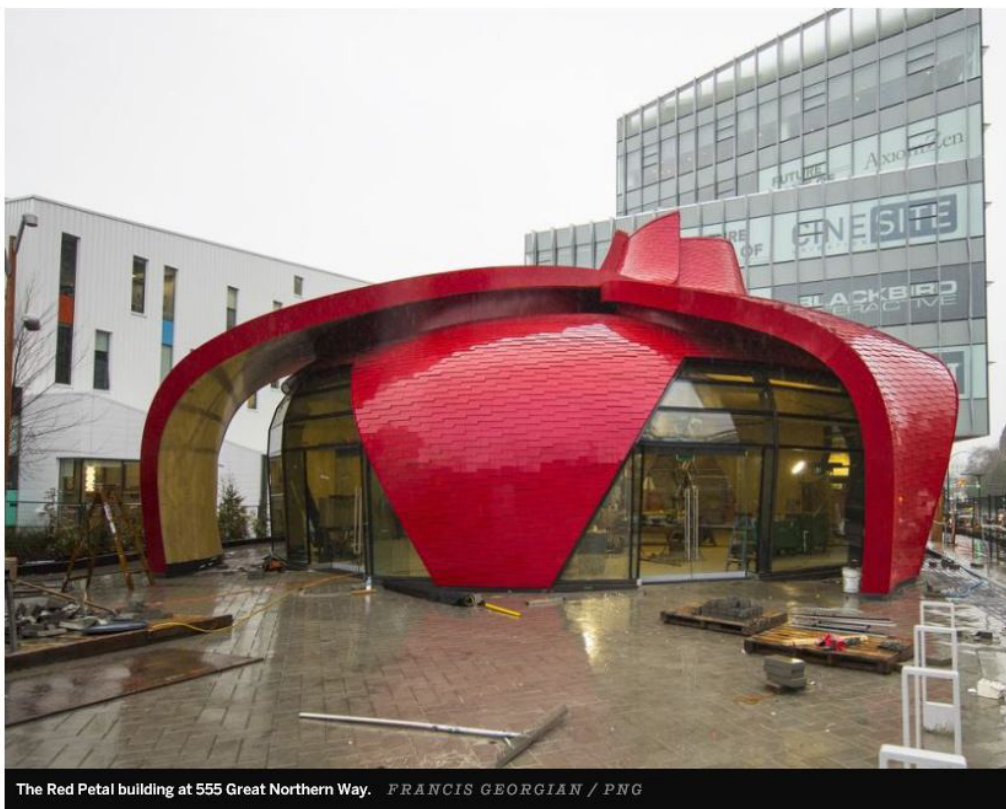


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Chip Wilson-inspired 'The Red Petal' expected to become destination spot on Great Northern Way

The initial design for the retail pavilion more closely resembled a wooden west coast cabin with a twisting roof. And then Chip Wilson got involved in the project.

KEVIN GRIFFIN Updated: January 2, 2019



The Red Petal building at 555 Great Northern Way. FRANCIS GEORGIAN / PNG

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It's the kind of distinctive building that stands out in Vancouver.

Months before the bright red building and its curving shape opens as a destination coffee shop, it's attracting attention from architects and passersby.



It's located at 555 Great Northern Way in front of Emily Carr University of Art + Design. The building is already generating nicknames. They include The Red Petal and The Red Pavilion.



It's another example of the ongoing transformation of the former industrial area between Clark Drive and Main into an office, tech and innovation centre.

"It was always conceived of as a food and beverage pavilion because that area is in desperate need of that type of activity," said [Ryan Bragg](#), project architect and a principal of the Vancouver studio of [Perkins+Will](#).

The initial design for the retail pavilion more closely resembled a wooden west coast cabin with a twisting roof. And then [Chip Wilson](#), the yoga clothing entrepreneur who started Lululemon, got involved in the project when his Low Tide Properties joined forces with [PCI Developments Corp.](#)

Wilson wanted a more interesting design both for the retail pavilion and for the office building next to it.

Bragg said that's the "best thing an architect wants to hear."

In Wilson's world of fashion, he's used to asking designers to come up with 10 ideas for clothing. Once he has all the options, he picks the one he likes. When it came to the retail building, he wanted to follow the same approach.

"Architecture is a little different than fashion design," Bragg said.

"Ten ideas for a building is kind of ridiculous in some ways — but also a huge challenge."

Bragg brought together a team of seven people in his office who worked intensely for three days. About every four hours, they produced a new design. They eventually created not 10 but 14 designs. They 3-D printed all of them.

Low Tide and PCI were shown the models. Hands down, Bragg said, the winner was a symmetrical, computerized version of the current design.

"It's not biased to any direction — not to the plaza, or Emily Carr University or Great Northern Way," he said.

Through the design process, the building's ten identical panels — or petals to continue using the flower metaphor — were digitally manipulated to create a neck on the building. That space at the top where the panels meet now resembles an oculus which allows light into the building.

The colour red, Bragg said, is all Wilson.

"He came in one day and put a photo down," Bragg recalled.

"He said: 'I want the pavilion to be this colour.' This building he'd seen was super bright red."

In choosing the right shade of red and the panels, Bragg had to ensure that the coloured cladding on wasn't flat and dull. The final choice was a composite aluminum metal panel called [Spectra](#). Bragg wanted a colour that would change slightly in response to different lighting conditions.

"It doesn't look like it is changing colour so much as that you never get the sense that it is a flat panel," he said.

"There is a bit of sparkle to it."

Bragg said people are already contacting [Perkins+Will](#)'s Vancouver office to find out where the pavilion is located.

"When it opens, I think it definitely will be a destination," Bragg said.

Bragg said the café will be operated by [Nemesis Coffee](#) when it opens in 2019.

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