“There is a concerted effort to get the shoreline right the first time,” Hannon added. “The surprisingly strong current [of the Columbia], the shipping lanes being so close to shore and natural erosion will be accounted for from the beginning.”

TERRACING and steps along with methods of armoring along the shoreline will bolster the banks. Otherwise, the river’s edge will be left in as natural a state as possible.

Design cues for the park and much of the new development will capture the character of the Columbia River itself, the historical culture of Vancouver and public art from local artists.

Such a major undertaking cannot happen overnight. The waterfront project will unfold in phases over the next several years. Finalized designs and construction readiness are set to be completed this summer and fall. The first construction is underway – the expansion of Esther and Grant streets which slip under a pair of new railroad bridges. These will be two of three streets that will connect downtown with this section of the waterfront.

Private development in the new space is slated to break ground next spring with work on the park itself in the summer of 2015. The first phase of the park should be finished the following summer.

Gramor Development is leading the $1.3 billion project.

“Working with the city has been great. They are ‘all in’ on this project,” said Barry Cain, president of the Tualatin-based development company.

Being an instrumental part of the vision of the project since the beginning has been extremely helpful throughout the planning process, Cain said.

“Coordinating all the phases of construction – roads, the park and the buildings, helps to make all the projects work together,” he said.

On schedule

According to both Cain and Hannon, the waterfront park, along with the rest of the 32-acre project, is tracking along according to schedule.

A proposed oil terminal at the Port of Vancouver was one of few concerns throughout the process, Cain admitted. However, the developer said he is confident that it won’t be an issue moving forward.

“Funding, funding, funding,” Hannon said, referencing the only other challenge the project has grappled with.

Grants for infrastructure improvements to the major arterial roadways, connector streets and walking paths have been critical to the initial phase of the project.

A timeline

Delivering a premium venue for new businesses, shops and living spaces from reclaiming a forgotten industrial site will be a major change for Vancouver’s southern most edge. Here is how the timeline is to unfold:

Railway Phase
– began in 2011, completed

Roadway Phase
– began in 2013, 2 of 3 roadways completed

Finalize Park Design
– Fall 2014

Private Development Construction Begins
– Spring 2015

Phase One Park Construction Begins
– Summer 2015

Phase One Park Construction Complete
– Summer 2016

Phase Two Park Construction
– TBA
are not where you want to find an architect or engineer. The design and construction industry is well-suited for offering and receiving reliable referrals. Experienced and qualified architects and engineers have proven themselves on past projects, demonstrating their competencies to the contractors, design professionals and owners of those projects. These are the people from whom you want referrals. Architects usually hire their own sub-consultants. Want a great referral for an engineer? Ask an architect. Engineers often work with multiple architects and can compare and contrast their skills and attributes. Want a great referral for an architect? Ask an engineer. And don’t forget contractors, who can assess the “constructability” of an architect’s or engineer’s designs, something that will directly affect the bids for your project.

4. One size does not fit all
Many small design firms are formed when the principal of a larger firm breaks away to form a new firm. These smaller firms often possess a wealth of industry knowledge and experience. The owner of a smaller firm may be more frequently involved with your project, representing an opportunity to receive more customized and personal services. A larger firm may be the right fit for your project when the schedule is aggressive and large quantities of human resources are needed over a shorter period of time. A larger firm also offers increased staff redundancy, which may prove beneficial for a long duration project, or for projects that require near-constant accessibility to the design team. Either way, don’t confuse firm size with experience or competency. Instead, focus upon the professional experience and attributes of the individuals within those firms that would consult on your project.

5. Don’t consider personalities
A building design and construction project can often last many months, and even years. Life is short, and we spend a large part of our waking hours working to support our families. Overlooking the human aspect of the design team can often lead to a sense of drudgery, or even resistance, when project meetings and similar commitments are needed. Can you personally work well with the prospective architect and engineers? Is this a person that will be an asset to the project team chemistry? When there’s a problem, can you trust them to work with you honestly and effectively? If needed, could the engineer or architect be called upon to clearly articulate complex design options to non-technical decision makers? While technical competency is paramount, don’t forget to consider the personality behind the stamp.

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