

Vancouver schools celebrates future of trades education with new building at Hudson’s Bay

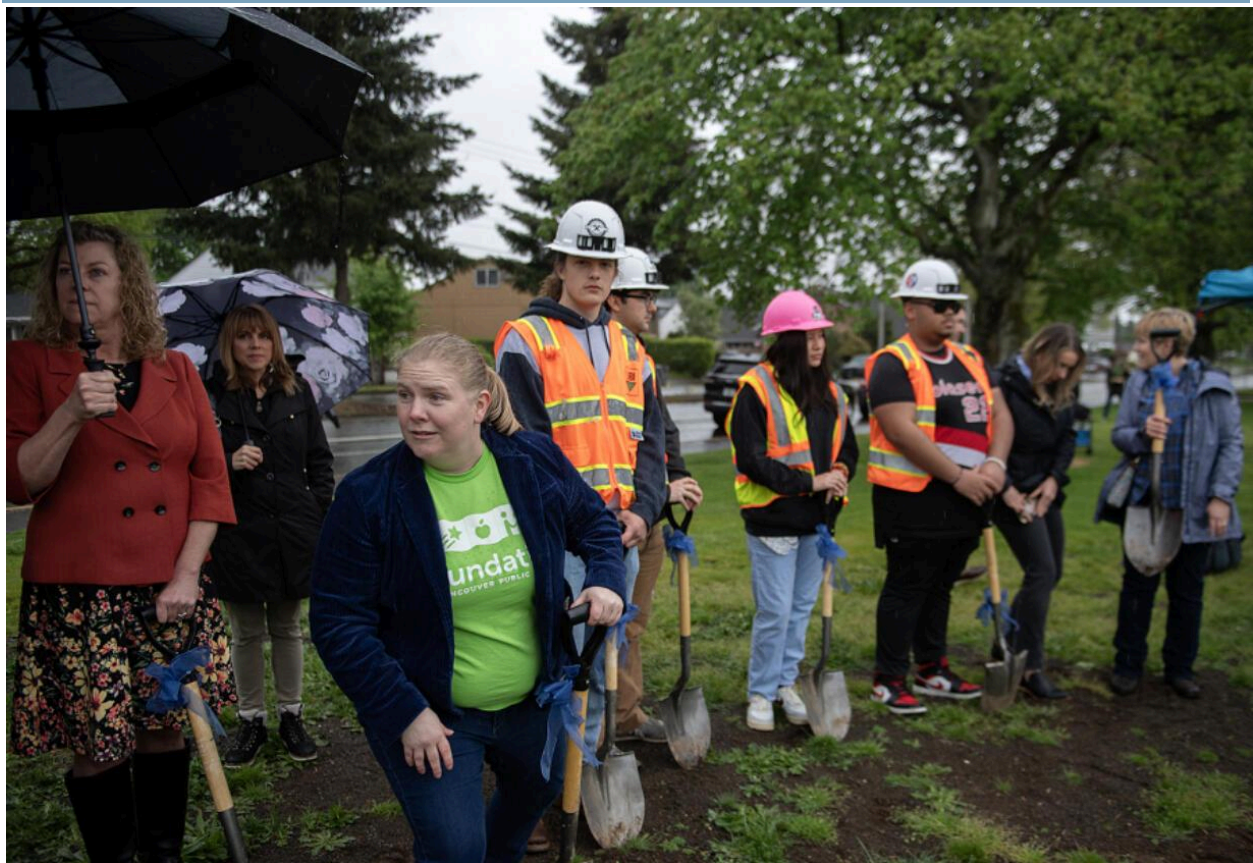
Endeavour Technical Trades Building will serve construction trades and a new maritime pathway

By Griffin Reilly, Columbian staff writer

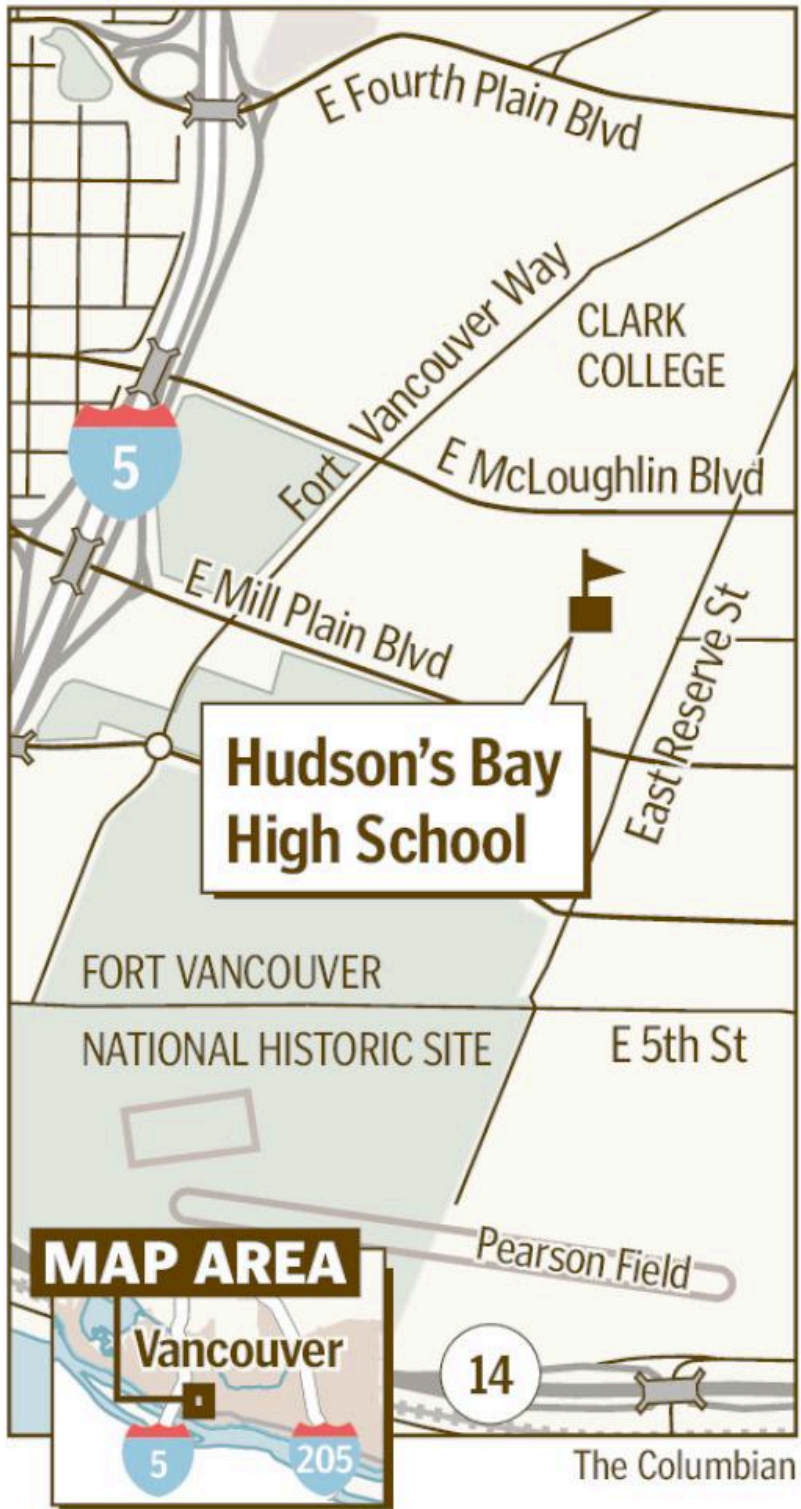
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LEADOPTION Jenny Thompson, executive director of the Foundation for Vancouver Public Schools, blue blazer, takes part in the groundbreaking on a new building to support construction trades and maritime pathways for Vancouver students at Hudson’s Bay High School on Tuesday morning. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian) [Photo Gallery](#)



Photo

Vancouver dignitaries, school staff and students weathered relentless showers to celebrate Southwest Washington's newest investment in trades education at Hudson's Bay High School on Tuesday morning.

Leaders broke ground on the site of what will be the Endeavour Technical Trades Building on the east side of campus. The building will support instruction in construction trades and a new maritime pathway for Vancouver students.

The 7,500-square-foot building is likely to open in early 2025 and is expected to support classes for 40 to 60 students in the district.

The ceremonial moment, despite the clouds and rain, is a beacon for Vancouver Public Schools amid otherwise challenging financial times. The district is in the final stages of notifying staff members whose jobs may be eliminated or changed to accommodate [\\$35 million in budget](#) cuts for the next school year.

"It shows how much that the community in Clark County, as a whole, cares about our students," said district superintendent Jeff Snell.

"These are the outcomes when you match needs in the community for construction and trades programs with opportunities for kids,"

Funding from private companies and the community for this project was its driving force, Snell said. The district received \$2 million from the Endeavour Fund — a West Coast-based investment group for which the building was named — and \$500,000 from an anonymous donor.

The total cost for the building wasn't available.

Jenny Thompson, director for the Foundation for Vancouver Public Schools, echoed Snell's sentiment.

“It's an honor to be a part of the community that's coming together to support our young people and their growth. This wouldn't have been possible if private partners didn't show up,” Thompson said. “And it was great to involve students in the design for this project, their voice is important.”

Investment in trades

Politicians and education officials across Southwest Washington seem to be on the same page regarding trades education: [It's critical to the future of the region](#) and in dire need of long-term, stable funding.

Mark Wreath, the head of the district's career and technical education programs, said that if nothing else, there's sure to be local construction jobs on the horizon as the Interstate 5 Bridge Replacement Program creeps toward reality.

“That’s a real thing, you know, and we’re going to need lots of people for that,” he said. “These programs can lead to family wage jobs for our graduates so they can go right into working, if that’s what they want to do.”

Investment in trades education over the last decade has been met with an explosion of student interest, Wreath said.

More than 8,000 students in Vancouver Public Schools — out of a district total of 22,000 — are engaged in some form of career and technical education classes as of this year.

Wreath said only a few years ago Hudson’s Bay had just 20 students in its construction class — that number has since ballooned to nearly 400 across multiple classes.

The new maritime pathway, Thompson said, will one day connect Vancouver students with officials and workers at the Port of Vancouver to learn about their work and engage in “pseudo-internships.” The pathway’s curriculum is still under development and will likely not be ready in time for the building’s opening in the winter, however.

“The trades in general has been this area that has been kind of ignored for so long and now we’re coming back to them to realize just how important they can be for our local economy,” Snell said. “It’s almost like a Renaissance.”

Thompson said official construction on the new building is expected to start after the school year in June and could be completed as early as December.