

# Amazon's transformative office complex in downtown Vancouver nears completion (PHOTOS/VIDEOS)



[Kenneth Chan](#) | May 26 2023



Artistic rendering of the retail concourse of The Post (left) and construction progress as of May 18, 2023 (right). (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)

This is Part One of a [two-part series](#) on the single largest office development project in Vancouver's history.

*Part Two: Full basketball court and dog parks on rooftop of Amazon's new Vancouver office at The Post (PHOTOS, VIDEOS)*

The Post carries at least five superlatives for its local economic significance and design.

Spanning a city block immediately north of Library Square, it is the single largest office building in Metro Vancouver, with 1.1 million sq ft of office space — enabling the single largest critical mass of employment in downtown Vancouver.

The entire office space component is leased to Amazon, which has designated this building as its main corporate office hub in Vancouver.

It has the largest office floor plates in downtown Vancouver and the largest total rooftop outdoor amenity space for workers in any office building in Metro Vancouver.

Below the office levels, The Post will also introduce the single largest net gain in commercial retail/restaurant space in the downtown Vancouver peninsula in more than two decades, ever since the construction of the International Village Mall.

And there could be just one more superlative, specifically relating to the heritage design. Graeme Scott, the vice president of mixed-use development for Quadreal Property Group, believes this is the most ambitious heritage redevelopment in Canada's history.

It was just over a decade ago that the federal government sold the historic Canada Post building to British Columbia Investment Management Corporation, which then created its wholly owned real estate development firm, called Quadreal Property Group, to manage and maximize the potential of its real estate investments.

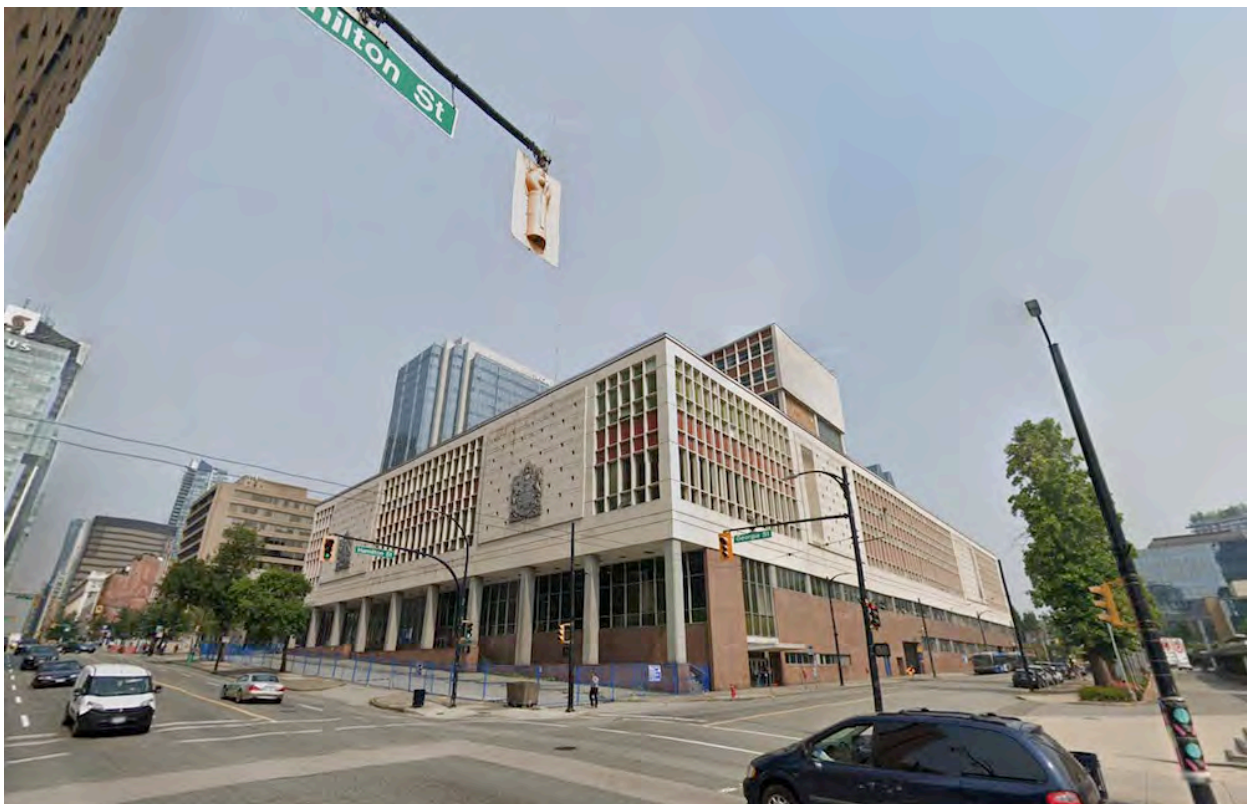
Shortly after the acquisition and Canada Post's relocation to a new modern facility at Vancouver International Airport, the legendary 730-metre-long tunnel between the building and Waterfront Station was filled in. It previously had a conveyance system to transport mail and packages for the final leg to the processing facility after arriving by train.

The acquisition and redevelopment of the Canada Post building is amongst the pension fund-owned development firm's flagship properties within its growing worldwide portfolio.

In its previous original life, the 1958-built complex was constructed to industrial warehouse standards for its purpose as a logistics and distribution hub for Canada Post's operations in Western Canada. The steel skeleton of the building was strong enough to support the weight of large postal trucks driving up from the building's internal ramps and onto the floors.

The Post's main contractor, PCL Constructors, has reached substantial completion on the redevelopment as of earlier this month, with work now shifting towards furnishing and outfitting the interior spaces.

***Previous condition:***



August 2018: Old Canada Post building before redevelopment. (Google Maps)

**New condition:**



April 2023: The Post redevelopment. (Google Maps)



Exterior of The Post; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



Exterior of The Post; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)

During an on-site construction progress tour and interview with Daily Hive Urbanized last week, Scott showed how the redevelopment is a mix of the old and new beyond the typical heritage preservation method of only retaining and restoring the exterior facade.

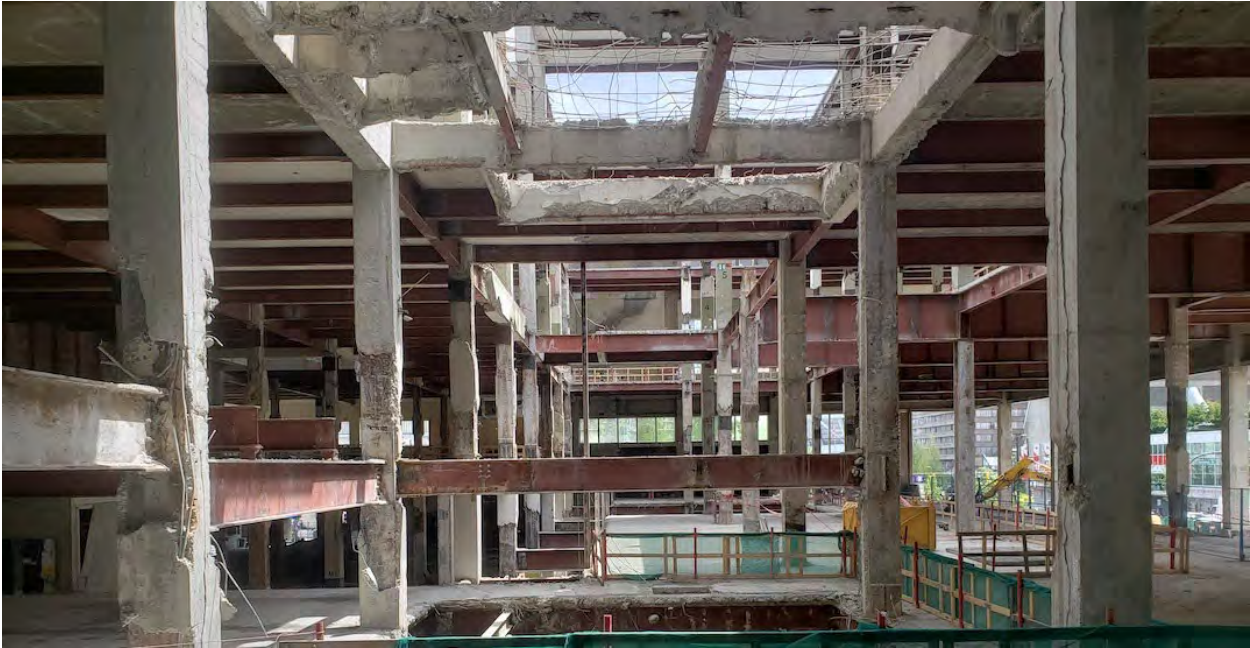
“We didn’t do façadism,” said Scott. “When people take care of heritage buildings, they often just leave a piece on the street that people recognize, whether it be the door, walls, and windows. We kept a large portion of the structure.”

While the building was stripped and gutted to enable the various new mixed commercial-only uses, the retainment of the building’s barebones meant about 50,000 cubic feet of demolition waste was prevented. If the entire building were to be demolished for brand-new construction, an additional 7,000 truck trips would be required.

When it comes to emissions considerations, the decision to save the structure prevented 23,000 tonnes of carbon from concrete and over 2,000 tonnes of carbon from steel. Along with various sustainable design features, The Post is expected to see a LEED Gold green building certification.

“We think one of the most amazing things we’ve been able to accomplish, other than the fact that it is probably the most ambitious historical redevelopment in Canada, is truly our commitment to our sustainability and innovation,” said Scott.

**June 2019 construction progress of gutting the previous interior:**



Construction progress on the Canada Post redevelopment in downtown Vancouver on June 10, 2019. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



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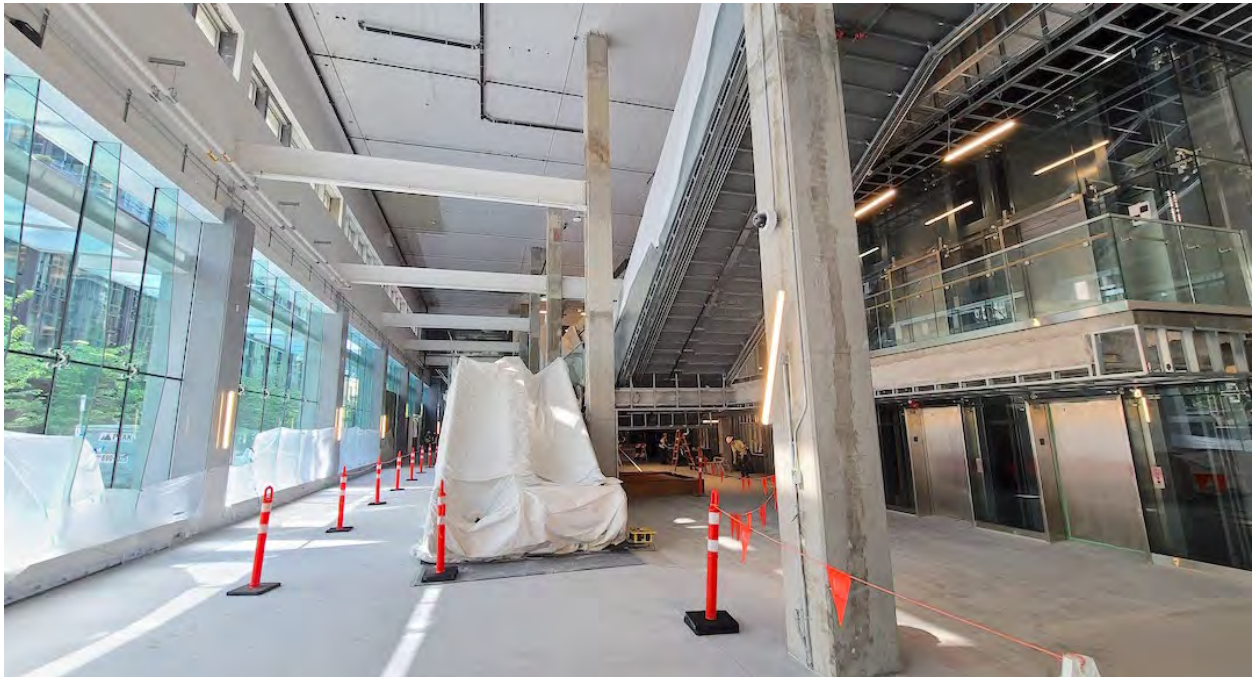


Construction progress on the Canada Post redevelopment in downtown Vancouver on June 10, 2019. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



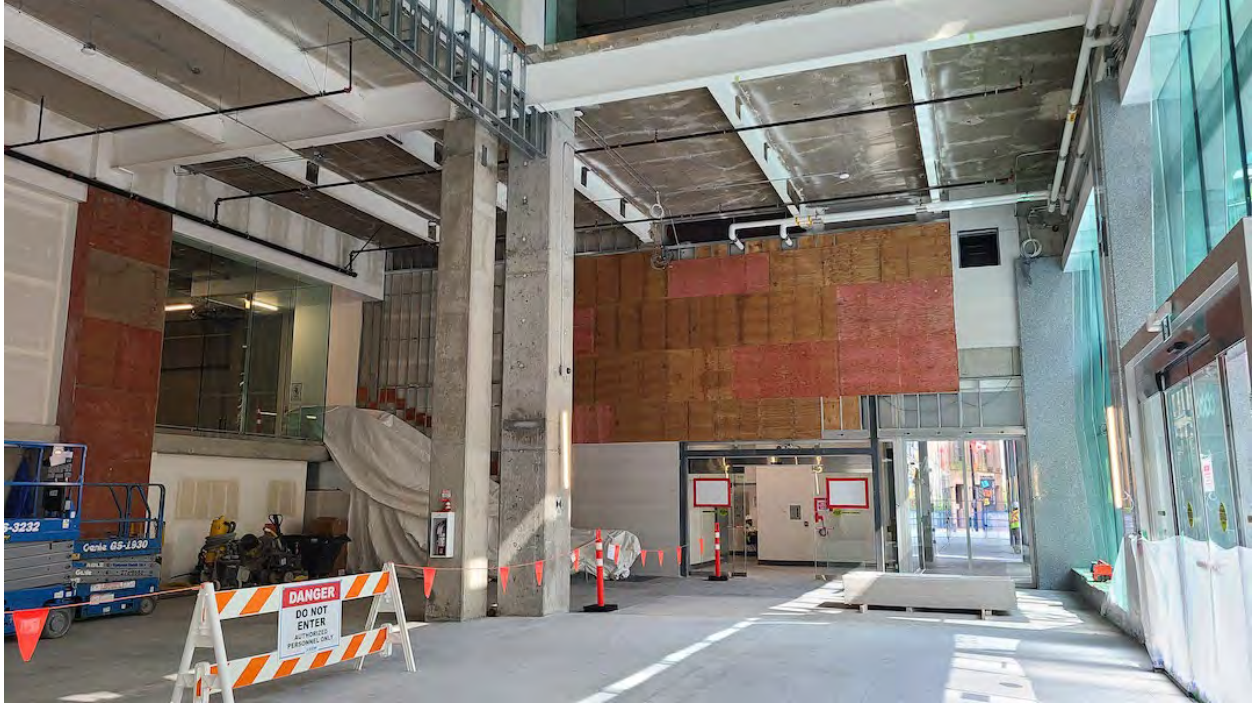
Construction progress on the Canada Post redevelopment in downtown Vancouver on March 26, 2019. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)

***May 2023 construction progress:***



Future retail concourse of The Post; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)





Future retail concourse of The Post; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



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Internal structural steel frames of the original building that used to be encased in concrete have now been exposed in the vast indoor retail concourse, which spans the length of the building's Homer Street (west) frontage. Protective paint has been applied to this common publicly accessible space to showcase its past use as a warehouse.

"Almost none of this is new — this is all historic and repaired," said Scott, when pointing out the design features of the retail concourse.

This atrium is the main circulation area over multiple lower levels to access about 185,000 sq ft of commercial retail and restaurant uses.

An expansive glass wall in the retail concourse will provide open visibility to the [Loblaws City Market, which is deemed to be a flagship location at 47,000 sq ft](#) — amongst the chain's largest locations behind Maple Leaf Gardens in downtown Toronto.

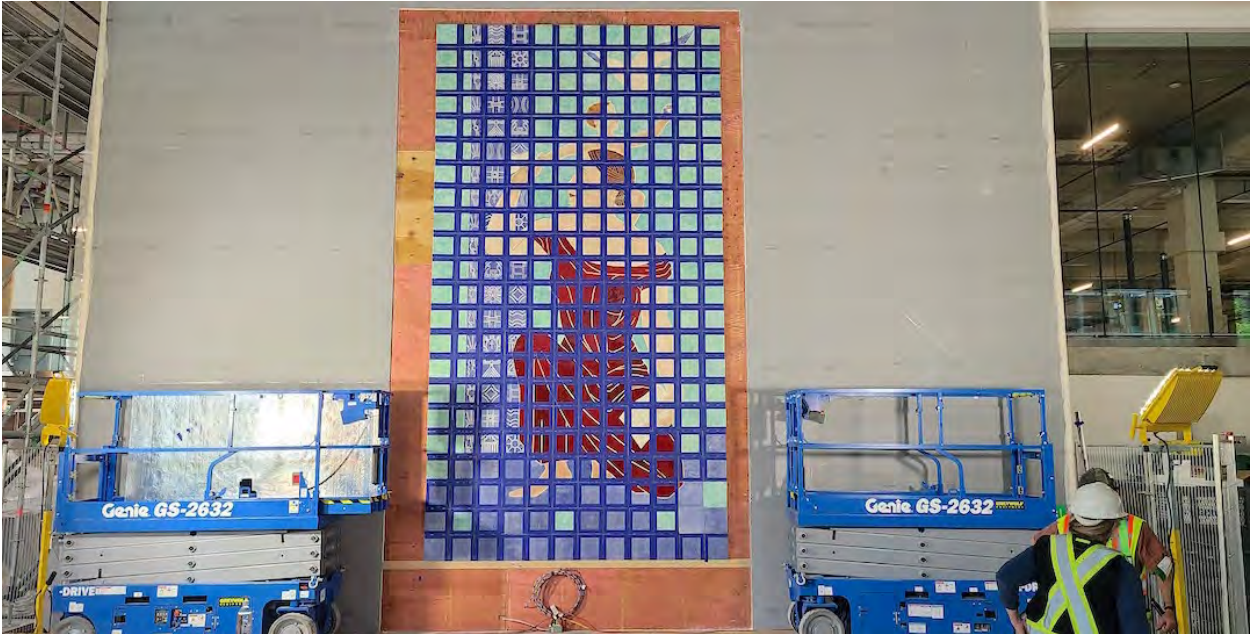
Island kiosks in the middle of the retail concourse — finished with impressive terrazzo flooring — will bring further life to the space for tenants such as Oakberry smoothies, along with accompanying ample seating areas. A standalone kiosk area on the Homer Street side has been leased to Deville Coffee.

Also expect glass concealed enclosures to exhibit art, including the permanent home of the [LEGO model of The Post commissioned by Amazon](#).

Original art from the building's past has also been preserved, restored, and reassembled, including two works by Paul Huba and one work by Orville Fisher.

Huba's "The Postman," previously found on the building's Homer Street side, has been relocated to the Hamilton Street side. This carved granite depiction of a postman is just one of numerous nods to the building's historic use, including the preservation of real metal mailboxes that previously lined the walls of the post office's public kiosk area on the southwest corner of the building. The mailboxes will be reassembled within a central space of the retail concourse at ground level.

Careful installation work is in the process of being performed on Huba's ceramic-tile mural called "Mural of a Woman and Child." It will be located near the northern end of the retail concourse. Additionally, Fisher's untitled mural painting illustrating the changes in how mail is transported will find its new permanent home at the south end of the retail concourse.



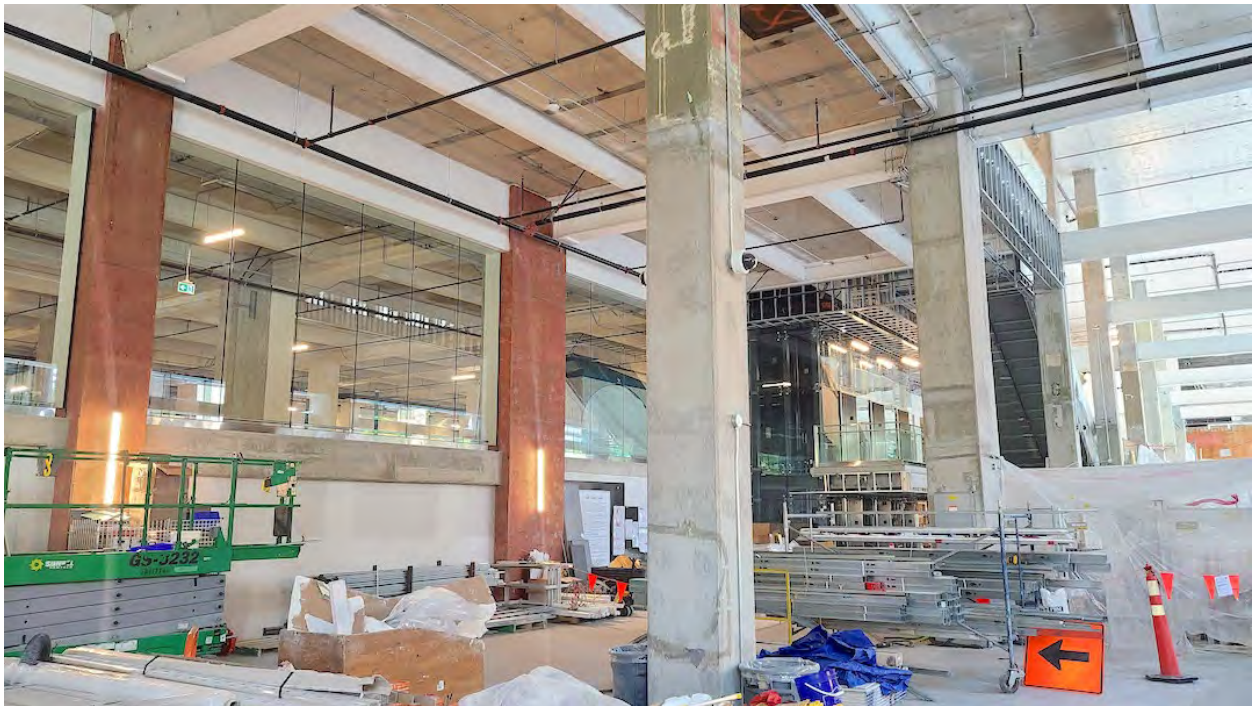
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Other anchor tenants within the retail/restaurant spaces of The Post include a food hall and a fitness gym.

The [food hall, operated by Surrey-based Joseph Richard Group \(JRG\)](#), will be located in a high-ceiling, partially underground volume on the Hamilton Street (east) side of the complex. This 26,000 sq ft food and beverage destination — the first of its kind in downtown Vancouver, going far beyond a traditional food court — promises to be one of the city's most electric spaces, with the chic interior design greatly enhanced by

being the [new permanent home of 22 vintage neon signs from Vancouver's past](#). These neon signs were previously restored and exhibited at the Museum of Vancouver's "Neon Vancouver Ugly Vancouver" exhibition.

JRG is also the operator of three other spaces in the building, including two spaces within the retail concourse and a large restaurant at the southeast corner of the building.

On a portion of the upper level of the retail concourse's atrium, [Evolve Strength](#) has leased 36,000 sq ft of space for one of the Alberta-based fitness gym chain's first two locations in this region — occupying the Dunsmuir Street (north) side of the level, which is also dedicated to office and other retail uses.

On the West Georgia Street (south) side of the building, a small surface parking lot that fronted the street is now a terraced public plaza, with steps providing seating opportunities. It acknowledges the municipal government's vision of enhancing West Georgia Street as the "ceremonial avenue" of downtown Vancouver.

The street entrance into [Fogo de Chao](#) will be located from this public plaza. This will be the first Canadian location of the internationally-renowned restaurant chain, which is known for its authentic Southern Brazilian steakhouse experience.

The retail/restaurant uses are located within the lower levels of the retained heritage base podium, which is the original Canada Post building volume. The upper levels of the podium are used for some internal vehicle parking (accessed through a spiral ramp from Hamilton Street) and Amazon's first two office levels.

As for the heritage exterior, Scott notes extensive work has been performed to repair, clean, and stabilize the facade, including work to re-pin the entire perimeter for seismic considerations.

"Basically, we reset the podium for the next 50 years," said Scott.

The pair of Royal Coat of Arms of Canada found on the West Georgia Street facade were never taken down during construction, but like all features of the building they have been fully restored. As well, an exterior lighting system highlights the building's heritage and contemporary features.



Exterior of The Post; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



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West Georgia Street public plaza; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)

According to the Vancouver Heritage Foundation, the former Canada Post building is a “very good example” of the International Style of Modernism, exemplifying the “optimism of post-war development in the downtown core of Vancouver.”

Above all the retail/restaurant uses and vehicle parking, the top two floors of the heritage podium are now the largest office floor plates in downtown Vancouver. Large open office floor plates are highly coveted by large tech companies and other larger businesses.

Amazon spokesperson Kristin Gable told Daily Hive Urbanized these are “mega floors” with a floor area of 114,600 sq ft for the seventh level and 88,300 sq ft for the eighth level. Essentially, each of these two floors is very close to being the same size as the footprint of the entire city block.

For comparison, the office floor plates above Nordstrom in the CF Pacific Centre building are each about 70,000 sq ft, with Microsoft Canada occupying two full levels, and the global headquarters of Sony Pictures Imageworks using another full level.

The proposed mixed-use redevelopment of Hudson’s Bay’s downtown Vancouver flagship store will have office floor plates up to 61,000 sq ft, while the proposed 800 Granville Street mixed-use redevelopment will have office floor plates up to about half the size of The Post’s eighth level. Expansive skylights for the eighth level allow the space to be flooded with natural light.

But the vast majority of the former Canada Post building’s expanded office uses comes from the building’s vertical escalation with two office towers at the north and south ends of the complex. Including the heritage base podium, the North Tower rises 22 storeys and the South Tower reaches 21 storeys, with the height of both towers limited by mountain view cones.

The Post can be considered as an expanded office use for the site as prior to the start of construction, there was a minor three-storey office appendage near the south side of the complex. This short and narrow office appendage was demolished, and its void now forms a part of the footprint of the exponentially larger South Tower.



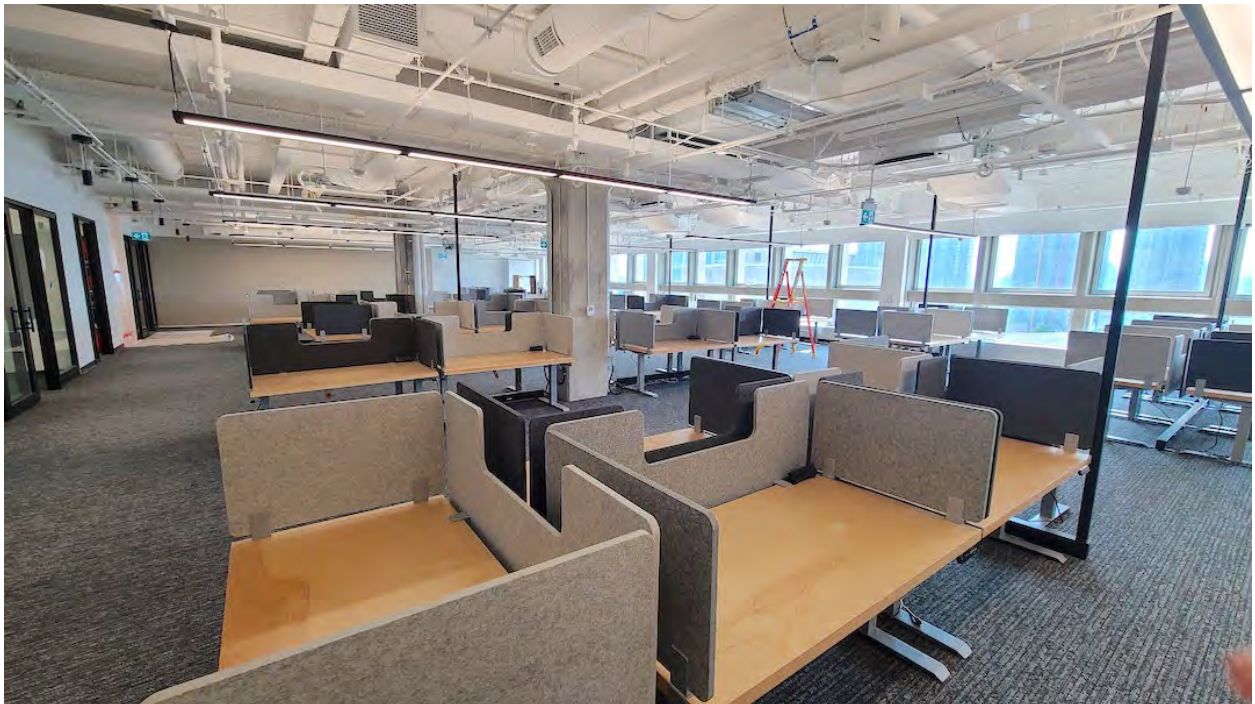
Amazon office space being furnished inside The Post's South Tower; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



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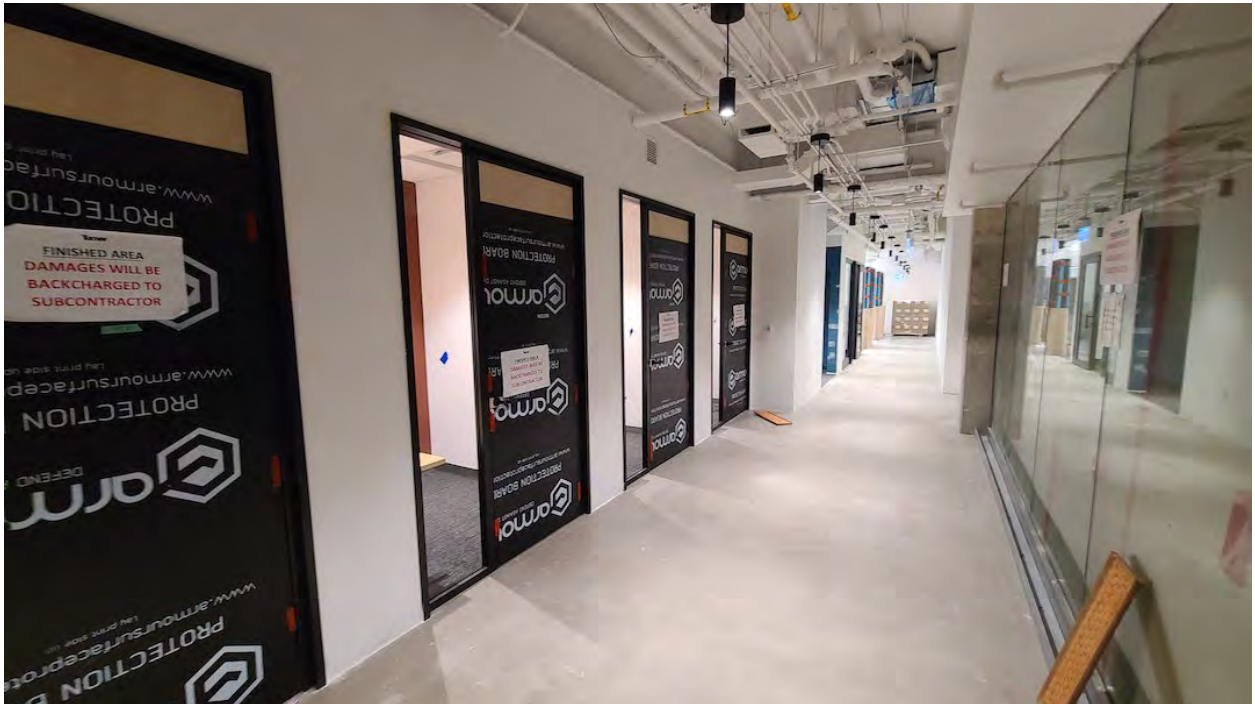
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Work is well underway on furnishing Amazon's office space inside the South Tower, with the interior design boasting the company's latest innovations in office workplace best practices and standards, the most optimal configurations, technological solutions, and amenities.

Each Amazon office building worldwide carries a similar interior design, almost like a template, with each office building addition carrying design improvements, and a flair of the local culture — expressed through art and motifs throughout the space.

For The Post's South Tower, says Gable, the workspaces will generally be configured into "neighbourhoods," where Amazon's teams will be assigned a general space to work within, allowing members of the team to optimally work together and collaborate.

Amazon employees can expect a wide range of workplace configurations to meet different needs and preferences, such as open spaces, hot desks, meeting rooms, phone booths, and indoor amenity areas, such as lounges, kitchens, and space for food and beverage. On the 20th floor of the South Tower, there will be a large dedicated indoor social room overlooking West Georgia Street.

But the [outdoor amenity spaces are perhaps the real highlight](#) when it comes to the building's amenities exclusive to Amazon workers.

The [rooftop of the South Tower](#) features open spaces with seating for lounging, extensive landscaping, and an [enclosed dog park](#) — one of two large enclosed dog parks at The Post. These spaces are accompanied by great views of the cityscape, the surrounding region, the harbour, and the North Shore mountains.

Down below, on the sprawling rooftop of the heritage base podium, is a [full-sized basketball court, the second dog park](#), and open spaces, including areas with seating.

With two dog parks, this will clearly be a very dog-friendly office, which is a company-wide policy for all of its location, wherever possible.



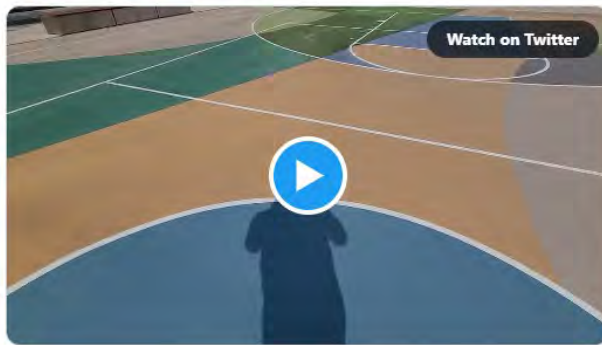
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360-degree view of the full basketball court on the massive lower rooftop of The Post. #Amazon #vanre 3/8

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The outdoor amenity rooftop on the South Tower of The Post, fronting West Georgia Street. #Amazon #vanre 4/8

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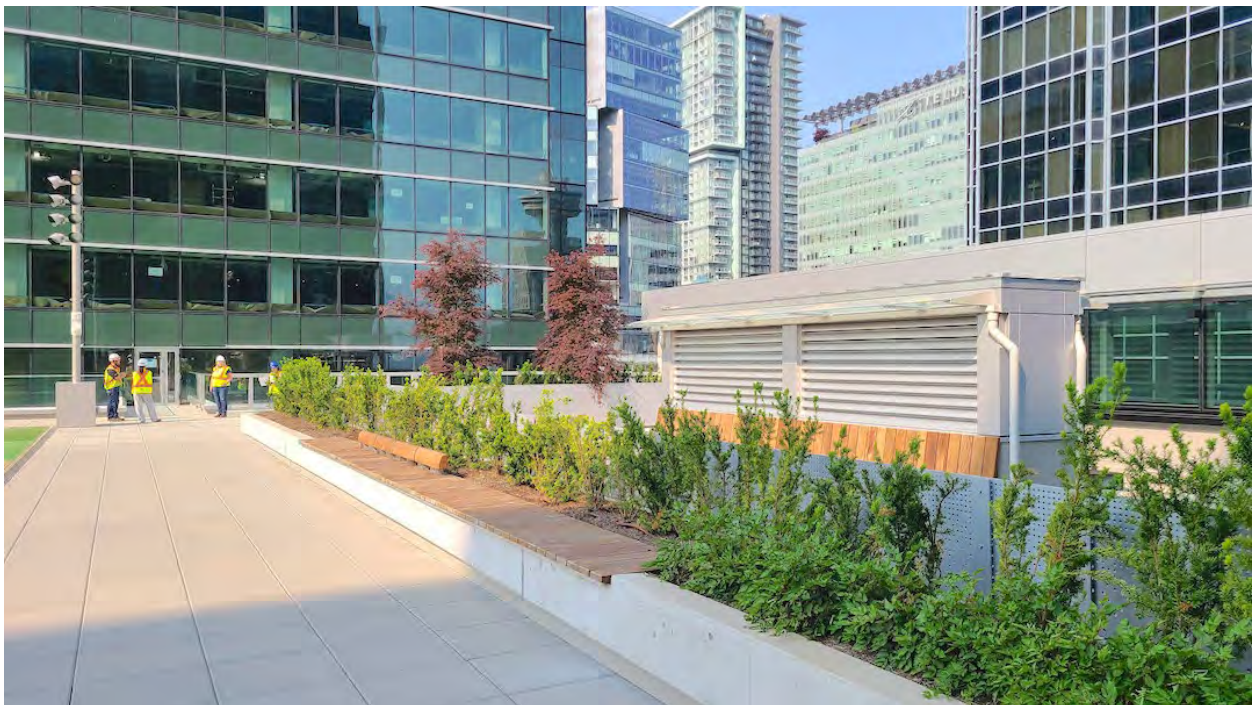


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Full basketball court on the lower rooftop of The Post, between the North and South towers; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



Lower rooftop of The Post, between the North and South towers; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)





Dog park on the lower rooftop of The Post, between the North and South towers; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



South Tower rooftop of The Post; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



South Tower rooftop of The Post; Construction progress as of May 23, 2023. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)

As work is incrementally completed inside the South Tower, it will open in three phases to Amazon employees between Fall 2023 and early 2024. Loblaws City Market, the yet-to-be-named food hall, and restaurants and other businesses will also open in 2024.

Gable says the South Tower, when fully complete, will have office space for over 3,000 Amazon employees.

The similarly-sized office space in the North Tower will be occupied at a later date, with construction currently ongoing. It is noted that the North Tower's workplace configuration has yet to be determined.

Amazon's 1.1 million sq ft of office space at The Post adds to its four other permanent locations nearby in downtown Vancouver.

In 2016, Amazon opened its first Vancouver tech office just down the street at Telus Garden (Amazon YVR11), where it leased about 90,000 sq ft for 1,000 employees.

Soon after, in 2017, it announced a major expansion of 150,000 sq ft within Oxford Properties' new nine-storey building at 402 Dunsmuir Street, immediately across the street from The Post. Amazon YVR 14, the name of this building, recently reached completion for its 1,000 employees.

In 2018, Amazon opened a 100,000 sq ft office in the new The Exchange tower at 475 Howe Street (Amazon YVR20).

And in 2020, the company leased 80,000 sq ft within the 2013-built, 25-storey office tower at 745 Thurlow Street (Amazon YVR25), which is also owned by Quadreal Property Group.

This brings Amazon's existing permanent office footprint in downtown Vancouver to about 400,000 sq ft — before including The Post.

Amazon reported it had 2,700 employees combined at its Vancouver tech hub locations in 2020, and this figure grew to 4,500 by the end of 2022. The types of jobs based at these locations include software development engineers, user experience designers, speech scientists, cloud computing solutions architects, and sales and marketing executives.

It was previously suggested The Post could host [as many as 6,000 office workers](#), in addition to Amazon's existing locations.



LEGO architectural model of The Post. (Amazon Canada)



LEGO architectural model of The Post. (Amazon Canada)



Then-Premier John Horgan touring The Post, the future office hub of Amazon in downtown Vancouver, in October 2021. (Amazon)



Construction progress of The Post in downtown Vancouver, as of June 29, 2021. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



Construction progress of Amazon's new Vancouver offices at The Post, as of January 15, 2021. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)

With The Post and existing office locations combined, Amazon will have approximately 1.5 million sq ft of permanent office space in Vancouver upon the full completion and opening of The Post's South Tower.

While this figure certainly pales in comparison to Amazon's headquarters presence in Seattle, where it has about 13 million sq ft of office space across dozens of locations, the total office space of The Post alone matches three Seattle buildings that are each tied for being the company's second-largest office locations in Seattle.

Amidst ongoing pandemic-induced changes for office-based work, Amazon's workplace policy changes starting May 2023 expect employees to [come into the office at least three times per week](#).

"When you're in-person, people tend to be more engaged, observant, and attuned to what's happening in the meetings and the cultural clues being communicated," said Andy Jassy, the president and CEO of Amazon, [earlier this year in his policy change announcement](#).

At the time, he also touted the benefits of "collaborating and inventing" when in office, saying, "The energy and riffing on one another's ideas happen more freely. In the more productive brainstorm sessions I've been a part of over the years, people get excited and blurt out new ideas or improvements to prior proposals, quickly advancing the seed of an idea, and leading to the broader group getting energized and feeling that it's onto something."

This shift in workplace culture also means vast office spaces will see real use, amidst the persistent problem of office occupancy rates in major North American city centres struggling to return to pre-pandemic occupancy levels (not to be confused with vacancy rates based on space leasing).

The return to the office space for Amazon office employees should provide city centres with more pedestrian traffic, public transit ridership, and a boost for restaurants and retail — and downtown Vancouver will be no exception, with Amazon's strategy to greatly boost its tech hub headcount in the city compounded by its workplace policy changes, along with The Post's major new and unique restaurant and retail offerings.

"We want The Post to be accessible for all. There has been great thought and attention to public entry points. We're creating vibrant community space," said Scott.

This also helps The Post reach its [full pre-pandemic envisioned economic potential for downtown Vancouver](#), with the gravity of the critical mass of employment and visitation in the building having the effect of expanding the Central Business District further eastward — a shift that first began with Telus Garden, and the 2022 completions of Amazon YVR14 and Deloitte Summit.

"Clearly, the optics of The Post look great. Adding a high-profile, tech-driven head office to this quadrant of the downtown core will have a great impact on foot traffic and surrounding businesses. It will only further solidify the rebound of Vancouver in a post-COVID world where we now see downtown foot traffic in excess of 2019 levels — something that cannot be said for most major cities across North America," Martin Moriarty, the senior vice president of investment and leasing for Marcus & Millichap, told Daily Hive Urbanized when asked to share his thoughts on the economic impact.

"With the addition of Amazon employees, a much-needed downtown grocer, unique food hall offering and other great retailers, we applaud the efforts of Quadreal in re-imaging this key downtown block. It is also important to consider all this was achieved whilst preserving the unique character and heritage associated with the iconic Post building."



Artistic rendering of the private rooftop amenity for office workers at The Post. (QuadReal Property Group)



Artistic rendering of The Post on the second level of the retail-lined concourse on Homer Street, with the entrance into Loblaws City Market also shown. (QuadReal Property Group)



Artistic rendering of the new plaza and restaurant uses of The Post along West Georgia Street. (QuadReal Property Group)



Conceptual artistic rendering of the Food Hall within The Post in downtown Vancouver. (QuadReal Property Group)





Conceptual artistic rendering of the Food Hall within The Post in downtown Vancouver. (QuadReal Property Group)



January 2019 artistic rendering of The Post redevelopment in downtown Vancouver. (QuadReal Property Group)



January 2019 diagram of The Post redevelopment in downtown Vancouver. (QuadReal Property Group)

More than six decades after the original structure was first built for the main post office, when it “marked the beginning of Vancouver’s development as a regional centre in the post-war era,” according to the Vancouver Heritage Foundation, the building has now come full circle, with its evolution into The Post renewing the site’s importance as an economic anchor.

Prior to the start of The Post’s construction in Fall 2018, the building went through several design iterations, with MCMP Architects retained throughout the entire process.

When Daily Hive Urbanized last toured the building’s previously vacated postal office configuration in [May 2016](#), the pension fund originally had a vision of making the Canada Post building redevelopment primarily residential, with four residential towers — 650 market rental homes and 200 condominiums — perched over the retained heritage building. A fifth tower fronting West Georgia Street would contain office space. There was also a larger retail/restaurant component in the base levels of about 300,000 sq ft — out of 1.5 million sq ft.

A second iteration of the design revealed to the public in [November 2016](#) was even larger, with consolidated floor space creating three larger towers above the heritage podium, including 350,000 sq ft of market rental housing, 356,000 sq ft of condominiums, 274,000 sq ft of retail, and 512,000 sq ft of office space.

The pivot to a 100% office and retail/restaurant space project, as we know it today, was not sealed until [2018](#), when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau presided over Amazon’s announcement that it would occupy about half of the office space. In [September 2020](#), Amazon confirmed it would take over the entirety of The Post’s 1.1 million sq ft of office space.



Inside the former Canada Post building in downtown Vancouver in May 2016, before construction. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)



Inside the former Canada Post building in downtown Vancouver in May 2016, before construction. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)