

Contractor jumps through final hoop to get construction site fence approved

Carolyn Heiman, Times Colonist

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It took seven months to get the sign approved, but a Humboldt Valley construction site is now circled by a fence wrap with peek-a-boo holes for passersby to check out the activity.

Jim Pearson, chief executive officer of Aviawest, admits being a bit surprised by the resistance the fence plans got at Victoria city council.

Pearson said he's not opposed to Victoria's tough sign bylaws but didn't expect to have to pass through so many hoops for the approval of a 122-metre temporary sign intended to beautify a construction site.

Similar to many North American cities, Victoria has regulations governing the size and lighting of business signs. The fence wrap, although temporary and made of fabric, came under the rules.

The council wanted the signs to have more images and general information about the project than straight advertising. The approved fence wrap has photos on it but also a range of information about the project, including its intention to achieve a platinum Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating from the Canada Green Building Council, and that the resort and spa will house plants rescued from the Crystal Garden conservatory.

Coun. Pam Madoff, one of the staunchest defenders of tough sign rules, said she doesn't like the fence.

"It comes down to esthetics. It still feels like it is designed for an advertising point of view."

Madoff said other Canadian cities, including Montreal, offer hoarding and construction site coverage that is pleasing to look at and can include heritage streetscapes and art images.

The \$75-million Parkside, at the corner of Humboldt and Blanshard streets and Fairfield Road, is Victoria's first fractional ownership project, a concept that is increasing in popularity and is part of a \$1.65-billion global market, Pearson said.

He said 95 per cent of the first building is sold and the second building, originally intended to be put into Aviawest's time-share inventory, is also up for sale.

Pearson said higher-than-expected construction costs have compelled the company to also sell the second building.

Construction on Parkside was to be complete in 2006. Following a change in contractors, it is now expected to be finished by spring 2008. Pearson said costs jumped by 30 per cent over the last two years.

Parkside will have 126 units, most sold between \$126,000 and \$275,000 for a quarter-share. A handful of properties will be whole ownership and sold for around \$1.1 million.



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Charlie McKinnon peeks through a hole in a cloth fence surrounding the Parkside Victoria Resort and Spa construction site in the Humboldt Valley area of downtown Victoria.

John McKay. Times Colonist

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