



Wednesday » October
4 » 2006

Mission plans massive downtown expansion

Project involves large stretch of waterfront

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MISSION - Mission is preparing to develop one of the biggest stretches of waterfront left in the Lower Mainland in a massive expansion of its downtown precinct.

The city last night released a preliminary outline of the development, an ambitious array of public space, high-density residential development, business uses and light industrial on an 80-hectare parcel along the north bank of the Fraser River.

Mission Mayor James Atebe says Mission Landing will build on the area's historic roots to become a magnet for visitors throughout the Lower Mainland and further afield.

"We have an opportunity that no other community has right now. This land is accessible by water, railway and Highways 7 and 11. It's a quick trip from Vancouver and even the U.S.," Atebe says. "It will be a major destination."

Mission residents had their first glimpse of a conceptual drawing that is heavy on public space, with a boardwalk along the river, space for a public market and restaurants.

"It should be a place where people can live, walk, play, learn and work," he said.

The concept draws from successful waterfront developments like Granville Island and Calgary's Bow River waterfront that integrate historic industrial uses with public amenities.

"We have to borrow the strengths of those places in order to make a jewel in the Fraser Valley," Atebe said.

The river, which will be the focal point of the development, will be accessible along the full length of the property, he added. "Those cities have already been through it so we know what works and what doesn't work."

Mission Landing will have to leverage the highway and the rail tracks that run through the site to create employment -- what Atebe calls part of a "complete community." The entire western half of the site is tentatively designated as a business park with some waterfront residential buildings.

"Granville Island has a viaduct running over it and the cement plant is there; it is part of the infrastructure that supports that place," Atebe says.

Atebe says waterfront development will be the catalyst to create a more mature Mission economy, one that will be home to a greater variety of businesses and create a stronger tax base.

"Right now we are too much of a bedroom community. We want to be a complete community and to attract employment and quality employers," Atebe explained.

The proposed development stretches from the defunct Meeker Cedar Products property west to the Mission Raceway.

Mission chief administrative officer Glen Robertson said the land is on a flood plain protected by dikes, but that further protection from flooding would be incorporated into plans for the site's development.

The first in a series of public consultations was slated for last night at the Mission Leisure Centre.

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