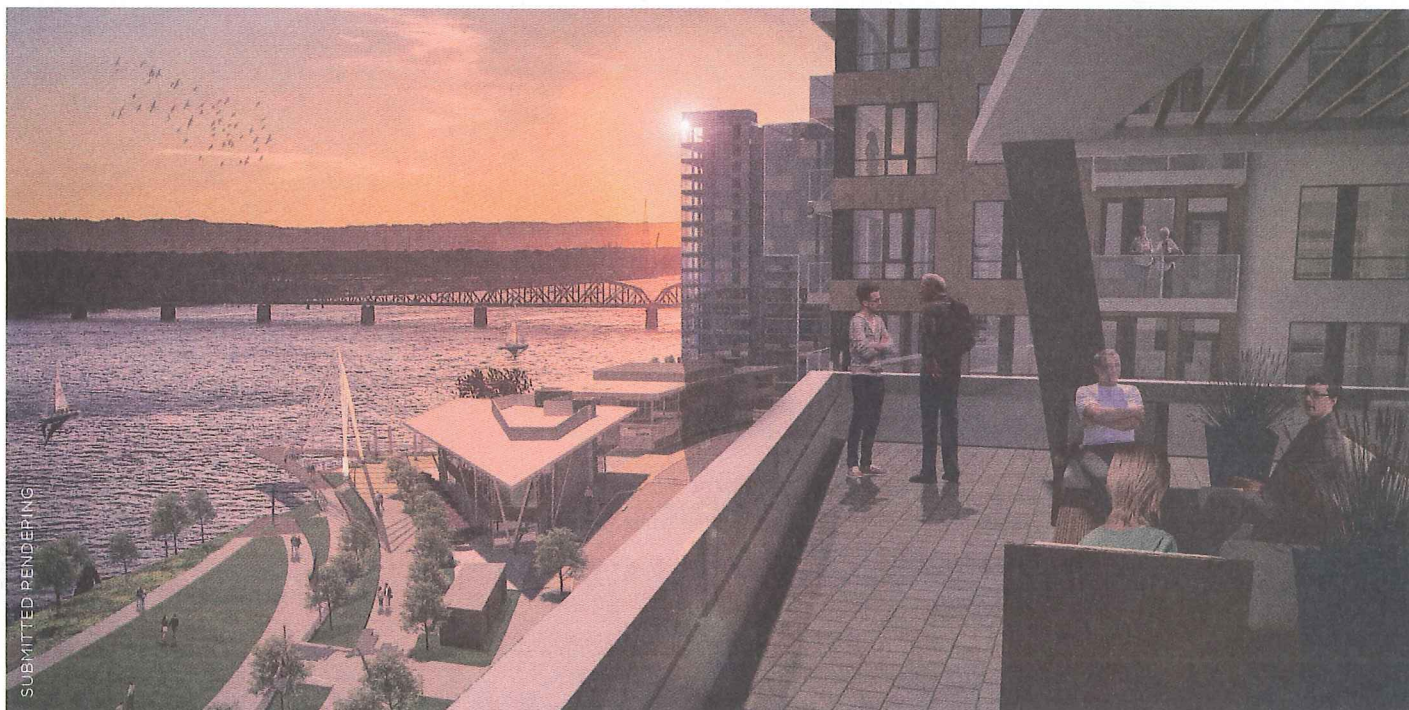
ON THE WATERFRONT

The mighty Columbia makes way for Vancouver's fresh start



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The Vancouver Waterfront Project is coming out of the ground next year, after 10 years of planning and community building.



SUBMITTED RENDERING

There is a restaurant and several top-name companies already signed on to the site. A world class design is coming together, and the access that is already paved between the shore and downtown portends greatness for every beautiful weekend morning of market-goers, joggers and families making the Columbia Way loop.

It's a once-in-a-life-time project for the North Bank of the Columbia River, and the ripple effect is in full-force with building permits doubling and hiring increasing. A new restaurant or pub seems to open every week, and apartment buildings are popping out of the ground.

But we've seen renaissance like this in recent history, haven't we? The beautify-

ing of Esther Short Park, the building of the Hilton, the rising of Vancouvercenter, the development of Grand Central, even the east-side river development with its restaurants and condos.

And still, small businesses struggle to stay in historic walkable neighborhoods, a few property owners control a large swath of Main Street, and businesses turn over monthly. Fractured business districts never materialized as a priority, and the creative class continues to struggle, while priority goes to chain eateries and stores.

So as we see the spark of the Waterfront light the whole of the city, let us not continue to make the mistakes of recent history – investing in

the already established – while adding the new mistakes of our neighbors to the south: doubling rents, investor-owned homes and depressed wages.

Before us, we have an opportunity of unsurpassed potential. As the Columbia River returns to its rightful place in the identity of this historic Washington city, let the rising tide float all boats.

Jessica Swanson
Editor



ON THE WATERFRONT

After 10 years of groundwork, the seminal Vancouver Waterfront Development is ready to rise up

story by jodie gilmore

photos by todd gunderson

architectural renderings courtesy of gramor development

Thirty-two acres, 21 blocks, over \$60 million already invested in new infrastructure, nearly a decade in the planning – the Vancouver Waterfront Development Project isn't your average build out.

In 2008, a group of private investors, led by Barry Cain, president and CEO of Gramor Development Inc., formed Columbia Waterfront LLC with a single vision: to reconnect downtown Vancouver with the Columbia River waterfront – access that had been blocked for more than 100 years. Since then, the LLC has worked with the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Parks and Recreation Department, State of Washington, Port of Vancouver and BNSF Railway on this \$1.5 billion public-private project, creating something larger than either a public or private entity could accomplish alone.

“There is no other project that Vancouver has seen in downtown that compares to the Waterfront Project,” said Chad Eiken, director of community and economic development for the City of Vancouver. “It is transformative – it will take us to the next level and build on what we've already achieved.”

With the opening last fall of West Columbia Way, the path is clear – quite literally – for construction of the first phase of the project to begin. But Cain said it has taken “diligence and perseverance” to bring the project to this point.

The new Vancouver waterfront development will feature 1.25 million square feet of class A creative office space; 250,000 square feet of restaurant and retail; 3,300 housing units; a 7-acre park and an iconic cable-stay pier.



Left: The new Vancouver Waterfront project is book ended by bridge views. **Right:** Both currently proposed restaurants, Twigs and WareHouse '23, will feature contemporary Northwest fare.



COURTESY OF TWIGS

“So much of the work that was required was underground and not visible to the public,” said Cain. “It takes patience to enact a vision of this largesse. Now here we are in 2016, with the vision becoming a reality.”

“We are an integrated and collaborative team taking each careful step to plan and realize this project,” said Cain.

A third critical success factor, he added, has been the improved economic climate.

“The biggest challenges have been the complexity of the project and getting the project timing to coincide with a good economy – there’s been some prayer involved!” said Cain.

Overall, the development will feature 1.25 million square feet of Class A creative office space, 250,000 feet of restaurant and retail space, 3,300 housing units (a mix of condos, apartments, and senior living/affordable housing) and a 150-room luxury hotel.

The finished, mixed-use development will bring more than 10,000 jobs, as well as over \$385 million in state and local taxes.

2017: THE DOORS SWING OPEN

In the next few months, Cain said, construction will start on several blocks of the development, as well as on the seven-acre Waterfront Park. The first buildings are slated to open in mid-2017. This first phase will result in the completion of Twigs Bistro and Martini Bar as well as 220 residential units plus retail and office space.

“We have made some rapid progress in the past year,” said Cain.

Two tenants are already eagerly awaiting their new digs.

The nonprofit M.J. Murdock Trust will move from its current Broadway St. location to 18,000 square feet in one of the development’s new office buildings in

Sept. 2017. The Trust has invested more than \$800 million in regional nonprofits over the past 40 years.

Twigs Bistro and Martini Bar, a Spokane-based restaurant chain, will be the anchor restaurant near the iconic cable-stay pier. According to Twigs Vice President Trevor Blackwell, the 8,320-square-foot restaurant will serve “regional American cuisine” – a broad array of appetizers, salads, pizzas, and specialties such as crab mac n’ cheese and osso bucco (pork shank). Other options may include fish tacos and Moroccan beef – and of course 24 to 36 signature martinis and craft cocktails.

Blackwell said that the Twigs in Spokane has won the city’s “best cocktails” award 10 years running.

While waiting for Gramor to finish the building, the restaurant is working on general layout plans.

“Every Twigs has the same feel – comfortable – but each is unique,” Blackwell said. “The layout, lighting and finishes are always different.” Twigs has four locations in Spokane plus restaurants in the TriCities, Yakima, Tigard, Ore., Farmington, Utah, and Meridian, Idaho.

Blackwell said that an exhibition kitchen is pretty standard, as is an open design. Because of the proximity of the river, he expects the whole south side of the restaurant to be open to the park and water.

“It will be an outdoor feel, but able to be used year-round,” he said. “The draw for us was the waterfront – you don’t get an opportunity like this very often.”

BUILDING ANTICIPATION

Eiken said the project offers many advantages for local residents. As the blocks develop, there’ll be more restaurant opportunities and shopping experiences. Events such as the Vancouver Marathon will center there. New options for places to live – with a waterfront view just a few hundred feet from the doorstep – will be unique.

“Everyone wants to know when the residential options will be available and how to reserve one,” said Eiken. “People who work downtown are excited about being able to walk down and have lunch right on the river, and about being able to get out in the sunshine and exercise close to work.”

“Creating a waterfront district for Vancouver, the largest city on the Columbia River, is an opportunity that comes along once in a lifetime,” said Cain. “This development is purposefully planned to take full advantage of the south-facing positioning on the Columbia River. No matter what building or condominium or restaurant or retailer you’re in, you’ll be able to see and enjoy the light and the Columbia River.”

A CLOSER VIEW: WATERFRONT PARK

By June, bulldozers will be moving dirt, preparing the site of the future Waterfront Park. This \$25 million project will encompass seven acres along a half-mile of shoreline, and will anchor the entire development to the main natural feature – the Columbia River.



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“It’s hard to describe the world-class design we’re bringing in, hand-in-hand with the City,” said Cain.

Team members include Jane Jacobsen (founding executive director for the Confluence Project), renowned public artist and former Northwesterner Larry Kirkland, Charles Stone (known for the two light towers that shown in the Manhattan skyline following the September 11 terrorist attacks), Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Vancouver Julie Hannon and Vancouver City Architect Margot Long, along with Canadian-based park designer PWL Partnership.

“The team effort has been fabulous,” said Jacobsen.

Kirkland has designed the iconic cable-stay pier, which will be right outside

Twigs’ doors. This work of art, with timber decking resembling a ship, will extend ninety feet over the mighty Columbia and will serve as a focal point for the entire development.

Hannon said that PWL helped set recurring themes for the park, such as the energy of the water, looking back at past usages of the River and local Indian tribes, ships and ropes. These themes will be echoed not only in major features but also in details such as the paving patterns and bike racks.

In addition to the pier, the other main feature of the park will be a magnificent, interactive Columbia Basin water feature. One-hundred-eighty feet long, it aims to draw all visitors – toddlers to seniors – into the history and ambience of the fourth-largest river in the U.S. It will include

facts about the river (such as how much water comes from the Klickitat River and how long it takes a drop of water from the Snake River to get to the ocean) and will help visitors understand that the river that flowing in front of them is just a tiny portion of the entire river.

“We want them to understand that the river intersects with and is the livelihood of so much of the Northwest – it reaches from Vancouver, BC, to the Pacific and is part of the Northwest economy,” said Jacobsen.

Stone columns will lead to the water feature, sporting scientific, inspirational and thoughtful quotes to help visitors engage with the river. A play area for children will nestle near the park’s west end. Again the theme is interactivity with the river. The rope climbing area is

inspired by the fish nets that were used by local tribes, and play structures will stimulate creative play through interesting shapes and sections.

Stone, the lighting specialist, is designing an engaging way to light the whole park, including the plaza at the end of the pier, the trails, and the green spaces. The lighting will draw the community to the restaurants (near Grant Street and near the pier).

Of course there will be lots of grassy areas for picnics, trails for walking and biking and benches for sitting and admiring the view.

“It’s so much fun to work on because the main attraction is the river – you don’t have to have a big ‘something else.’ The river is the compelling reason to be there and see how it changes all the time,”



Excavation has begun, and the first buildings are slated to open mid-2017.

Jacobsen said.

Hannon said that the main challenge with the Park has been coordinating all the pieces: permitting, designing, shoreline work, managing construction that affects both natural resources and manmade structures, stabilization for the pier, and con-

struction of the water feature’s underground vault for mechanicals – she said it was like a big jigsaw puzzle.

But when it’s done, said Hannon, “It will be an unbelievable experience that people will want to come see over and over – it will be a game changer for the region.”

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