

## OPUS Versante targets 2017 launch



Twelve-storey luxury boutique property will target a diverse business and leisure clientele

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Vancouver-based OPUS Hotel Corp. plans to open a 12-storey OPUS Versante luxury boutique property in fall 2017 as part of the International Trade Centre project being developed by MoYeung International Enterprise Ltd. in Richmond, B.C.

OPUS Hotel Corp. founder and president John deC. Evans told CLN Richmond was a perfect fit for OPUS because it is the “focal point of the influx of people moving from Hong Kong and mainland China” and features an affluent demographic across a wide spectrum of age groups.

“We see lots of room in the Richmond market for a four-star luxury boutique property,” he said.

Also key is Richmond’s proximity to Vancouver International Airport and its 17 million annual visitors. In addition to targeting the Richmond market, OPUS Versante will court leisure travellers and such business segments as corporate groups and individuals and those employed in the entertainment industry as B.C.’s television, film and TV commercial production continues to thrive, said Evans.

Construction on OPUS Versante is expected to break ground by the end of 2015, so exact details on the hotel’s design and amenities will be finalized during the next six months or so, according to Evans. Spearheading the project are two Vancouver-based firms, GBL Architects and B+H CHIL Design.

Plans call for 110 guestrooms, but that number will likely change, he noted. All guestrooms are expected to feature the OPUS ‘spa bathroom’ design.

On the tenth floor, an open-air lounge will operate featuring a cutout roof, while a Chinese fine-dining restaurant is planned for street level.

Both a fitness and swimming room are expected to be part of the mix.

On the top floor, there will be four penthouse suites.

Directly connected to the hotel, there will be 3,500 square feet of retail, for which luxury goods tenants will be sought.

For additional inspiration, the team will look to OPUS Vancouver, which opened in 2002 in the city’s Yaletown area. As one example, Evans said a number of tech-forward in-room features pioneered at OPUS Vancouver - Virtual Concierge iPads; mobile devices in place of traditional telephones; TELUS Optik TV, permitting visitors to manage their guest experience through the TV monitor or iPad - will likely be offered at the Richmond property.

Similarly, the Vancouver hotel’s 17 room types will influence the Richmond mix. “Consistent with our brand positioning, we don’t want to be homogenous and aren’t afraid to have a variety of room types,” said Evans. Since OPUS boutique properties attract a

demographic across a wide income spectrum, it's important they offer a broad range of room types, he noted.

"Our clientele want luxury and unique experiences, but with all the functionality and comfort," said Evans, whose company, Trilogy Hotel Management Ltd., will operate and manage OPUS Hotel Versante.

Once built, the property will stand alongside the International Trade Centre's two office towers and 34,000 square feet of luxury retail space.

Specializing in high-end residential, commercial and retail, MoYeung International - also based in Richmond - has developed more than 11 million square feet of real estate projects in Asia, the U.S. and Canada, including residential buildings in Richmond and Vancouver, since 2002. Evans said the trade centre is expected to open "towards the end of 2016."

Looking ahead, could the launch of the Richmond hotel pave the way for additional expansion for OPUS Hotel Corp.?

Currently, the Vancouver property is the company's only operating location. (OPUS Montreal was sold in 2012; it subsequently de-flagged and now operates as a regional Quebec brand, said Evans.)

"Canadian growth will be selective to the market and type of deal available to us," said Evans, adding cities of interest include Toronto and Calgary.

A greater focus, said Evans, is licensing the rights to OPUS in mainland China. To that end, OPUS Hotel Corp. has been in talks with a developer of hotels in China for the past 18 months.

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