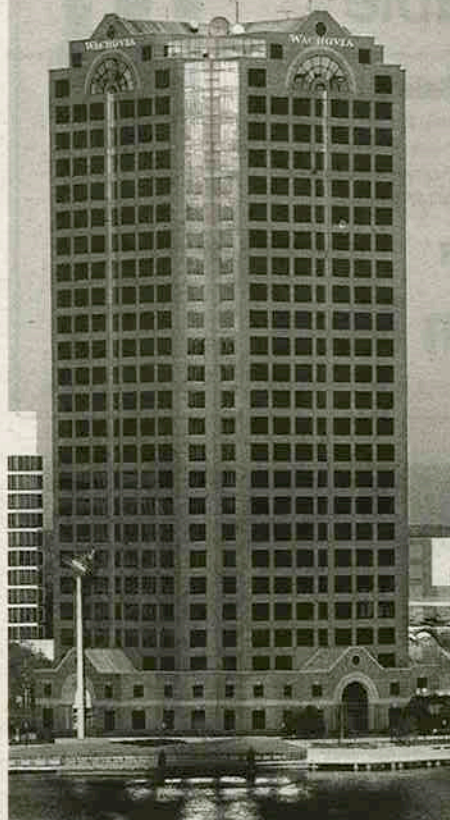


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The 11-story Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, which is under construction, will feature an executive boardroom with sweeping views of the 5-acre fountain at City Center in Newport News.

SARA LEWIS

## At City Center, expect the unexpected

With events and new shops, development puts the new in Newport News

By Sara Lewis

Something new is rising from the dust of construction in the heart of Newport News. At City Center, glass windows in office buildings reflect the Marriott Conference Center taking shape across the waters of a 5-acre fountain. A white-peaked canvas tent invites the community to sail away on a new wave of entertainment. Business tenants and customers are abuzz. In stores, merchants are unpacking an array

of wares. Around the corner, a jogger makes his way from his Park Place Apartment for a lap around the park.

Is this really Newport News?

According to William A. Hudgins, president of HL Development, an affiliate of NAI Harvey Lindsay, “The intent is to provide a public gathering space – a new downtown Newport News. We want the community to expect the unexpected here.”

As he awaits its grand opening scheduled for

March 2006, Hudgins says events are being created in partnership with the city of Newport News to draw people into the center.

“We scheduled events this fall including a performance by the Virginia Symphony,” Hudgins said. “The upcoming schedule strives to gather all ages and all cultures to the urban center during all seasons of the year.”

In the meantime, the first two of four construction phases appear to be coming alive with office

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tenants, retail merchants and apartment residents. The wide sidewalks and open spaces call out as venues for street entertainers and relaxed gatherings.

“When this place comes together – the combination of retail, residential, office and events – it’s going to be dynamic,” said Carol Berg of the Belgian Chocolatier. Along with co-owner Cindy Hazelton, Berg sees traffic picking up already at their recently opened shop.

Mixed-use urban centers across the country have had tremendous public response to events featuring groups and individual performers. City Center’s 2006 calendar of events will be available at the end of 2005 and can be viewed on the Web at CityCenteratOysterPoint.com.

“Events will have a seasonal strategy and also fit into the City Center master plan as buildings are being finished and venue surfaces can be free of construction,” Hudgins said.

The schedule will be diverse and – unexpected. “City Center is not just another shopping center,” Hudgins said. “Its components are part of a carefully defined master plan determined by the city of Newport News and the developer.”

NAI Harvey Lindsay is a part of Newport News Town Center LLC, which is developing City Center.

The development has easy access from Interstate 64 and is near the geographic center of

the city.

Hudgins sees City Center as distinct among mixed-use urban centers since it is one of the largest public-private developments on the East Coast.

“There are many examples of planned communities like City Center that have remained successful for more than 20 years,” Hudgins said, “and our development is reaping the benefit of their lessons learned.”

Sharon Durand and Alice Barker relocated their fine tableware boutique, The Perfect Setting, to City Center because they are sure this will be a vital shopping destination.

“Harvey Lindsay has a vision that is being laid out,” Durand said. “The developers are committed in their hearts to making this place thrive.”

Barker said the shop’s silk centerpieces have drawn customers into the store.

Likewise, Hudgins said he believes retail, office and residential tenants and owners are beginning to swirl around City Center’s dramatic fountain centerpiece.

“The synergy of components will circle around our small-scale urban mix with all the benefits of suburban life,” he said. “You will be able to walk from work to your favorite stores and restaurants.”

The City Center Market features Ceriello’s Fine Foods, Medik’s Market and other market specialties.

Hudgins said the City Center’s distinctiveness will emerge with the satisfaction of its tenants, resi-



The Belgian Chocolatier’s owners, Cindy Hazelton and Carol Berg, see business picking up during special events. Their shop (above) is among the retail development included in the City Center.

SARA LEWIS

dents and the community who visit the gathering place often for entertainment.

“City Center will appeal to more than the upper consumer tier from the retail mix to residential opportunities,” he said. “Because we are working closely with the city, our mission is to mirror the commitment of the mayor and the economic development authority to create a better quality of life for people living on the Peninsula. In City Center, we recognize that Newport News leaders are standing behind their

dreams, to bring partnership, to deliver.”

“People ask us all the time, ‘Do you think Newport News is ready for high-quality chocolate?’” said Berg of the Belgian Chocolatier. “I tell them yes. Our business is proof of the fact that Newport News customers want the quality we offer and are becoming regular customers.”

“People aren’t expecting it, but I see this becoming a hub,” Berg said. “City Center will change the way people think about Newport News.” **IB**