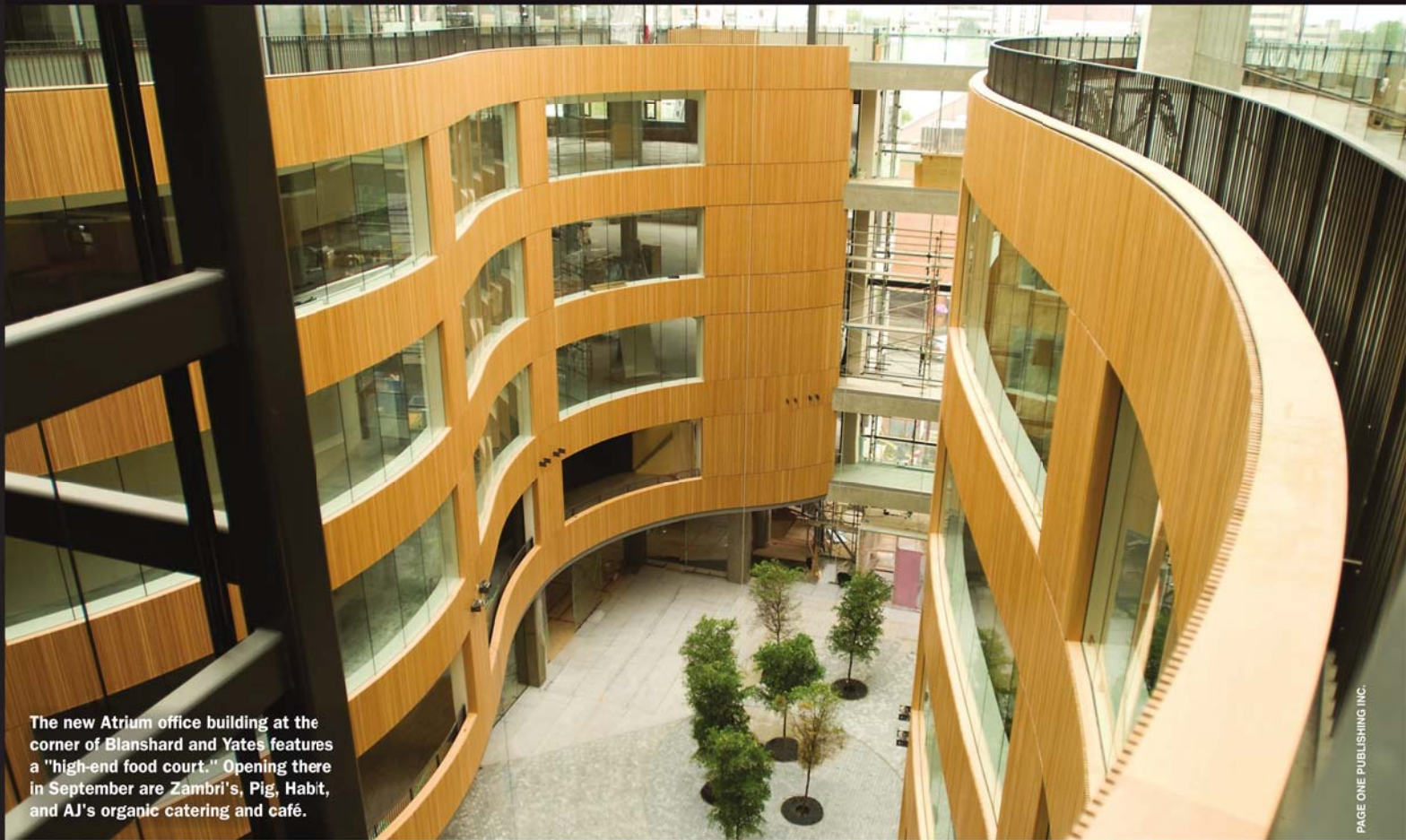


In the Know

BUSINESS NEWS IN THE OFFICE AND ON THE STREET



The new Atrium office building at the corner of Blanshard and Yates features a "high-end food court." Opening there in September are Zambri's, Pig, Habit, and AJ's organic catering and café.

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ATRIUM'S URBAN ROOM

Maybe running a \$700-million-a-year ferry company and keeping the province's land title system running will be the important upstairs activities. Down on the ground floor, it's all about what tastes good.

About 800 people will work upstairs at the corner of Blanshard and Yates Streets in the new Atrium office building, which is also a new location for four local restaurants filling the ground-floor "urban room," as the architect calls it. Opening in September are Zambri's, Pig, Habit, and AJ's organic café and catering. While they may compete for customers sometimes, they have worked closely together on this new location. They form the building's "high-end food court," which is Jo Zambri's description. Calen McNeil, her brother and Zambri's partner, noted "a big city feel" to the space.

Architect Franc D'Ambrosio has designed the all-weather urban room, according to developer Jawl Properties' web site. With entrances on Yates and Blanshard, it will function like one of the city's mid-block passageways.

"We've been working together for the better part of a year," says Shane Devereaux, who is opening a second Habit café there. Informally, they're "the Atrium gang."

"We're all going through the same process. We're all having the same experiences," he says.

Jawl Properties, which built the \$100-million, seven-storey building with 204,000 square feet, "really let us share information with each other. It's been an open book," says Jo Zambri.

Adds McNeil: "There's way more value in co-operating. We feed off each other."

They praise Jawl for deliberately going after local businesses, rather than the usual franchises and chains, though it probably could have asked higher rents.

Robert Jawl says going local was a goal early on. "From the start, we really set some philosophical objectives." The company took its time to pick the tenants. "We'd rather go slow and get that right mix," he says.

Young business newcomer Alesha Davies says "absolutely not" when asked if she's been through anything like this before. She will have a 16-seat café and a full-time baker, but her new kitchen for the catering business will take most of her space.

"Each one of us has planned and designed from the ground up with the architect," she says

McNeil jokes that "we're all wearing our big boy pants now." It's been a \$650,000 project for Zambri's and the move from Wilson Centre behind London Drugs will give the restaurant 2½ times the space. Zambri's will also expand its menu, with a pizza oven and a proper bar, and will stay open to midnight. Jeff Hetherington's Pig

BBQ Joint gets 1,800 square feet, 30 seats, and a liquor licence, while its old location on View Street becomes Pig Dog, serving takeout hot dogs. Habit, located on the Blanshard-Yates corner of the Atrium, has 40 seats and extended hours. Also going into the Atrium street-level space are Poppie's Florists, moving from 700-block Yates Street; Metropol, Steve Webb's Metropol Printshop; and Cook Culture, a new kitchenware business run by Jed Grieve.

The group plans to advertise together. "We want to make sure people understand the uniqueness of what we're doing," says McNeil.

Another Smoking Lily

Smoking Lily, the nationally known Victoria fashion designer and retailer that turned 15 in July, is opening its third store. Trish Tacoma says The Milkman's Daughter is her dream concept, and it will be different from Smoking Lily's first tiny outlet here and the Vancouver store. "It's finally having a space where I can do more of my fantasy," she says.

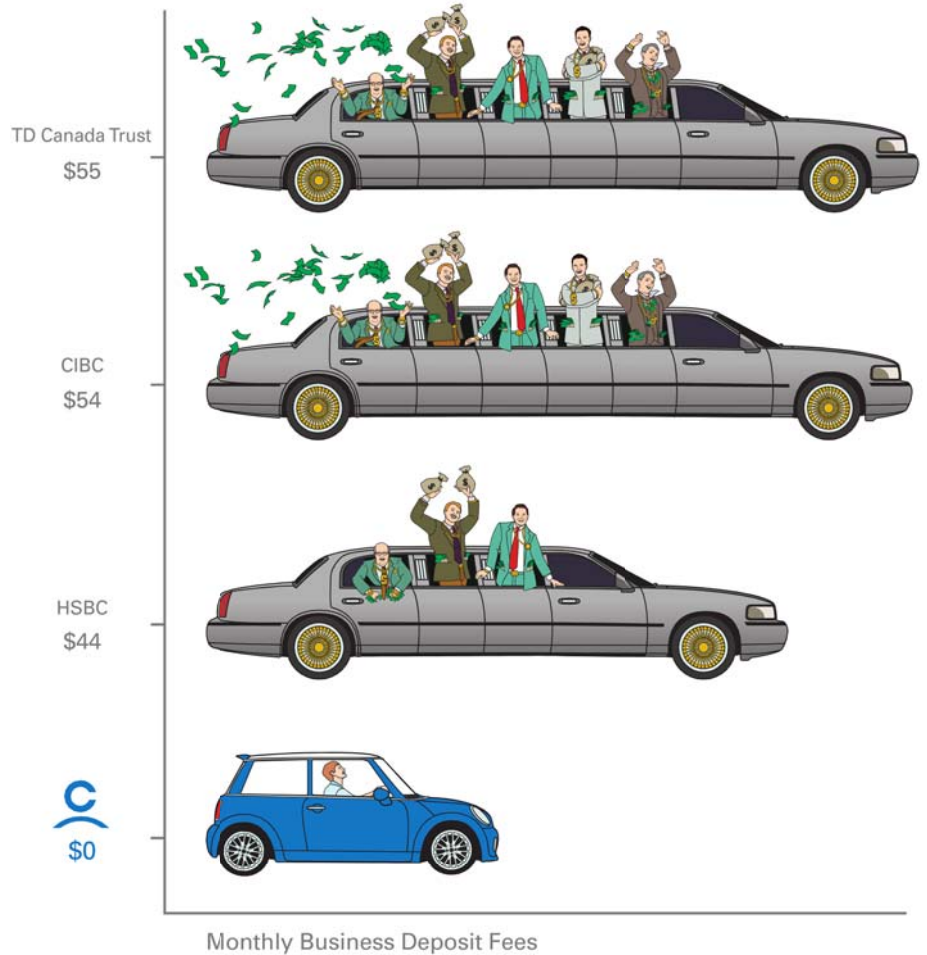
It's in the 1700 block of Government Street, what used to be a Chinatown grocery store and, some years back, Jeff Smith's Mirari Gallery with a paved asphalt floor and some of Victoria's first halogen lights. This store came about, she says, because "I was bored this winter." She had always admired the neighbourhood and tried in the 1990s to locate her first store there. When the space beside Brasserie L'Ecole became vacant this year, she leased the 1,200 square feet.



It's triple the size of Smoking Lily's Vancouver store on eastside Main Street, and it definitely won't mean closing the original Johnson Street location. That one is just 44 square feet, including the curtained "change room" that descends from the ceiling. Tacoma says she'd never close her first little store: "That's the heart."

The Milkman's Daughter — the name is a reference to her dad, who delivered milk — will have other clothing lines and Smoking Lily's new children's wear. You'll see plants and housewares too, says Tacoma, promising the new place will be "more like a lifestyle shop."

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