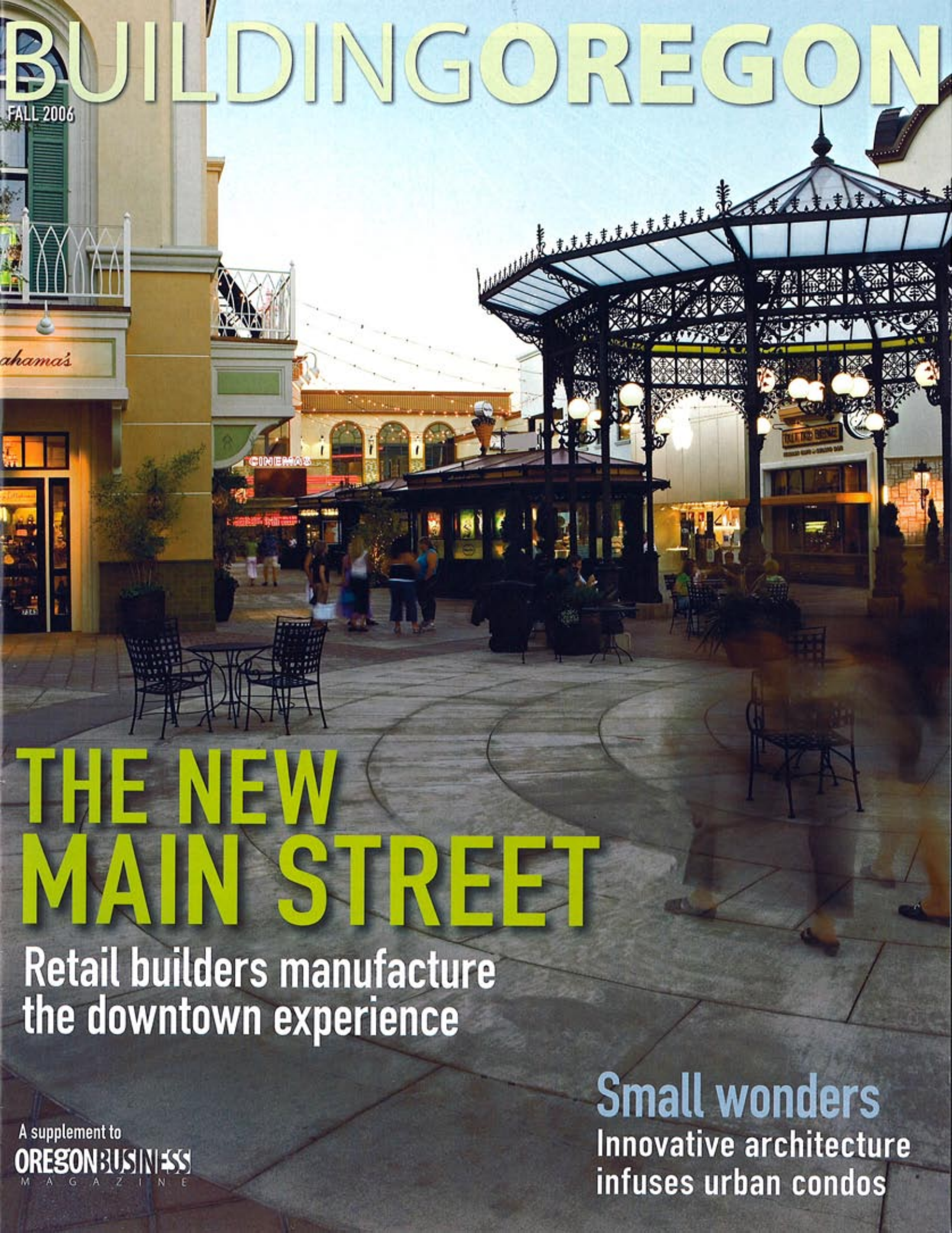


# BUILDING OREGON

FALL 2006

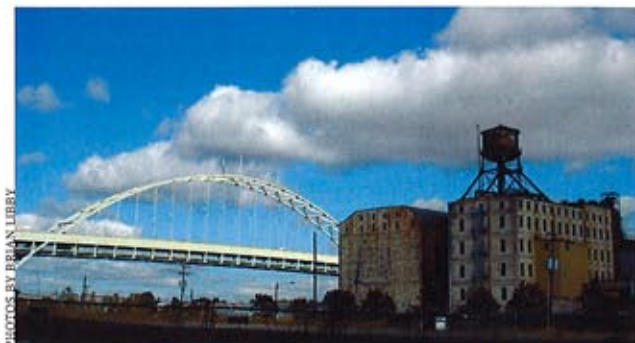


## THE NEW MAIN STREET

Retail builders manufacture  
the downtown experience

Small wonders  
Innovative architecture  
infuses urban condos

A supplement to  
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MAGAZINE



PHOTOS BY BRIAN LIBBY



BOORA ARCHITECTS

(Top left) The Fremont Bridge frames the Pearl's north end. (Top right) The Henry helps anchor the thriving Brewery Blocks area. (Above) Hoyt Street's proposed development for the north end seeks to "bookend" the Brewery Blocks and its retail success.

**AS THE LARGEST DEVELOPER** in Portland's burgeoning Pearl District, Hoyt Street Properties has built a succession of high-rise condominiums that have helped transform this once sleepy industrial enclave north of downtown into a national model for urban renewal: the city reborn. But one look at the Hoyt Street conference room, where maps and architectural renderings are pinned to every available wall, and it's clear the Pearl's omnipresent construction cranes won't be leaving anytime soon. "Some of the most important things we do are still to come," says Hoyt Street president Tiffany Sweitzer.

## THE RETAIL MIX FIX

Pearl District developers look to the retail success of the Brewery Blocks for north-end inspiration.

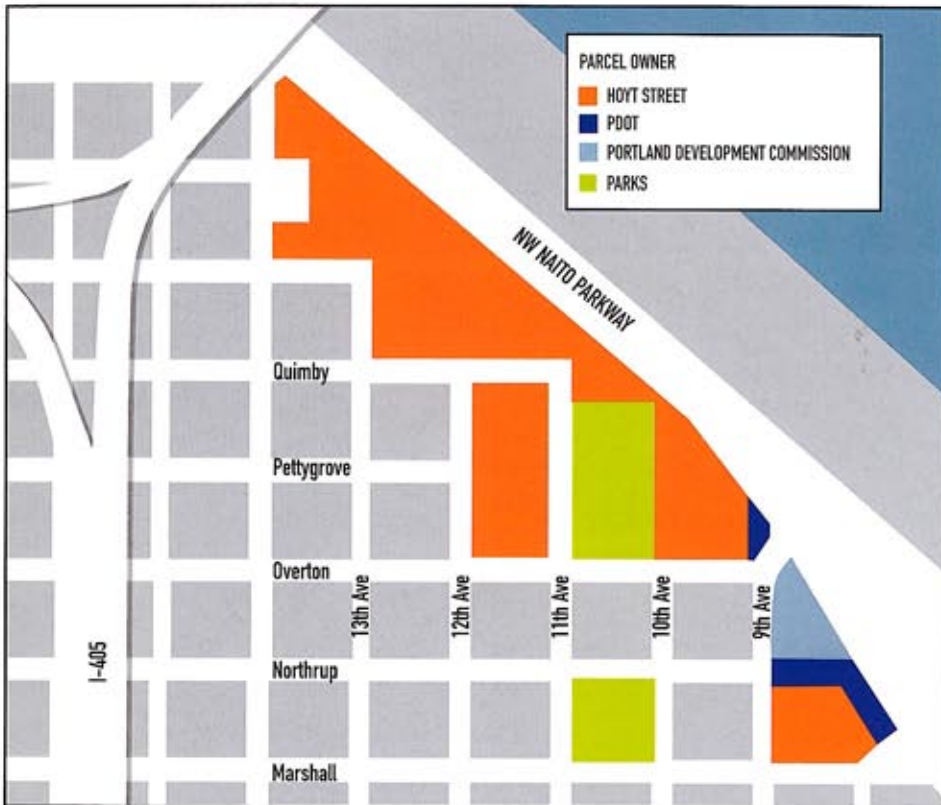
By Brian Libby

The developer is currently planning the blocks that will form the Pearl District's northern edge, next to the picturesque Fremont Bridge and the Willamette River. There are to be glassy condominiums, a new park and, if all goes according to plan, a cluster of shops and restaurants that will make the development a destination for more than just residents.

It's that last part that is particularly crucial. The Pearl District largely has been a retail success, with a blend of art galleries, gourmet restaurants and furniture stores filling out the neighborhood over the past decade. But there remain significant challenges. Pearl retailers face increasingly fierce competition from popular suburban "lifestyle center" shopping areas such as Tualatin's Bridgeport Village and Hillsboro's Streets of Tanasbourne (see related story, p. 5). These suburban shopping areas also point to the Pearl's Achilles heel: For all its individual retail successes, the district lacks a central pedestrian spine that can concentrate enough shoppers to collectively generate retail synergy.

The Pearl's greatest retail success has been at the five-building Brewery Blocks development, where a steady stream of pedestrians patronize businesses such

## UNDEVELOPED PARCELS IN THE NORTH PEARL



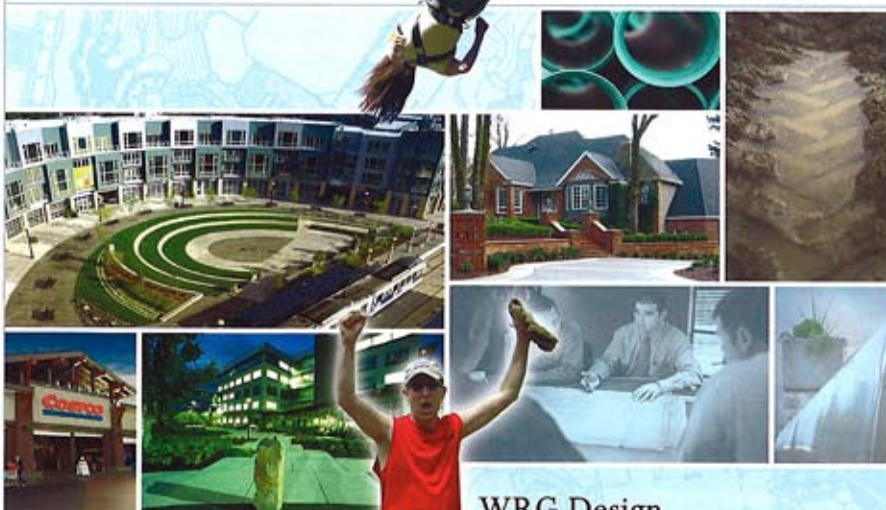
as grocer Whole Foods, furniture chain West Elm, and the adjacent Powell's Books. But that same critical mass of shoppers hasn't been replicated elsewhere in the district.

"The neighborhood needs that bookend," says Portland city planning director Gil Kelly. "The Brewery Blocks lit up the landscape a few years ago, and we need that same mix of residential, retail and housing at the Fremont Bridge. And part of the puzzle for us is how you make the connections between them." Kelly says Northwest 13th Street could become the Pearl's new Main Street if there were a sense of momentum carrying people from one end to the other.

Sweitzer and Hoyt Street Properties hope their new development at the Pearl's northern edge will create that coveted Brewery Blocks bookend and help articulate a pedestrian thoroughfare between them. The developer has been working with Portland's BOORA Architects to design not just a cluster of condos and a park, but something more indefinable, too: a destination.

"With the park and the river and the connections to the bridge, this area could be really special," says BOORA principal John Meadows. "It's trying to see if there are ways to have it clearly still be an economic success for the developers but to find opportunities to make stronger public rooms. Even if it's dense and built out, it's sort of like, 'Why would

Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho,  
it's off to work we go!



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- Cobb Building - LEED Silver

people go there other than to sleep?' You could probably sell housing for a long time there. Are there ways to make it more of an anchor here at the Pearl's north end like the Brewery Blocks is at the south end?"

The "public rooms" Meadows speaks of are public areas where people enjoy congregating. The aforementioned park planned for near NW 11th and Overton, where the Pearl abuts the Fremont Bridge, Naito Parkway and the nearby riverfront, will provide an athletic field for playing Frisbee or tossing your dog a bone (and also preserves views of the bridge by not putting more condos there). But that's just a start. BOORA envisions a European-style plaza where pedestrians, diners at outdoor cafés and slow-moving cars share cobblestone streets together. The architect and Hoyt Street Properties hope this kind of environment can invigorate retail investment here that attracts more than residents.

"The ugly truth of this is, if you don't have business and things happening during the day, you can't have a vital, ground-level retail experience," says Patricia Gardner of the Pearl District Neighborhood Association. "It just cannot be supported by the residential only."

For Hoyt Street Properties, this northern terminus for the Pearl will also represent the culmination of all that the developer has learned in building nearly 3,000 units of housing in less than a decade and a half. "I can't

stress enough that there's a learning curve of not only the architecture and how something sits on a block, but everything that has to fall into place to make it work," Sweitzer says. "It's open spaces, it's how the transit works. It's the differentiation of architecture but also the unit sizes, and between rental and affordable. When people walk down there, they say, 'How did all this come together?' Well, it was a series of things. But looking at the remainder of the property you think about how it all starts to come together."

Still, the Pearl remains attractive to retailers, who like the idea of customers living right above them in the countless condos that have shot up here over the last decade.

Take REI, the popular retailer of outdoor gear, which moved its flagship Portland store two years ago from the big-box retail environment of the Jantzen Beach shopping center to the ground floor of the new Edge Lofts in the Pearl. The company viewed it as a substantial risk, says REI operations manager Brian Bate.

But the risk paid off. "It's a hugely successful store," Bate explains. "Our first year we saw a 30% increase over what we were doing out at Jantzen Beach. It's a demographic bull's-eye for our members. People used to have to fight the traffic out on I-5 to get to REI. We'd be slow from about 3:30 to 7 p.m. every weekday because of traffic. Now, for a lot of them, we're at their doorstep." ■



In 2004, REI took a risk in putting its flagship store in the Pearl's north end, below the Edge Lofts. REI says today it is a huge success.

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