

Many unruffled by plans for towers

Ernie Garcia
The Journal News

YONKERS — Freddie Wedlowe said he likes the view of the Hudson River and Palisades from his apartment, though he would prefer a redeveloped waterfront.

"It's not important," said Wedlowe, 63, of the sights from Woodworth Avenue just east of land where developers have proposed high-rise buildings. "New York City and White Plains are constantly building, so (Yonkers) has to get out of that old-fashioned

(frame of mind) and let some new buildings in here."

Residents and environmentalists who oppose high-rises next to the river say they hold the majority position based on opinions voiced at public meetings. Yet on the streets nearest the land north and south of the Yonkers train station where the buildings would rise, anti-height sentiments are harder to find.

"I think it's more important to fix up the area," said Christina Chong, 21, a stay-at-home mom who lives on Buena Vista Avenue.

"It's just a view. You want to look at it? Go down (to the water) and look at it."

There are several proposals for tall buildings along the Yonkers waterfront. To the south of the Yonkers train station, the Struever Fidelco Cappelli development group has proposed two 26-story buildings.

North of the Yonkers train station, the development group would like to build additional tall buildings, while other developers have already begun construction or have made their own high-rise

proposals.

"We do have concerns that public input we've heard hasn't been reflected in the plans put forward," said Ned Sullivan, president of Scenic Hudson.

Whether the opinions Sullivan heard are the majority view is debatable.

Robert Walters, former director of the Beczak Environmental Center, said skyscraper opponents represent a wide constituency.

"Every public meeting I've gone to, the public has been vehement that they don't want high-rises," Walters said.

However, back on Woodworth Avenue, Carlos Gonzalez, 44, a mechanic and Yonkers native, said the high-rises are a good deal.

"One man's gain (of a view) is another man's loss, but I think everybody is going to gain," Gonzalez said Friday.

Joseph Apicella, executive vice president of the Fuller Development Co., a division of Cappelli Enterprises, said taller buildings will create less blockage because developers will build up, not out.

Such density is also appropriate for downtown Yonkers, he said.

Donna Nolan, 41, a school cafeteria worker, lives on Yonkers' east side and attended public hearings on development.

"I've listened to them complain, but the bottom line is that you need to build. You want to live in a little pumpkin town? There are plenty of those, but Yonkers is a big city," said Nolan, whose husband works in the buildings trades.

The Yonkers Public Library's Riverfront branch attracts many patrons to easy chairs on the third floor with sweeping views of the river and the Palisades. It's easy to find a high-rise critic there.

"It's a bad idea," said Stephen Robinson, 49, a forklift operator, who was reading the newspaper on Friday facing the river.

At the river's edge, Collins Enterprises has already begun work on two 12- and 14-story towers, which will partially block the library's views. Robinson supported the idea of high-rises, but not in front of the library.

"Economically it's great, but the views are beautiful here," said Robinson, who comes to the library twice a week and looks forward to development like the proposed baseball stadium downtown. "If the buildings weren't so high, it wouldn't be bad."



Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News

Stephen Robinson of Yonkers talks Friday about the view of the Hudson River from the Yonkers Public Library.