

Big turnout for Grant Street Pier groundbreaking at Vancouver waterfront



Carrie Vogelzang of Vancouver Parks and Recreation holds a poster of the Grant Street Pier, which will open as part of the Vancouver waterfront park in 2018. (Ariane Kunze/The Columbian)



Barry Cain of Gramor Development holds up a cookie frosted with an image of the future Grant Street Pier, the signature element of Vancouver's waterfront park, which will open in 2018. A crowd of about 100 gathered at the waterfront for the Grant Street Pier ground-breaking ceremony Monday. (Ariane Kunze/The Columbian)



Vancouver Parks and Recreation Director Julie Hannon speaks Monday afternoon at a ground-breaking ceremony for the anticipated Grant Street Pier, which will open as part of the Vancouver waterfront park in 2018. (Ariane Kunze/The Columbian)



Berry Cain of Gramor Development speaks at a ground-breaking ceremony for Grant Street Pier, the signature element of Vancouver's waterfront park, which will open in 2018. A crowd of about 100 gathered. (Ariane Kunze/The Columbian)

By [Brooks Johnson](#), Columbian Business Reporter

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The Vancouver waterfront today isn't a patch of dirt, its soil. And it's there the seeds have been planted to grow the city's new image.

"As we look around at this empty site, close your eyes for a few seconds and imagine what this will look like in just a few short years," state Sen. Annette Cleveland, D-Vancouver, said during a groundbreaking for the Grant Street Pier on Monday afternoon. "This project changes the face of Vancouver and will benefit our region for generations to come."

The pier, a cable-stayed walkable work of art jutting 90 feet beyond the banks of the Columbia River, will undoubtedly become the signature element of the downtown waterfront park, the city's \$30 million contribution to the \$1.5 billion private development there.

"This project is changing the face of our community, both literally and figuratively," Mayor Tim Leavitt said.

More than 100 people gathered for speeches and golden shovels as the maritime wind whipped across a faded blue barge moorage Monday. That dock, one of the last remnants of Boise Cascade's industrial presence at the waterfront, will make way for the vision of Larry Kirkland, an internationally known artist who designed the Grant Street Pier.

“We believe this is a one-of-a-kind item that doesn’t exist anywhere else in the world,” said Barry Cain, president of Gramor Development, the Tualatin, Ore., company driving the waterfront project.

The pier will be solely supported by a 70-foot mast and cables — no in-water support. Lighting on the pier was designed by Charles Stone, who is responsible for lighting the 9/11 Memorial, the Washington Monument and other massive projects.

“The creative and technical team have been striving to make this as simple and elegant as possible,” Kirkland said in a statement.

Plenty of business and political figures and other community members walked to the groundbreaking event via the new trail alongside the river. Along the way they saw a hole in the ground that will soon become multistory developments along Columbia Way.

Speakers at Monday’s event touched on the thousands of construction and permanent jobs the fully completed waterfront project will bring and touted the collaborative efforts of those involved.

“Barry talked about ‘surcharging’ and ‘geo-piers,’ ” said Leavitt, referring to the site work where two new restaurants will overlook the pier and finding an apt metaphor for the complexity of the project. “There’s a lot of intricacy in putting something like this together.”

Cain said the first elements of the waterfront will come to life next year, and the rest will be history.

“The waterfront park will be the one place everyone in Clark County will have in common. It will be a sign to the rest of the world that a new era has arrived in downtown Vancouver.”