



Peninsula

Fresh Waterfront

Reclaiming industrial land for a new waterfront lifestyle

by **STEPHANIE MacDONALD**

“THE MIIIIIGHTY FRASER. A working river.” Anyone who grew up in BC during a certain era will remember this phrase from a ubiquitous educational TV program emphasizing the historic, economic, environmental and cultural value of BC’s largest river.

At 1,375 kilometres long, the Fraser begins at a spring at Fraser Pass and discharges (along with tonnes of fertile silt) in arms separating the islands of Richmond from Vancouver and the Corporation of Delta. Supporting an abundance of wildlife, transportation, fisheries, forestry, recreation and First

Nations cultural heritage, The Fraser has always been the artery giving life to the heart of the Lower Mainland.

Before it was called “The Fraser River” it was called many different names by the Musqueam, Sto:lo, St’at’imc, Secwepemc and Nlaka’pamux nations who inhabited its banks in hundreds of villages. A few decades after the river was renamed after the white explorer, Simon Fraser, it was the route taken by thousands of hopeful prospectors hoping to strike it rich in the Gold Rush.

In the early 1900s, as Vancouver

was growing, the river was left to the industrial businesses that required water for operation: sawmills, pulp mills, canneries, farms and transportation, while residents tended to move towards the ocean, concentrating in what is now the city of Vancouver. This trend has continued until recently. But are we missing out on something by ignoring the riverfront at our doorstep?

Beau Jarvis, senior VP of development at Wesgroup explains the current interest in rebuilding on the shores of the Fraser. “The Fraser River offers a different kind of waterfront. It’s

active with tugboats and fishing vessels, but it's also extremely beautiful with amazing sunsets and a diverse bird population. It's a unique experience, one that is undervalued."

Thus, a major change is in the works. With a decline in the industrial use of the river due to increased urbanization, this has left much of the riverfront abandoned and dilapidated. But not for long. Several very major developments are in the works, as developers recognize the value of this new waterfront and the desire people have to live close to the water.

The Peninsula, by Aragon, is one of these properties. "The luxuriousness of the homes themselves, the resort-style amenities, and having a fresh-water marina right outside your front door truly creates resort living in the heart of the city," explains Lisa McDonald, sales director. "It's like you're getting a Coal Harbour home and lifestyle at half the price you'd pay downtown. All this, and you've still got easy access to Vancouver, the airport, and the freeway to Interior BC or the US border."

Geoff Duyker, MOSAIC's senior VP of marketing, agrees that riverfront is prime real estate, "People naturally gravitate to the coast and to water. In Metro Vancouver, our riverfront was underutilized." The Pitt River flows into the Fraser through the Tri-Cities area, but the riverbank was a brownfield from previous industrial activities. MOSAIC saw the opportunity here, and envisioned a lively waterfront community that would be a benefit for the whole Port Coquitlam area. The result is Fremont Village, a bustling, family-friendly master-planned riverside community in the heart of the Tri-Cities.

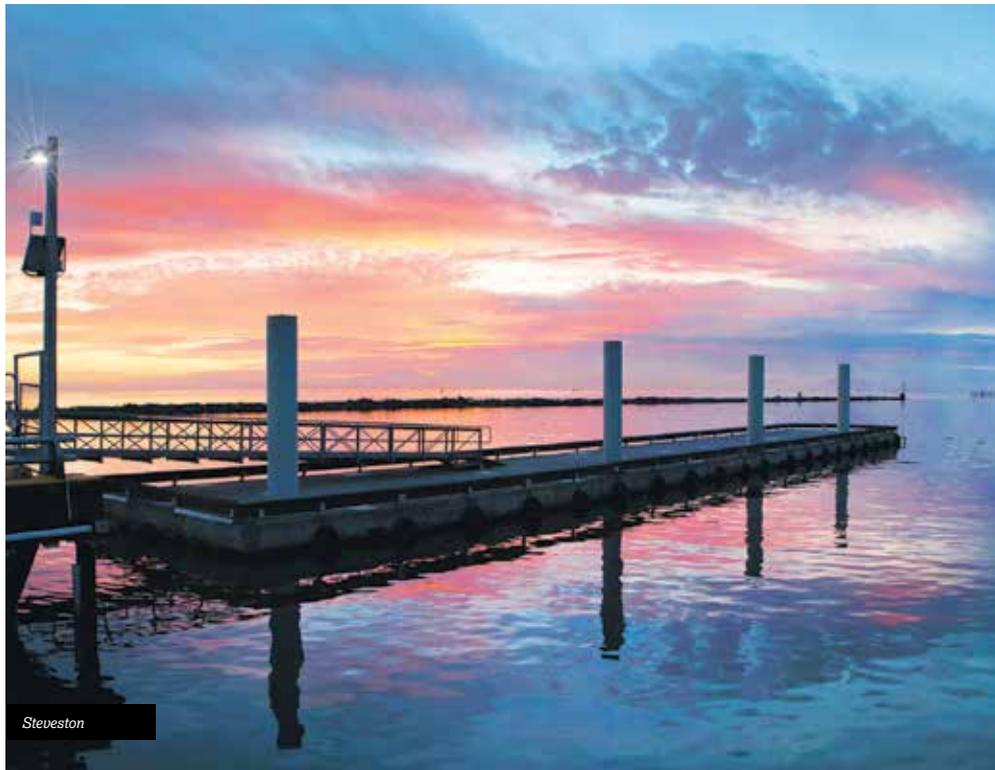
"We had great leadership from the elected government here," explains Duyker, "and we were able to rehabilitate the shoreline, provide homes for 300 families (with 300 more on the way), a business park, and lots of recreational areas. It has gone from being a brown field to being this vibrant place."

Wesgroup has undertaken an even





The Sapperton



Steveston

more monumental riverside development, on the Vancouver side of the Fraser as it meets the sea. Jarvis describes this ambitious plan: “With River District, we are only in the beginning stages of what will soon become a small town, with 15,000 people living here. The value is this is just the start of the city’s largest and last waterfront community. It’s also in the proximity to 25 acres of parkland, riverfront pathways, sports fields, shops and services, community centre, daycares and schools. It’s the unique experience of living on an active waterfront within walking distance to great shops, cafes and services. We have worked hard to ensure this will be a strong community with walkability, great amenities and access to nature.”

Right across the river from River District is ASPAC’s River Green in Richmond. Touted as “Richmond’s Coal Harbour,” this master-planned community incorporates the dyke trails, public art and five-star hotel amenities on grounds showcasing terraced gardens, water features and of course, spectacular views of the river.

Up the river in New Westminister, there are also opportunities for riverside living, even more affordable than in Richmond and Vancouver. RiverSky by



RiverSky View



FREMONT Green



River District



Harbour Walk



River Green

Bosa is a beautiful concrete tower in the heart of New West. Explains Bosa sales manager Anderson Hsu, "Living on the waterfront is a dream for many people."

Some other new communities along the river are: Reflections by Falcon Homes in Maple Ridge; Beedie Group's master-planned community Fraser Mills in Coquitlam; and Harbour Walk, The Pier at London Landing and Dava's Parc Riviera and Parc Gilley in Richmond. Whatever your budget, and whatever river view you prefer, now is the time to do your research and find your perfect riverfront home.

Wesgroup is also building the Brewery District in Sapperton, and Beau Jarvis explains the value in buying at River District and Brewery District, "This is a waterfront community, and they don't make waterfront anymore".

Because in the end, the appeal of a river is timeless and magical, even to the timid Mole in *The Wind in the Willows*.

"By the side of the river he trotted as one trots, when very small, by the side of a man who holds one spellbound by exciting stories; and when tired at last, he sat on the bank, while the river still chattered on to him, a babbling procession of the best stories in the world, sent from the heart of the earth to be told at last to the insatiable sea."