

New 7-story apartment building planned for Waterfront Vancouver

San Francisco-based Jackson Square Properties has developed other properties in Vancouver



The corner of Block 20 is seen here along the Vancouver Waterfront on Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018.
(Nathan Howard/The Columbian)



Block 20 is seen here, to the left of the sidewalk, along the Vancouver Waterfront on Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018. (Nathan Howard/The Columbian)



Block 20 is seen here West of currently developed Vancouver Waterfront properties on Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018. (Nathan Howard/The Columbian)

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A California-based developer has submitted a preliminary plan for a new seven-story apartment building at The Waterfront Vancouver.

The proposed building would include 239 residential units and would be located on Block 20, which is near the western end of the development area. It would be bordered by Vancouver Waterfront Park to the south and Columbia Way to the north.

The pre-application packet states that construction is targeted to begin next spring or summer. A pre-application conference with the city has been scheduled for 10 a.m. Jan. 9.

The project doesn't appear to have an official name yet; the pre-application form refers to it as "Vancouver Waterfront Block 20 Apartments." The pre-application form was submitted to the city of Vancouver by the local office of the Pacific Northwest firm PBS Engineering + Environmental, on behalf of Columbia Waterfront LLC.

Columbia Waterfront is owned by Gramor Development, the Tualatin, Ore.-based company that has led the waterfront development charge with several initial projects on the central blocks, including the Grant Street Pier, the two flanking restaurant buildings and the Rediviva and Murdock buildings on Block 6.

According to Gramor Development President Barry Cain, the Block 20 project comes from Jackson Square Properties, which is based in San Francisco. The Block 20 property is currently

owned by Columbia Waterfront, but Jackson Square will purchase it as part of the development agreement once the project is approved, Cain said.

Jackson Square's online portfolio lists dozens of residential properties and projects throughout the United States, but primarily on the West Coast, including several residential developments in Vancouver. The pre-application form also lists Blue Pine Construction, another California-based company, as being involved with the project.

PBS and Blue Pine both declined to comment for this story, and Jackson Square did not reply to a request for comment.

Cain expressed confidence that the project would find plenty of interested tenants due to a strong demand for apartments in the Vancouver area. A few tenants have already moved into the Rediviva building, which opened earlier this month, and Cain said the luxury apartment tower is 65 to 70 percent leased.

The 1.06-acre Block 20 site is part of a 5.5-acre parcel at the west end of The Waterfront Vancouver which was identified in the 2009 master plan as the final subdivision for the development, slated to be divided into blocks 17, 19, 20 and 21. The plan for Block 20 includes a 40-foot-wide pedestrian easement along the eastern side, split evenly between blocks 18 and 20.

"It's a beautiful area down there and it's right on the water," Cain said.

The pre-application form for Block 20 describes a seven-story building with ground-floor residential amenities, a 10,000-square-foot terrace on the second floor facing the Columbia River and 250 parking spaces on two levels of underground parking, for a parking ratio of 1.07 spaces per unit.

The first two floors will include some residential units in addition to the amenities, and the remaining floors will be entirely residential. Some of the ground-floor apartment units will feature direct access and outdoor patios. A diagram of the proposed ground floor also lists a dog-washing station and a bike storage area.

The diagram of the ground floor labels 10 of the 18 apartment units as one-bedroom and six as two-bedroom, with two labeled as studio apartments. The plan does not indicate how the upper-floor apartments would be broken up in terms of the number of bedrooms.

Some of the more central Waterfront buildings are mixed-use projects with retail and restaurant spaces on the ground floors, but Cain said the Block 20 project and other future projects on the western blocks are likely to be entirely residential.

"We'd always assumed that as we go further west, it would be predominantly residential, if not all residential," he said.

The portion of Columbia Way that runs through the western parcel is unfinished, but the master plan calls for a full extension of the road with new cross streets to divide the blocks, ending in a new traffic circle at the northwest corner of Block 20. Cain estimated that all of those roads will be completed by June 2019.

Like the rest of the Waterfront, the western blocks have been home to various industrial buildings and uses dating back more than a century, including lumber yards, wharves and paper mills. The existing buildings were demolished after the site fell out of use in the 1990s, and the entire waterfront area sat unused and undeveloped prior to The Waterfront Vancouver project.

Other projects under construction at the Waterfront include the RiverWest apartments on Block 8 and the Hotel Indigo and Kirkland Tower condos on Block 4. Another apartment building, the Timberhouse, is slated for Block 3 but is still in the planning stages; Cain estimated it will break ground in the first quarter of 2019.

There are 12 remaining blocks at The Waterfront Vancouver that do not have projects lined up, according to Cain, although he said that some of them have development deals in the works that are still too early to announce.