

THE WATERFRONT VANCOUVER TAKES SHAPE IN WASHINGTON

By Katie Sloan

At the former site of a waterfront paper mill located 20 minutes outside of Downtown Portland in Vancouver, Washington, a new mixed-use project is taking form.

Construction on Phase I of The Waterfront Vancouver — a 32-acre development set to feature 3,300 residential units, 1.25 million square feet of Class A office space, a boutique hotel, restaurants and retail — is currently underway.

Barry Cain, president of Gramor Development Inc. — the originator of the Waterfront project — notes that the former paper mill hampered development in the Vancouver area for years.

“The paper mill took up all of the waterfront property in downtown Vancouver,” he says. “It hampered the development of the town to have a big, ugly paper plant there. Now that we’ve dispensed of that and are replacing it with a really high-end waterfront development, we’re seeing a lot of new things starting to happen in downtown Vancouver.”

The first phase of the \$1.5 billion project will deliver a \$30 million waterfront park with a cable stay pier; 40,000 square feet of restaurant space overlooking the Columbia River; 45,000 square feet of ground floor retail space; 70,000 square feet of Class A office space; 263 apartment homes; and a Hotel Indigo.

A public-private partnership between developer Gramor Development Inc., The City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Parks and Recreation Department, the State of Washington and Columbia Waterfront LLC was formed to create the large-scale project, set to open its first phase in 2018.

The focal point of the development is a half-mile long waterfront park, anchored by the cable stay Grant Street Pier designed by nationally recognized public artist Larry Kirkland and illuminated by lighting designer Charles Stone. “We wanted the development to have a special waterfront park,” says Cain. “The pier extends over the water 90 feet right into the middle of the river. It is a cable stay pier, so it has a big mast and cables that hold it up without any visible supports.”

PWL Landscape Architects designed the park, which is set to walking trails, expansive green space and areas for picnics and biking. The Columbia River Renaissance Trail will provide a five-mile pathway connecting Esther Short Park in downtown Vancouver with Wintler Park, providing visitors, the office tenant and the residential community with a walkway for jog-



The Grant Street Pier will anchor a half-mile long waterfront park at The Waterfront Vancouver.

ging, biking or simply strolling.

Two buildings devoted to restaurants will be situated alongside the Grant Street Pier, offering roughly 40,000 square feet of waterfront dining space. “We plan to have six restaurants within those buildings and they’re right on the water, which was important to us,” says Cain. “We have two restaurants signed. Twigs Bistro and Martini Bar will occupy 8,500 square feet and WildFin American Grill will occupy 7,500 square feet. We also have a brewpub that we’re working with that we will be signing shortly.”

The Shops on Waterfront Way will initially consist of 45,000 square feet of ground floor retail with open-air patios, offering a variety of service, soft goods and dining tenants. “The Shops will consist of all of the retail on the ground floor levels of the hotel,

office and apartment buildings facing out onto Waterfront Way,” says Shana Alles, director of leasing for Gramor Development. “There is quite a bit of activity — we have a number of letters of intent that are going back and forth. We are excited to make some tenant announcements within the next few weeks.”

Alles notes that the retail facing the waterfront will likely consist of restaurant space. “The shop space facing the water will be mostly eateries and coffee shops — tenants that can take advantage of the wide patios and views of the river and park,” she says. “On the north side, the retail will be more service-based to support the office and residential components of the project.” Gramor expects that the project will feature eight to 10 restaurants when the first phase opens in 2018.

“In the coming years, we believe

that Downtown Vancouver is going to grow substantially,” Cain continues. “In Washington State, we do not have a state income tax, which is a big benefit when comparing Washington to Oregon. There are lots of good reasons to be here in addition to the beautiful south-facing waterfront on the Columbia River.”

Cain expects that The Waterfront Vancouver will be a top five destination for the Vancouver/Portland area, and hopes that more surrounding development will follow.

“We just want to have good quality development follow what we’re doing on the waterfront,” says Cain. “The way that we’re going about this development as far as the water and the pier is top notch. We hope to see more development to follow, making Vancouver even more of a draw for visitors.” ■

continued from page 39

can evolve along with their companies, while their owners are able to limit the turnover expenses associated with constantly re-leasing the office when a tenant outgrows the space.

In addition to flexible buildouts, collaborative common areas like indoor/outdoor gathering spaces are appealing to traditional tenants as they continue to place a stronger emphasis on a work/play culture that was previously dominated by the tech tenant. These shared spaces build a sense of community for tenants and further aid in driving long-term retention for property owners.

For example, at Corporate Pointe office towers in Culver City, we are in the process of transforming the courtyard into an indoor/outdoor amenity area for employees to gather and socialize. This collaborative environment will attract not only tech companies but also smaller ancillary service providers that seek the same type of work/play environments of their larger counterparts.

Custom Artwork

Tech companies aren’t the only ones that want art in their office buildings. Demand for a modern workplace aesthetic is on the rise as even traditional office tenants seek innovative spaces that inspire and stimulate creativity.

Integrating artwork at a property is one way that owners are differentiating their workspaces to attract and retain a wide variety of tenants. In Downtown Los Angeles, for instance, office owners are infusing elements of the local art scene into a traditionally corporate district to create unique and innovative workspaces.

As demand for creative office continues to rise, unconventional amenities like food options, collaborative workspaces and local artwork are gaining traction in the market. By taking note of this growing trend, owners will be able to appeal to a broad range of users, from tech startups to traditional corporate firms, who are rethinking their spaces to cater to a growing Millennial workforce. ■