

Westfair Inc

Westchester

Fairfield

Hudson Valley

Westfair Media

Business Web

Online Support Directory

WESTCHESTER COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

CarbonCopyPRO™ Entrepreneurs Wanted!
Click Here Now!



Current Business Features
20:53:26 - Monday February 4 2008

ABOVE THE BAR AWARDS

Ask ? Andi Strategy Leaders

Business Briefs

Deals & DEEDS

Faces & Places

Fly on the Wall

Focus Section

Guest Columns

Health Care

Letters to the Editor

Luxurious Living

NEWS 12 Westchester Journal Business Report

Off-Site

On The Record

Profits & Passions

Real Estate

rockland worldradio.com HUDSON VALLEY BUSINESS

SURVIVING THE FUTURE By Maureen Morgan

TalkBack ..

TECHCETERA

Tumbling Dice By Bryan F. Yurcan

Clock ticks on SFC approval Push to break ground this year

By JOHN GOLDEN



Marc Berson

The Yonkers City Council took a small step last week toward approving the \$1.5 billion downtown redevelopment project proposed by the city's master developer. But business leaders have made clear to city officials: You're not moving fast enough.

On the day of a council vote that paved the way for future development on former parkland beneath the city's downtown parking garage and Health Center Building on Nepperhan Avenue, City Council President Chuck Lesnick said he heard the message at a Yonkers Chamber of Commerce breakfast: "Get your ass moving on the SFC project."

"Maybe not in that vernacular, but yes, that was the message," said Kevin Cacace, president of the city's approximately 600-member chamber. Lesnick had already heard it earlier this month in a meeting with Cacace and other concerned business leaders. Yonkers Mayor Philip A. Amicone heard it too in a like meeting. "That's going to be a continual message," Cacace said. "There's been too much foot-dragging and it's got to stop."

Cacace was speaking of the sluggish progress through city government channels of the mixed-use River Park Center construction at Chicken Island planned by Struever Fidelco Cappelli (SFC) L.L.C. as the first phase of its downtown and waterfront redevelopment project. SFC handed the council a preliminary draft environmental impact statement for the overall project in July. Later this week, SFC officials expect to submit their final responses to questions raised by the council's consultant before council members accept the voluminous study as complete. Lesnick said that vote could come at the council's next meeting in February – about seven months after the developer's draft report was submitted.

"The fact that we have spent a long time scrutinizing this is a good thing because it will make the rest of the project go quick," Lesnick said.

Advertise Online

Online Survey
click here

NEW YORK PRESS ASSOCIATION
NYPA
FOUNDED IN 1953



[Wilcox County Homesites](#)

Legacy Shores, a private, gated waterfront community.
www.alwaterfront.com

[Westchester Condos](#)

Find a Home. Search Open Houses & More in Westchester Today!
www.Homescape.com/Westchester

[Walkill New Homes](#)

New construction starting from the low \$200's in Orange County, NY.
BakerResidential.com/Woodside

[Condo Yonkers Ny](#)

See current Real Estate listings in Yonkers, NY. Search now!
homegain.com

[Corporate Gift Yonkers](#)

Find Local Corporate Gift Services at Superpages.com
www.Superpages.com



Google™

Google Search



Web



WestchesterCountyBusiness

Once accepted by the council, the developer's proposal will be the subject of public hearings. "Everybody at the council is generally supportive of the downtown plan," Lesnick said. "Now we have to shape what it looks like. That's where the public part of the process comes in and I've been looking forward to it."

Lesnick said the SFC project and the city's recently unveiled master plan to redevelop the Alexander Street industrial corridor on the waterfront for residential, retail and recreational use "will probably have the greatest impact on our built environment within 100 years, so we have to do it right."

Do it faster, too, Yonkers business officials are urging city officials.



"While we want the City Council to be thorough in their due diligence, time is money in retail," said Steven Sansone, executive director of the Yonkers Downtown/Waterfront Business Improvement District. "Clearly, our existing businesses are anticipating the additional foot traffic that this proposal could bring."

In meetings with city officials, Sansone, Cacace and Jose Velez, executive director of the South Broadway Business Improvement District, delivered that message on behalf of more than 1,000 businesses their groups represent.

"We're close to two years now" since SFC partners first proposed their redevelopment project, Cacace said. "It's been informally discussed in public many times. Small issues are taking too much time. We need to be very bullish in our downtown and go forward."



In December, said Cacace, SFC officials "said very plainly that if this is going to be an indefinite process, they're moving out of town." When the developers say they must move ahead on the project this year, "I take them at their word," he said. The loss of the SFC project would be "catastrophic for business in this city."

Regarding both the SFC and Alexander Street redevelopment plans, "We would like to see positive action on all this, especially in light of what's going on in the banking world," said the chamber president. "If we blink the wrong way, this whole thing could come to a stop and that's what concerns us."

At Yonkers City Hall, officials share that concern. "We need to get some action going," said David Simpson, the mayor's spokesman.

The SFC partners "made it very clear not only to the mayor but also to City Council that they've got to move this year" on the project, he said. As indicated by last week's reports of massive banking losses and falling stock markets, "The good times don't roll on forever," he said.

Simpson said the public-hearing process on the SFC project could last several months. "It's ambitious to say that we're going to start it by the fall, to have a shovel in the ground," he said. "It's realistic for me to believe that construction will begin this year, and that's how the mayor feels. These developers have made it very clear that they'll walk away if they don't have a commitment, as any developer would."

The SFC partners have spent \$17 million in planning, architectural, legal and acquisition costs for the Yonkers project, said Joseph V. Apicella, senior vice president at Cappelli Enterprises Inc. in Valhalla. "We would never give an ultimatum" to Yonkers officials, "but certainly if you just view the economic market of today, that project that was quite viable two to three months ago is quite speculative right now," he said. "Time is not our friend in this case. Time is of the essence, let's put it that way."

"If a year passes and there isn't significant progress, we'd have reason to evaluate what we're doing here, absolutely," he said. "Let's face it, as of yesterday (Jan. 22), we're officially in a recession. We can't continue to add insult to injury and continue to accumulate debt on a project" that is stalled by city officials.

Apicella said he was confident the SFC project could clear the public review process and gain required approvals within a year.

SFC project manager Peter G. Klein said he hoped the Yonkers City Council was included in the partnership the private developer has forged with city officials in order to speed up the approvals process. "Our goal is for the project to be nonpolitical," he said. "We think the benefits are for the city and not for any individual politician."

Among Yonkers business leaders, "We just don't want to see politics get in the way of progress," said Cacace



Reader Comments

Please add your Comments

Westchester TalkBack

Name:

Email Address:

Add your Question or Comment:

Issue important to you:



[create form](#)



© Copyright 2008 Westfair Business Publications

3 Gannett Drive, White Plains, NY 10604
Tel: (914) 694-3600