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36 PAGES

East  
meets  
West

The new Aberdeen Centre opens in December, and owner  
Thomas Fung predicts it will be a mall like no other

by Chris Bryan  
Staff Reporter

If sunlight promotes growth, employees at the new Aberdeen Centre will add two inches in their first year on the job.

The building, located near the corner of No. 3 and Cambie roads and slated to open in December, is awash in natural light. Unlike conventional malls—which tend to exist in windowless denial of the outside world—the entire structure is cloaked in glass.

It is the vision of Thomas Fung, and an example of what you get when you combine business savvy, money and a creative mind. His family fortune is in securities, banking and trading. But his interests led him to New York University, where he studied graphic design, as well as TV and film production.

“That’s my basic nature,” says the Vancouver resident and sole owner of Fairchild Group, a company involved in media, real estate and retail. “I like art and creativity, but because of family business...that’s why you have to go that way—whether you like it or not.”

A recent addition to the Aberdeen project is a nine-storey, 155 unit hotel, which brings the total budget to \$130 million.

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PENNER

FREE RING



# Aberdeen looks to take the lead again

From Page 1

Fung likes to make an impact. When the original Aberdeen Centre was built 14 years ago, it was the first significant Chinese mall outside of Asia—something that made it the subject of much media attention.

“But after five, six years, almost identical shopping centres cropped up,” Fung says. “I realized, times had changed. We were not the leader at all.” He thought “either we sell it, or I take the lead again.”

Two years ago, his company applied for a permit to tear down the old mall, and build a new one from scratch.

The entire mall is 380,000 square feet (more than three times the size of the Superstore on No. 3 Road). Though still smaller than Lansdowne Mall (about 600,000 square feet), Aberdeen has no major department stores, so almost all of its 250 tenants will be small- to medium-sized stores.

Aberdeen will be a three-level mall. Designed in part by noted Vancouver architect Bing Thom, the sleek, curved glass exterior is reminiscent of the new architecture found in the designs of buildings such as the 45-storey north tower of the Wall Centre in Vancouver, the tallest building in the city.

Inside, Aberdeen features two large, open plaza spaces, or galleria. One will have a \$4-million, Las Vegas-style dancing fountain 60 feet tall with jets of illuminated water that dance in time with the music. The same galleria is covered with a shallow bowl-shaped roof about half the width of a football field supported by small pillars, and ringed with glass.

At night, it will appear as though the roof is floating.

“It’s like a top hat,” says project manager Mike Hartigan, of Dominion Fairmile Construction Ltd.

The food court at the north end of the project includes a vast semi circle of glass on one side, and is opened above by three large skylights. Diners will have a panoramic view of the North Shore Mountains.

Some 380 subcontractors were on the site this week, putting the final touches on the framing and drywall, and installing tile. Scaffolding is everywhere, particularly in the main galleria where it forms a

“We’re trying to have something new.”

**Thomas Fung**  
*Fairchild Group*

complex matrix three storeys high.

As the December opening nears, as many as 1,000 construction workers will be on-site, building the shops and restaurants that will call Aberdeen home.

This retail mix is also something that makes Aberdeen fresh.

Where most malls are interchangeable with their Gaps, Banana Republics and Radio Shacks, Aberdeen is hoping to act as a gateway to name brands from Asia and Europe.

Many are unknown to most North Americans, but are household names in places like Japan and Malaysia, Fung says. For instance, Daiso Industries, known in Japan for its 100-Yen shops, will open a 26,000-square-foot store that is a combination convenience/department store.

But there will be some familiar names, too, part of what Fung believes will make Aberdeen “Greater Vancouver’s pre-eminent cosmopolitan shopping destination.”

The goal is to attract not only Chinese-Canadians, but everyone. Fung says all stores must have English as the dominant language on their signs; other languages are limited to 30 per cent. All performances in the mall must be bilingual, and tenants are “encouraged” to have multi-ethnic staff. Other tenants include HSBC, which is moving its branch from Parker Place. Also, BMW will open a car dealership in the new mall.

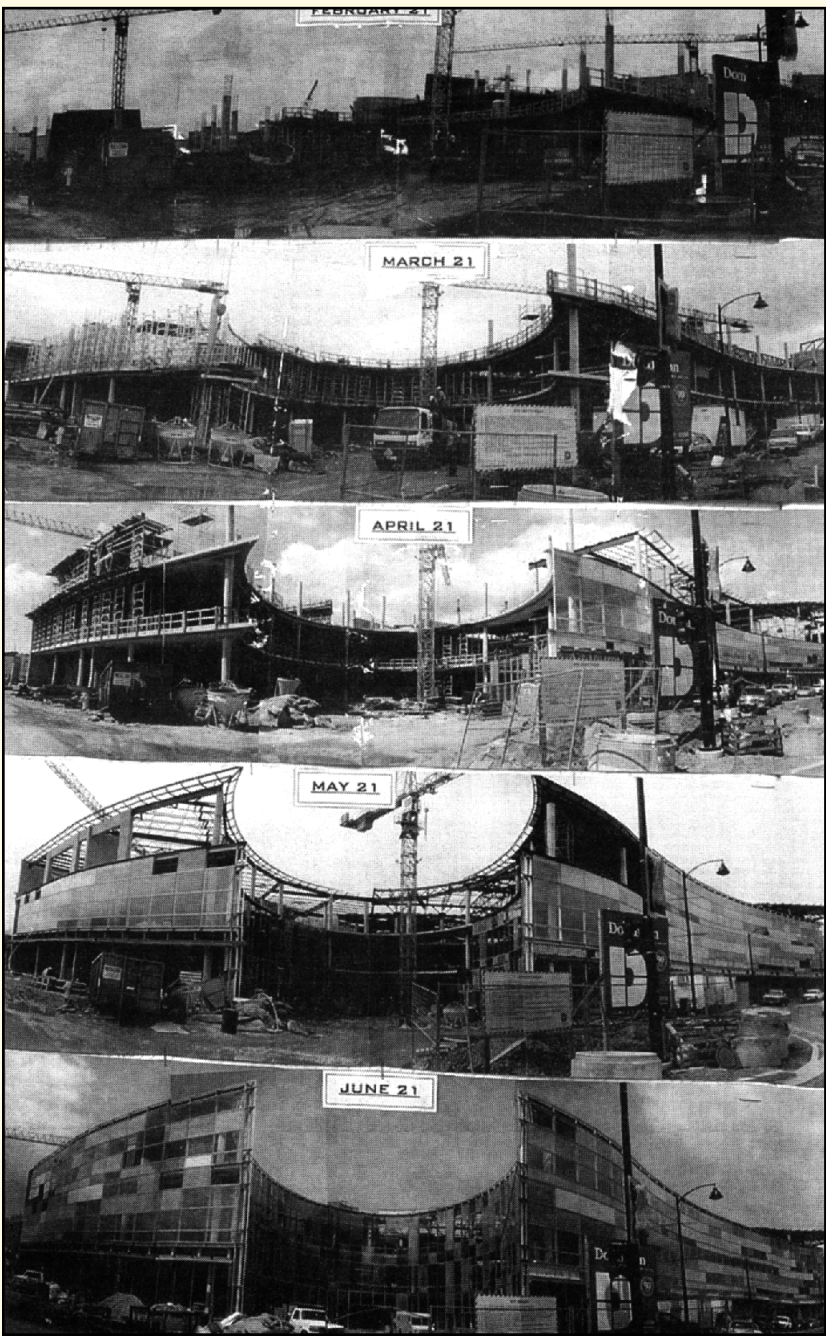
“We’re trying to have something new, but with quality and competitive pricing.”

With about 70 per cent of the space spoken for, there will likely be a few empty spaces when the mall opens. Fung demolished the old building about the time of 9/11. He concedes that his timing—particularly when combined with the market downturn and the SARS scare—could have been better.

“That wasn’t an easy time for leasing.”

Another factor is the lease rates, which are triple that charged at the old Aberdeen.

But when it’s finished, when people see the



How Aberdeen has evolved, month-by-month.

showpiece he’s created, “the first Asian/Western centre of its kind, anywhere,” Fung is sure the remaining spaces will be snapped up.

“Not too many people can visualize how we’ll be better than the others,” he says.

“I have confidence once we open up...they can tell this would be a good place for their products.”

If the project succeeds, Fung plans to forge ahead quickly, building similar malls in cities such as Toronto, Los Angeles and Edmonton.

# City staff recommend rejecting Wal-Mart bid

by **Chris Bryan**  
*Staff Reporter*

City staff are recommending

which is technically outside city centre?

According to city staff, the area is better suited to small, local neigh-

square feet of retail on a 17-acre parcel. Most of that retail—129,000 square feet—would be taken up by a Wal-Mart. Over the

doesn’t currently have it, and would generate nearly \$1 million in property taxes annually.

Nora Stevenson, a consultant to

ment options and opportunities for the site.

Once that hurdle is cleared, the proponent believes the rezoning