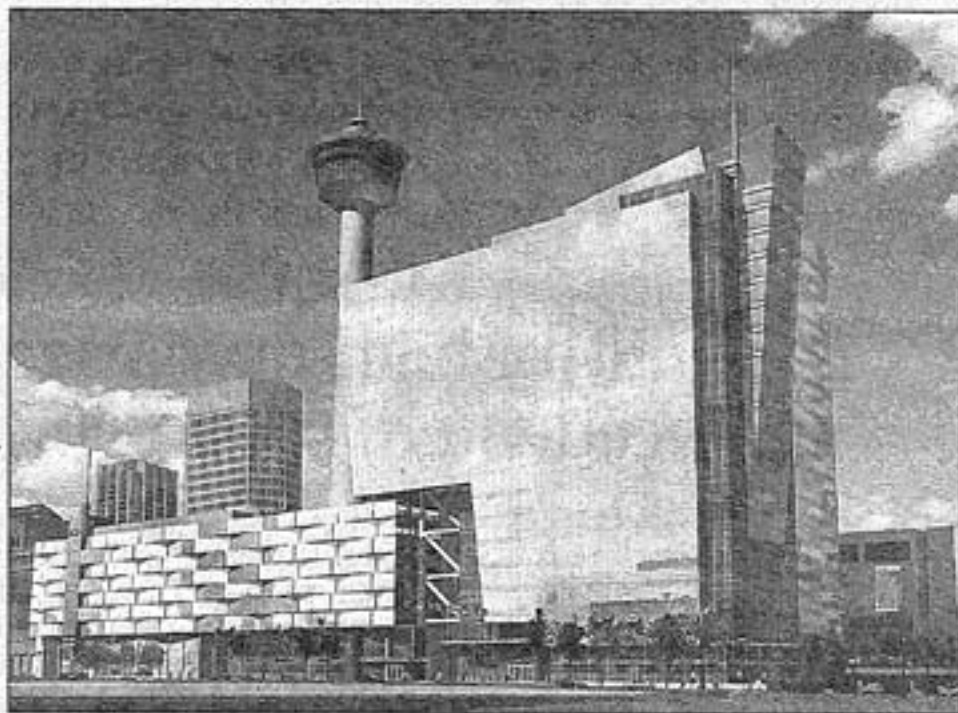


New office block, updating in works for Palliser Square



DAVID PARKER



Courtesy, Gibbs Gage Architects

A mirrored glass skin over One Palliser Square and a new tower, Palliser South, are in the works for this landmark site.

Add Palliser South to an impressive list of building designs by our creative local architectural community. The right combination of developer and designers has given us recent gems such as: the Crowchild Trail office building I mentioned last week; Five West condo tower; the new community centre at The Bridges; and the new children's hospital.

Visionary **Scott Hutcheson**, president and CEO of Aspen Properties, recently purchased Tower Centre and with the help of Gibbs Gage Architects is changing the face of a block that bridges the Beltline and downtown in a rather spectacular way.

A development permit has been awarded for additions at the base of the tower on 9th Avenue and a new, mirrored glass skin will cover One Palliser Square, the existing tower on the corner of 9th Avenue and 1st Street S.E. But the first exciting construction project will be a new tower to the east of the 10th Avenue parkade stretching over to the underpass on 1st Street S.E.

Palliser South Tower will rise nine floors and then cant to the west at an angle over the existing parking structure for another 10 floors to provide a total of 300,000 square feet of leasable office space over a floor of retail. A dramatic, 13.5-metre-wide portion of the design also slopes away from the sixth floor on the east side, so that floor plates get larger toward the top one, which will offer 21,000 square feet. Even the rooftop mechanical penthouse is sloped.

A two-storey, high-end lobby will feature an escalator to the Plus-30 level that will take pedestrian traffic over the railway tracks into a new escalator and a refurbished lobby area in One Palliser Square.

The parkade structure will be dressed up with a new facade on 10th Avenue; regulations do not allow for enclosure, but Gibbs Gage has designed a basket weave of the same glass panels used on the new tower that will allow air to flow through.

The entrance and exit to the parkade will not change, but two office floors are to be built from ground level to ac-

commodate the dozen medical professional services now located in the tower complex, giving them a street-level presence on what is to become a very attractive thoroughfare. A big improvement that the complex will bring is a new retaining wall at the 1st Street underpass; with no need to hold back dirt, the wall can now begin at grade on the 10th Avenue corner.

As there is no need for underground parking for Palliser South and by piggy-backing on the existing mechanical services, no sub-surface work is required, which means valued construction time can be saved. A 21-month schedule should have the new tower ready for occupancy by the fall of 2008.

Tower Centre is being redesigned and revitalized — check out the new city information space that is now open at the base of the tower — into what will become a striking complex of which we can all be proud.

The response to last week's comments on Calgary Parking Authority's purchase of a parking lot and office building along 3rd Avenue at 5th Street S.W. was quick and informative.

General manager **Dale Fraser** invited me down to discuss his plans for that site, which he says was bought with retained earnings and debt financing — no money was used from the cash-in-lieu operation.

The parking authority is looking at new technology and joint venture partnerships with developers to build this and other projects.

Plans are afoot to take out parking meters from downtown streets and replace them with pay machines along the blocks.

Fraser suggests one advantage would be that up to 200 vehicles could squeeze into

the curbside spaces.

Then he is looking at parkers registering their number plates so that tickets need not be issued; paying only for time used; using credit cards instead of cash; the ability to reserve spots at parkades by web or phone; and even finding available spots via Internet or in-car navigation.

He is in discussions with developers to build a mixed-use/parkade project on 10th Street N.W. and plans similar developments at 3rd Avenue (425 stalls) and on the surface lot the authority owns along 9th Avenue S.E., where the 4th Street underpass is to be built.

Unfortunately, they will all take too long to solve the current parking crunch, but help will come from the 177 extra stalls on the roof of Centennial Parkade and Fraser says he is proceeding right away with additional parking at his surface lot off Riverfront Avenue in Chinatown.

Today, there are 29 stalls there. A feng shui blessed redesign and extension under Centre Street Bridge will bring that number up to 64, plus new space for motorcycles.

Bev Shaw, owner of Creative Juices Communications Consulting, has just completed her term as president of the Calgary chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators and handed over the reins to **Shauna Lowery**, communications and stakeholder relations adviser for the Alberta Electric System.

An IABC member since 1995, Lowery heads a dynamic chapter with 440 members, making it the fifth largest of the 99 chapters around the world.

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