

# Big W beckons shoppers again

Saturday, January 16th, 2010

**Stuart Davis**

*Sun*



Crowds gathered to celebrate at the Woodward' s development in Vancouver' s Downtown Eastside on Friday, as the lights on the big, iconic W atop the development were turned on. Photograph by: Stuart Davis, PNG, Vancouver Sun

The Big W is once again shining over the city at the Woodward' s site.

New customized low-energy red lights that decorate the replicated steel structure were turned on as part of the official opening of the Simon Fraser University Woodward' s Contemporary Arts complex.

From 1944 to 1993 the big red W, perched on top of an Eiffel Tower-like structure, beckoned shoppers to the Woodward' s department store, where the Downtown Eastside meets the business district.

Now, a new W sign is the centrepiece of a \$330-million, mixed-use condo development including 536 units of market housing, 200 units of non-market housing, government offices, community space, retail stores and a new SFU campus.

The W weighs more than 2.5 tonnes and has 6,000 LED lights made to look like the old fashioned light bulbs of the past.

It remains on top of the tower but this time around it will be overshadowed by 42-and 32-storey condominiums.

The SFU campus will house a new theatre for performing arts and be home to a number of art displays. On Friday, SFU hosted the Arts and Architecture of Woodward' s, complemented by the lighting of the W- 17 years to the day after it last went dark.

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# Bowling alley one of proposals for new Woodward's

Friday, September 30th, 2005

## City council to vote Tuesday on how to pick tenants

John Bermingham

*Sun*

A bowling alley is one of 55 proposals put forward by non-profit groups for the Woodward's facelift.

Vancouver city council is to vote Tuesday on the method it will use to choose which groups become tenants in the revamped Woodward's building on Hastings Street.

The list of applicants include the Dragon Boat Festival, the Vancouver Folk Music Festival and the Kootenay School of Writing.

Vision Vancouver mayoral hopeful Jim Green said the remake is a city-wide project, which will employ and cater to locals.

"It's not just a Downtown Eastside project," he said. "We really want to make that a magnet, where people come to the Downtown Eastside."

NPA mayoral candidate Sam Sullivan wants 10,000 square feet, or one-third of the space allotted to non-profit groups, to be converted into market rentals.

Sullivan said it would help recoup some of the \$30-million-plus cost overruns already on the project.

"I think it's important to have some space for non-profits," said Sullivan. "But that [stalls] would make the project more viable."

As part of its deal with the developers, the city will get 31,500 sq. ft. of space to lease to non-profit tenants for \$1 per year. Tenants will have to pay the overheads of \$6 or \$7 per square foot.

Preferred non-profit uses include a seniors' centre, arts and rehearsal space, as well as offices for non-profit societies.

The Portland Hotel Society has applied to run an "affordable grocery store" and a 37-space childcare centre. PHS has been chosen as the operator of 125 social-housing units for singles, with the other 75 units for families. All tenants will be chosen by a selection panel.

Woodward's project manager Michael Flanigan said many non-profit agencies in the Downtown Eastside already have established offices there.

“We don’ t want to poach those locations and bring them into Woodward’ s, and then leave a problem behind,” he said. “We’ re looking to really bring activity into the Downtown Eastside, as opposed to relocating within it.”

© The Vancouver Province 2005

# Construction Update Aug 2009: Woodward' s - 108-128 W Cordova, Ritz Carlton 58 storey dev going ahead in March 2009, Jameson House going ahead to be built by Robert Bosa, Cosmo by Concord at \$600/ft sold out

Thursday, August 27th, 2009

**Malcolm Parry**

*Sun*

NEW SPACE RACE: Recessionary chills are declining in numerous economic sectors. High among them is housing, on which the development community is throwing warm water again.

With the \$330-million Woodward' s redevelopment closing, 160 buyers received their keys last week. Meanwhile, that project' s Ian Gillespie appears nearer to acquiring the Bayshore property. That should see two condo towers and a second hotel — estimated value \$127 million — added to the Coal Harbour waterfront site. Gillespie reportedly now has until mid-October to complete due diligence on the deal.

As for hotels, don' t expect a 127-room Ritz Carlton on West Georgia Street. Malaysia-based Holborn Group president Joo Kim Tiah still has contractual obligations to renegotiate with the hotel chain, but the Arthur Erickson-designed 58-floor tower-with-a-twist should go ahead again in March with smaller, less-ritzy condos on the upper floors and a different-named hotel below. Original condo-buyers' deals were cancelled in April. Multi-property owner Rob McDonald later half-joked it' d be a good site for Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide' s luxury St. Regis brand. He' d just spent \$11 million refurbishing his Dunsmuir-at-Seymour St. Regis hotel and has legal right to that title here. Still, Tiah' s father, Holborn chair and TA Enterprise executive chairman Datuk Tony Tiah Thee Kian, owns the now-renovating, 185-room Aava Whistler hotel and others, so who knows?

On one of downtown' s smaller sites, at Hastings off Hornby Street, the 31-floor, \$180-million Jameson House looks ready to roll again with Bosa Properties founder Robert Bosa supplanting brothers Tony, John and Tom Pappajohn, and son-president Colin Bosa running the project. Original purchasers have reportedly been offered renewal discounts from one to 15 per cent. The question for the Bosas and marketer Bob Rennie will be whether to sell hard right away or wait a year for better prices and activity.

Meanwhile, 250 buyers marched past the B.C. Regiment' s Beatty Street drill hall recently to pay some \$600 per square foot for all the units of Concord Pacific' s adjacent Cosmo project.

# Design panel OKs Woodward' s project

Thursday, December 8th, 2005

**Frances B**

*Sun*

VANCOUVER – The Woodward' s redevelopment project got unanimous approval from Vancouver' s urban design panel Wednesday, with one member praising the architect and developer for their bravery and dedication.

“I want to applaud the developer for taking this on because it takes a lot of courage,” said Peter Wreglesworth.

An architect himself, he said project architect Gregory Henriquez' s design — which includes four separate buildings, a public plaza and a mix of about a dozen uses — shows a real commitment to social design and is clearly a “labour of love.”

The \$280-million project, which was spearheaded by the previous COPE-Vision city council, will see developers Ian Gillespie and Ben Peterson build more than a million square feet of space. It will include both social and market housing in two towers, a School for the Contemporary Arts for Simon Fraser University, a public plaza, two major stores, a daycare, offices, a renovated heritage building that will be used by non-profit groups, and space for smaller stores.

Panel members said the design presented good solutions to a complex, rich project and said they were willing to give it some flexibility in order to help the difficult economics work.

They approved the 121-metre W tower, a flat-iron building with greenery growing up it, which will intrude two metres into one of the city' s view cones, and the density on the site.

The development, which is expected to help revitalize the Downtown Eastside, is also challenging financially because it is being built at a time of rising construction costs on the edge of the city' s most troubled and drug-dominated neighbourhood. The last city council agreed to put \$13 million into the building in order to help the developer, who will finance the rest of the project.

Panel members did express concerns about several aspects of the project, especially the public space at the centre of the four buildings, the low level of retail or activities on the street side of the project, and how well the innovative “living wall” of greenery on the W tower will work.

Architect Nigel Baldwin said he was worried that the public space, part of which will be a glass-covered atrium, will struggle because it doesn' t have enough connections with the buildings surrounding it. Others said they thought it was crucial that the public space be open all the time, not gated as currently proposed.



**FEATURE** Density bonuses build up 1.4 million square feet of potential commercial and condo towers

# East side air rights

ANDREW PETROZZI/WI STAFF

WESTERN INVESTOR

**M**ore than one million square feet of density bonus space is up for grabs from a now-frozen Vancouver heritage incentive that focused on the Downtown Eastside.

Begun in July 2007, the city's heritage building rehabilitation program and transfer-of-density program review has been exploring ways to deal with the more than 1.45 million square feet of transferable heritage density that has been created but not yet transferred to other development sites.

Of that, more than 1.1 million square feet remains on hold or as a sale in process. Currently, just 349,011 square feet is available for sale, according to the **City of Vancouver's** heritage density inventory.

"People may never be able to do the sorts of projects that we have done because we are running out of good heritage buildings, and the city can't figure out how to make their program work," said **Robert Fung**, president

of the **Salient Group**, which has 425,880 square feet of density from the city that it has yet to transfer from its six heritage redevelopment projects in the Gastown/Crosstown area. Of that, 346,431 square feet remains on hold or a sale in process. Salient has just 79,449 square feet available for sale currently.

Since the heritage density transfer review started, the city embarked on a historic-area height review, as well as a downtown capacity and view corridors study. Both are interre-

lated with the density transfer review because they could potentially provide the capacity to receive density transfer from heritage or to provide for other public benefits, according to **Marco D'Agostini**, senior heritage planner for the City of Vancouver.

Density transferred from heritage projects has not been taken up by development applications to the extent envisioned. The economic downturn aggravated the situation as rezoning applications slowed further and forced the city to reconsider where the stockpiled density could be used.

"The heritage area height review and view-cone study are trying to explore ways, find places to land that density," said D'Agostini. "It still gets back to the point that there needs to be real and hard applications to utilize that density, so we are providing the policy context and background to facilitate it, but we still need the applications."

## Options

The heritage area height review is contemplating two options: maintain current maximums in the area, which runs from Richards Street in the west to Water Street/Alexander Street in the north to Gore Avenue in the east and Union Street in the south encompassing Victory Square, Gastown, Hastings and Main and Chinatown.

The second option calls for moderate height increases in each area. The city is also exploring an option using four possible special sites – 300 West Hastings, 21 West Pender, 8 East Pender and 105 Keefer Street – that could have towers of up to 300 feet, as well as increased heights up to 200 feet on the Main Street cor-

**"Our civic history as well as the social and community health of the Downtown Eastside is an amenity to the entire city."**

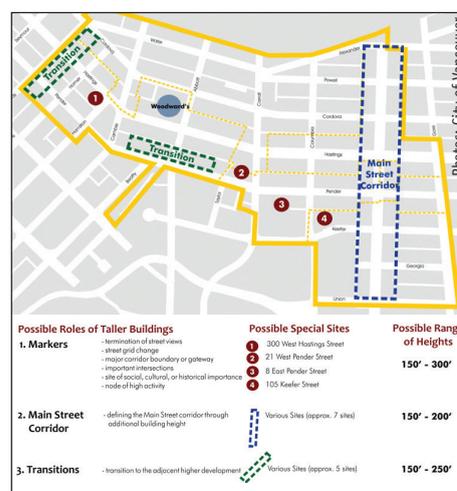
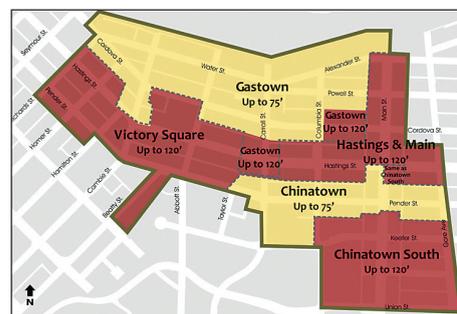
**ROBERT FUNG, PRESIDENT, THE SALIENT GROUP**



**44-storey Woodward's tower, which opened last month, is expected to remain the highest building allowed in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. How high?: Top: Current zoning height regulations at 70-75 feet; Middle: Moderate zoning height increase proposal to 120 feet. Bottom: Special zones where taller buildings are proposed, up to 250 feet.**

ridor from Alexander Street south to Union, as well as "transition zones" bordering the Gastown and Victory Square zoning areas that could permit heights up to 250 feet.

"Strictly speaking from the heritage perspective, I would like to see lots of 20-storey buildings, but we also, because we are part of the whole planning department in the city, need to understand the potential impacts of allowing more density," said D'Agostini.



The Woodward's project was a special circumstance, he said, and not subject to the heritage density designation. "It should not be seen as the model to apply across the historic area," said D'Agostini.

The Woodward's project comprises four buildings, including the 44-storey Abbot tower, and has sold out of more than 500 condominiums. Residents began moving in this August.

Please see **Fitting In** page A20

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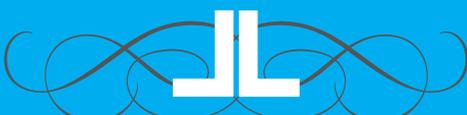


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# It' s curtain time for Woodward' s

Thursday, January 14th, 2010

Paint may not be dry, but show will go on and a whole lot more besides

Glen Schaefer

*Province*



Artistic director Michael Boucher sees the theatre as an umbrella for the artistic community. Photograph by: Mark Van Manen, PNG, The Province

It' s apt on several levels that the leadoff production at SFU Woodward' s new theatre is called *The Show Must Go On*.

The Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theatre, named for the philanthropist and former Simon Fraser University chancellor, was still surrounded by construction fencing and peopled with hard hats when we met the theatre' s cultural director Michael Boucher at a nearby coffee shop.

He' s the guy tasked with filling the 430 theatre seats which, when we talked last week, hadn' t yet been installed. The paint will likely still be drying when the theatre opens today for a two-night architectural salon but it will open because, you know, the show must go on.

Cheap wordplay on the title aside, this dance work by French choreographer Jerome Bel wittily captures what Boucher and the theatre aim to do in the long term — provide a link between artists (SFU is moving its 1,800-student contemporary arts school from Burnaby Mountain to 125,000 square feet of classrooms at Woodward' s) and the community they live in.

Bel' s work, previously staged throughout Europe and North America, plays with audience notions of where performance ends and begins by blending a cast of 22 dancers, actors and high-profile laypeople. Those latter cast

members include critic Max Wyman and Heart of the City's Savannah Walling in this production. The performance opens Jan. 20

"It's in a way inspired by the average person, their sensibility of what dance is about," says Boucher. "It's very personalized, they move to their own rhythm. It's set to contemporary music and they move in ways where there's a narrative that unfolds. There's a street sensibility to it."

The Show Must Go On is part of the Push Festival, founded by SFU alumnus Norman Armour. The new theatre's six-month inaugural program is a homecoming of sorts — past SFU students on the program also include actor-director James Sanders, starring this March in the play SPINE, about reinventing the body through technology. That mixed-media play is a joint production with the Cultural Olympiad, and Boucher sees such external partnerships as a way of getting the most out of the theatre.

For most of February, the theatre will be home to writer-director-actor Robert Lepage's international hit play The Blue Dragon, also part of the Cultural Olympiad.

The Wong will feature about 100 student-driven productions a year after the contemporary arts school moves in this September. In addition to the below-ground 430-seat theatre, the facility includes two 125-seat studio theatres, an orchestra studio, a 350-seat theatre equipped to screen films and host lectures and the ground-level Audain Gallery.

"We've been waiting for a building for 30 years," says Martin Gotfrit, the school's director, adding the school aims to be more visible after years on the mountain. "The building itself is very porous. To walk into the plaza from Hastings Street you have to walk through our lobby. We hope there'll be a sense of people feeling welcome."

Aside from the student productions, groups outside the university will be able to use the space.

"The inaugural program is a model of how we want to work with the community," says Boucher. "A lot of it will be driven by cultural partnerships. The city needs more venues and this building addresses that need."

"When you have a venue with multiple studios in it, a state of the art theatre, it allows for smaller companies to step up. We're looking at ways to make it workable and affordable to well-recognized smaller and mid-sized companies to come in and use this space, animate it."

The benefit to the university is that students will be amid the outside professionals as well. “It will motivate this cycle of students wanting to go out and become professionals, and coming back in.”

The theatre opens its doors Thursday and Friday with a two-night onstage dialogue among members of Vancouver’s architecture and design communities. Tonight, architects Bing Thom and James K. M. Cheng will talk about the late Arthur Erickson’s architectural legacy. Friday night will feature a discussion of the art and architecture of the new Woodward’s housing, theatre and commercial complex itself, including the inauguration of a huge photographic installation by artist Stan Douglas and the re-lighting of the restored Woodward’s “W.”

The free multimedia exhibition Vancouverism: Architecture Builds the City will be staged in the Woodward’s atrium, showing until Feb. 27, and it will serve as the starting point for the two City Salon dialogues.  
gschaefer@theprovince.com

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# Most of the historic Woodward's building to be demolished for construction of the 2 towers

Saturday, September 16th, 2006

**John Mackie**

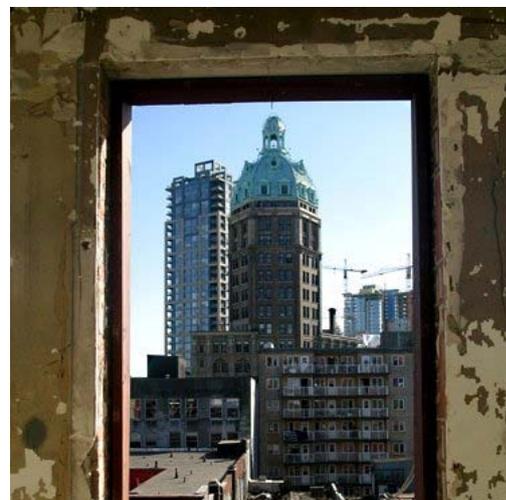
*Sun*



The view looking northwest from the Woodward's building demolition site. The original 1903 building at Abbott and Hastings will be saved and restored. Photograph by : Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun

If you haven't been down to see the Woodward's building lately, you might want to go and pay your last respects. Most of the building has been demolished, save for a few outside walls and the small original 1903 structure at the northwest corner of Abbott and Hastings.

Three-quarters of what's left is scheduled to come down in a "rollover" implosion at 8 a.m., Sept. 30. After the debris is cleared up, construction work will begin on the new Woodward's site, which includes three new buildings (nine, 32 and 43 storeys high) and the restored



The Sun Tower, which was completed in

six-storey original building.

Nine excavators and a crew of about 40 are preparing what's left of Woodward's for the implosion. The rat-a-tat-tat and boom and clang of giant diggers clawing through cement, brick and steel make the site sound like a war zone, a feeling reinforced by the skeletal remains of the building. Think Berlin after the Second World War, or Beirut after the recent fighting.

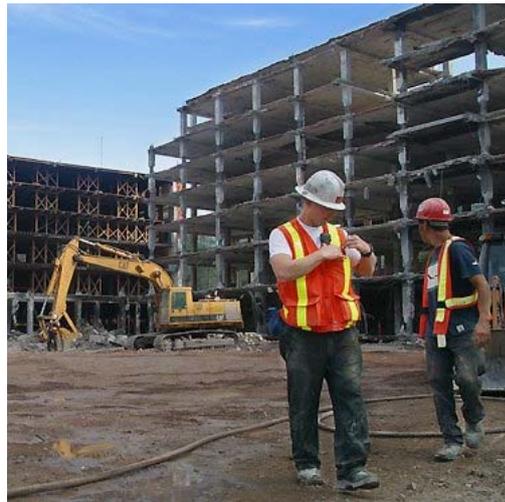
Walking through the remains of the old department store is a somewhat disconcerting experience. The middle of the formerly 600,000-sq.-ft. building is completely gone, leaving three facades and a small bit of floor space on Hastings, Cordova and Abbott streets. There are no interior walls, and you are warned not to go too close to the edge, which is open to the elements.

Twisted bits of steel rebar curl out of the floors like spaghetti, some with small chunks of cement still attached. The remaining beams have been tapered at the bottom like pencils, so that they'll come down easily during the implosion. A two-storey-high hole has been cut in the top of the Hastings Street side, making for easy access for the pigeons that are the building's main occupants.

Someone has placed a small W on top of an antenna sitting on the roof of the 1903 structure. It echoes Woodward's famous Big W neon sign, which is now in a warehouse waiting to be refurbished so it can be reinstalled when the new project is complete.

The Eiffel Tower-like structure the Big W sat on, though, is gone. So is the part of the building that the tower sat on. In the interior, the only thing that reminds you that this was once the flagship store for a made-in-B.C. retail empire is an old

1912, is framed by a south-facing window. Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun



Workers prepare the remains of the Woodward's building for demolition. Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun



Concrete pillars have been tapered to help the building implode. Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun

Woodward's shopping bag that someone shoved into the ceiling of the first floor.

There doesn't seem to be any steel or concrete in the 1903 building, which was made out of brick and wood. You can clearly make out the original four-storey structure because the floor joists are completely different from the 1908 addition that brought it up to six storeys.

The part of Woodward's that is being saved is covered by a big white tarp on the street side. Workers are beginning to strip away layers of paint on the brick, and have discovered some of the signage written on the bricks back in 1903. Parts of this signage may be restored along with the 50,000-sq.-ft. building, which is in a fragile state and will be seismically upgraded with a new steel frame.

The original building is being saved because it has the most heritage value. Project architect Gregory Henriquez said it was added on to 14 times, which made the Woodward's store much bigger but something of an architectural mishmash. He argues that it is much better to restore the original building and build new on the rest of the site, rather than keep some of the later additions.

"That's the only building that has any architectural merit at all," he said.

"[The rest] really wasn't a significant piece of architecture. [But] it really was the economic catalyst of the neighbourhood, and what we're doing is replacing it with a 21st-century economic catalyst, a mixed-use project which has people living, working and performing there."

The new site definitely will be mixed-use. When the project opens in the spring of



Architect Gregory Henriquez at the site of the Woodward's building in Vancouver. Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun



The Dominion Building and the Harbour Centre tower as viewed through the hole left after a west-facing, seventh floor window was salvaged at the old Woodward's building demolition site. Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun

2009, it will include retail outlets such as London Drugs, Simon Fraser University's School for Contemporary Art, civic and federal government offices, community space, a daycare, 200 units of non-market housing, and 536 condos.

The \$300-million project will no doubt be an economic catalyst for the long-depressed neighbourhood, which basically went down the tubes after Woodward's closed in 1993. But it comes at the expense of most of the building that was once the heart of downtown Vancouver.

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Graffiti on a fourth floor wall of the old Woodward's building reads "Class War". Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun



Pigeons fly over the northern section of the old Woodward's building, along West Cordova Street. Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun



First aid attendant Peter Kilpatrick, left, and Sun reporter John Mackie are silhouetted on the sixth floor of the old Woodward's building. Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun



A Woodward's bag echoes the past as it hangs trapped in a second floor beam at the Woodward's demolition site. Chuck Russell, Vancouver Sun

# Quality details in Woodward' s kitchens, bathrooms

Saturday, April 22nd, 2006

*Sun*

All the homes in the Woodward' s towers will have a gas cooktop and electric wall oven from AEG under a microwave and hood fan from Panasonic.

The LG fridge is slightly smaller than usual and less deep, but comes with a bottom freezer.

AEG will also supply the dishwasher; Samsung, the stacking washer and dryer.

Eggersmann, a German company, will supply the cabinetry in kitchen and bathroom. Stone slab will top counters in kitchen and bathroom.

Most master suite bathrooms will be four-piece affairs, with a walk-in shower separate from the tub the fourth piece.

All bathrooms will have a flooring of 12-by-24 inch porcelain tiles.

Interior designer Michelle Counihan specified blue glass for the feature wall in the show home kitchen and green in the bathroom. The other colours from which buyers may choose are grey, red and orange.

By limiting the choice of interior features — cabinetry a what-you-see-is-what-you get example — the interior design team at Woodward' s was able to offer better-quality finishes, like European-sourced cabinetry.

“You can go bold or more minimal or spa-like,” Counihan says of the consequences of selecting one colour over



another.

“By having a neutral palette [for the major items in a home] it remains a timeless design and creates a basic palette people can add colour to through art and accessories.”

© The Vancouver Sun 2006

# Sullivan chokes on Woodward' s

Sunday, September 18th, 2005

**Allen Garr**

*Van. Courier*

That sound you may have heard Thursday morning was Sam Sullivan backing up on Bill Good' s radio show. He was debating Jim Green, who will be his main opponent in the mayor' s race if Sullivan first wins his battle for the NPA nomination with Christy Clark.

The topic was the Woodward' s project, the massive redevelopment of the derelict department store at Hastings and Abbott in the Downtown Eastside. At Tuesday' s council meeting, city staff presented a report asking councillors to remove the last political hurdle and to endorse the project in principle. There were 13 recommendations in all dealing with the design, the sale of the property to the private developers and the cost-sharing and benefits that would accrue to the city.

Sullivan voted against them all. He said he found the staff report "very upsetting." It called the redevelopment "an expensive and risky undertaking" and said because of soaring construction costs, increasing one per cent a month, and the doubling of the social housing from 100 to 200 units, the city' s funding shortfall was \$13.5 million. The overall cost of the project is about \$280 million.

At one point Sullivan asked city staff whether a new and different city council following November' s election could make significant changes to the deal to "get us out of this mess."

Green has pushed for years for the redevelopment of the building, which closed as a department store 22 years ago and accelerated the economic collapse of the whole area.

A number of private developers tried and failed to put together a project on the site that would be economically viable.

In its most recent incarnation, the city bought the building from the province about two and half years ago—very early on in COPE' s term governing the city. The deal was worked out by Green, Mayor Larry Campbell and Premier Gordon Campbell.

When the NPA was swept out of office, it left behind an intractable squat of homeless people and anti-poverty activists at Woodward' s demanding social housing in the building.

The building' s sale was seen as a boost for the 2010 Olympic bid because it potentially satisfied demands for more social housing as an Olympic spinoff. Now the development has come to symbolize what the left on council stands for. They may be

fractured over RAV, support for the Olympics and slot machines. But on Woodward's they are unflinchingly united.

Before I go further, I should point out my interest in the project. For the past three years I have been president of a non-profit society providing housing for people with severe physical disabilities. We have been negotiating with one of the developers and working with their architects to secure 36 units in the project to provide accessible housing. We are crunching numbers.

Young disabled people have a particular problem accessing post secondary education. We were attracted to the project because of the possibility of an SFU campus on the site, another a few blocks away and an accessible bus service to UBC.

Now back to the politics.

Green, his Vision Vancouver party and the folks in COPE would be tickled pink to run a campaign against Sullivan and the NPA on the single issue of the Woodward's development. They see this as the equivalent of the Four Pillars drug policy and the promised safe injection site that swept Campbell and COPE into power three years ago.

Woodward's is even more widely supported than the drug strategy because of its potential to revitalize a huge part of downtown. One of Green's strategists described Sullivan's vote Tuesday as "a gift."

That's why Sullivan is now frantically trying to back up. He's telling anyone who will listen—including the developer—that if he becomes mayor, he won't kill the project.

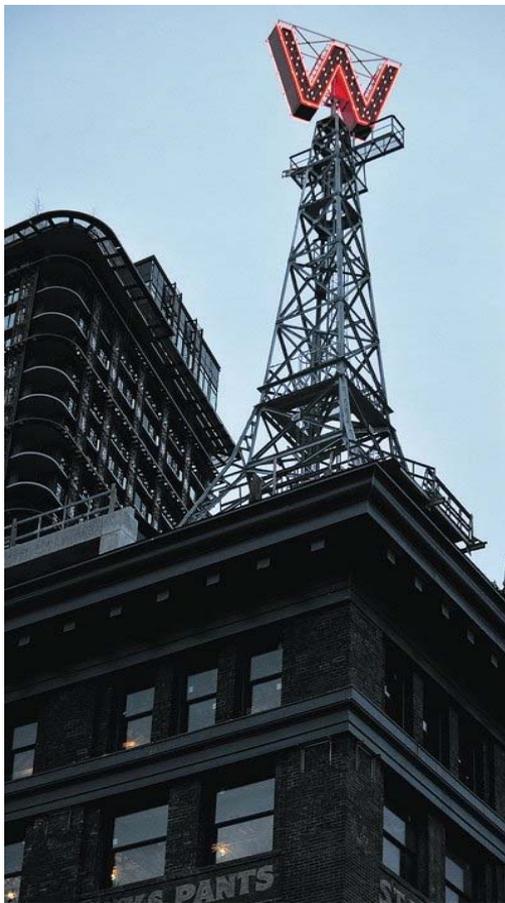
That revolving 'W' celebrates a healing opportunity  
below

Saturday, February 20th, 2010

Woodward' s an invitation for us all to experience a historic  
social re-integration

Bob Ransford

*Sun*



The 'W' sign is once again rotating above Abbott and Hastings in downtown Vancouver. The Downtown Eastside development has become a model for modern urban regeneration, columnist Ransford comments. Photograph by: Jenelle Schneider, PNG, Special to the Sun

The big red “W” –a rebuilt Vancouver icon on its Eiffel Towerlike base — marks ground zero for the rebirth of a real community in Vancouver’ s Downtown Eastside.

The Woodward’ s development, topped once again with the rotating “W” , is a model for modern urban regeneration, demonstrating the mix of uses, urban-design detailing and intentional diversification required to make a real neighbourhood with a real sense of community.

Many have taken issue with me in the past when I have suggested that the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood isn’ t a real neighbourhood today.

Some of my strongest critics on this issue have been from among that small group of activists who believe that the disadvantaged deserve their own neighbourhood. They argue that their community’ s identity is based on a strong culture.

No doubt a culture does exist in the neighbourhood. But there are some who constantly try to constrain the bounds of that culture so that it only embraces one class and celebrates poverty as a symbol of class struggle, resisting any change that suggests the kind of social integration that makes communities diverse, complete and strong.

Woodward’ s pulls at those constraints. It pushes the bounds, not only those embraced by the protectors of the class struggle, but also those bounds self-defined by people outside the neighbourhood who see nothing but misery in the Downtown Eastside.

With its mix of high-end and moderately priced condos, its 225 units of social housing for families and the hard-to-house, all planned as part of a mixed-use development with a university mini-campus and cultural facility, pharmacy, grocery store, bank, coffee shop, dentist’ s office, sandwich shop and a pub, Woodward’ s has ignited the rebirth of what was once Vancouver’ s city centre.

I spent a couple of hours walking through Woodward’ s the other day, hanging out in the public space and shopping there when most other Vancouverites and our onslaught of Olympic visitors were preoccupied with the fun zones throughout the downtown. It was relatively quiet there, but welcoming.

That’ s when it dawned on me that it’ s not just the housing and the mix of commercial and educational uses at Woodward’ s that are already helping make the Downtown Eastside a real neighbourhood.

The real key to Woodward' s success is its public spaces and the way they are already beginning to instigate the kind of social interaction that is needed for all of us to know each other and understand how we all fit together in the Vancouver we all cherish.

The inviting public realm and the generously scaled public gathering places in the Woodward' s project are the places that will welcome people of all means, all cultures, all backgrounds and from all parts of the city, night and day, encouraging the kind of social interaction that builds real community.

For the last few decades, the Downtown Eastside has lacked well-designed and well-maintained public places that attract a diverse people and make them feel welcome, comfortable and safe. Litter-strewn sidewalks on busy thoroughfares fronted by boarded-up, decaying buildings are not places people want to hang out — unless you have no other choice or unless you are a dope pedlar preying on those who have few choices in life.

Woodward' s has spaces that will attract people — all kinds of people — and those are places where people will once again feel comfortable in this special part of Vancouver.

One of the most impressive and welcoming spaces is a well-proportioned atrium tucked between three main buildings, protected from the weather, but designed to feel very much like an outdoor plaza. The space feels comfortable because of its generous but contained size, its abundance of natural light, the engaging public art and the active retail areas that front on a space protected from the rain, but open enough that it feels like a street.

There are other well-designed public spaces in the Woodward' s project, like the courtyard on which the SFU Contemporary Arts Centre faces, and the new Cordova and Hastings Street frontages.

I discovered something profoundly ironic when I visited the “Downtown Eastside Connect Centre” in the Woodward' s project the other day.

The Connect Centre is a drop-in display centre targeting the international media in town for the Olympics. The Centre showcases the many partnerships that have been built and the investments made by the provincial government, City Hall, Vancouver' s corporate community and more than 30 non-profit groups to address quality-of-life issues like housing, social services and economic development in the Downtown Eastside.

Among the exhibits and information displays at the Connect Centre was one that advertised a so-called “living library” . The library, operated by the non-profit agency Atira Women’s Resource Centre, offers 30-minute appointments with select residents and workers from the Downtown Eastside (the “books” ) to engage in dialogue with visitors to the neighbourhood (the “readers” ) to openly discuss prejudices and stereotypes and to tell their stories. It is a contrived way for people of different social classes and different backgrounds to get to know each other.

The irony was that this artificial attempt at facilitating social interaction — the kind of interaction that occurs naturally in diverse neighbourhoods — is being advertised in a space within a new neighbourhood centre that has the potential to encourage much more authentic and real social interaction.

Bob Ransford is a public affairs consultant with Counterpoint Communications Inc. He is a former real estate developer who specializes in urban land use issues. E-mail: [ransford@counterpoint.ca](mailto:ransford@counterpoint.ca)

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# The Big W returns to the Downtown Eastside

Sunday, January 17th, 2010

Iconic sign reminds area residents of better times — and makes them hope for the future

**John Colebourn**

*Province*

The lighting of the big “W” atop the redeveloped Woodward’s site in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside was the talk of the block Saturday.

For some, the lighting of the iconic W perched high above the corner of Hastings and Abbott and the massive block-long development means progress. For others, looking up and seeing the W shining much the way it was years ago was a chance to be nostalgic and remember the days when the Woodward’s store was the anchor of a vibrant neighbourhood.

“This area was definitely a hub of community and it went downhill,” said Louise Sturm, 23, who is now enrolled at the Simon Fraser University campus inside the development that has taken years to create.

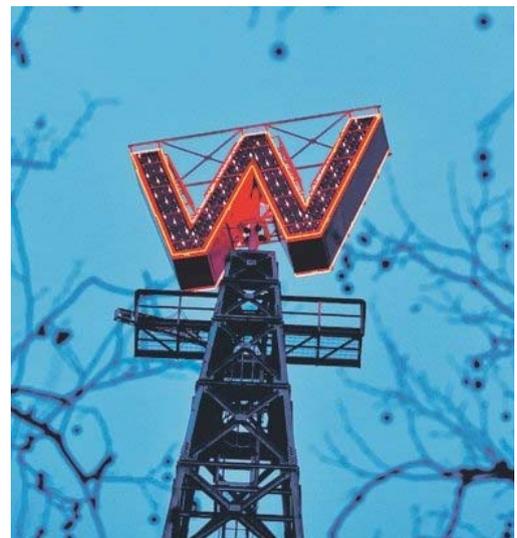
“Hopefully this will revitalize the area and help people living in the Downtown Eastside.”

Brenda Wallace and husband Jim, both retired, say they can remember the Woodward’s store and the big W like it was yesterday.

Brenda said she was impressed with the new version of the W.

“It is nice to see that sign up there again,” she said. “It was always the symbol of prosperous times.”

Husband Jim said the W always reminded him that the Woodward’s store was a place you could go and find friendly faces.



The W sign is lighting up Vancouver again. Photograph by: Jenelle Schneider, PNG, The Province

“Those were the days when the staff was always friendly,” he said.

Joe Cardinal said the lit sign is like a beacon for the area. He also feels the development is better than having a block of boarded-up buildings.

“They’ ve done a great job here,” Cardinal said of the \$400-million project.

The Woodward’s building was built in 1903 for the Woodward’s department store. The store was famous for its Christmas window displays and the giant W sign at the top of the building.

After the bankruptcy of Woodward’s in 1993, the building remained vacant, except for occasional squatters.

The original W was removed, as it had fallen apart with age. The replica, built to look exactly like the old one, weighs more than 2.5 tonnes and has 6,000 LED lights set in place to look like the old-fashioned bulbs of the past.

The new energy-efficient sign sits on a tower between 42- and 32-storey condominium towers.

Part of the giant development includes the SFU campus housing its School of Contemporary Arts. The development includes one million square feet of market and non-market homes, a daycare facility, a London Drugs, a Nesters grocery store and non-profit office space.

Vancouver Coun. Raymond Louie said the project, with its mix of nonprofit and market-priced units, took a long time to push forward — and that the lighting of the big W is a second chance for the beleaguered community.

“It will renew confidence in the area,” he said.

Louie said the mixed-housing project was viewed by many as a lost cause, but the city worked hard to see it developed and the sign now also symbolizes the hard work done by many of the city’ s politicians, he said.

“People can look at the sign as a symbol that things can be turned around,” Louie said.

“The sign is very symbolic of a rebirth. This is the start of the rebirth of that neighbourhood.”

# The ‘W’ Stands for ‘What’ s The Hurry?’

Thursday, January 21st, 2010

From idea to conception, the Empire State Building was built in 1 1/2 years, the Eiffel Tower in two. Social housing in Woodward’ s 25 years

Pete McMartin

*Sun*

From its birth as an idea to its completion as the first link across the country, it took 14 years to build the Canadian Pacific Railway.

It took the same amount of time to build the Golden Gate Bridge.

From the day its investors assembled the land to the day it opened, it took 1 1/2 years to complete the Empire State Building.

It took two years to build the Eiffel Tower.

Here’ s something funny: A 25-metre-high replica of the Eiffel Tower was built to support the famous “W” that stood atop the old Woodward’ s building. From the day the old Woodward’ s building closed its doors in 1993 to the day of its reincarnation this month, it took 17 years for the new Woodward’ s building, and a new “W” resting atop a new replica Eiffel Tower, to be reborn. If you add on the years the idea was first floated to convert the former Woodward’ s building into a residence with a social housing component, it will have taken 25 years from start to finish. For some reason that eludes me, people felt this was a reason for celebration when it opened its doors this month.



Woodward’ s closed its doors in 1993, but the idea to convert the building to include social housing was born years before. Photograph by: Arlen Redekop, PNG, Vancouver Sun

In those 2 1/2 decades, little in the neighbourhood has changed for the better. Drugs are still omnipresent. The number of homeless are still legion. Crime, disease, the problems of the mentally ill ... the grim litany continues apace 25 years down the road.

It is the accepted wisdom that poverty is the Downtown Eastside's biggest problem, but that is nonsense. The Downtown Eastside's biggest problem is paralysis. Despite the balm of hundreds of millions of tax dollars applied to the neighbourhood in those 25 years, despite the steady accretion of layer after layer of social welfare agencies (so many that the provincial government finally ordered an audit last year to find out exactly how many there were), despite the tireless work of charities and churches and foundations, the sore continues to fester.

But, oh, the tail-chasing social welfare debates and failed experiments over those 2 1/2 decades! And the moralizing designed to frustrate anyone who dares think of the Downtown Eastside as anything other than an enclave for the poor, the poor who always seem to be beset by the horrors of gentrification, which is a word the socially sensitive gentry use to express their horror of gentrification. Mount Pleasant can be beset by gentrification, Commercial Drive and Yaletown can be beset by gentrification. Even nearby Strathcona can be beset by gentrification. Change has touched them all. But a pestilential war zone located next door to the downtown of a city completely reinventing itself? Never!

Meanwhile, in all those years, Woodward's did nothing but languish. In the campaign to incorporate social housing into its redevelopment, any suggestion of commercial enterprise wasn't just rejected, it was demonized.

When Fama Holdings bought the building in 1995 and announced plans to build 350 condos and two floors of commercial space, the then president of the Downtown Eastside Residents Association offered the view that the developers should pay for any social housing to be built in a low-income area like the Downtown Eastside because, after all, "they're the ones making fortunes."

The blitheness and entitlement of that statement typified the welfare culture that had established itself firmly in the area. The developer, in response, replied that if the neighbourhood wanted social housing, maybe it should ask the government, whose duty it was to provide it.

At this ideological impasse, the provincial government stepped in. In 2001, the province, that is, taxpayers, bought the crumbling building for \$22 million. In 2002, there was the famous squat of protesters demanding the

building be saved and developed into social housing, followed by the famous squat eviction of the protesters by the city. Then in 2003, the city, that is, the taxpayers, rode to the rescue and bought the building from the province for \$5 million. Then, after a couple of years of massaging plans into just the right socially responsible mixture, construction began in 2006.

Construction took four years. It cost \$400 million. There's a couple hundred non-market units, over 500 market units, retail space, a downtown campus for SFU and other government flotsam and jetsam for ballast. Something for everybody.

And after all this angst and decades of delay and truly gargantuan expenditure of public money, and this bending-over-backwards to satisfy the insatiable appetite for social housing, what ran on the op-ed page of The Sun on the week the new Woodward's building opened? Jean Swanson, coordinator of the Carnegie Community Action Project, fretted in print that the new Woodward's will have the effect of driving out the homeless population living on the street and the resident population living in single-room occupancy hotels because, she felt, it would make them feel "uncomfortable." In other words, they will flee in the face of gentrification.

In the Downtown Eastside, no one will ever get it right.

In the Downtown Eastside, change will never be good.

In the Downtown Eastside, the one constant we can always be sure of, even after 25 years of stagnation, is complaint.

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# The Woodward's project will bring some changes but other steps are needed

Thursday, January 21st, 2010

Michael Geler

*Sun*

Will the recent lighting of the Woodward's W herald a new chapter in the life of the Downtown Eastside?

I do not share the view proclaimed by some community activists that Woodward's and other condominium developments will lead to the eviction of low income households and more homelessness. But there will be changes; some neighbourhood residents will no longer be able to urinate in the streets and alleys and openly sell and use drugs in front of the Woodward's property.



The Woodward's W was recently lit.

Unless we put in place a National Housing Policy that proclaims housing as a right, like the government of Cuba did after the revolution, there will always be homeless people in our city.

Since we are not soon likely to get a National Housing Policy, below are five approaches that could be tried.

Recently it was announced that the StreetoHome foundation wants to build thousands of new housing units in the city.

I would suggest the Foundation copy what its Toronto counterpart did, namely help fund the placement of people into existing rental apartments scattered around the city, along with a range of support services.

Some people on the streets did have friends and families from whom they have been cut off. Perhaps we should devote more resources to help reunify these people with families and friends.

The Salvation Army operates one such program, but with inadequate resources. Maybe additional funding should be provided to it and other organizations offering similar services.

Many homeless and low income people are capable of working, if only they could find suitable employment. Tradeworks, Building Opportunities for Business (BOB) and Eastside Movement for Business & Economic Renewal Society (EMBERS) are excellent organizations trying to help people find work. However, each needs more funding and support.

Some people want to work but cannot do so because of their appearance. So why not have more barbershops where people can get free shaves and haircuts to prepare them for work?

There is no one coordinating entity. Perhaps what we need is a local Community Trust.

One of the worst times in the DTES is Welfare Wednesday when everyone receives their welfare cheque and many head off to pubs and drug dealers, resulting in increased crime. Why not spread the payday across the whole month?

In summary, there is no one easy answer to address the problems of this neighbourhood.

However, while Woodward's may offer many benefits, there may be equally effective but considerably less expensive and time consuming solutions. Let us hope so.

Michael Geller is a Vancouver architect and developer.

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# Woodward' s, area will be sparkling by 2012 according to Jim Green (128 W Cordova)

Tuesday, October 6th, 2009

Visionary Jim Green predicts area' s most derelict block will be  
sparkling by 2012

**David Carrigg**

*Province*

There' s a reason Jim Green chose a sixth-floor, east-facing office in the Dominion Building from which to launch his post-political consulting career.

“I wanted this space so I could look at Woodward' s,” said Green, sitting in a work space cluttered with books, art and memorabilia from four decades as a Downtown Eastside social housing developer, politician and powerbroker.

“Woodward' s is something that' s gathered attention around the world. It represents diversity and inclusion. There' s a thesis being done on it. One book' s been written [Toward an Ethical Architecture] and another [Body Heat] is being released.”

The thesis, by University of Chicago student Naomi Bratz, is bolstered by work being done by visiting students from the Goethe Institute in Frankfurt, Germany.

Green drove the resurrection of Woodward' s when he was elected to council with Vision Vancouver in 2003. A rabbit warren of additions sprouting from the original 1903 Woodward' s store at Hastings and Abbott, which had closed in 1993 and sat derelict, had led to retail



It' s likely over the next three years that no part of Vancouver will change as quickly as the south side of the 100-block West Hastings, which is right across the street from the new Woodward' s towers (above).  
Photograph by: Gerry Kahrmann,  
The Province

collapse all around.

Vancouver taxpayers bought Woodward's from the provincial government in 2003 and council chose a developer on the condition the new project respected the social makeup of the Downtown Eastside. Construction of the two towers began in 2006 and in August, the first suite owners moved in.

The project's key is its mix of 536 high-end and moderately priced condos with 225 units of social housing for families and the hard-to-house, on top of a pharmacy, grocery store, bank, coffee shop, dentist's office, sandwich shop and a pub.

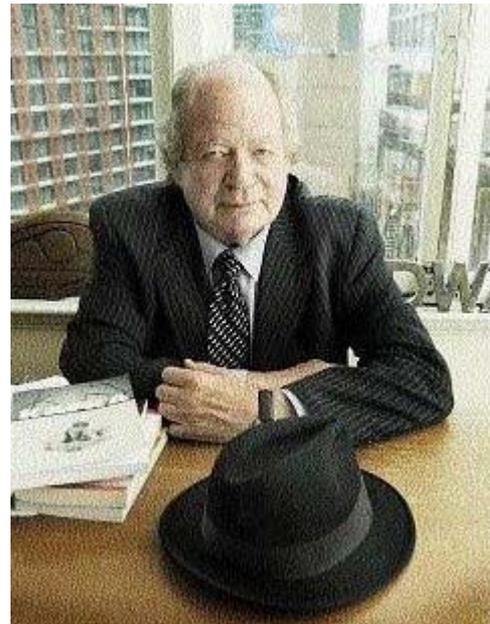
Rounding out the list of tenants are Simon Fraser University's Contemporary Arts Centre, several non-profit spaces, a daycare, the City of Vancouver's cultural staff and the Vancouver office of the National Film Board.

After Green lost his mayoral bid to Sam Sullivan in 2006, he was hired by the Woodward's developer to make sure all the promises to the community were upheld — most importantly, to make sure local residents are trained and employed in Woodward's construction and businesses and that those businesses source what they can locally, including labour and supplies.

Green is impressed, but not surprised, that every retail space in the project is filled.

"That's extremely rare in this area," he said, noting the nearby International Village has struggled for years to retain retail tenants.

The impact of this month's opening of Woodward's businesses and the 4,000 people a day expected to be in and around the development will be felt immediately on the south side of the 100-block of West Hastings.



Jim Green in his Downtown Eastside office, with the Woodward's building visible over his right shoulder. Photograph by: Wayne Leidenfrost, The Province



Fabric merchant Dave Schmidt has outlasted all other commercial tenants in the 100-block East Hastings. Photograph by: Jon Murray, The Province

Right now, that block has the worst storefront vacancy rate of any in Vancouver and has been an eyesore since Woodward's closed.

Green predicts all those storefronts will be occupied by 2012. In fact, it's likely there's nowhere else in the city that will change as swiftly as the 100-block West Hastings over the next three years.

n

Dave Schmidt has been in business on that block for seven years, outlasting every other retailer that has taken the risk of operating on the sketchiest block in town.

Schmidt moved his fabric wholesaling business into a storefront at 150 West Hastings because of the low rent. At the time, he was only wholesaling, so wasn't reliant on street trade. Three years ago, he opened the shop to off-street customers.

"We were running out of room and wanted cheaper rent," he said. "I knew it was bad but I didn't have a storefront then. I've been here the longest on the block. I've seen the pawn shops come and go. There's the Victory Food Market [166 West Hastings] but it's had different owners."

Schmidt has noticed major improvement in the past six months.

"It is not as bad as it used to be," he said. "There used to be people shooting up and peeing all day long. There used to be dealers all the way up the street. They're not here now and the number of customers I am getting off the street has gone up."

The alley behind the south side of the 100-block is now also cleaner than the sidewalk, due to intense city cleaning efforts and addicts moving a few blocks east.

Three years ago, the laneway was as bad as the notorious alley alongside the Carnegie Centre at Main and Hastings.

Schmidt recently renegotiated the lease on his shopfront and is now paying more. He expects his rent to continue to rise as the area improves further.

The building Schmidt is in is fully leased. It was purchased by BumbleBee Investments for \$440,000 in March 2004, according to government records. The building is now worth \$900,000, meaning the BumbleBee investment has doubled in six years.

The block is full of real-estate winners, none more so than the owner of 108/110 West Hastings. According to government records, the building was bought in July 2005 for \$230,000 and is now assessed at \$900,000.

In six years, 134/136 West Hastings has gone from a March 2003 sale for \$265,000 to an assessed value of \$863,000. The building is tenanted by a new Money Mart.

The most valuable building on the block is 198 West Hastings, valued at almost \$5 million, which is at Hastings and Cambie. It is owned by Millennium Estate Holdings and was bought for just over \$2 million in February 1997.

At 116 Hastings, the owner of the Golden Crown Hotel is in a scrap with the Downtown Eastside Residents Association and the city over attempts to evict tenants in the \$425-a-month rooms for renovations — dubbed (by John-Ward Leighton, activist blogger) “renovictions.” The Golden Crown has vacant retail space at street level.

Three side-by-side buildings in the middle of the 100-block are being extensively renovated and are expected to come online in 2010.

Leighton is not happy to see the area gentrified, but is glad the buildings on the block will likely now be saved.

“There’s a lot of history in those buildings, but they are falling down,” Leighton said. “The city should put pressure on them to clean them up. But from their point of view, they don’t have to do anything. They are just waiting.”

Green said that when he was in city hall he was working on a proposal that would have led to property owners of decrepit building being forced to pay higher property taxes. He never got a chance to push that agenda, but is now focused on doing whatever he can to stop the owners of buildings opposite Woodward’s from trying to gouge their existing and potential retail tenants.

“Being greedy doesn’t mean you’re smart. You can’t charge the same price as Woodward’s,” he said.

For all the excitement, Green cautions there’ll be a three-year wait before Woodward’s will be established in the area.

“I saw with Four Sisters [a housing project] it always takes at least a year before things settle in. For Woodward’s, it will be three years because of its scale. In three years it will be totally functioning at

a high level. It will be a different neighbourhood. The locals will be here, but the storefronts will be occupied. It will be a cultural magnet. ”

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# Woodward' s housing celebrated

Sunday, May 30th, 2010

## Social-housing units mixed with market condos

Tamara Baluja

*Province*



Premier Gordon Campbell (left) and Liz Evans of the Portland Society tour the Woodward' s affordable housing units in downtown Vancouver at the grand opening on Friday. Jenelle Schneider — PNG

Eight years ago, Denis Paquin was sleeping on Vancouver' s streets — cold, wet and homeless. Today, the 57-yearold sleeps on a queen-sized fold-out bed with a cheerful yellow cover — and a glorious view of the mountains.

Paquin is one of the many residents who has moved in to more than 200 social-housing units at the former Woodward' s building in the Downtown Eastside.

The federal, provincial and municipal governments and the private sector pitched in \$400 million for the entire renewal project, including market condos, business and community spaces.

“This is really the best social housing in the country, ” said Jim Green, the driving force behind the resurrection of Woodward' s when he was elected in 2002 to city council. “It' s an extremely positive project. . . .

“I see it as a monument to rebuilding a community that had a lot of negative things dumped on it.”

The nine-storey West Hastings Street building has 125 bachelor suites for low-income singles, such as Paquin, who pay about \$375 a month in rent.

Tenants have a kitchenette with a fridge and stove, a fold-out bed, a small seating area and a bathroom.

“I love the room. It’s very clean and bright,” Paquin says.

The 32-storey Abbott Tower has 75 two-or three-bedroom family apartments, as well as 206 market condos. The 43-storey W Tower has nine apartments for disabled people, plus 300 condos.

Deputy mayor Suzanne Anton said she was most pleased with the 75 family units because “it’s really important that we have families living all over Vancouver.”

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# Woodwards opens - Long awaited, much-heralded remake of famous department store

Friday, August 21st, 2009

## Long-awaited, much-heralded remake of famous department store

Elaine O' Connor

*Province*

After years of waiting, Woodward's is finally rolling out the welcome mat.

The first of the Downtown Eastside development's residents are moving in to the 'W' Tower this week, closing out a long chapter in the history of the circa-1903 heritage property.



Houtan Rafii of Westbank Projects, one of the members of the consortium behind the \$330-million-plus development, said the first of the condo homeowners in the finished 'W' tower took possession of their units Wednesday.

Soaring skyward: The Woodward's 'W' tower. Photograph by: Gerry Kahrman, The Province

About 30 people a day are now taking possession of their suites and can start to move in furniture.



Back in 2004, when proposals for development were floated, the expectation was that the complex could be completed by late 2006 or 2007.

It's taken a bit longer than that.

The soft launch has begun, but the grand opening for the entire complex will have to wait.

The remainder of the development's buildings are being completed in phases, with the second ('W2') tower up next. Rafii expects residents of the subsidized units to move in by October's end.

All the tenants, including the retail clients, should be in by the end of the year, he said.

So when will Woodward's throw open its doors for its first open house? It could be just in time for the Olympics.

"The date hasn't been set yet. We're not going to have an opening party until all the tenants are settled in," Rafii said, adding that the party would likely be in early 2010, perhaps to coincide with the Winter Games.

"We're thinking about an open house for the public, or a festival, something that is part celebration, part introduction, to show we are part of the neighbourhood here and the neighbourhood is part of us."

The transformation of the vacant department store began when the city purchased the lot from the province in 2003.

The new Woodward's includes 200 social-housing units, along with 536 market-priced units.

The market condos, initially sold in 2006 at prices ranging from \$250,000 to \$1.4 million, are shared between the W tower, with 330 units, and the Abbott tower.

The 125 units of non-market housing for singles are in a separate building (managed by the Portland Hotel Society) and the 75 subsidized family units (managed by B.C. Housing) are in the lower floors of the Abbott Tower.

All have their own entrances and elevators, so, although the buildings are mixed-use, the residents won't necessarily mix.

The development — heavily marketed in 2006 as an "intellectual property" with the slogan "Be bold or move to suburbia" — includes four buildings, two towers and a central plaza totalling 980,000 square feet.

On an average day, at least 525 workers were on site building the complex.

The two 42- and 35-storey towers will be grounded by Simon Fraser University's new School for the Contemporary Arts, which will house gallery and theatre space, a London Drugs store, a grocery store — to mimic the old Woodward's food floor and be operated by Nesters Market — a TD Canada Trust bank outlet and a city-run daycare.

Tenants like the City of Vancouver, dentists and the National Film Board will take up office space.

Other soon-to-be finalized tenants? A coffee chain (no, not Starbucks), a submarine sandwich shop and a pub and restaurant.

Public amenities include an atrium, rooftop deck space and green plant wall, and a mural by Vancouver artist Stan Douglas.

A new W sign will be set atop the old heritage building this fall and the old W will be displayed in the public space as sculpture.

Federal, municipal and provincial governments have put an estimated \$130 million in tax dollars, tax exemptions and benefits into the project.

Costs rose from the initial estimate of \$200 million during the build, as the developers contended with higher construction and labour costs during the real-estate boom, some hazardous-waste cleanup costs, higher costs of providing social housing, and redesign and expansions.

The building was designed by architect Gregory Henriquez, known for his social-housing projects, developed by the Woodward's Redevelopment Group, a consortium of government and private stakeholders, and managed by Westbank Projects and the Peterson Investment Group.

Rafii says the people who have been working on making Woodward's a reality are eager to see it finished.

“We're hugely excited. It's a very complicated project and, when it's all done, its going to be a landmark in the community, both architecturally and socio-economically.”

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# Woodward' s opens door to cutting-edge condo living

Saturday, April 8th, 2006

**PETE McMARTIN**

*Sun*



GLENN BAGLO/VANCOUVER SUN Interested parties view a model of the total Woodward' s condo project at the Shaw Tower at 1077 West Cordova.

As of Friday afternoon, they had 5,526 prospects: people so interested in buying a piece of the Woodward's development they had registered their names, addresses and phone numbers in advance. Calls came from New York, Los Angeles, Seattle. Calls came from realtors acting on behalf of offshore buyers. Calls came from thousands of locals who — unthinkable a decade ago — now were intrigued by the idea of owning a piece of the Downtown Eastside. For sale: A total of 536 suites. Price: Anywhere from \$200,000 to \$600,000. Move-in date: Some time in 2009, or 16 years after Woodward's closed its doors and the tortuous story of its redesign began. And today — Saturday, at noon — members of the public will get their first chance to preview what is being offered for sale.

A 639-square-foot one-bedroom demonstration suite has been constructed on the 17th floor of the Shaw Tower, at 1077 West Cordova.

It's a sleek little thing with patterned oak floors, polished stone kitchen countertops, high-end stainless steel appliances, a tastefully appointed bathroom — the typical chi-chi finish you find in a Yaletown condo.

The thing differentiating a Woodward's condo from a Yaletown condo, though?

It's more than the address, or the local wildlife.

It's the high-minded idea, or the pretension, take your pick, that buying into the Woodward's project is to take part in a social experiment. It's an experiment that ostensibly encourages egalitarianism, of having the well-off and the not-so-well-off living together.

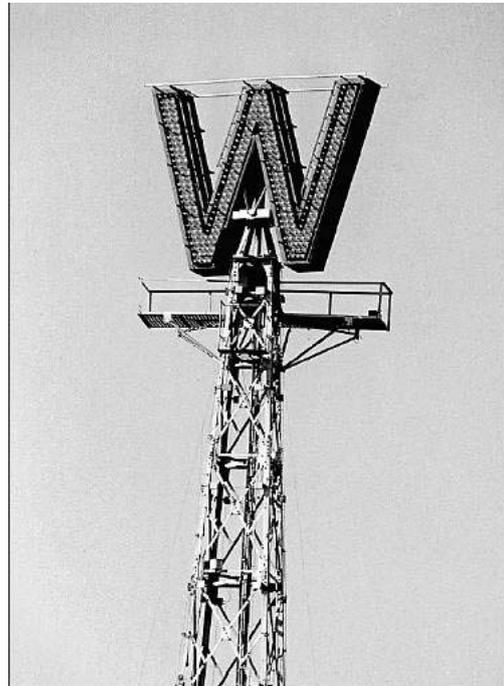
At the same time, it's a sly form of reverse marketing, of using the grittiness of the Downtown Eastside as a selling point.

Or to put it another way, living on the edge of the Downtown Eastside is cutting edge. You're not just buying a condo; you're buying texture, an arty urban toughness, a commitment. As its ad campaign states:

"This is an authentic area, not a sanitized environment. Neighbourhoods like this are rare and offer a creative mix of cutting-edge culture, heritage and character. That's why the intelligent buyer will get in early. This is the future. This is your neighbourhood. Be bold or move to suburbia."

"That's why I like to call it an intellectual property," said Bob Rennie, the condo king marketing the Woodward's project.

"You have to think about what you want in living here and about being down here. It's not like buying a condo in Yaletown, because the social housing is in place here and it's not going anywhere. The buyers coming in



VANCOUVER SUN FILES The once rotating neon 'W' atop the former department store will be incorporated into the development's design



VANCOUVER SUN FILES In the early 1900s, the Woodward's department store offered everything from oilskins to hardware and groceries to Vancouver shoppers.



GLENN BAGLO/VANCOUVER SUN Realtor Bob Rennie stands in the kitchen of the

know this.”

Unlike much of Yaletown, the Woodward’s development has a high portion of social housing units set aside — 200 apartments situated on the development’s bottom 12 floors, to be managed by the Portland Hotel Society.

In addition to that, 100 of the 536 market units are also being offered to residents of the Downtown Eastside on a priority basis.

You might ask who in the Downtown Eastside could afford to buy a \$300,000 or \$400,000 condo, but the qualifying residence area covers two postal codes — all of V6A and half of V6B. Rennie believes there are more than enough single-family residences and home owners in the area to generate sales.

If the number of registered prospects is any indication, he could be right. Saturday’s preview, which as I wrote earlier, opens at noon today and is expected to attract about 1,500 viewers. Viewing will run until April 20.

What follows next has the air of a radio-show call-in contest.

On April 13, Rennie’s phone lines will open at exactly 9 a.m. and a bank of operators will take calls from interested buyers. It’s first-come first-served, and depending on the time they call in, buyers will be assigned a colour-coded wristband designating when they can come in and make an offer.

Those residents within the Downtown Eastside postal code areas will be given priority, and then, on April 22, buyers from outside the area will be able to come in and make offers.

“And they are eligible to buy only one unit,” Rennie said.

“My bet is that 90 per cent of the building will be sold on the 22nd,” he said.

A couple of years back, he said, he was not as sure.

“Two and a half years ago, [city planner] Larry Beasley and I both spoke at the Urban Development Institute, and we both said, ‘The city’s moving east,’ as if we were soothsayers. We said there was nowhere else to go, and at that time, it was considered pioneering.

“But that pioneering that existed 2 1/2 years ago is not the same pioneering we are talking about now.”

The pioneering we’re talking about now, Rennie said, is the undiscovered territory into which the Woodward’s development is about to take the Downtown Eastside. The appetite for change down there is tempered by the fear of change, which he said he understands and with which he sympathizes. He hopes the Woodward’s development will be the critical mass needed to start urban renewal but not one that completely changes the neighbourhood’s character.

“The drug dealers? If they disappear, I could give a s—. They should have no place down there. But there should be room for a real mix of incomes and types of people.”

That’s the question of Woodward’s. How will the well-off and the not-so-well-off get along?

Will Woodward’s change the Downtown Eastside or not?

In perfect illustration of that, Rennie told a story.

“I got a call from a guy who was from L.A. and who had expressed interest in buying a unit, and he was in town

639-square-foot demonstration suite.



GLENN BAGLO/VANCOUVER SUN There’s a Yaletown look and feel to the interior of the one-bedroom Woodward’s apartment.



CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES CVA 1184-2234 Like this 1946 display of bathing suits, Woodward’s department store windows were often dressed to kill.

As of Friday afternoon, they had 5,526 prospects:

walking around the [Woodward's] building. While he was there, a woman on the sidewalk dropped her drawers in front of him. So he took a photo of her on his cellphone, sent it to me and asked:

“ ‘Should I be worried?’ ”

[pmmartin@png.canwest.com](mailto:pmmartin@png.canwest.com)

604-605-2905

This story can be heard online

after 10:30 a.m. today at

[www.vancouversun.com/readaloud](http://www.vancouversun.com/readaloud). THE DAILY SPECIAL LOOKS AT: A North Vancouver soccer team taking everyone by Storm

# Woodward' s project attracts 3,000 prospective buyers

Saturday, March 18th, 2006

## City planners, developers look to the east for space to build

Bruce Constantineau

*Sun*



Bob Rennie will be marketing the Woodward' s building in the near future. Photograph by : Ward Perrin, Vancouver Sun

If you don' t believe residential development in downtown Vancouver has taken a sharp turn to the east, consider this — more than 3,000 people have already signed up to preview 536 condo units that go on sale next month at the \$300-million Woodward' s project near Hastings and Abbott.

Add the surging residential development activity taking place in nearby Gastown and Chinatown, and the trend is obvious.

“I said two years ago that the city was going to move to the east, but it didn' t take a genius to figure that out, ” said Vancouver realtor Bob Rennie. “It had nowhere else to go.”

Rennie, who is marketing the Woodward' s condo units for developers Westbank Projects and Peterson Investment Group, said development sites in the western half of the downtown core are scarce now so city planners and developers are eagerly looking eastward.

“If you' ve lived in Vancouver all your life, you might look at [the Woodward' s project] as a questionable part of town, ” he said in an interview. “But if you' ve lived in any other big city, you recognize these as emerging areas.”

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. senior market analyst Cameron Muir said increased demand for housing sites in that part of town will likely drive land prices higher

and he expects the Woodward's project — due for completion by the spring of 2009 — to be the “anchor tenant” that attracts other developments to the area.

“Once you see a critical mass [of new housing projects] achieved, then you see prices going up,” he said.

Muir said developers and buyers who invest in new housing in non-traditional areas might be taking a bit of a gamble, but the risks can be reduced with proper research.

“Any new development that opens up first has a certain amount of risk,” he said. “Values may not climb or may not be as firm as areas that are more established. But the first ones into a new area obviously pay less than those that come later, so that's a mitigating factor.”

The Woodward's condominiums will sell for prices ranging from about \$250,000 to \$600,000 for 600-square-foot to 1,100-square-foot units. Rennie has run full-page and two-page newspaper ads promoting the development since November and feels he probably doesn't need to advertise any more, as 3,000-plus potential buyers have already signed up.

“I don't need this many people on a database,” he said.

The Woodward's development will contain a total of 536 market condominiums in two towers, of 41 storeys and 32 storeys. The larger tower features a 4,600-square-foot lounge and fitness centre on the top floor and the project will also be home to the new Simon Fraser University School for the Performing Arts.

It will also contain 200 units of social housing and retail amenities, such as an 18,000-square-foot drug store and a 25,000-square-foot grocery store.

“You need anchors like that to make it livable,” Rennie said. “In my view, Concord Pacific [on the north shore of False Creek] really didn't work until they put in Urban Fare. You need a place to buy milk and bread when you get home from work.”

Rennie himself plans to follow the eastward trek in about a year when he moves his offices from Hornby Street to a renovated 117-year-old Wing Sang building on East Pender. He said it's a multi-million-dollar investment he's making to be closer to the residential action downtown.

He noted other new developments in the area include a 500-unit condo project near Tinseltown, a renovation taking place at Five West Pender, another redevelopment of 75 East Pender and several Gastown projects being developed by Vancouver entrepreneur Robert Fung, including the Terminus project at 36 Water Street.

Muir said developers will be challenged to match the numbers of new downtown condos built in previous developments because new popular areas like Gastown and Chinatown have height restrictions and heritage aspects that will restrict the scope and speed of future projects. The city will also require social housing in many developments, which will reduce the number of new market housing units.

“The goal is to have people from all socio-economic backgrounds living in reasonable proximity to each other, so they don’ t have to commute long distances to work every day,” Muir said. “So people who work at Starbucks should be able to live in Vancouver, just like the people who own Starbucks.”

While real estate sales on the Greater Vancouver Multiple Listing Service dipped slightly last month, Rennie noted the downtown condo market remains strong because there’ s not an oversupply of units and buyers and investors remain confident.

“They may get a low rate of return on their rental income but they’ re looking for capital appreciation down the road,” he said.

Rennie expects about 10 per cent of Woodward’ s condo buyers to be international investors from Europe, Asia or the U.S.

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# Woodward' s proposed re-development

Wednesday, September 14th, 2005

## 'Risky' Woodward' s project gets approval

David Carrigg

*Province*

Vancouver council last night backed the redevelopment of the Downtown Eastside' s abandoned Woodward' s building despite a staff warning it is an "expensive and risky undertaking."

Sam Sullivan was the only councillor who voted against the \$280-million project — which is now \$32 million over budget.

"It' s irresponsible to expose taxpayers to a multimillion-dollar risk," Sullivan said.

The Woodward' s building, on the 100-block West Hastings, has been empty since the early-1990s.

It was bought by the NDP government in May 2001 for \$22 million, after which several million dollars were spent on repairs.

In March 2003, the building was sold to the City of Vancouver for a basement bargain \$5 million as part of a deal with the COPE councillor Jim Green to support the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Council believes the Woodward' s project will help revitalize the troubled Downtown Eastside.

The proposal is for 500 units of market housing in a 40-storey tower on the Cordova Street side of the property and 200 units of social housing on the Abbott Street and Hastings Street side.

There will also be a drugstore, child-care centre, Simon Fraser University satellite campus and space for non-profit societies.

Last September, council selected a consortium between Westbank Projects and the Peterson Investment Group to develop Woodward' s on the condition it included social housing.

The social-housing component has long been advocated by Green.

However, council was told last night that the cost of providing that social housing has jumped from \$27 million to \$48 million over the past two years.

Council then agreed to contribute \$7 million to that increased social-housing cost, on the condition the federal and provincial governments agree to do the same.

The city will also chip in an additional \$6.5 million to deal with other cost increases, creating a total commitment of \$13.5 million.

Green said Sullivan did everything he could to stop the development and threatened to kill it if Sullivan's NPA party got into power again.

"It's expensive, there's no doubt, but the financing is in place and the only risk is a political one — that the NPA will cancel the project if they get back into power," Green said.

Sullivan has been challenging Green over the project since last year, when Green was appointed to the committee overseeing the project.

"I've always complained about him being on what should be a staff-only committee," Sullivan said.

City council's other NPA councillor, Peter Ladner, said he supports the project in principle but believes it needs to be scaled back.

"We are trying to do too much and aren't willing to rein it in," he said.

"For \$13.5 million we could have a new library in Strathcona or could finish off the Renfrew Community Centre pool. We shouldn't be covering the developers' risk on Woodward's."

Sullivan said he expects the Woodward's redevelopment will become a key election issue in the upcoming municipal election.

According to city staffer Michael Flanigan, the risks involved with the project are outweighed by the benefit the redevelopment will have for the Hastings Street corridor east of Main Street.

Green said he expects work to commence on the project by fall next year and it should be complete by the 2010 Winter Olympics.

# Woodward' s redesign goes to council

Monday, September 12th, 2005

**Francis Bula**

*Sun*



The Woodward' s project: Is 1.1 million square feet in size. Will cost \$280 million. Will include 200 social-housing units, 500 condo units, urban plazas, an SFU arts school and commercial space. Faces a shortfall of \$32 million.

Vancouver' s most ambitious urban-renewal project ever — the development of the former Woodward' s department store in the city' s troubled Downtown Eastside — is coming to council for final approval Tuesday, a year after the bid from a private developer was okayed.

The project is now 50 per cent bigger, at 1.1 million square feet, with a total price tag of \$280 million, and a \$32-million shortfall largely caused by the rising construction costs that are hitting hard everywhere.

Along the way, it has also gone through an extensive redesign process that will now see the project incorporate 200, instead of 100, social-housing units, add two new lots to the west, build two towers on the site instead of one, and include several urban plazas, along with the already-planned 500 condo units, SFU School for Contemporary Arts, commercial space, daycare space, and offices for non-profit organizations.

Woodward' s project manager Mike Flanigan warns in his report to council that the development “remains a complicated challenge in an environment of consistent and unprecedented construction cost escalation.”

Just over \$22 million of the \$32-million shortfall comes from the increased construction cost for the social housing and child-care space. As well, there are added costs for hazardous-waste clean-up that have appeared in the last year. The city is also stuck with costs for some infrastructure work.

Flanigan' s report says that staff thought the developer should have paid those costs, which Westbank Projects/Peterson Investment hadn' t included in its original bid.

But, he wrote, “it is the Woodward’ s steering committee conclusion that the [shortfall] challenges are all of the project partners’ problems to solve collectively in order to move forward and achieve the public benefits council has envisioned.”

The provincial and federal governments have each committed \$7 million more to cover the social-housing costs. Developer Westbank/Peterson has also agreed to put in \$5 million. That leaves \$13 million to be covered by the city.

Coun. Jim Green, who has worked for 20 years as a housing advocate, provincial government bureaucrat and city politician to redevelop Woodward’ s, said the report brings together all of the complicated partnership arrangements for the building.

“If council approves this, we will know exactly what we are doing.”

Green also praised the partnership work that went into the project.

“This has worked so well — the free market, the unions, the non-profits, the developers, the city.”

The SFU board of governors still has to give its final approval for the 120,000-square-foot School of Contemporary Arts at a Sept. 29 meeting.

The city bought the site from the provincial government for \$5 million shortly after the Coalition of Progressive Electors came into power in 2002. It will be selling the site to Westbank/Peterson for \$6.3 million. It will get back a 31,000-square-foot space for city use.

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## Woodward' s redevelopment is finished, owners moving in - Fairmont views for a quarter of the price

Friday, August 21st, 2009

new condo owner: 'I used to walk down here . . . and I was kind of scared'

Elaine O' Connor  
*Province*

Daron Rusjan is rushing to unload furniture and a flat-screen TV from a truck on the streets of the Downtown Eastside.

But the 27-year-old isn' t trying to make a getaway with the goods. He' s anxious to load them into his new, \$300,000, one-bedroom Woodward' s condo, as one of the first owners to move in Thursday to the Downtown Eastside' s swankiest new address.

"It' s the nicest place I could find for the price," said the first-time home-buyer of his seventh-floor suite in the 'W' tower, where owners began moving in Wednesday.

"It' s definitely cleaned up a lot," the currency trader said of the area around the new development.

"I used to walk down here three or four years ago and I was kind of scared."

But now, he — and the owners of 366 other upscale condos in the first tower to be completed — are part of the neighbourhood.

The 'W' tower contains 366 market condo suites. To date, about 80 people have closed on their new units. About four moved in Wednesday and a dozen Thursday.

"By tonight, at least a dozen people should be sleeping here," said Greg Zayadi, project manager for Rennie Marketing



Ying Chao clutches an owner' s manual for the Woodward' s 'W' tower. Photograph by: Gerry Kahrmann, the Province



Fairmont views for a quarter of the price,' says Greg Zayardi, marketing project manager. Photograph by: Gerry Kahrmann, the Province

Systems.

The finishing touches are ongoing — the rooftop patio and the 42nd-floor W Club gym and lounge still have to be completed.

The atrium remains unfinished, and the public outdoor space that will eventually hold a basketball court — and tables and chairs made from reclaimed wood — is still covered in building supplies.



Thursday's moving-in day at the new Woodward's 'W' tower. Photograph by: Gerry Kahrmann, the Province

The ground floor will house a pub and restaurant and a coffee shop, but it's empty for now.

But most of the suites are finished.

Behind each door — decorated with one of 10 designs owners can select — are energy-efficient stainless-steel appliances, exposed concrete ceilings, engineered oak floors, sleek, glassed-in showers and glass tiles, steam-powered heating radiators, some free wireless Internet services and, in upper-floor north-facing units, million-dollar views.

“We joke that you get Fairmont views for a quarter of the price,” Zayadi says.

New owners will also get “welcome” gifts of organic cleaning products and ‘W’ -branded coffee travel mugs and washcloths in a Downtown Eastside-made pine-beetle wood case, as well as gift cards to local retailers moving in, such as London Drugs and Nesters.

New owner Alex Yun, 32, held his welcome pack as he lingered in the lobby of his new home.

“I bought it as sort of an investment and, hopefully the downtown home values go up,” said Yun, who is moving from Coquitlam to live in his new, 32nd-floor, one-bedroom unit.

“It was the right price. But I'd like to see a little more change to get rid of the drug users and panhandlers.”

Fellow owner Ying Chao, 42, who bought a unit to share with her boyfriend, agreed that she'd like to see more transformation, as she's considering buying a second unit in the 'W2' building.

“I think the building is very good quality and the price was attractive,” she said of her \$330,000 unit.

“I see the area changing. It seems cleaner, but I’ m still worried a little bit.”

Zayadi says Woodward’ s new residents will have to be patient and wait to see the full benefits as the neighbourhood adapts to the new mega-complex and influx of new condo owners.

“This is going to have a huge impact on this neighbourhood, but it’ s going to be six to eight months before everything settles in and all the skepticism [about transformation] goes away,” Zayadi said.

“The real impact is not going to be felt until probably 2010, when you have up to 2,000 new people travelling through this neighbourhood to their homes and school.”

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# Woodward' s residents embracing the traditional neighbourhood

Saturday, January 30th, 2010

The middle class has begun moving into the troubled area. Whether that' s a good or bad thing depends on whom you ask

Lori Culbert

*Sun*



The courtyard at the new Woodward' s condominium complex: While new residents find the neighbourhood to their liking, others have sounded a warning. Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Vancouver Sun

Mike Meyer is hauling two breakfast bagels and some grapefruit juice in a Nesters Market bag along West Cordova, heading to his home in the new Woodward' s development.



Meyer and his girlfriend, both twentysomethings from Calgary, moved into the building — an eclectic mix of the old refurbished department store, new gleaming towers, and mainstream businesses — in October, and were suddenly immersed in an unofficial social experiment in the Downtown Eastside.

Are the Woodward' s residents embracing the traditional neighbourhood, as the shoppers in the iconic department store once did?

Pam Williams and friend Jesse Lawrie each have their own places at Woodward' s. 'It' s becoming one of the best places to live, because everything is right downstairs,' Williams says.

Are they supporting local businesses and stopping to chat with low-income neighbours, or do they walk briskly past on the way to Robson Street?

And is the injection of the middle class — right into the heart of the Downtown Eastside — a lifeline or a death-knell for the troubled neighbourhood?



Like any emotionally and politically charged debate, it depends on whom you ask.

Mike Meyer returns to his apartment in the Woodward' s complex after a shopping trip. 'We live in a four-block radius. We do everything here.'

Meyer, 26, and his 23-year-old girlfriend moved from Yaletown to Woodward' s because it was closer to her job, and the rent for their condo was reasonable. Since they both came from Calgary, neither had a romanticized past with Woodward' s — it was really just another condo project.

They were cautious at first about moving into a neighbourhood that is home to many of Vancouver's homeless, most of whom struggle with addiction and/or mental illness.

But, Meyer said, that worry quickly dissipated. The people on the street, he said, inspired sympathy, but not fear. At first he gave them spare change, but now he buys them sandwiches or passes around leftovers from a restaurant meal.

Meyer, who has worked in construction and snowboard sales but is taking time off right now, said most days he and his girlfriend never leave the 'hood.

"We live in a four-block radius. We do everything here," he said.

They frequently have a pint at the Irish Heather. They go out for Mexican food at La Casita across the street. They had just bought breakfast at Nesters, and often shop in London Drugs and bank at the TD, which are all in the Woodward's development.

A development project like this can be beneficial, says David Eby of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, because it contains about 200 units of social housing, allowing people of different economic backgrounds to live in the same building — an experiment that has been successful in some U.S. cities.

However, protections have to be put in place to ensure such developments don't drive up rents in the neighbourhood, and that an equal number of low-income buildings are also constructed.

"There are great facilities in it and hundreds of social housing units, which are positive. People who are homeless are excited to be moving into the Woodward's building. But the issue is whether the city will act to dispel the Woodward's effect so people aren't displaced," Eby said.

Wendy Pedersen, of the Carnegie Community Action Project, said there are condo and business owners who support the low-income community, but she fears that as more computer-savvy, well-spoken, middle-class property owners move into the neighbourhood it will tip the balance away from the rights of the poor.

"That is the big problem with Woodward's — because there isn't a plan to control 'change' in the neighbourhood," Pedersen said, adding what the community desperately needs is more housing specifically for low-income people.

“That’s the underlying story that people don’t realize: We can’t just rely on Woodward’s projects to build the number of units that we need.”

As long as middle-class neighbourhoods reject having social housing in their backyards, argued Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre project coordinator Harsha Walia, this community should not accept expensive buildings on its streets.

“The Downtown Eastside is a last safe haven for people who are non-judgmental, for people who understand the barriers that others face,” Walia said.

While she said she doesn’t want to generalize about every person living in Woodward’s, she has witnessed some low-income residents being poorly treated by shoppers in the new mainstream stores or by pedestrians on the sidewalks.

Vancouver city hall spokeswoman Theresa Beer said city staff thought it was premature to speak to The Vancouver Sun about the interaction between new and traditional residents in the area as people and businesses are still moving into the long-anticipated project.

She was not aware of any recent bylaw complaints involving homeless people near Woodward’s, and said Vancouver police told her they do not track crime complaints by such specific locations.

Houtan Rafii, project manager with developer Westbank, acknowledged there will always be anti-Woodward’s people in the Downtown Eastside, but said the response from people in the building’s 533 market units has been “overwhelmingly positive” so far.

There have been few, if any complaints for Westbank to handle between new and existing Downtown Eastside residents, he said.

He said the building remains popular, noting few original buyers are now trying to flip their units.

Woodward’s has a storied history in Vancouver. It was a place that many longtime residents fondly recall visiting for shopping trips. But the iconic department store closed in 1993 after falling on hard times, and its redevelopment has been many years in the making.

Pam Williams, 23, has lived in Woodward’s since October after finding her former hometown of Whistler too expensive. She loves the local stores, she said, and feels safe living in the neighbourhood.

“It’s becoming one of the best places to live, because everything is right downstairs,” Williams said during an interview outside the JJ Bean coffee shop in the Woodward’s development.

Her friend Jesse Lawrie, who also lives in the building, said he likes the mix of old and new in the Downtown Eastside, when it comes to residents and businesses.

Added the 26-year-old mechanic: “I wouldn’t want to live anywhere else now.”

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# Woodward' s sparking Downtown Eastside revival

Sunday, October 4th, 2009

## Workers sought as Downtown Eastside continues rebuilding process

Susan Lazaruk

*Province*



Michael Ozamma, 26, looks for work at a Downtown Eastside job fair. Employers at the rebuilt Woodward' s site were recruiting Saturday. Photograph by: Arlen Redekop, The Province

The last time Rose Mancini spent time in the Downtown Eastside, she was addicted and homeless.

Yesterday, however, she and her teen son returned, hoping to find a job at one of the handful of businesses set to open at the new Woodward' s site.

She was grateful for a job fair that attracted dozens of other hopeful jobseekers yesterday on Pender near Main Street.

“Right now, I' m looking for pretty much anything,” said Mancini, who lives in south Vancouver.

“And I would like to live close to here again but not too close.”

Christopher Mancini, 16, was hoping to land a part-time position in the electronics department at the new London Drugs opening this fall.

Michael Ozamma, 26, a recent Nigerian immigrant, was also at the fair, looking for a customer service position so he could “become a good citizen.”

The fair, organized by Building Opportunities with Business and former mayoral candidate Jim Green's consultancy firm, was designed to help provide locals with jobs, one of the mandates of the Woodward's development. Subway recruiter Sandeep Deo said he was willing to offer employment to the right candidates, "depending on their backgrounds," and was banking on the economically depressed area turning around, much as the area around Main Street and 12th Avenue, where his family has another Subway, has over the past decade.

Green's spokeswoman, Caroline Neufeld, said a previous similar job fair drew more than 150 applicants and London Drugs almost filled all their positions, a quarter of them from locals.

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# Woodwards W32-108 W Cordova & W43-128 W Cordova almost Finished

Friday, April 3rd, 2009

From amenities to view from the top, mixed-use redevelopment has mass, glass and class

John Mackie

*Sun*

The public had its first look inside the \$330-million Woodward's project Thursday. It was impressive.

Not only is it big (980,000 square feet of space spread over four buildings), the project is diverse, with 536 condos, 200 social housing units, Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts, all sorts of community amenity space, and three major retail-commercial components: London Drugs, Nester's Market and TD Canada Trust.

A Who's Who of politicians — including Premier Gordon Campbell and Mayor Gregor Robertson — turned out to heap praise on the project and its developer, Ian Gillespie of Westbank.

Campbell even saluted the hard work and dedication of longtime political foe Jim Green, who worked on revitalizing the site for over a decade.

People will start moving into Phase 1 of the market condos — the 43-storey W Tower — by June. The rest of the project will open in phases through October.

The W Tower is a little different from the glass towers popping up around town.

One of its defining features is some ornamental grillwork inspired by the steel structure of Vancouver's original skyscrapers, the 1908 Dominion Building and 1912 Sun Tower. The grillwork runs up the full 380-foot height of the south and east faces.



View from the top of the tower is just a small facet of the impressive facility on the site of the original Woodward's store.

Photograph by: Ian Lindsay, Vancouver Sun



Ornamental ironwork on the facade of the W Tower is intended to handle ivy that will provide cooling for the structure. Photograph by: Ian Lindsay, Vancouver Sun

The grillwork's primer-red colour makes reference to the nearby Dominion building, but soon will be covered in vines to create a "green wall" to provide shade in the summer, a la the Sylvia Hotel.

The building's eco-friendliness is enhanced by 18 trees that have been planted on the rooftop deck, which offers breathtaking views of Coal Harbour, the port, Gastown and other parts of downtown. The deck will be available to all condo owners, a radical departure from most projects, where the top floor is reserved for the owner of a pricey penthouse suite. There will even be a rooftop hot tub for residents, as well as a lounge. The rooftop amenities are called Club W.

The tour included a stop in suite 1710, a 1,200-square-foot, two-bedroom corner unit facing northwest. It's quite grand, with an open plan in the living-dining area that accentuates the spaciousness. Floor-to-ceiling windows, a polished cement ceiling and parquet floors give it a modern feel, but you're surrounded by brick heritage buildings, which gives it a totally different vibe than a Yaletown tower.

The 32-storey Abbott Tower will be a mix of condos on the upper floors and non-market units on the lower ones. Nester's will be on the main floor at Cordova and Abbott.

SFU's School for the Contemporary Arts will be in a new nine-storey building on the southwestern side of the site. It will include several performance spaces and theatres, including a dramatic space in the basement with a 40-foot ceiling that will seat up to 400 people.

Above SFU are 125 units of non-market housing operated by the Portland Hotel Society. London Drugs will be located on the main floor of the SFU building along Hastings street.

The seven-storey brick building at the southeast corner of the site is all that's left of the Woodward's department store that occupied the site from 1903 to 2006. It is the original part of the Woodward's store, which was basically a mish-mash that included 14 different additions. TD Canada Trust will be on the main floor; non-profits will occupy the offices above.

The iconic Big W neon sign will be placed on top of the heritage building, but it will be a replica. The original Big W had deteriorated to the point it couldn't be repaired. The original will be placed in a glass display case in the inner courtyard, complete with a bird's nest that was hidden in the sign for years.

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# Woodward's: Customizing

Friday, January 22nd, 2010

Plaster and lath points to what was

*Sun*



Photograph by: Arlen Redekop, PNG, Vancouver Sun

Randy Orr of Distinct Interiors sent along these before-and-after images from a Woodward's commission. "We were asked by a client to introduce an urban/Vancouver feel to their new downtown interior; we were allowed to take some liberties because the apartment is not their primary residence. 'Let's make it feel like we not in the suburbs,' the client requested. So we did."

The apartment is two-bed, two-bath, 1,100-square-foot residence.

“Our specialty is working with organic lime plasters, a traditional craft-product; our passion is to use them in nontraditional ways,” comments Orr.

From start –” drawing board” — to finish — “the final stroke” — the commission took a month to execute. “We decided to pick up on the interior theme of the common halls throughout the building and pay homage to the old Woodward’ s: thus we used lath and plaster.”

That treatment shows up well with the facing Distinct Interiors added to columns in the apartment’ s live/dine space, western red cedar lath and plaster coloured to match the walls.

The presence of a stylized W on the public face of the door to the apartment inspired the Orradded W to the apartment’ s hallway. The interior face of the door means household and visitors will never doubt where they are.

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