

## Cable park plan could make waves in Hood River

Naito Development's mixed-use project near downtown Hood River would include 88-room hotel and 10-acre park

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The first water-sports "cable park" west of Texas may soon be built in Hood River, according to the Portland-based developers who are hoping to build the \$1 million attraction as part of a larger, waterfront development.

Naito Development is working through the permitting of a \$15 million project that will include an 88-room Hampton Inn & Suites Hotel and a 20,000-square-foot mixed-use building near downtown Hood River. Within the adjacent lagoon known as Nichols Basin, the plan includes a 10-acre cable park, which is a system of towers, pulleys, and obstacles that creates a course for wake-boarders and water-skiers to zip around the water without being tugged by a boat.

"I really believe in this thing," developer Will Naito said of the parks, which are most popular in Europe, although a few outposts exist in Florida and Texas. "Once you dig into it, you can see what a fun form of recreation it is."

Naito says he first heard about cable parks when an anonymous caller asked the developers about the possibility of building one in Nichols Basin. The development firm, comprised of Naito

and his father Bob, has owned the 5.27 acres next to the basin since 2006. But the economic downturn and environmental cleanup delayed initial plans.

The market for a hotel in Hood River is strong, according to Bob Naito, who has secured financing for the project through the EB-5 investment visa program. The program rewards foreigners who invest in a job-creating American enterprise by offering them permanent U.S. residency.

"If there's any place where a hotel should be successful, it'd be Hood River," he said.

Meanwhile, the younger Naito was exploring the world of cable parks. After watching some videos online, Will found out that the sport was most popular in Germany, so he took a trip to Munich to tour several of the cable parks.

"This will grow the community's reputation for water

sports and recreation," he said. "It's going to draw a lot of people to Hood River."

But the park has raised opposition from some local community members who are concerned that the developments will impact salmon habitats and limit public access to Nichols Basin.

"The idea that you can put basically an amusement park on Hood River's waterfront, in designated critical habitat for salmon, is ridiculous," said Brent Foster, an attorney representing a group called Friends of the Hood River Waterfront.

"It's a crazy use of any city's prime waterfront," Foster added.

Permitting for the cable park is just getting under way, according to Hood River planning director Cindy Walbridge, and the project depends on forthcoming decisions from several agencies. The Port of Hood

River, which owns the basin, still needs to sign off on the plan, and the state Department of State Lands is currently reviewing the application.

Friends of the Hood River Waterfront plans to oppose the park when it goes before the planning commission later this summer, Foster said.

The group has already appealed the commission's initial approval of the site plan and conditional use permit related to the hotel and commercial building. In a marathon meeting of the Hood River City Council on Monday, Foster presented 23 objections to the Naito site plan covering a broad range of topics.

Councilors unanimously upheld the approval, although they did strengthen some conditions adopted by the



Courtesy of Surround Architecture  
The two-story commercial building will include a restaurant and bar with a large deck, office space, and a water-sports pro-shop.



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planning commission, including requirements for public access through the property and clarity on flood plain restrictions. Their final determination will be presented July 9.

"We won't be able to start construction this year," said Bob Naito, founder of Naito Development. "But we're confident that in the end we'll prevail."

Naito expects construction of the four-story hotel and commercial building, which will include office space, a water-sports retailer, and a restaurant, to begin next spring. Jansen Construction of Oregon City will be the general contractor.

Acknowledging the ongoing opposition from the Friends of the Hood River Waterfront, Naito said they would start construction on the cable park "when we can."

"For Hood River – the kite boarding, wind surfing, and water sports capital of the world – this will add one more element," he said.