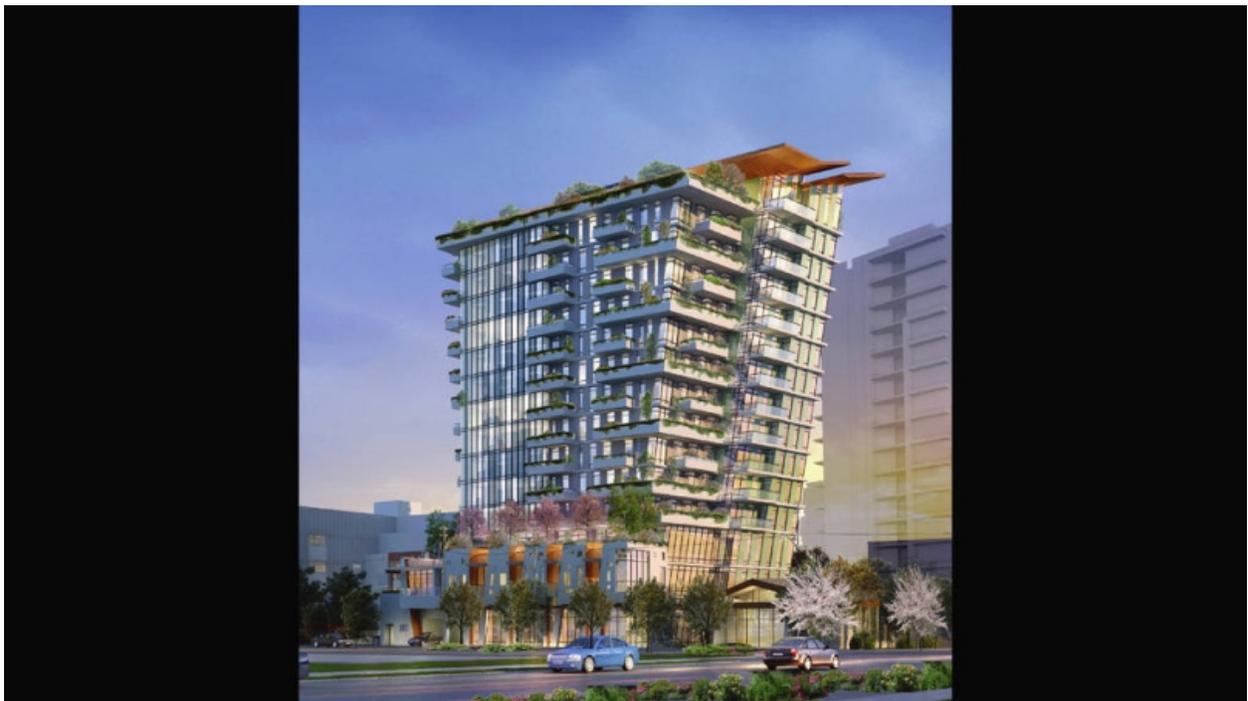


Tower with tilted look expected to be finished in 2023

Darron Kloster / Times Colonist

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A building that won a major award and accolades even before shovels hit the dirt is underway in downtown Victoria.

The Wedge, a \$50-million residential tower at the corner of Vancouver and Johnson streets, is in early excavation stages. The tilting design of the 15-storey, 93-unit building won a Golden Nugget Award at the Pacific Coast Builders Conference this summer and Victoria's mayor called it "gorgeous."

The project by Cox Developments is on the site of the former McCall Bros. funeral home and incorporates the chapel, which was designed in 1955 by Victoria architect John Di Castri, who was renowned for West Coast modern architecture. The

building is being preserved in a garden setting for “hospitality orientated use” within the development.

The Wedge has an angled eastern facade with each ascending floor extending outward, giving the illusion of a lean or tilt. The design by AVRP Skyport, based in San Diego with an office in Vancouver, allowed the historic mid-century modern chapel to remain as part of the development.

Cox Developments said excavation for the tower is about two thirds complete, drilling for piles is underway and a crane will be erected on Dec. 15.

President Dan Cox said design was of paramount importance. “The Gold Nugget Award win is truly an honour because it recognizes our bold vision and validates that we have accomplished what we set out to achieve,” he said in a statement. “The Wedge really is the best project for this site, and among the best designs in North America.”

The Gold Nugget Awards are considered one of the industry’s most competitive and prestigious design competitions, which recognizes outstanding architectural design and planning achievements in more than 50 building categories. The Wedge won in the Best On-The-Boards Multifamily Community category.

Mayor Lisa Helps accurately predicted an award in September 2019 when she called the Wedge “an exquisite addition ... I think there is award-winning potential here in terms of the design, and I think that when people walk down the street and walk past this building, they’re really going to be in awe of what Victoria can deliver.”

Even then-councillor Pam Madoff, long a stalwart voice for heritage properties, praised the project in 2018, saying the chapel did not have official heritage protection, but the developer chose to voluntarily preserve it.

Douglas H. Austin, founder and CEO of AVRP Skyport, said the best architecture often emerges when there are unique design challenges. “These obstacles force designers to think creatively and find solutions for that specific development,” he said. “Certainly, that was the case with the Wedge. Finding a way to preserve the

historic chapel and maximize views of Victoria's natural beauty sparked the idea for the distinctive wedge-shaped design."

The Wedge will have one-, two- and three-bedroom units, ranging from 460 to 1,481 square feet. It includes a tech centre, rooftop garden with solar panels and underground parking. The development was designed to achieve LEED Platinum - Certification and includes eco-friendly elements such as water conservation and on-site power generation.

The Wedge will also have ground-floor commercial space.

The development is being built by Blackrete Builders Inc. Construction is expected to be complete by early 2023.

Cox Developments has two completed condo projects at 989 Johnson St. and 1075 Pandora Ave. The three properties have a total of 433 units.

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