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CAPTURING VISITORS

New Aberdeen Centre Offers Broadening Opportunities for Business

WHEN THOMAS FUNG chose to tear down a just 12-years-old and profitable mall to build another on site, it's likely more than a few eyebrows were raised. But with prominent universal spiritual leader Professor Lin Yun's endorsement on the new Aberdeen Centre's perfect Feng Shui environment, and its designation as a Public Art Project Pixel by the Public Art Commission of Richmond, suffice it to say, the decision seems to have been a sound one. Designed by top architect Bing Thom, famous for his work on Vancouver's Chan Centre and the Hotel Georgia, the newly designed Aberdeen Centre promises to be not only a pre-eminent shopping destination for Greater Vancouverites, but a stunning architectural feat of multi-coloured glass and organic design.

Twelve years ago, the Aberdeen Centre in Richmond was the first and largest Asian shopping mall in North America. The move to rethink the concept—and rebuild the structure—comes from the

Fairchild Group's Chairman and CEO Thomas Fung. With a vision to take Aberdeen's creative concept to both Asian and Western audiences, Fung enlisted Thom and the world's top shopping mall designer, Toronto design firm Design International. Fung started from scratch on the six-acre site, the result being a new Aberdeen Centre four times larger than the original, including a hotel component. A fusion of Asian and North American brand-name outlets capture customers of East and West, the Aberdeen Centre will be celebrating public holidays such as Christmas, Halloween and Valentine's Day, as well as traditional Asian celebrations, such as Chinese New Year and the mid-Autumn festival, creating more peak shopping periods for its tenants.

The inner workings of the Centre are a technological marvel. Streaming video screens in the mall will project feeds from around the world: the streets of Toronto, San Francisco or Hong Kong can be broadcast live to its visitors. Even the covered parking lot will have web cam surveillance, should a friend or loved one be traveling alone to the mall. The atrium will feature a projected ceiling, the first of its kind in Canada, that will take Centre visitors slowly from daylight into an evening sky, complete with twinkling stars. And a fountain, similar to the one found in Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas, will



FROM EAST & WEST



move in time to a symphony of sound and light. The food court features an 800-seat café-style arrangement, with wireless Internet access for its patrons and a million-dollar view of the North Shore mountains.

The design of the building itself is what has garnered attention from art panels and philosophers alike. The curved, organic shape is clad entirely in transparent, translucent and opaque glass in many shades, designed by glass architect Stephanie Forsythe; the glass structure means that the building literally glows at night. Skylights of varying shapes and sizes dot the ceiling, allowing natural light to flood the floors below. The main atrium is designed in amphitheatre-style, so that patrons can witness the projected ceiling and musical fountain regardless of level. Rather than the traditional shopping mall structure of a box-like building surrounded by acres of parking lot, the new Aberdeen Centre will bring an urban look to the area, with the four-level, 1200-car parking lot covered and behind the Centre, and the glass structure itself at street level.

The new building, located at the corner of Hazelbridge way and Cambie Road in Richmond, has already garnered attention from Science World, which, for the first time, will be setting up a satellite operation in Aberdeen Centre, with exhibits throughout the mall. HSBC will be opening a sizable branch in the mall. "That's telling of the importance of Aberdeen Centre," explains Fung. Cathay Pacific Airlines is planning to facilitate the mall merchants with their Asia

Miles program, a frequent flyer program similar to Air Canada's Aeroplan program; shoppers at Aberdeen will garner mileage points towards gifts and air travel.

A promotional strategy is already in place, says Fung, through the strong networking of the Fairchild Group, which owns and operates two national TV stations and five radio stations, as well as a national magazine, and e-commerce operation, all of which will help the new mall in its future promotions. That strategy is matched with events that will attract other media, such as world-class performers and athletes scheduled to appear in the new centre.

Promising to become a tourist destination (Tourism Richmond has indicated that they will list the mall as a local tourist attraction) as much as a new form of retail experience for residents, Aberdeen Centre is scheduled to open in November 2003, in time for the Christmas season. "Our previous loyal customer base, along with the new ones that will come translates into an almost instant business," explains Fung. "We don't need to remind them to come."

*Take a virtual tour of Aberdeen Centre at www.aberdeencentre.com
For model presentation, contact the Aberdeen Centre Leasing Office, Suite C5, 525 West Broadway (entrance at 2445 Cambie Street), Vancouver, B.C. Phone 604-270-1234, Fax 604-273-7370, Email leasing@aberdeencentre.com*

