

Q&A: Waterfront hotel developer reveals new details

Block 4 of Vancouver's waterfront development will feature a 10-story tall condominium tower

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Rendering courtesy of Kirkland Development

When Kirkland Development first announced that it was purchasing Block 4 of Vancouver's new waterfront project from Columbia Waterfront LLC, the Vancouver-based developer revealed plans to bring a boutique hotel (Hotel Indigo) and a complement of retail and residential living spaces to the water's edge.

Four months have passed since that initial announcement, and we're learning new details about how the project has evolved.

Perhaps the most noticeable change is a 10-story blue-tinted glass condominium tower, as illustrated in the accompanying renderings. The residential component of the block was previously slated to be five stories of apartments on top of ground-floor retail.

We sat down with Dean Kirkland, chairman of Kirkland Development, to learn more about where the project sits today.



Rendering courtesy of Kirkland

Development

Q: How has this project evolved since it was initially announced?

Kirkland: Originally, the block was going to include apartments, but we decided to go with the condo tower and we took advantage of some of the height available... We wanted to turn the tower into more of a glass, upscale look to match Gramor Development's building next door, which will be an office building.

The tower will be nine floors over one floor of retail space for a total of 10 stories, with subterranean parking underground. It will have its own entrance on the very west end for residents as well as guests, and you'll be able to enter through the common lobby off Columbia Way. There are 36 units.

The building (approx. 140 feet tall) has mirrored glass and a silver metal panel on it.

The hotel remains five stories over one story of retail space. It's a metal panel building – some of it's a blue metal on the east end, some is a silver metal and then there's some wood on the retail level on both sides of the building. There's about 17,000 square feet of retail space – 7,000 of that will be used for a restaurant/bar.

It's a gorgeous building ... this is project we are really proud to be a part of.

Q: What about the design of the hotel rooms themselves?

Kirkland: We asked ourselves, what do millennials like? What do you do when you walk into a hotel room? Your bathroom, how does it feel? How does the shower feel? Does your room have

a great bed and a great television? I don't think desks and heavy furniture are the most important things to the new generation.

Q: You've developed a number of different hotel brands. What made you choose the Indigo brand for this project?

Kirkland: Every one of them is different and that's what attracted me to that brand.

There are about 60 Hotel Indigos now across the United States. The newest one just opened in Manhattan and is doing amazingly well. Each one of them creates a story based on the neighborhood that they're in, so we'll work hand in hand with the staff at IHG (also known as InterContinental Hotels Group – owners of the Hotel Indigo brand) to do our research. I know a little bit about Vancouver since I grew up here, but we'll learn more. We'll make sure it has its own theme that is portrayed to the public when they come here.

As a preferred developer for IHG, we have the ability to set ourselves apart and not just be a cookie-cutter hotel like some of the other brands. We want this to be unique.

Q: What more can you tell me about the ground-floor retail component of the block?

Kirkland: The restaurant and bar will be run as part of the hotel. That leaves us with about 10,000 to 11,000 square feet of retail/commercial space. We envision that being anything from a high-end spa to a high-end jeweler, a small eatery or café, coffee shop – things like that. I think those will fill up.

I think businesses that lease there will benefit highly from the fact that they'll be part of the buzz and the water and the park out in front of us; all the things the city is doing with the pier, everyone will end up a big winner.

Q: What style of restaurant are you planning to have?

Kirkland: I think it will be traditional American. The restaurants that are down on the water – Beaches, Joe's Crab Shack – they've done well, so we'll keep it traditional. You want to have a restaurant that when you walk in, the smell is great and the light is great, and you'll be able to take in the view of the water if you choose to.

Q: What's the current timeline for the project?

Kirkland: We're hoping to kick it off in the fall of next year. It will take that long to get it there, and we're on a pace to do that. We've done a lot of work – that's everything from dealing with other waterfront project developers, the city, the [hotel] franchise (IHG), dealing with capital partners, financing, all those things. The project should be completed by December 2018.

Q: Does that timing benefit you because some of the amenities down there will have already been established?

Kirkland: I think so. I think it's kind of paralleling [the rest of the waterfront projects]; no one is more important than the other. We all have to do right by each other – that's the art. It's been a bit of a dance for all of us. There are things that Kirkland Development has to do, there are things that Gramor Development has to do, etcetera. We all have to do our part to get this thing to the end zone.

You always have a responsibility to yourself first and foremost – to your partners and your bankers. But with this project, there's a lot more cohesiveness working with other partners and that takes time... It's been good. I'm really pleased with how we've worked hand in hand.

Q: What do you think your project – and the waterfront development as a whole – means for the future of Vancouver?

Kirkland: City skylines can be done right where they are very attractive to the eye. I think it's of huge monument that it's done correctly. I think having these buildings there will absolutely shape that waterfront, and I think it will change the way people look at Vancouver – not just guests and residents, but businesses too. There's just not a lot of waterfront property out there.