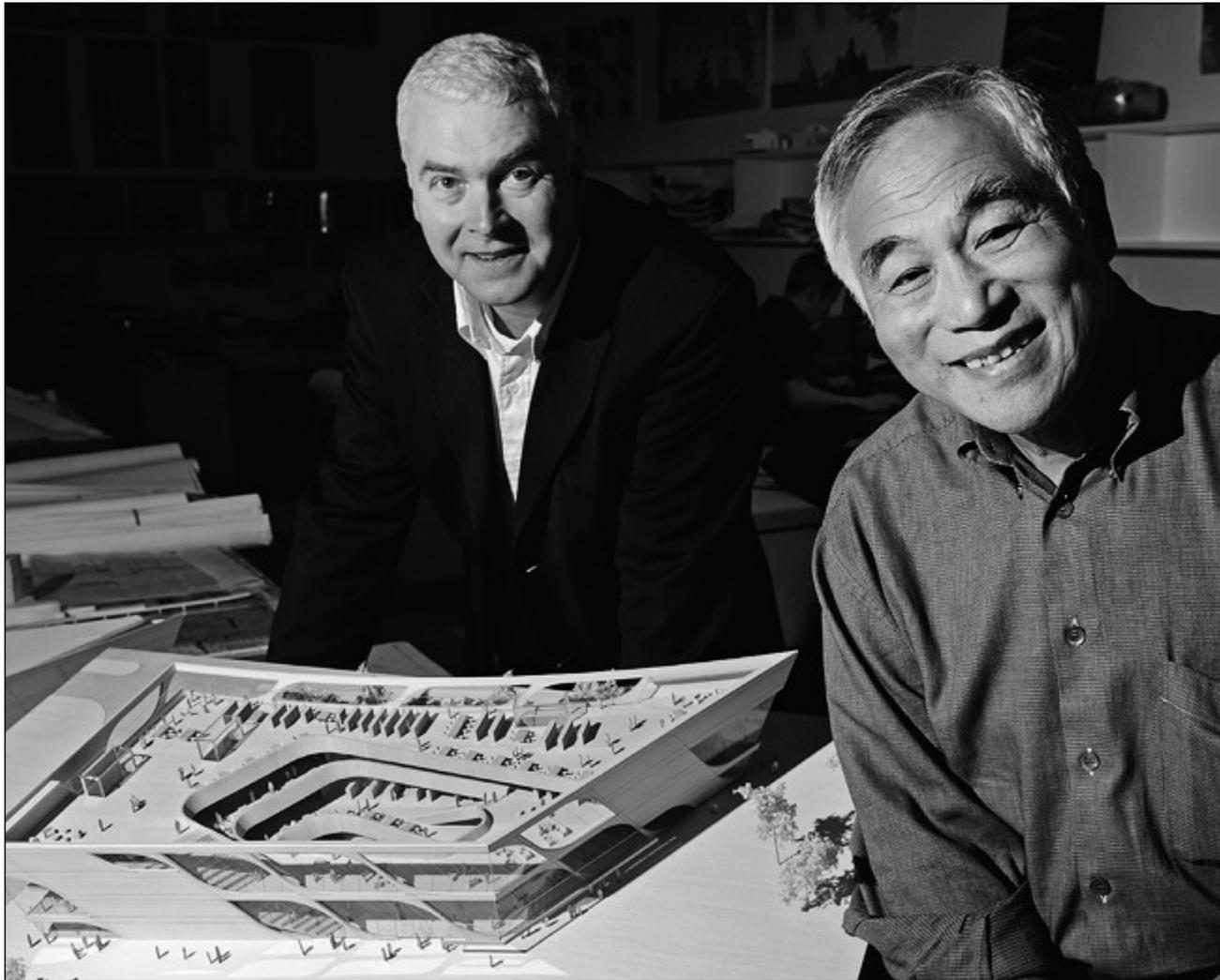


■ **Renowned architect Bing Thom (right) and Michael Heeney, principal and executive director of Bing Thom Architects, with a model of the City Centre Library in Surrey, which is slated for completion in 2011.**

LES BAZSO — PNG



# A library for the future

**SURREY:** Bing Thom's design for Central City site 'raises the bar'

BY JENNIFER SALTMAN  
STAFF REPORTER

Surrey's new City Centre Library will be an extension of the home, its architect said Thursday.

"It's a community room. It just happens to store books," Bing Thom told *The Province*.

Vancouver architect Thom was scheduled to talk about the library Thursday night at an event at the Simon Fraser University Surrey campus.

The 77,000-square-foot building — which is under construction and scheduled to be finished in spring 2011 — takes inspiration from "hugely successful" Central City, which Thom's firm designed almost 10 years ago to meld an existing shopping mall with office space and a university campus.

The library features big windows, grand staircases, plenty of room to move around and a centre atrium that cuts through all four floors. Thom said it has been described as looking like a cruise ship or a carved First Nations box.

"[The design] evolves out of the natural need of the site and the function that comes with the

**"Surrey used to be the joke of Vancouver. Well, it's not going to be a joke. People are starting to see that it's the future."**

— *City Centre Library architect Bing Thom*



library," Thom said. "The building is designed to be very flexible."

People in urban areas live in fewer square feet now, Thom pointed out, and need somewhere to go when they want to get out of the house.

Thom said the library will include gathering places for the community, a learning centre, comfortable spots to read and study and extra space for the nearby SFU campus.

Surrey Mayor Dianne Watts said the city wanted to make sure the library met the needs of the public. "Typically, libraries have been . . . a lot of books, and this certainly is not that," she said.

Surrey's chief librarian, Beth Barlow, said there will be less emphasis on collections, and more emphasis on spaces for people to

connect with each other. "The building is quite different than anything I've been involved with before," Barlow said.

"The world is changing . . . We're sure trying to keep up with some of those changes to provide options for people and still connect them with a good read or information or other people."

Barlow said it's not often that a library gets to help shape a city's downtown.

The library, which will replace the Whalley branch but serve the whole city, is part of the Build Surrey infrastructure program, and the first phase of development in Surrey's city centre.

"One of the things we wanted in our city centre was an iconic building, and the regional library is definitely that," said Watts. "It

certainly raises the bar in terms of our expectations and what we want as we move forward on the buildings that will go into the city centre."

Watts said Whalley has changed for the better recently and the library shows that the city is serious about continuing the change.

"This is the beginning of a whole new civic initiative that's going to transform the area yet again," Thom said. "Certainly we've set a standard that everyone else will have to match."

Thom is convinced of the ability of architecture to improve the surrounding area and hopes to do more work in Surrey.

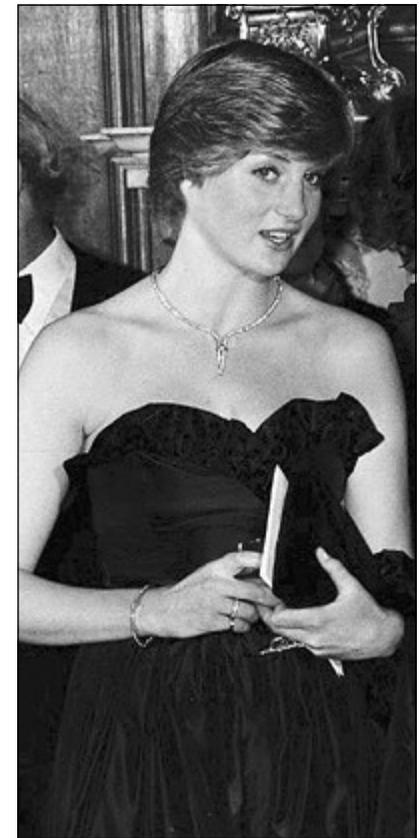
"Surrey used to be the joke of Vancouver. Well, it's not going to be a joke. People are starting to see that it's the future," Thom said.

The city borrowed \$16 million to cover its portion of the \$36-million library cost. The federal and provincial governments have committed \$10 million each.

Projects slated for the city centre include a new 165,000-sq-ft city hall, to be completed in 2013, and a performing arts centre.

*jensaltman@theprovince.com*

**TODAY  
ON THE WEB** 



**Diana, Princess of Wales, in the dress that caused a press sensation in 1981.** — PNG ARCHIVE

## Di's daring dress fetches fortune

The revealing black gown that had the press calling Diana, Princess of Wales, "daring Di" when she wore it in 1981 sold for more than four times the price expected at an auction this week. Read the full story and see other famous frocks that sold for big bucks at [theprovince.com/liveit](http://theprovince.com/liveit).



One of the best things about soccer is its simplicity.

A ball, two objects to act as goalposts at both ends of some sort of playing area, and some straightforward rules (for the most part — damn you offside) are all you need to enjoy a good game of footy.

In a bid to get reacquainted with some of the basics, DGTV enlisted the help of the very handy Kerrisdale Strikers girls soccer team. Check out the video at [theprovince.com/dgtv](http://theprovince.com/dgtv) or [youtube.com/user/theprovinceonline](http://youtube.com/user/theprovinceonline), and the story in Sports, Page A69.

**theprovince.com** 