



What's Happening in the River District?

It spans 130 acres, an area three times the size of Granville Island. When complete, it will be home to more than 15,000 residents, making its population larger than the City of White Rock. This community will comprise 7.2 million square feet of residential space, 250,000 square feet of retail space, and 260,000 square feet of office space, plus a brand new elementary school, four daycare centres, and 25 acres of parkland – an area bigger than Gastown.

Yet, surprisingly, despite being poised to become the largest single development site in Metro Vancouver, River District remains a mystery to many.

A Grand Scope

Now over a decade in the making, the vision of River District is of five interconnected neighbourhoods, providing 7,000 homes ranging from townhouses to low-

rise apartments to high-rise towers. The development has already garnered Wesgroup a number of accolades for community engagement and the extensive remediation required to bring the once-industrial site back to life. Now the vision is becoming reality.

On the site's western edge, where Romer's Burgers is already a popular dining spot, Polygon has already built around 600 homes in the first three phases of this community. They are currently marketing a fourth project, Rhythm, while their fifth and final contribution is in the permitting process. All future buildings will be built by Wesgroup.

Breaking ground in July or August this year, One Town Centre will introduce the neighbourhood's first tower component. The town centre is designed to become a central shopping, dining and services hub that Ben Taylor, Wesgroup's director of sales, says will be the

heart of the community. TD Bank has already set up its first BC mobile branch to have an immediate onsite presence.

Taylor anticipates the public plaza and commercial components will be complete within three years, and the High Street, with what Wesgroup hopes will be an eclectic mix of boutique retail, will be done within five. There will also be a 14,000-square-foot, residents-only amenity building including an aquatic centre, state-of-the-art fitness facility, yoga/dance studio and squash courts.

Future phases of residential development further east will be completed gradually in the following five to 10 years, with the timeline until total completion of the master plan likely to be around 15 years.

Making the Community Work

Peeter Wesik, Wesgroup's

president, says Wesgroup has adopted four cornerstones that aim to make up a vibrant, happy place to live.

Schools, he says, are buyers' number one must-have element, and there are two sites set aside for schools at River District. "Schools, especially elementaries, bring a natural, authentic social network," he explains.

Shopping ranked number two. "There's a social aspect to shopping within your own community that increases a neighbourhood's desirability."

Proximity to nature is Wesgroup's third component. Wesik stresses that from day one, River District has been planned to capitalize on its location, including parks, trails, a songbird strategy and a salmon preservation scheme.

Finally, Wesik notes, walkability is critical to a community's health. "It's about creating communities where people can

simply park their car after work and walk or bike everywhere. River District is designed to be highly walkable."

Even though the site is not near any current transit hubs, transportation options are coming. For those homeowners who prefer to live without a car, car-share companies are on board at River District. It's also anticipated that TransLink will provide high-speed shuttle service to the Canada Line and SkyTrain stations.

Legacy for the Future

"What I find exciting is seeing how River District will grow and evolve," Wesik says. "In five years, I'll be able to bring my grandchildren here for lunch and walk my dog along the river. We'll go for ice cream, check out the farmer's market, and hopefully catch a sunset or two."