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Bside6 building luring the eastside creatives

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A new building near the Burnside Bridge will cement the Central Eastside's makeover into a proving ground for bootstrapping creatives.

The building, known as Bside6, joins several other recent large-scale projects in the area that have elbowed out inventory-heavy businesses, including manufacturers and wholesalers, in order to make room for scores of graphic designers, architectural firms and branding agencies.

Because of the new building's daring design and highly visible location some say it will become the district's defining structure. The building is located at the gateway to the Central Eastside on the corner of Burnside and Southeast Sixth Avenue — hence the name Bside6.

The asymmetrical concrete and glass structure will extend eight feet over the sidewalk, giving tenants unobstructed views up and down Burnside.

"We wanted to build an iconic building," said Lance Marrs, who's developing the project with

Brian Faherty and Paul Caruana. The team is also responsible for the Commodore Hotel renovation in Astoria.

Despite the grand vision, the \$5.5 million project almost didn't come together. A \$250,000 grant from Metro helped Marrs and his partners get financing.

The grant was part of a Metro program that promotes new construction near public-transit options. The building sits near the proposed line for the streetcar expansion as well as several bus routes. Construction will begin in September and is expected to take 10 months. When finished, Bside6 will have six floors of flexible space on top of one level of retail.

That's exactly the kind of space the market needs, said economic developers.

"There's a need for incubation-type space [for the creative community]," said Anne Mangan, creative services liaison for the Portland Development Commission. "There's an interest in space that allows one- and two-person businesses to get in somewhere and have more of a collective [work environment]."

Local creatives say Bside6, the

Jupiter Hotel, Doug Fir, the new Rocket Building, Olympic Mills Commerce Center, Eastbank Commerce Center and the Water Avenue Commerce building are responsible for rebranding the Central Eastside as a hotbed for the industry.

Census data shows the number of manufacturing and wholesale businesses in the area declined 18 percent between 1998 and 2005. In that same time, the number of creative services agencies, such as graphic design, marketing and advertising agencies, jumped 33 percent. The number has probably jumped even more. Data from several new projects isn't reflected in the most recent federal statistics.

"I see no end to the demand," said Brad Malsin, president of Beam Development, which has built nearly 350,000 square feet of space for creatives in the Central Eastside in the past three years.

Two of the projects — the Eastbank Commerce Center and Water Avenue Commerce building — are fully leased. The third is still being renovated.

"The future of Portland is right here in the Central Eastside," Malsin said. "It's in small, locally

owned businesses."

Bside6 is already getting rave reviews.

"It's a very ambitious building," said Bill Neburka, principal of Portland-based Works Partnership Architecture LLC, who designed the building with his partner Carrie Schilling.

Willamette Week calls Bside6 "cool as all hell" and "one of the most courageous pieces of pending Eastside PDX architecture." The Portland chapter of the American Institute of Architects gave it a merit award last fall in its un-built category, calling it "richly executed."

"The ethos of the area is thoughtful, pragmatic and sensible with no additional frills," Neburka said.

That's reflected in the building, which has little drywall, exposed cement and off-the-shelf fixtures.

"It will become an iconic building for this neighborhood," said Jeff Stuhr, principal of nearby Holst Architecture and a member of Portland's Design Commission, which approved the building's plans.

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