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Developer eyes April start for Waterscape

Cambridge Times
Ray Martin

The skyline of Galt core will soon have its own version of the twin towers as Waterscape on the Grand River breaks ground this spring.

The \$120-million project is just about ready to go, said Chris Pidgeon, of GSP Group Inc. – Waterscape’s planners.

“We went for the building permit last week and if everything comes together construction will start in April.”

Pidgeon said the final details have been worked out with the city and region over the reconfiguration of Water Street in front of the project. As part of the site redevelopment the developer, Haastown Group of Companies, has agreed to make use of the Water Street sidewalk safer for GCI students and to provide access to the riverbank trail system. Meanwhile, records of site condition are still being dealt with by the Ministry of Environment as Haastown seeks to sever the southern portion of the 3.7-acre site on Water Street across from Shoppers Drugmart.

Haastown has worked for almost two years on a design for the two 12-storey

condominium towers that make up the first phase of the project.

The two towers will house a total of 230 studio, one and two bedroom suites, with commercial space available on the ground floor for a potential café or bistro and rooftop fitness centre, lounge and entertainment centre. Parking will be provided above and below ground for 299 vehicles.

“It’s not too often that you get to work on a landmark development like this,” Pidgeon said. “It’s the type of project that will act as a catalyst for change in the downtown core and will likely spur other project.”

Another important element of the project is the cleanup of carcinogenic coal tar contamination of at least part of the site.

The company’s engineers are continuing to work with Ministry of Environment officials on the remediation plan for the site. Late last year Haastown split the site in two and is now finalizing two risk assessments for the site.

“At the north end of the property there isn’t too much contamination to deal with,” said Haastown president Paul de Haas. “Right now we are tidying up our submission (to the ministry).

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trying to do. We want to get on the site in April to do the preliminary site work and by the time that's completed we hope to have our approvals which will clear way for construction."

It is expected that once approvals are in place the first of the two towers will be completed within 18 months. Work on the second tower will commence once half of its 115 units are presold.

Pidgeon said collaboration between the developer and the University Of Waterloo School Of Architecture in Cambridge has made "a good project even better."

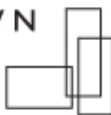
"Rick Haldenby, director of the school, has been involved in the project and he hasn't been afraid to voice his opinion," Pidgeon said. "All this has resulted in a better project. It's come great strides without major cost to the developer."

On the advice of the university, the initial slab design of the Waterscape towers have been modified. Now, the towers will have a stepped appearance to better fit in with the surrounding neighbourhood. The towers have also been repositioned on the site to improve the river views for surrounding residents.

Haastown has now presold 60 per cent of the units in the first tower and the company will be contacting the nearly 500 people who have expressed an interest to moving to Waterscape once construction starts.

"We're on the runway and ready for take-off," de Haas said.

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