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Winnipeg Free Press

August 5, 2011

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Winnipeg Free Press > Business > SHIPPING-CONTAINER CONSTRUCTION

BUSINESS

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

Shipping-container construction Steel boxes used as base for home, commercial space

By: Murray McNeill

Posted: 08/2/2011 1:00 AM | Comments: 0 (including replies)

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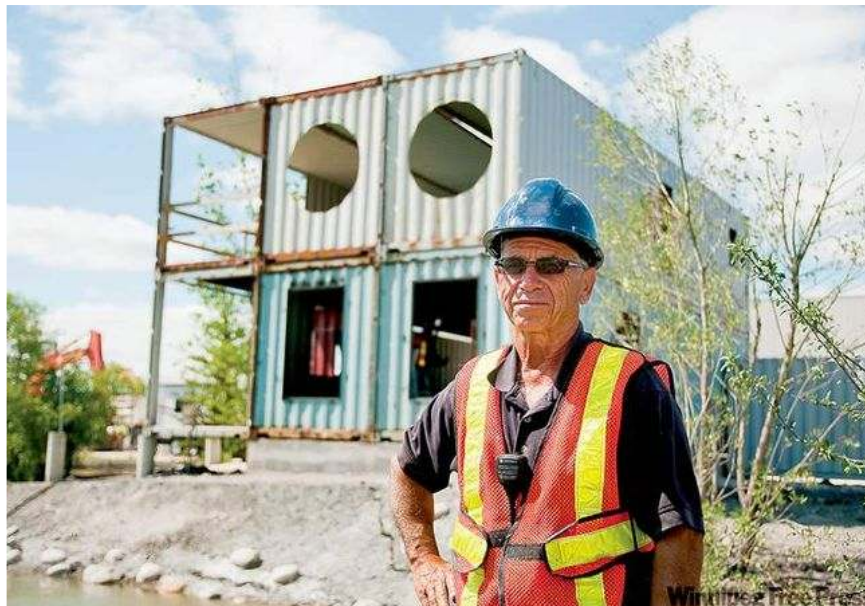
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Hadas Parush / Winnipeg Free Press Mario Costantini, owner of the Fort Whyte Business Park and ADM Storage, stands near the steel shipping containers that will become his new home.

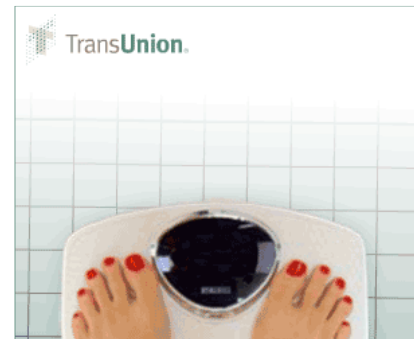
A local business park operator is taking an off-the-wall concept -- a house made out of shipping containers -- and giving it a commercial twist.

Fort Whyte Business Park owner Mario Costantini plans to build as many as six 1,500-square-foot single-tenant office buildings on the shore of the park's drainage pond, and he's making them out of several steel shipping containers joined together in a variety of shapes and configurations.

Costantini hopes the novel design will tickle the fancy of local businesses that don't need a lot of space and want something different -- architecture, engineering or accounting firms, for example.

Because he doesn't have any tenants lined up, he'll only build one or two to start and see what kind of response he gets. He plans to begin construction next spring and to have the first two completed by the end of next summer.

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Costantini estimates he can save 20 to 40 per cent on construction costs by using shipping containers rather than conventional building materials.

"These things are incredibly versatile. They can be adapted to almost anything and they're incredibly strong because they're made of steel."

How does Costantini know this? Because his company -- ADM Storage -- has been buying and selling new and used shipping containers for a decade. The firm already converted about a dozen of them into temporary construction-site offices it rents out to local construction companies.

He's also in the midst of building a two-storey, 1,600-square-foot house out of six large containers. The house should be ready for him and his wife to move into this fall.

Costantini admits designing and building a house that meets building-code requirements has been a challenge.

"We started out with quite a few different ways to do this and there were a lot of changes we had to make on the go. We basically had to reinvent a lot of stuff through trial and error. But with this next project, we'll know what to do or at least what not to do, because we figure we've overcome a lot of the problems."

Costantini isn't the first guy to build a house out of shipping containers. Last year, a Winkler-area man -- Vern Hiebert -- converted a single container into a small three-room house, and Costantini said there are numerous homes and several apartment buildings in Europe made out of shipping containers.

But he thinks he's the first local guy to build a two-storey house or an office building out of them.

"I love the challenge. I've built several homes and buildings, and this was something out of the ordinary. That's what intrigued me."

-- -- --

CentreVenture Development Corp. is burning through its second batch of downtown-residential-development grants as quickly as the first.

Less than four months after the city agency received a second \$20-million infusion of city and provincial funds into its popular downtown residential grants program, only \$7 million is left. CEO Ross McGowan thinks that will be gone by the end of the year.

The first batch of money was supposed to last three years but was gone in less than 10 months.

Under the program, extra taxes triggered by property reassessment are returned to developers as a grant. They can get as much as \$40,000 for each new apartment or condominium built.

McGowan said so far, a total of \$33 million has been earmarked for 26 different projects. The projects will add 1,000 condos and 375 rental units downtown.

He said six of the projects are in the construction phase, 10 are in different stages of approval, and 10 are still in the planning stages.

-- -- --

The recent surge in downtown development has breathed new life into a long-vacant former McDonald's restaurant outlet on Portage Avenue.

The leasing agent for the 5,600-square-foot building at 600 Portage Ave. said it will be refurbished and subdivided into three smaller eateries.

"Tenants have been secured... and we're doing a complete refacing (of the building)," said John Pearson, a commercial leasing specialist with Shindico Real Realty Inc. "The exterior facade is being rebuilt and it's getting a new roof and new mechanical systems."

Pearson wouldn't reveal the identity of the new tenants, saying they want to make their own announcements. He said one is a local operator and the other two are chain restaurants, one of which is new to the city.

-- -- --

The Winnipeg Winter Club may have found a new buyer for a 35,000-square-foot parcel of surplus land on Stradbrook Avenue.

"There is an offer in place as we speak," club general manager Rob Guthrie said recently.

Guthrie said it's a conditional offer scheduled to close at the end of August. He wouldn't say who the buyer is, but did say "It's a new interest."

A tentative deal to sell the land to a Calgary company headed by singer Tom Jackson -- Dreamcatcher Housing Ltd. -- fell through last year after the Winter Club refused to grant further extensions. Dreamcatcher wanted to team up with Winnipeg's Shelter Canadian Properties Ltd. to build a 16-storey apartment/commercial complex on the site, which is across the street from the new bus transit corridor.

Know of newsworthy or interesting trends or developments in the local office, retail or industrial real-estate sectors? Let Murray McNeill know at the email address below or at 697-7254.

murray.mcneill@freepress.mb.ca



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" I think the larger issue here is ... why charges were laid in the first place?? "

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August 5, 2011

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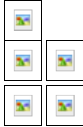
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This user is now ignored.

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Dave11

9:13 AM on 8/2/2011

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You want to sea a real container home? This particular one is under construction near Rimbey Alberta.

http://www.glennonseacanhome.ca/monthly_progress.html#june_2011

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Chad Weswick

10:39 AM on 8/2/2011

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Lets hope they get creative with the design. We don't need another eyesore.



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Name withheld

Uniden

10:37 PM on 8/2/2011

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Holy cow. That has all the design of a bunker for bikers.

I'm just saying.





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
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