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Rethinking Nova Centre led to 'a better project today': Ramia



Developer Joe Ramia shows final architect renderings of the Nova Centre project at the last public consultation session at Pier 21's Kenneth C. Rowe Heritage Hall on Wednesday night. JEFF HARPER/METRO

Halifax development. Design of \$500-million mega project unveiled with priority on people



ANDREW RANKIN
andrew.rankin@metronews.ca

Boasting a "green roof," a "European streetscape," and an Argyle Street without a parking garage, the final design plans for the million-square-foot Nova Centre was unveiled on Wednesday night.

Sitting at the heart of the proposed \$500-million mega-project is Grafton Street. The street will split the facility that spans two city blocks, and is expected to be the centre's social magnet.

On Argyle Street the convention centre's main entrance will be lined with shopping and retail space with sweeping staircases.

The sprawling development will also boast a financial centre, luxury hotel,

Big changes

"We shelved everything. The convention centre is above ground, for example. Everything has changed."

Joe Ramia

shops as well as two towering financial towers.

Besides raising the convention above ground, one of the major changes to the original design is the location of the parking garage on pedestrian-friendly Argyle Street. The garage has been moved to a small slipway on Grafton Street, off of Prince Street, which developer Joe Ramia said will have little impact on pedestrian flow.

The top of the convention centre will feature a green park space.

After 11 public consultations held across the province since July, Ramia said design plans for the project have completely changed.

"This is a better project

today then what we started with," he said. "The consultation process has been challenging at times but it has been very fruitful."

The design team, including architects from Toronto-based IBI Group, were on hand to present the plans. The design hasn't been finalized, including one of the two financial towers planned for the corner of Prince and Argyle streets.

"There's an inside and outside that we have to get right," IBI's lead architect Jamie Wright said.

"It's not only a space for a convention centre it's actually part of the grain of the public realm and people that are passing through Grafton Street can stop there."

More coverage

The complete design will be submitted to the city for approval early in the new year.

- For more coverage, see page 3.



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