

Gramor secures \$14.8M loan for Waterfront Vancouver

Financing from Banner Bank will facilitate construction of new Grant Street Pier restaurant buildings

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Courtesy of Gramor Development

If you start building, the loans will come.

At least that's how Gramor Development's new \$14.8-million loan for the Vancouver Waterfront Development came about. Barry Cain, Gramor's president and owner, said his

company actually started the project without closing on the loan with Banner Bank, because he was so confident the project would go forward.

“We were building these restaurant buildings a ways before we closed on the loans,” Cain said. “But I felt comfortable that we’d get it settled out. Until you build buildings, you don’t really have a project.”

Gramor and Banner Bank announced in mid-September that the parties had closed on the loan, which will support construction of the new Grant Street Pier restaurant buildings, located across Block 9 and Block 12 at the waterfront.

The 40,000-square-foot, two-building complex will house six marquee restaurants, including Wildfin American Grill, Ghost Runners Brewery, and Twig’s Bistro and Martini Bar, all of which have already confirmed plans to occupy the site.

The first restaurants and stores are set to open by July 30, 2018, with the rest of Phase 1 of the waterfront development due for completion on Sept. 30 next year, Cain said.

The overall cost of Phase 1 of the \$1.5-billion project will be about \$250 million. It includes the development of the \$35-million waterfront park and the 90-foot-long cable-stay Grant Street Pier, which will be suspended above the water.

“We’ve got a lot of things under construction,” Cain said. “Hopefully we’ll also get the (Hotel Indigo) construction going in the next three to six months. Then we’ll have six buildings under construction on the waterfront.”

Gramor recently closed the sale of Block 4, where the Hotel Indigo is set to go, to Kirkland Development. That company plans to develop the 32,339-square-foot block for the hotel, condos, restaurants and retail spots.

The eight-story hotel, part of InterContinental Hotels Group, will have 138 rooms and a skybar on the top floor.

Area businesses are also excited about the Waterfront Development drawing more people to downtown. Sunny Parsons, owner of Heathen Brewing and the company's Feral Public House at 1109 Washington St., said he's been making patio improvements to his site in anticipation of the growing traffic.

"I think the development is going to create a kind of Pearl District effect (like the one seen in Portland)," Parsons said. "We'll have people here that we aren't used to seeing in Vancouver. There will be high-tech business people, upscale visitors. The boardwalk is going to be beautiful. It's going to be very classy down there."

As the waterfront becomes more upscale, downtown businesses will also likely have to look at cosmetic improvements to draw more traffic. But overall Parsons thinks that's going to be a good thing for Vancouver.

"I think the rising tide will raise all ships," Parsons said. "I think this will be a good deal for everybody, except maybe for those trying to find parking. But overall I think it will be amazing."

Banner Bank was attracted to Gramor's work on the project because it sees the potential for the development to become a thriving local landmark, said Damian Uecker, vice president and commercial real estate relationship manager for Banner Bank.

"In every community, a handful of unique properties become landmarks," Uecker said. "We believe The Waterfront Vancouver project is bound to hold that moniker in Vancouver. We applaud Gramor's tremendous commitment to this transformational project and are pleased to have an opportunity to be a part of it."

Cain said the new loan should also help draw more lenders to the project, both for Gramor and other partners.

Finding the first bank is always the hardest, he said.

"It's a special situation," Cain said. "You have to have lenders willing to look outside of the box, that try to understand what you're doing and to believe in what you're doing."

Banner Bank was really interested in doing this loan, and we're grateful to them. It will make it easier to get more banks to sign on in the future."

Gramor is currently working on blocks 9, 12 and 6 in the project.

Block 9 is 15,000 square feet and can house two restaurants, one of which will be Wildfin American Grill, the Seattle seafood chain. That restaurant will take up about half of the space on Block 9.

Block 12 is more than 28,000 square feet and can house four restaurants, including Ghost Runners Brewery and Twig's Bistro and Martini Bar, which have both confirmed their spots. Block 6 will include office and retail space and has one confirmed restaurant tenant, MidiCi The Neapolitan Pizza Company.

Gramor has worked with Banner Bank on projects in the past, and Cain said the bank has been a great business partner.

"Once we get this going, the whole of downtown Vancouver will be bustling," Cain said. "Once these buildings finish and do well, more will come. And with this loan, we're officially underway."