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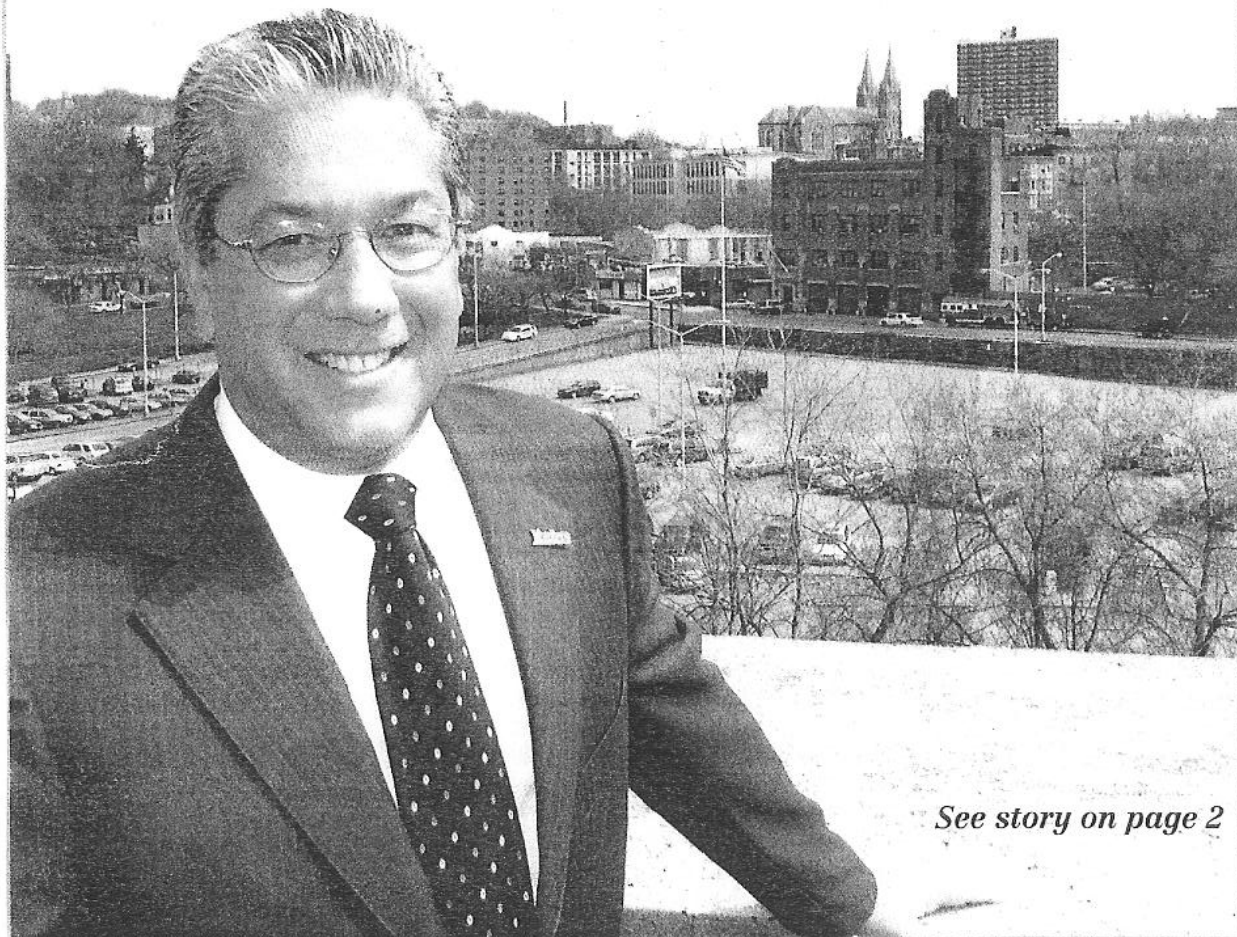
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Grand Slam

Developers set to cover bases for \$3 billion plan



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Business Journal photo by BOB ROZYCKI

Marc Berson, a partner in Struever Fidelco Cappelli L.L.C., stands above Chicken Island, site of the proposed minor-league baseball park in Yonkers.

Grand slam

Developers gear up for \$3 billion ballpark, river walk, housing plan

By ALEX PHILIPPIDIS

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Getting unanimous approval from the normally fractious City Council was the easy part for the trio of top developers intent on giving downtown Yonkers a \$3 billion makeover.

The tough part will take place over the next six months, as the developers finalize plans to build that long-discussed minor-league ballpark within an \$850 million retail-residential complex, as well as uncover the Saw Mill River and build more apartments on the city's Hudson River shore.

At the same time, Struever Fidelco Cappelli L.L.C. will also map out its plans for the remaining 500 or so acres comprising much of Yonkers' commercially zoned land from the Saw Mill to the Hudson rivers.

The partnership consists of Baltimore-based Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse Inc., Fidelco Realty Group of Millburn, N.J., and Valhalla developer Louis R. Cappelli.

"This isn't like urban renewal in the 1960s when you go in and say we should clear a seven-block area and start over again. This is identifying what sites within these designated areas are appropriate for, and would be helpful to have, new development on ... and what form should that new development take?" said Geoff Thompson, a Struever Fidelco Cappelli spokesman.

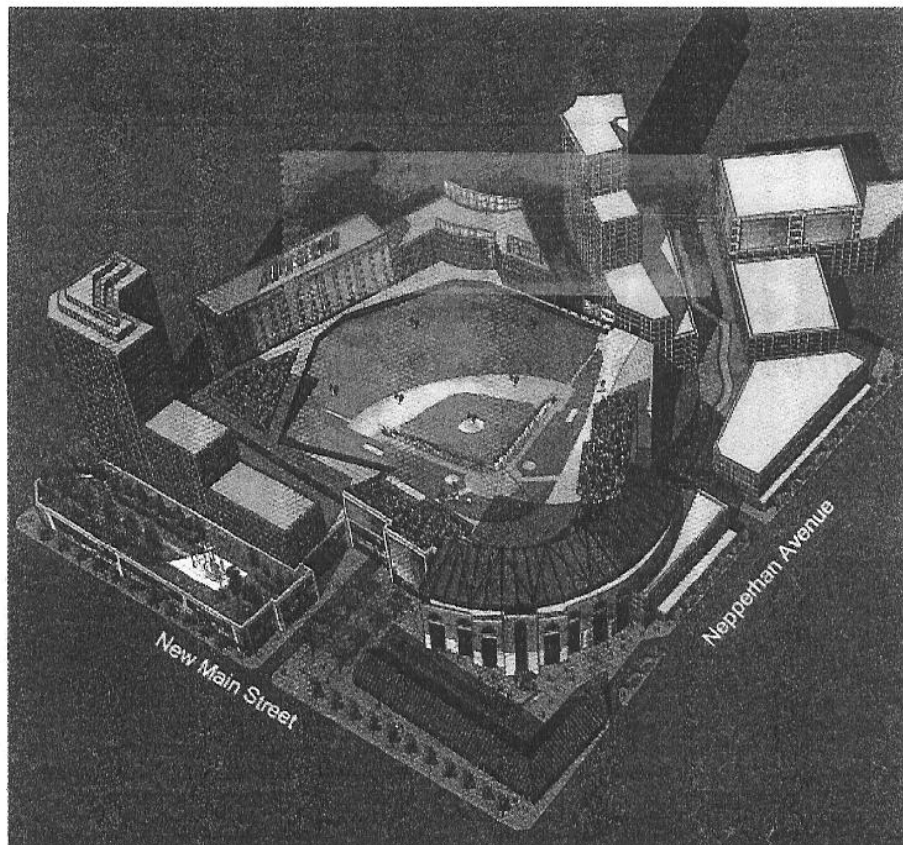
Thompson said the developers will decide which properties to redevelop by themselves, and which they will redevelop by bringing in partners or selling to other builders. New developers, he said, could be brought in for projects that include below-market "affordable" housing since that is not a specialty of the partnership.

Struever Fidelco Cappelli has begun pursuing agreements to acquire land in the areas where new projects will emerge. Joseph V. Apicella, executive vice president with Cappelli Enterprises Inc., said the developers have signed contracts with property owners representing "70 to 80 percent" of the city block envisioned for the retail-apartment-ballpark project, titled Gateway Center.

"I'd say we're about four or five properties off from completing that. I have every confidence we can close a deal with these people," Apicella said.

Among owners still in talks is Harvey Goldman, owner of the variety store C.H. Martin Inc. at 2 Palisade Ave. and an active opponent of previous ballpark proposals.

"There has been a dialogue that's begun. Exactly where it will lead remains to be seen," said Debra S. Cohen, a White Plains-based lawyer representing Goldman. "He's encouraged that the developers have reached out to him and to others in the area, and finally treating them with the respect they are entitled to."



An artist's rendering of the \$850 million "Gateway Center" retail-residential-baseball complex proposed for downtown Yonkers. The long-discussed minor-league ballpark will be built on the roof.

Said Apicella: "We've talked about a relocation. We've talked about a joint venture possibility. We've put everything on the table with Mr. Goldman, and we view him as a partner."

Marc Berson, chairman of Fidelco, said earlier this year the developers would forge partnerships with property owners, officials and other stakeholders to ensure the mega project will succeed where generations of redevelopment efforts have failed.

Struever Fidelco Cappelli "will be a dynamic partnership that will bring the critical mass that's needed to make Yonkers a leading city for creative new development projects," Berson said.

'IT'S VERY DOABLE'

Gateway Center would consist of 800 residential units, 580,000 square feet of retail space, 175,000 square feet of office space, a 100,000-square-foot hotel and 6,500-seat minor-league ballpark, to be built on the top deck of the project's parking garage.

"The refreshing news about this proposal is that it has garnered such widespread support, and I think that's going to allow things to move more quickly and easily through the process," said Mary Jane Foster, who with her husband, Jack MacGregor, are Bridgeport, Conn., investors that have spent the past four years trying to bring a minor-league baseball team to Yonkers.

That would mean starting work at year's end or early in 2007, and tossing out the first pitch in 2008, Foster said, adding: "I think that can happen. It's very doable."

Gateway Center would anchor the first

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UpClose:

Gateway Center

Gateway Center is an \$850 million retail-residential-office complex proposed for a downtown Yonkers city block near Getty Square, bordered by New Main Street, Nepperhan Avenue, School Street and Palisade Avenue. The project includes:

- 800 residential units.
- 580,000 square feet of retail space.
- 175,000 square feet of office space.
- A 100,000-square-foot hotel.
- 6,500-seat minor-league ballpark, to be built on the top deck of the project's parking garage.
- 4,750 parking spaces — 2,450 in on-site garage; 2,300 in garage on adjacent site.
- Developer: Struever Fidelco Cappelli L.L.C.

Courtesy STRUEVER FIDELCO CAPPELLI L.L.C.

Grand slam —

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phase of projects comprising the make-over. Less than a mile west of the Gateway Center site, the Saw Mill River would be unearthed or "daylighted" after some 50 years of flowing via culverts underneath downtown Yonkers.

Yonkers will have \$14 million in state money it can use toward the daylighting, plus another \$10 million toward infrastructure for Gateway Center. The funds were included in the new state budget agreement and secured through state Sen. Nicholas A. Spano.

The first phase also includes construction of 385 apartments on two vacant city waterfront lots known as parcels H and I.

Struever Fidelco Cappelli will pay the city \$10.4 million — \$1.2 million an acre — for the city land used in first-phase projects, including the municipal park-

ing lot at Chicken Island, parcels H and I and a third waterfront site, the old ATI terminal.

COUNCIL COMFORT

The Yonkers City Council gave the developers a key vote of confidence April 4, when it voted 7-0 to sign the Master Developer Designating Agreement between Struever Fidelco Cappelli and Mayor Philip A. Amicone. The vote came just eight weeks after Amicone submitted the agreement to the council.

"The council's approval came in a positive way. It was very, encouraging," said the lawyer for the developers, Alfred B. DeBello of the White Plains law firm DeBello Donnellan Weingarten Tartaglia Wise & Wiederkehr L.L.P. "Everybody was very excited by the way it came down. There's been almost total support throughout this city for this project. So far almost everybody has been speaking

in favor of it."

In an interview last week, Amicone said the city would hire within the next month an official who would act as a liaison to the developers.

"It's basically to make sure every I is dotted, every T is crossed, and if we need 10 copies they've got 10 copies — somebody to make presentations with the City Council, with the Planning Board," Amicone said. "We want to make sure that all those bumps that typically throw themselves in the way of a major development are smoothed out so that it takes the least amount of time to get a quality project."

This week, the mayor said, he would meet with the developers to begin the process of working with city department heads: "In a project of this size, the right coordination can cut months off the construction time."

Council President Chuck Schorr

Lesnick said the unanimous vote reflected the fruits of a more participatory review. One example: Every council member was allowed to participate in talks with the developers.

"We probably could have gotten a 4-3 vote a month earlier, but I really wanted everybody on the council to feel comfortable with the project, and to ask all the questions they needed to and to get it thoroughly explained," Lesnick said.

Struever Fidelco Cappelli created comfort for council members, Lesnick said, by renegotiating the price for city land from the \$1 called for in the original agreement.

Lesnick promised that the City Council would encourage public involvement in the redevelopment projects — a promise the developers and Amicone have also made.

Last year, Lesnick unseated Republican Richard Martinelli as council president in part by pledging more public participation in project reviews. That followed criticism of Martinelli and Amicone for supporting earlier ballpark plans and for pushing through a divided council the \$600 million Ridge Hill Village project planned by Forest City Ratner Cos. Amicone has said he and last year's council majority acted properly.

"So far they (Struever Fidelco Cappelli) have shown a willingness and an openness to the public and to the council members that the Ratner organization never did," said council member John Murtagh,



Lesnick



Murtagh