

by **Remy Scalza**

photography by **Brian Howell**

On a recent Sunday afternoon, a free tasting of fortified wines has lured the thirsty and curious into Legacy Liquor Store, the cavernous new 8,600-square-foot private store in the heart of Olympic Village, now officially known as the Village on False Creek. Couples with monstrous strollers, the young and bearded of Mount Pleasant, and seniors in track suits and dark glasses crowd the granite-topped bar in back, sipping a mid-priced reserve from Jerez.

"I always think of this one as butter tarts in a glass," says 31-year-old Legacy general manager Darryl Lamb, uncorking a bottle behind the bar. "With a little crème brûlée, flan, even Fig Newtons, it's magic." A line has formed, curling back through elaborate displays of craft beer and a maze of well-stocked wine racks. Between pours, Lamb explains that the healthy turnout today is hardly unusual: "The amount of walk-in traffic since we opened in November has been unbelievable. We're already months and months ahead of our sales projections."

In the throes of receivership, against a backdrop of lawsuits from jilted condo buyers and lingering controversies about concessions to developers and taxpayer-shouldered losses, the Olympic Village development and the surrounding Southeast False Creek neighbourhood (stretching from the Cambie Bridge to Main Street, and from False Creek to West Second Avenue) are quietly getting on with the business of business. Proximity to downtown, ample mass transit and an ambitious residential plan all seem to augur well for the area's commercial future. "Developers are creating a lot of density and a lot of residential activity," says Tsur Somerville, director of the Centre for Urban Economics and Real Estate at UBC's Sauder School of Business. "The fact that there are no readily accessible amenities there right now creates an excellent environment for retailers to go into."



RETAIL RAMP-UP:
Olympic Village residents don't have a grocery store, but Darryl Lamb oversees one of B.C.'s biggest selections of liquor

It Takes a Village

A year after the Olympics, life is starting to appear on the business landscape of Southeast False Creek — slowly

corporate profile

McQuarrie Hunter LLP



Photoed from left to right: Ted Pearce, Managing Partner and Wade Winkler, Partner.

A Legal Linchpin for the Fraser Valley

McQuarrie Hunter LLP is the Fraser Valley's largest law firm and a champion for Surrey's evolving downtown core. The firm has supported B.C.'s second major metropolis since the 1950s, when founding partner Ted Pearce built a base there. Four firms merged in 1967 to create McQuarrie Hunter and the practice has since blossomed south of the Fraser River.

Last December, McQuarrie Hunter's three offices became one on the 15th floor of North Surrey's Central City Tower. "Surrey is B.C.'s second-largest city but, being so spread out, it didn't present as a major urban centre," says Ted Pearce, McQuarrie Hunter's managing partner. "That's changing with the focus on a new downtown core."

"We now have 27 lawyers and 55 staff based at Central City, while New Westminster - McQuarrie Hunter's former HQ, where a third of our partners live - is only a 10-minute SkyTrain ride away. We have some of the region's brightest lawyers, serving clients locally but also across B.C. and Canada."

McQuarrie Hunter provides a broad array of legal services to its extensive community including business law, real estate, land development, family law and personal injury claims. The firm is focused on continuing its rise as a regional force.

"Our commercial clients are small- to large-sized businesses and we also assist thousands of individuals," says Ted Pearce. "Our new modern office and facilities enable us to better assist our clients, while also helping attract the best lawyers and legal support staff."

To help turn the pages in its new chapter, McQuarrie Hunter has hired the experienced Catherine Jacobs as its chief operating officer. With Jacobs leading the management team, McQuarrie Hunter's partners and associates can now channel more focus into their client needs.

For more information about McQuarrie Hunter LLP, visit www.mcquarrie.com or call 604-581-7001.



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Rosy retail forecasts

are currently tempered, however, by a simple metric: in and around Olympic Village, there are still few residents. The Southeast False Creek neighbourhood is projected to house 12,000 Vancouverites in 6,200 residential units by 2020, putting it roughly on par with current-day Oakridge or West Point Grey. For now, however, the area remains a post-industrial mash-up of vacant lots and rusting mills, eerily empty new mid-rises and construction sites. Just 1,300 people currently reside in Southeast False Creek, according to city estimates. And even after an aggressive round of fire sales, at the time of writing 48 per cent of available Village condos were still unsold, according to a media representative of Rennie Marketing Systems. A far greater percentage remain unoccupied.

Back outside of Legacy, the Village's signature community plaza - buttressed by mid-rises and open to False Creek - is nearly empty on a sunny afternoon. Two young children make a game of climbing Myfanwy MacLeod's outsized sparrow sculptures, using the tail feathers as slides. The restored Salt Building, a bright red reminder of False Creek's industrial past, remains shuttered, signs stubbornly promising a restaurant that has yet to materialize. And more than a year after athletes vacated the Village with their haul of Olympic gold, silver and bronze, shop windows flanking the plaza are still papered over, the unfinished walls and girders inside shrouded from public view.

But the tipping point may be nearing. "Whenever you're building a development like this in time for the Olympics, you're doing it in an order that's a little different from what the market would suggest," says Brent Toderian, director of planning for the

City of Vancouver. Toderian has addressed Olympic Village concerns before, and when he speaks it's with the passion of a father defending a sadly misunderstood child: "There's a great long-term vision here that just requires a little patience." Despite appearances of hasty execution, he explains, Southeast False Creek's master plan has in fact been in the works since 1991, when city councillors first issued a mandate for the new neighbourhood to be built as a "model of sustainability, incorporating forward-thinking infrastructure, strategic energy reduction, high-performance buildings and high transit access."

Olympic Village, the source of so much hand-wringing in recent years, occupies just part of one of three ambitious devel-

Opposite Olympic Village, just across West First Avenue, all 557 units of the four-tower, yet-to-be-built Wall Centre False Creek have pre-sold, and 60 per cent of Pinnacle Living's planned 133-unit, 13-storey second building have sold. Nearer Main Street, in the area planners call the Rail Yard, two towers, one of which will be 24 storeys tall, are slated to be built around the old Opsal Steel building. And at First and Main, a 12-storey, 129-unit city-owned social housing building primarily for low-income individuals climbs higher every day.

"In my opinion, it's the best new urban public space we've created in a generation along the waterfront," Toderian says, pointing out the new seawall, SkyTrain access at Olympic Village and Science World, and the



MISSING MASSES: The condos need to fill up before early-entry businesses can win big

opment zones in Southeast False Creek: the so-called Ship Yard. Unencumbered by controversy, construction and sales in the rest of the neighbourhood are proceeding at a frenetic pace. The raw numbers alone tell the story of a small city waiting in the wings. In the Works Yard, a development zone at the foot of the Cambie Bridge, the new Maynards Block residential towers, totalling 254 units, are quickly rising and are already 70 per cent sold. One block over, the 13-storey, 155-unit James building is 60 per cent sold, while the 10-storey, 105-unit Pinnacle Living building is 85 per cent sold. Nearby, work has also begun on an 11-storey, 147-unit social housing facility for addicts and the mentally ill, at the former site of the Party Bazaar novelty store.

diversity of housing stock. "The liquor store was the first retail to go in, but more will follow." Indeed, signs of a quickening retail pulse are already evident. Next to Legacy, banners announce a new 2,100-square-foot Terra Breads café opening on July 1. Across the plaza, security scanners and entry doors have been installed for the long-awaited London Drugs, whose opening remains contingent on increased occupancy in the Village. A new restaurant called the Village Kitchen is slated to begin serving in the Creekside Community Recreation Centre in 2012. And negotiations continue to secure a grocery store for Olympic Village, which Toderian considers "the most important anchor" of the community. "It becomes not only the retail destination for the neighbourhood but

the social heart," he says, "where people interact and meet future spouses."

But city planners and retail specialists alike are quick to point out that Southeast False Creek will never be a true commercial hub in the mould of Robson Street or even Yaletown. Successful retailers will be those that focus on serving the needs of the immediate community rather than larger, destination stores that woo clientele from afar. "You don't want to get too specialized," warns retail strategist David Ian Gray of Vancouver's DIG360 Consulting Ltd. "Southeast False Creek is not a destination area. You're really limited to the population of the community." Coffee shops, takeout restaurants, convenience stores, dry cleaners and small-scale pharmacies all make a good fit. And even these retailers should be prepared initially for lean times. "You better get a really good deal on the lease, and you better have some cash to wait it out for a while," says Gray.

But a wild card could shift that dynamic. A long-planned but yet unfunded streetcar running along the First Avenue median and onward to Science World, Gastown and the convention centre would fundamentally alter the commercial dynamic in the neighbourhood. "It would bring Olympic Village right into the ground zero of tourist activity, as well as make it more accessible to average Vancouver citizens," says Patrick Condon, James Taylor chair in landscape and livable environments at UBC, citing city studies showing hundreds of thousands of tourists would use the corridor. "But barring that, it's a little out of the way, isn't it?"

Back inside Legacy, the crowd from the afternoon tasting has thinned, leaving bar tables cluttered with used glasses and crumpled napkins. A few remaining patrons roam the expanses of the store, wandering the cool recesses of the cold beer room and browsing five-tiered shelves of high-end tequila and Scotch. With 700 ales and lagers, 800 varieties of liquor and 1,500 wines, Legacy has what Lamb claims to be the largest alcohol selection in B.C., everything from back-vintage Bordeaux from the '80s to bottles of 40-year-old Glenglassaugh single malt. But for now its hottest items are decidedly less esoteric. "One of my top sellers is OJ," Lamb says. "There's still nowhere around here to get pop and bottled water and stuff like that. I'd sell milk and eggs too, but my licensing doesn't allow it."

Village People

THREE SMALL BUSINESSES
BETTING ON THE FUTURE OF
SOUTHEAST FALSE CREEK

The Opportunist

Sin Bin Sports Grill

the handwritten caption beneath the photo tacked to the bulletin board at the Sin Bin Sports Grill says, The Famous Ski Shot. In the picture, six members of the U.S. women's hockey team have precariously balanced shot glasses on a cross-country ski resting on the bar. The background shows red-faced athletes draped in Maple Leaves and country flags cheering the drinkers on. "We were operating 24 hours a day during the Olympics and didn't close for three weeks," says 28-year-old owner Chris Hall, who opened the grill in June 2009 on West Second Avenue at Crowe Street, with an eye to being the nearest bar to the Olympic Village and its 3,000 thirsty residents during the Games. "We went through 135 kegs of Granville Island beer during the month of February."

On a recent weekend afternoon, more than a year removed from Olympic madness, the mood inside the Sin Bin is considerably more sedate. A wan grey light filters through the windows, illuminating the lunchtime crowd: young guys hunched around pitchers of beer, older couples and families, many on their way to or from *Cavalria*, a horse show being staged nearby in a tent at the base of the Cambie Bridge. Canucks jerseys and giant foam fingers hang on the wall, and above the bar a sign reads Free Beer – Tomorrow. Two girls pick disinterestedly at an enormous plate of nachos.

"The thought was that as soon as the Olympics was over there'd be a two- to three-month turnaround and then everyone would move into those

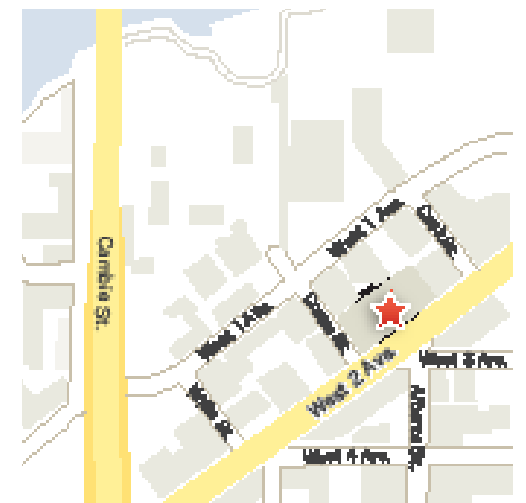
A SPORTING CHANCE:
New locals have been slow
to fill the seats left by
Olympic athletes at Chris
Hall's Sin Bin sports bar



condos," explains Hall, who also owns a speed-dating service called Rendezvous Club. Instead, Olympic Village condos remained unsold, and the double whammy of the new HST and tough new drinking-and-driving laws in the wake of the Games conspired to keep patrons away.

But 2011 has seen an uptick in business, fuelled partly by hungry construction workers labouring on the 155-unit, 13-storey James building rising just behind the bar, and the 105-unit, 10-storey Pinnacle Living building next door. Proximity to the Olympic Village Canada Line station has contributed to walk-in traffic, which Hall hopes will increase as more residents move into Southeast False Creek. And the Canucks' record-breaking season has kept taps flowing at the sports-themed bar.

This afternoon, on a late-model projection TV glowing feebly on one wall, the Virginia Rams are completing an improbable upset of the Kansas Jayhawks in a U.S. college basketball tournament. The TV is muted, and no one seems to be watching. "We've been doing OK," Hall says, resigned by now to his post-Olympic reality. "But it would definitely be nice if that Village was full."





METALWORKING:
False Creek was once
Vancouver's industrial
heart; now it's home to
Tammy Morris's pole-
dancing fitness centre

The Early Adopter

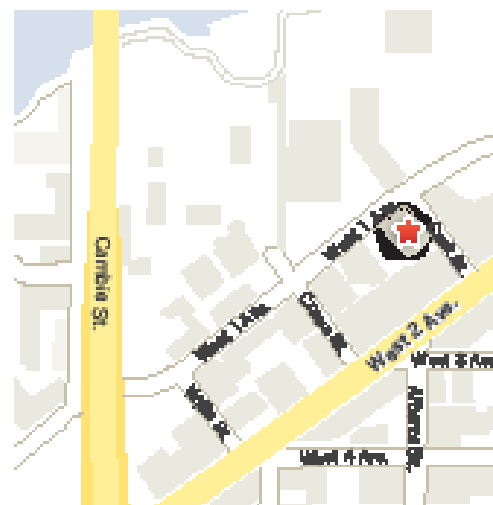
Tantra Fitness

With a quick jump, Crystal Lai, 2010 Miss Pole Dance Canada and an instructor at Tantra Fitness, vaults to the apex of one of the studio's 10-foot brass poles. Then she flips, clinging upside down with a single, well-muscled calf. "It's all about skin friction and upper-body strength," she says. A co-ed class, gathered for a Friday afternoon "Jack-and-Jill" session, watches as she arches her back, extends her legs and thrusts out a fist in a Superman pose.

Tantra Fitness, a pole-dancing fitness studio, occupies a nondescript low-rise on Cook Street, just opposite the rusting steel shell of what was once Vancouver Mill Machinery Ltd. "It was a little rough when we first started," says 37-year-old owner Tammy Morris, who opened the studio in 2005, well before False Creek's bright Olympic future was ordained. Morris, an exotic dancer for 16 years and *Playboy* model (as well as the woman behind the 2003 J-Lo/Ben Affleck, or Bennifer, breakup), had stopped dancing and was teaching pole fitness out of her home when she took a chance on the location. "Lease rates were competitive, and I knew the area was eventually going to be developed," she says.

Initially the studio's lone instructor, as well as de facto receptionist and publicist, Morris contended with break-ins and strung-out street addicts early on and remembers a squatter camp of homeless people in the sprawling city works yard down the block. But her niche fitness offering attracted clientele from as far away as Coquitlam, Richmond and North Vancouver, and being situated along Second Avenue bus routes and an easy drive from highways 1 and 99 proved a boon for business. "We even have unmetered parking, which is unheard of for downtown," Morris says.

Now, yellow-and-white cranes clutter the skyline behind Tantra, sprouting new high-rise residential towers around the foot of the Cambie Bridge. The studio employs 15 instructors to handle its more than 500 students and has expanded its repertoire beyond the pole to embrace cardio striptease, burlesque and lap dancing. Morris added daytime classes in April to capitalize on interest from new neighbours in Olympic Village, in particular stay-at-home moms. Though lease rates have more than doubled since opening, she has no plans to move. "I think anyone who stuck with the area deserves to reap the benefits now," she says.



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corporate profile

Taylor/Spice Wealth Management Group



Photoed from left to right: Kristin Spice, Dan Taylor, and Stacy Anderson

Investment Advice Beyond the Ordinary

If you're seeking a unique approach to wealth management - a service that's personal, professional and absolutely reliable - look no further than the Taylor/Spice Wealth Management Group.

The practice, co-founded by financial experts Dan Taylor and Kristin Spice and now including Associate Stacy Anderson, offers 40 years of collective experience and was built on the belief that clients deserve a more comprehensive approach to the management of their financial affairs - particularly in a temperamental economic climate.

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"Our team brings a full range of professional investment expertise, to develop comprehensive, customized programs designed to manage risk and taxes, build income and generate long-term capital growth."

Collaborating closely with its clients to deliver value, consistency and peace of mind is something the Taylor/Spice Wealth Management Group prides itself on - along with adding a distinctly personal touch.

"Our comprehensive and stress-free solution is infused with personal care for each client and his or her family's goals," says Kristin Spice, Associate Portfolio Manager. "The entire group works closely with them - and the other trusted professionals they employ - to ensure their financial affairs are structured effectively and satisfy every unique need."

Going forward, the Taylor/Spice Wealth Management Group will continue refining its service, including helping clients master the modern technology arsenal to keep their financial affairs healthy and thriving.

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To find out more about how the Taylor/Spice Wealth Management Group can help you, contact Dan, Kristin or Stacy at: 604-941-4589.

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THE UNCOOKED TRUTH: Preet Marwaha's raw food is attracting customers to this converted old warehouse from miles around



"life force." "We have no competition in the Lower Mainland," explains 40-year-old owner Preet Marwaha, a one-time telecom executive who converted to a raw-food diet after a sustained illness and then decided to open OrganicLives. "Customers come all the way from Chilliwack, Mission and Squamish because there's nowhere else to go."

Shelves in the former warehouse are stocked with hemp protein powders, heirloom Ecuadorian cacao butter and Himalayan salt crystals that look like precious gems. Plots of wheat grass grow in the bottom of refrigerator cases and line cooks with heavily tattooed arms arrange bean sprouts into neat stacks for tapas platters. Behind the whole-earth esthetic is an ambitious business plan embracing retail and online sales, on-site food manufacturing, cooking classes and wholesale to major vendors including Vancouver's four Whole Foods Market stores.

"The results we achieved in the first year are unheard of, particularly in our area," says Marwaha, noting that OrganicLives reached \$1 million in revenue after just eight months of operations and broke even after its first year. The decision to open in Southeast False Creek was critical to success, he says. Main Street and Second Avenue provide important arteries for customers driving in. Residential growth in the neighbourhood has meant additional walk-in clientele. And importantly, lease rates are roughly one-third of what they would be for an equivalent space in Yaletown, Marwaha says.

"Olympic Village is going to take time to build out," he says. "But in two or three or maybe five years, this place is going to be absolutely hopping." ■

The Optimist

OrganicLives

At OrganicLives, a raw-food café and store opposite the gutted Opsal Steel building on Quebec Street at East Second Avenue, MacBook laptops are *de rigueur*. The Apple logo glows from crowded tables clustered on a bare concrete floor. At the counter, a smiling barista in a crisp white chef's jacket lists the ingredients of the café's signature smoothie for me: cacao, maca, mesquite, lucuma, tocotrienol. Then she translates: "It's just like a chocolate milkshake but with superfoods instead of bad stuff."

Since opening in December 2009, OrganicLives has attracted a fiercely loyal following among organic and raw-food enthusiasts, not to mention the gluten, dairy and soy averse. Virtually nothing made on-site - not the vegetarian lasagnas nor the curries nor even the chocolate macaroons - is heated above 29 degrees Celsius, preserving what raw foodists describe as nature's