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January
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Abbotsford "Diverse"ifies

Eric Reynolds

With all the Highstreet Hype in Abbotsford, two new developments have flown under the radar... until now, that is. Both of them belong to the Fraser Valley real estate developer **Diverse Properties** and both look to contribute to the city in massive ways.

Diverse buys real estate to generate favorable returns for their investors and also for the purpose of improving communities, like Abbotsford. The projects they've got underway are no exception.

The first is the Mark, a proposed commercial development right in the heart of Abbotsford on South Fraser Way at Allwood Street. Two buildings – both around 30,000 square feet – will frame a plaza and plenty of parking spaces. The property was an underdeveloped site that Diverse bought three years ago, and they're planning to do something a little different with it.

"We're looking to sell the office space and lease out the retail space," said **P.L. Meindersma**, principal at Diverse Properties. "There's not a lot of office space for sale in Abbotsford. We're going after that market."

Diverse is addressing a need and hopes to profit from it. Business owners are looking for developments to hold for cashflow, and while many



Ken Friesen and P.L. Meindersma Principals of Diverse Properties, have big plans for Abbotsford. (Ron Funk, principal, is missing from the photo)

are purchasing commercial space as income producing properties, not many developers are offering business owners this kind of office space: something they can purchase and own.

The other property that excited Diverse is their innovative, New York-esque Central Park Village,

located on Gladwin between Maclure Road and George Ferguson Way.

"There are several items that make up the whole," said Meindersma regarding the name of the up-and-coming development. "First, the location is central to Abbotsford. As for the Park aspect, we are allocating

a significant amount of green space inside the development, not to mention it is bordered by a long walking trail that runs along Horne Creek. In regards to the Village component, we are integrating commercial, office and residential spaces to create a village atmosphere."

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Surrey

Business leaders from Surrey and White Rock join forces in support of new entertainment complex

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Langley intros revolutionary brownfield strategy

Eric Reynolds

It's never been done in BC. Just before the turn of the New Year, the **City of Langley** unveiled its brownfield redevelopment strategy in partnership with **Colliers International**. The report is the first of its kind at the local government level in BC.

The initiative will seek to solidify

the City of Langley as "the place to be" for business as underutilized real estate finds new life. "This Strategy supports the City of Langley's efforts to encourage the redevelopment of underused commercial and industrial lands," stated Mayor **Peter Fassbender**. By identifying the barriers involved in the redevelopment of derelict sites,

and by producing a range of strategies and resources, businesses will be better informed and more prone to develop in Langley.

"We've let the world know where we want to go and that we're open for business," said Fassbender.

City of Langley approached Colliers International, the development advisors and consultants,

to help them understand the development potential of brownfield sites around the city, especially on Logan Avenue. Brownfields are a financial risk even without the assessment costs, which the city rightly understands. Hopefully, with Colliers' expertise, information and strategies will be readily

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Valley First Aid open late for business

The Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce invites you to the chamber's free networking event, Open Late for Business, at Valley First Aid on January 31.

Hosted on a monthly basis by interesting chamber member businesses, these events are the perfect opportunity to connect with Langley's business community in a casual and fun environment. Join others for refreshments, draws and the host's behind-the-scenes tours.

Valley First Aid Ltd. has been providing outstanding first aid training to the Fraser Valley since 1984. Whether you work in industry, construction, health care, education, entertainment or the public sector, it is here to help. It is Valley First Aid's policy to provide services that conform to all established requirements and expectations.

Valley First Aid Open Late for Business networking event will



take place Thursday, January 31, at 101 - 20540 Duncan Way in Langley from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. This event is but an RSVP is appreciated for catering purposes. Call the chamber at 604-530-6656 or online.

Open Late for Business is one of several networking and education events offered by the chamber throughout the year. For an up-to-date list of seminars, events and programs visit www.langley-chamber.com.

The Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce has made a

commitment to ensure that all business centres within Langley are represented. In order to achieve this, community director positions were created for North Langley, South Langley, City of Langley and Aldergrove. The mandate of the community directors is to connect with businesses within the specific area and act as liaison officer with the Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce board of directors. Their key responsibilities are

- to communicate business development and issues to the board for information or chamber action;
- to report pertinent chamber

activity to area businesses and associations; and

- to participate with business groups and associations.

Michelle Chandra of Sutton Group West Coast Realty is the chamber's community director for Aldergrove. She has been living and working in Langley as a realtor for 11 years.

Scott Johnston of Campbell, Burton & McMullan LLP is the community director for the City of Langley. He is a business lawyer serving the Langley community with more than 12 years' experience as a solicitor advising clients in corporate and commercial real estate, leasing, residential purchase and sale, and mortgage matters.

Viviane Barber of Facet Advisors Inc. is the community director for North Langley. She is a chartered accountant specializing in Canadian and U.S. corporate and

individual income tax services.

Danielle Nielsen of Aldergrove Credit Union is the community director for South Langley. She has been in the financial services industry for the past 18 years. She joined the Aldergrove Credit Union's Murrayville branch as Branch Manager in 2011

Last February, the chamber of commerce appeared before city and township councils to advocate for mobile business licenses. We are pleased to announce that effective January 2013, a pilot project has been approved to implement an inter municipal business license that will be valid in all municipalities in the Fraser Valley from Surrey to Hope. ♦

Angie Quaaale is president of the Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce. www.langleychamber.com



Artist's rendering of The Mark, Diverse Properties upcoming 30,000-square-foot commercial development on South Fraser Way at Allwood Street | WCI MEDIA STUDIOS

Diverse properties

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Meindertma insists Abbotsford has never seen the likes of what is to come in Central Park Village. "We're putting a product out there with loft-style units: something that you would only see in larger city centres."

Is this something people in Abbotsford have been waiting for? "Some developers are reluctant to step outside of the box in tough economic times like these; we're going to give it a go."

The development's Village component should not be missed: the potential for two high rises would provide over 800 residential units, not to mention retail and amenities. Targeted tenants include a market,

a bakery/deli, a coffee shop, a boutique liquor store, restaurants, a pharmacy, a veterinarian, a medical office, and personal services.

P.L. is emphatic: "What Morgan Crossing is to Surrey, is what Central Park Village will be to Abbotsford."

Diverse sees the City of Abbotsford as an attractive market, being well-acquainted with the pros and cons of the Fraser Valley. "There is a stigma associated with [the Valley], but Abbotsford has everything Langley has for less cost." P.L. references the airport as only one of many reasons why Abbotsford is a diamond in the rough.

"The Mark and Central Park Village will make people turn their heads and say, 'Wow, I didn't know Abbotsford had that.'" ♦

Langley brownfield

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available to potential developers.

What are the risks? They're certainly not to be underestimated. Site evaluation, remediation costs, potential contamination, marginal increase in land value, relocation challenges, and access to capital are some of the barriers developers face, and each one can be a dealbreaker.

But Colliers insists these risks and others can be mitigated with all the information about a property.

Naturally, as contamination surrounds many brownfield sites, environmental concerns arise, which is why Colliers approached a third party for environmental assessment: Hemmera.

Eric Pringle, general manager of Hemmera, is also a British Columbia Environmental Industry Association (BCEIA) board member and the chair of the brownfield committee, which pulls together nearly a dozen individuals interested in brownfields across the province.

Pringle was impressed by the City of Langley's initiative. "It's never easy to be one of the first, and Langley's plans are well thought out. The leadership being shown here is critical." Pringle also



Peter Fassbender, mayor of the City of Langley, on leading the province in the redevelopment of brownfield sites

believes that Langley has understood the recipe for success, which is to get a number of stakeholders involved both at the provincial and local levels. To the city, he said, "Persevere! I'm sure there will be bumps along the road."

Colliers, who brought Hemmera on board, had much of the same to say about City of Langley.

"We're very happy to be involved in the process," said James Smerdon, vice president of consulting at Colliers. "What Langley has done and asked us to do is proactive and encouraging for the future."

Colliers has worked with City of Langley nearly a dozen times before this brownfield redevelopment strategy. Notably, they were

involved in the downtown master plan as land economics advisors. The current strategy will build on the previous plan and create a continuity that will almost certainly bode well for City of Langley.

What's so attractive about the City of Langley? "In terms of development, it is a central location, surrounded by the Township of Langley and Surrey," said Smerdon. "But moreso, City of Langley itself - both the staff and residents - are extremely pragmatic. They encourage growth and are willing to look at opportunities." Smerdon states that the development process in City of Langley is much easier than most if not all other municipalities in the area. ♦

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