

Grocer, housing planned for vacant downtown Vancouver lot

Block 10 likely will be developed by Gramor, the waterfront developer



Amanda Cowan/The Columbian Block 10, the last remaining vacant lot at the heart of downtown, could be home to apartments and retailers, including a grocery. [Buy this photo](#)

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A vacant lot in the heart of downtown Vancouver, known locally as Block 10, could be turned into a 250-unit apartment building with a grocery store, city officials announced today.

Gramor Development of Tualatin, Ore., the same company currently developing the city's waterfront, has submitted a proposal to turn the empty block cater-corner from Esther Short Park into a mixed-use development with housing and ground floor retail, including a grocery store.

Gramor's proposal for the long-vacant site, bordered by Columbia, Washington, Eighth and Ninth streets, includes both underground and above-ground parking.

The city's economic development division also received a proposal from LSW Architects, which called for building a K-5 public urban school of arts and innovation. LSW's proposal also suggested space for early learning and child care, a business innovation center, room for a nonprofit organization and a community assembly space.

Teresa Brum, the city's economic development division manager, said Gramor's proposal aligned more with the city's goals, particularly bringing in a grocery store.

"There is a huge pent-up demand and excitement from the community," Brum said about a grocery store.

Housing construction has been booming downtown, and Brum said the city has 600 more residential units in the pipeline in the downtown area. Coupled with a 3 percent vacancy rate, she believes there is sufficient demand for a grocery store. Although there are several convenience stores, there is no full-service grocer within walking distance of downtown.

Brum's department will present the proposals to the Vancouver City Council tonight at a workshop and request the council's approval to move forward negotiating with Gramor.

Barry Cain, the president of Gramor, said he's confident the location will support a full-service grocery store. The proposal includes space for a 30,000-square-foot store.

Cain said his company has worked with a variety of stores in previous developments from Oregon-based New Seasons and Market of Choice to Fred Meyer and Safeway.

"Nobody has done more with grocery-store development than us," Cain said.

Cain believes the market is strong enough now to justify a grocery store, but with the waterfront project and other downtown development coming online the demand will increase.

"If it's the right type of store, people will get off the freeway to go there," Cain said. "It's a very convenient stop, and I think multiple stores will want to go there. We will have choices."

The city is hoping to work with LSW Architects to find another location for its proposal.

Block 10 is the last empty block from the five-block Lucky Lager Brewery site. The city bought the property in 1993. The 1-acre lot was appraised at \$3.2 million, Brum said.

The other brewery blocks were developed into Heritage Place, a mixed residential/retail property that includes Starbucks and Subway, and Vancouvercenter, which has a mix of offices, a restaurant and residential space, plus a large public parking garage.

Two years ago the city asked for "request for proposals" to develop Block 10 and got no response.

In 2013, Vancouver's Downtown Association revamped the gravel lot, spending about \$15,000 on plants, flower beds, bicycle racks and flagpoles flying a rainbow of colors.

The site has been used for multiple purposes in Vancouver's nearly 200-year history. In the 1800s, the site was used for homes, housed a blacksmith shop and painting facility. In the 1900s, it housed a bicycle shop, grocery store, hardware store, machine shop, gas station and auto repair shop.

This story will be updated.

