



The Columbian

Drawing a new downtown

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By CAMI JONER and JULIA ANDERSON, Columbian staff writer

Want a glimpse of the future? Imagine the silhouette of downtown Vancouver redefined by a surge of new shoreline development where urban dwellers live and visitors linger.

Construction is expected to start in 2010 on the 32-acre former Boise Cascade industrial property, just downriver from the Interstate 5 Bridge. The project, being led by Gramor Development of Tualatin, Ore., is expected to bring a mix of mid-rise condominiums, offices, boutiques and restaurants to the site worth between \$900 million and \$1.2 billion.

The Boise project, however, is only one component of a powerful second wave of downtown redevelopment. Twelve additional projects worth another \$375 million are earmarked for sites in a 150-block downtown radius over the next three years.

Hilton ends first wave

If the completion of the Hilton Vancouver Washington hotel and conference center in 2005 meant the end of a first wave of redevelopment, the second wave is bigger and more significant, say planners and investors.

The new projects — from office buildings to condominium construction — reflect a continuing “shift away from Vancouver’s former resource-based economy to more of a technology and knowledge-based, creative-class economy,” said Eric Holmes, Vancouver’s economic development director.

But it will require more permanent residents, say Holmes and others, to make downtown the 24-hour-a-day activity hub needed to support retailers and restaurants and other urban-service businesses.

“Once the hotel was done people felt like they’d reached a real milestone,” said Steve Burdick, the city’s former economic development manager. “People said, ‘whew, we’re done.’ That’s not accurate, there’s still a lot to be done, particularly with residential.”

Burdick now works for Killian Pacific, the Vancouver development company poised to begin construction this year on Riverwest, a \$160 million combination retail, office and residential project that includes a new main library at Evergreen Boulevard and C Street.

Designed with 200 condominiums, Riverwest would

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Vancouver's downtown projects

Downtown Vancouver waterfront

- **Scope:** Redevelopment of 29 acres with multiple buildings to include more than 3,000 residential condo units, a 200-room hotel, mid-rise office buildings and retail space.
- **Location:** West of Interstate 5.
- **Square footage:** More than 3.25 million.
- **Project cost:** \$900 million to \$1.2 billion.
- **Developer:** Gramor Development Inc. of Tualatin, Ore., and private investors.
- **Architect:** Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects.
- **Construction:** 2010.

The Columbian building

- **Scope:** Six-story office building with street-level retail, four floors for newspaper staff, and two floors for lease.
- **Location:** 415 W. Sixth St.
- **Size:** 118,000 square feet
- **Cost:** \$30 million.

jump-start residential growth, said Burdick, who sees other sites where living units also make sense.

"You need a variety of choices," Burdick said. "The priority has got to be residential."

Ideally, projects would come on line "one right after another," he said.

Transportation challenge

In addition to attracting residents, managing downtown traffic and access to the Boise property presents another challenge. Even as planning for the new projects moves ahead, the city is looking for money to help pay the cost of downtown roadwork.

Where will the money come from?

Burdick thinks everyone, the city, the developers, the state and the feds need to step up and pay for street work to serve anywhere from 5,000 to 20,000 additional car trips a day through the downtown sector. That's how much traffic redevelopment is expected to generate, said Thayer Rorabaugh, Vancouver's transportation manager. "We're going to experience some significant congestion," Rorabaugh said. He linked downtown road work to the ongoing planning for a new Interstate 5 bridge across the Columbia River, a project complicated by needs for new waterfront access routes, a new rail line to the Port of Vancouver and a new mass transit system to serve urban growth.

"It's all interrelated in a sense," Rorabaugh said.

\$38 million in roadwork

The city is ultimately looking for \$38 million to address the traffic and road work needs in the downtown core. An important part of that work is creating access under the BNSF railway berm to the Boise site. The problem is that federal and state resources have dwindled, Rorabaugh said. "Funding is getting more difficult to come by."

Having said that, Rorabaugh is hopeful that the money will be there.

The city already has scraped together \$24 million from developers, city matching funds and the BNSF and needs another \$14 million, which it expects to receive in state and federal funding this year.

Design work has begun for two underpasses and realignment of Sixth and Eighth streets.

Meanwhile, Clark County's public transportation agency, C-Tran, has closed its Seventh Street bus mall leaving a three-block area open for revitalization. The AI Angelo Co. a Vancouver-based real estate and development firm owns the majority of two blocks within the sector. "I would love to see some new retail and maybe a couple of good restaurants there," said Craig Angelo.

However, before vacant buildings sprout nightclubs, cafes and shops, most stakeholders agree downtown needs more residents. The first wave of redevelopment

- **Developer:** Downtown Vitality Partners Inc., Vancouver.
- **Architect:** GBD Architects, Portland.
- **Timeline:** Completed.

Grand Central

- **Scope:** Community shopping center, anchored by Fred Meyer and Columbia Credit Union.
- **Location:** Grand and Columbia House boulevards.
- **Size:** 196,000 square feet.
- **Cost:** \$40 million.
- **Developer:** Killian Pacific, Vancouver.
- **Architect:** Tiland/Schmidt Architects PC, Portland.
- **Timeline:** Opening in April.

The Luxe

- **Scope:** Six-story project with retail, four floors of offices and residential units.
- **Location:** 412 E. 13th St.
- **Size:** 52,000 square feet.
- **Cost:** \$17 million.
- **Developer:** Prestige Development, Vancouver.
- **Architect:** Tiland/Schmidt Architects PC, Portland.
- **Timeline:** Construction starts in June.

iQ Credit Union headquarters

- **Scope:** Remodeled building as new headquarters and branch for iQ Credit Union.
- **Location:** 1313 Main St.
- **Size:** 28,000 square feet.
- **Project cost:** \$9 million.
- **Developer:** iQ Credit Union, Vancouver.
- **Architect:** EHS Design, Seattle.
- **Timeline:** Demolition has begun with new construction starting in June.

Vancouvercenter South Tower

Scope: A nine-story office building.
Location: Southeast corner of Sixth Street and Broadway.
Size: 110,000 square feet.
Project cost: \$30 million.
Developer: Vandevco.
Architect: Otak Inc., Lake Oswego, Ore.
Timeline: Construction this year.

Riverwest

- **Scope:** Mixed-use project with a public library, 100,000 square feet of office space, 17,000 square feet of retail space, 200 condo units, a 65-room hotel and underground parking.
- **Location:** South of Evergreen

brought more than 525 housing units on line at Heritage Place, Vancouvercenter and Esther Short Commons.

"But we're still trying to get to that critical mass" of residents, said Gerald Baugh, the city's business development director. "We're basically at the doorstep of that opportunity."

The door could swing wide open with waterfront construction, said Barry Cain, president of Gramor Development.

Similar to the Portland Pearl District, the Vancouver development "will be an active place," Cain said. "Its position along the Columbia River will make it unique."

3,000 living units

Planned to include about 3,000 living units, the Boise project will include a variety of housing, from penthouses to studios and brownstones to high-rises, said David Copenhaver, Gramor vice president. "This is not proposed as an enclave for the wealthy. It will have other uses"

Cain and Copenhaver plan to meet with downtown business owners, residents and educators from Vancouver Public Schools to get a feel for design. "We're taking the time to develop it the way other people want to see it," Cain said. He acknowledged that the slower housing market could delay residential construction. "The timing of this development is going to see ups and downs," Cain said.

The trick for new projects throughout the downtown core is to "time them correctly," said Roger Qualman, executive vice president of NAI Norris Beggs & Simpson commercial real estate firm.

Others say financially sound development will continue to move forward.

"The fact is, if you're well qualified and you're putting an appropriate down payment on the project, you're not going to have any trouble," said Tami Nesburg, a senior vice president at Vancouver-based Regents bank.

Though demand for downtown office space has slowed over the last year, Qualman expects development will continue for projects with end users in mind. These include iQ Credit Union's redevelopment of the city's former Citizens Service Center into company headquarters and The AI Angelo Co.'s plans to relocate its offices in a new five-story office building on the former Denny's restaurant site as part of the proposed 400 Mill Plain Center.

And just as potential home buyers have found the mortgage lending climate less friendly, developers of commercial office and retail space will also find stricter requirements.

"The underwriting or quality standards would be more stringent than they were a year ago," Qualman said.

A blank canvas

Boulevard on C Street.

- **Size:** More than 300,000 square feet.
- **Cost:** \$160 million.
- **Developer:** Killian Pacific, Vancouver.
- **Architect:** Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects, Portland.
- **Timeline:** Construction starts mid-year with completion in late 2010.

400 Mill Plain Center

- **Scope:** A two-building office complex with ground-floor retail and parking.
- **Location:** West of Interstate 5 on two blocks between Mill Plain Boulevard and West 15th Street.
- **Size:** 152,200 square feet.
- **Cost:** \$57 million, including \$17 million for five-story building and \$40 million for six-story project.
- **Developer:** The AI Angelo Co., Vancouver.
- **Architect:** Wilson Associates AIA, Vancouver.
- **Timeline:** First building to start this year; Second building planned in 2010.

Prestige Plaza

- **Scope:** A six-story building with ground-floor retail and upper floors of more than 100 market-rate apartment units.
- **Location:** 300 E. 13th St., to replace the former Vancouver police station.
- **Size:** 90,000 square feet.
- **Cost:** \$30 million.
- **Developer:** Prestige Development, Vancouver.
- **Architect:** Not yet selected.
- **Timeline:** Demolition this year. Construction in 2010.

Murdock Condo development

- **Scope:** Ten floors with up to 126 residential condo units atop the parking facility of the Murdock Building.
- **Location:** 770 C Street.
- **Cost:** Undetermined.
- **Developer:** DevSmart Inc., Woodland Hills, Calif.
- **Architect:** Myhre Group Architects, Portland.
- **Timeline:** None.

Ninth & Daniels building

- **Scope:** Three-story office building for Greenen & Greenen PLC, with ground-floor lobby, retail and parking.
- **Location:** Northeast corner of Ninth and Daniels streets.
- **Size:** 12,000 square feet.
- **Project cost:** \$1.75 million.
- **Developer:** Sedona Development,

Nevertheless, waterfront development alone is poised to generate upwards of \$30 million a year in property tax, sales tax, utility, business and occupation taxes, said Holmes, the city's economic development director.

"That's based on a whole host of assumptions," he said. The revenue would be spread among all taxing jurisdictions, including the city, county and state. "It's a significant piece in our redevelopment planning," Holmes said. The guidelines started with an \$18 million public investment in 30 blocks around Esther Short Park that brought \$300 million in private developments such as Heritage Place, Vancouvercenter and the West Coast Bank Building. Holmes sees the 20-block waterfront development as the key piece of the city's enlarged 150-block redevelopment footprint.

"It's kind of like a blank canvas, but set up with guidelines," he said.

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Vancouver.

- **Architect:** Wilson Associates AIA, Vancouver.
- **Timeline:** 2009.

Frontier Building

- **Scope:** Four-story retail-office building.
- **Location:** Block fronting Main and Sixth streets.
- **Size:** 63,000 square feet.
- **Cost:** Undetermined.
- **Developer:** Killian Pacific, Vancouver.
- **Architect:** Not selected.
- **Timeline:** To be announced later this year.

Black Angus redevelopment

- **Scope:** Convert Black Angus restaurant site into three-story office building with parking.
- **Location:** 413 E. 13th St.
- **Size:** 36,000 square feet.
- **Cost:** Undetermined.
- **Developer:** Pioneer Building Co. LLC., Vancouver.
- **Architect:** Glenn Wells Architect, Olympia.
- **Timeline:** 2010.

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