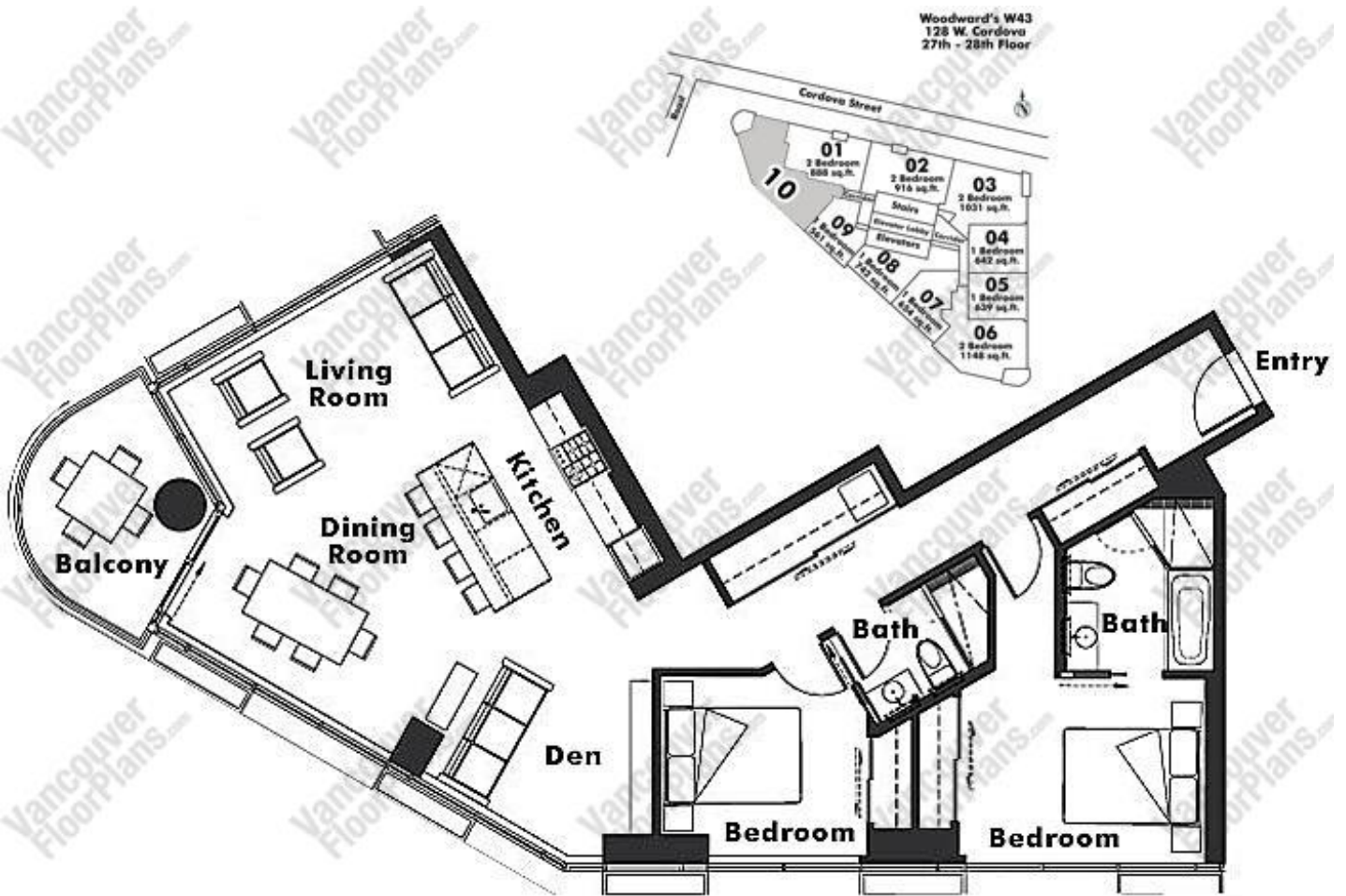


Woodward's W-43

#2710 128 W. Cordova, Vancouver, BC, V6A 1K9

2 Bedroom + Balcony

1154 sq.ft.



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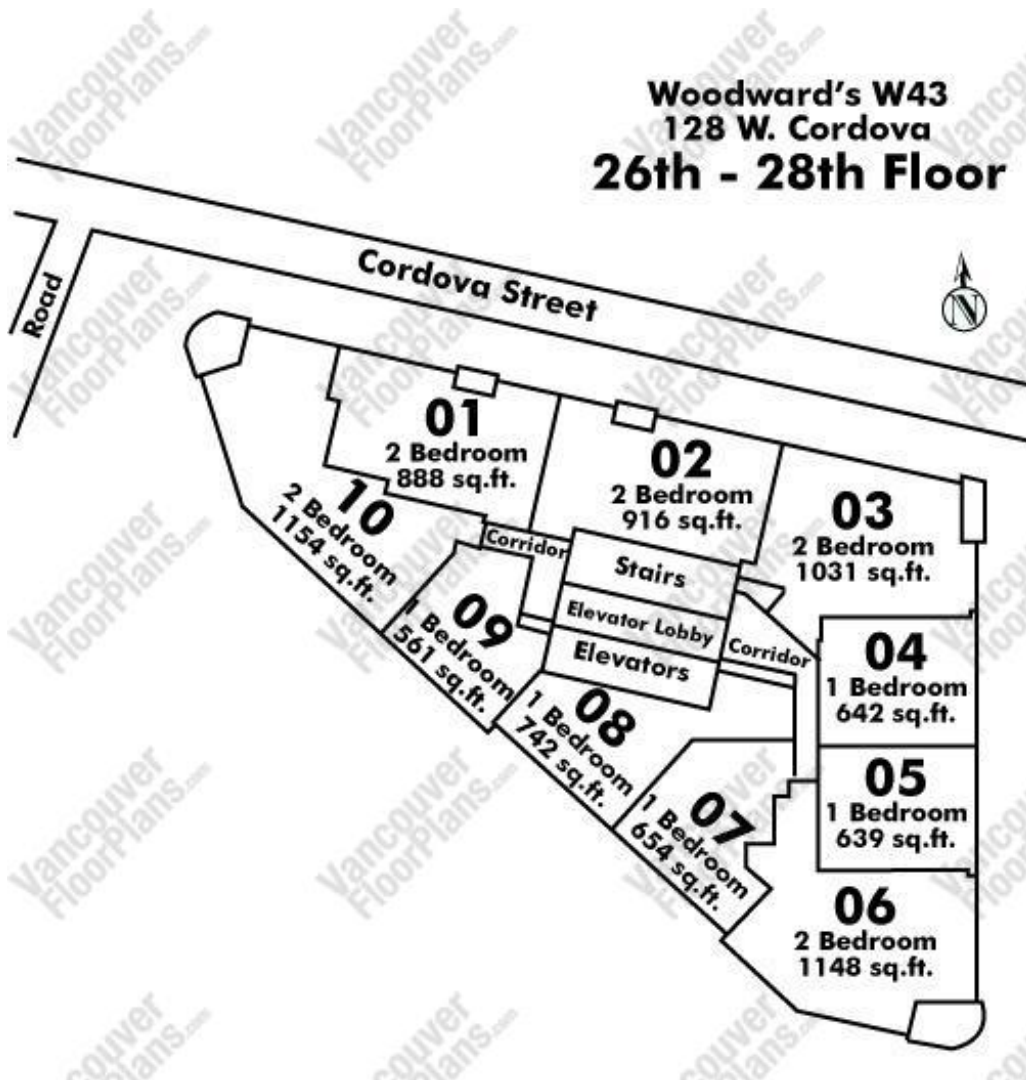
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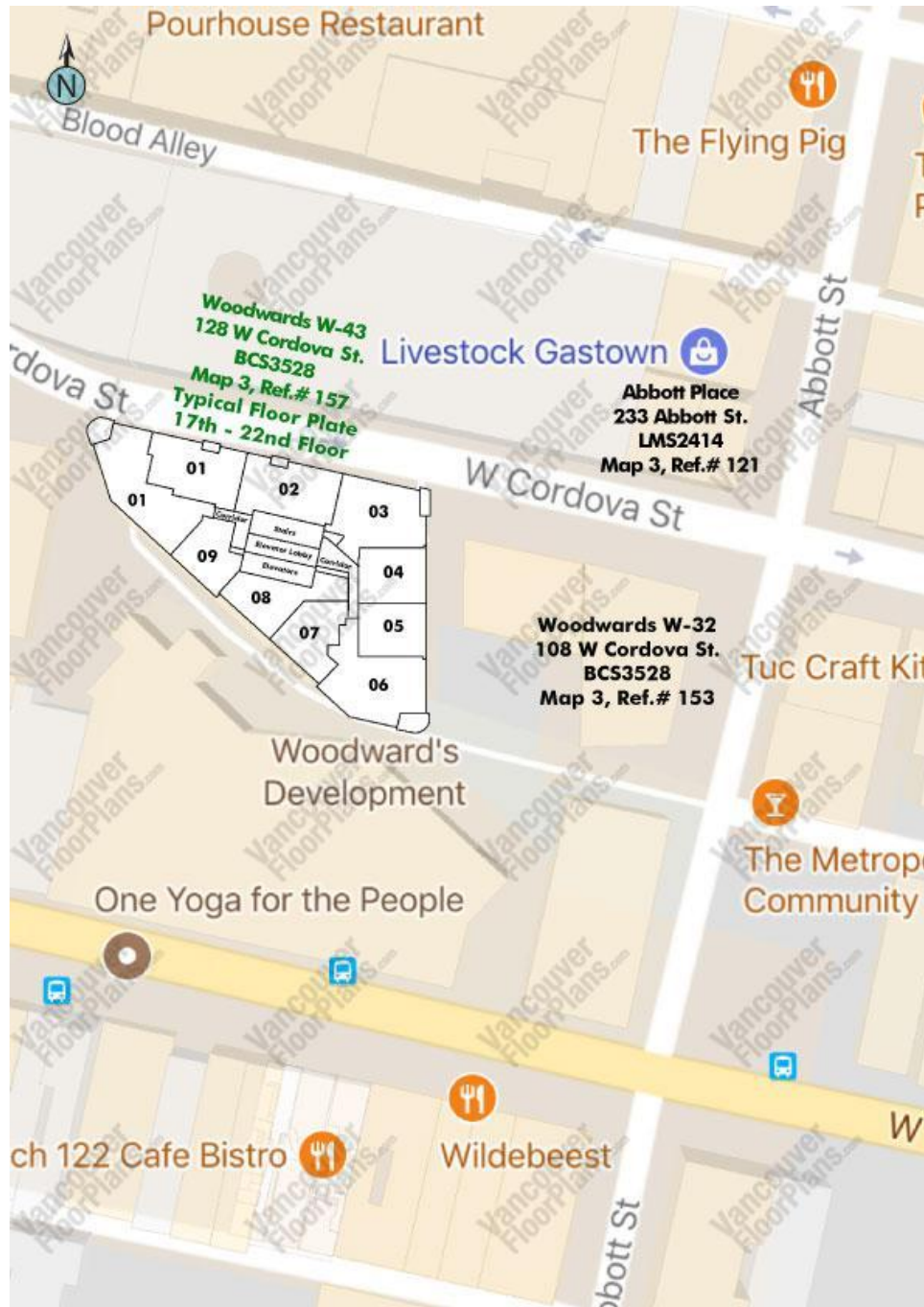
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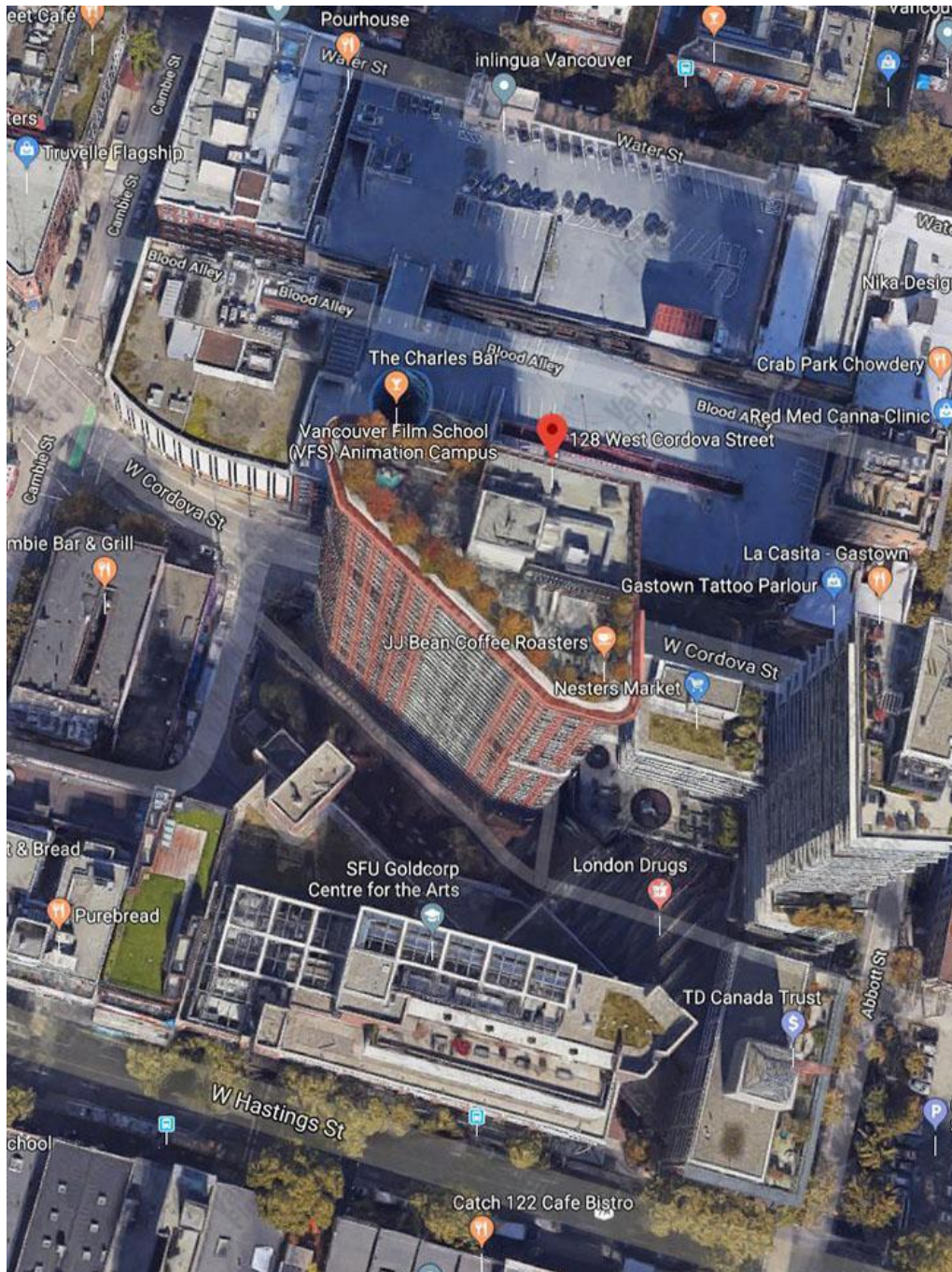
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Woodwards W32-108 W Cordova & W43-128 W Cordova by Westbank Projects Group

John Mackie

Sun

Friday, April, 03, 2009

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. 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, à 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.



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



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Vancouver Floor Plans
1428 W 7th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6H 1C1
Tel 604-671-7000. Fax 604-343-2666

<https://www.vancouverfloorplans.com/>
info@vancouverfloorplans.com