

Yonkers Community Forum

Struever Fidelco Cappelli LLC

June 28th, 2006

The following is a synopsis of the discussion points raised by the public at Struever Fidelco Cappelli LLC's ("SFC") June 28, 2006 Community Forum, held at the Riverfront Yonkers Public Library. This meeting was the second "public outreach" meeting to solicit the public's ideas for the planning effort of SFC to produce a development plan for the Southwest section of the City of Yonkers; the first meeting was held May 20, 2006.

After an introduction by Joe Apicella of Cappelli Enterprises, the public was invited to join "break-out" groups based on topics of interest. The break-out groups were: (1) Open Space / Waterfront, (2) History and Preservation, (3) Development, (4) Traffic and Transportation, and (5) Arts and Culture.

The following is a brief summary of each of the topics, followed by a detailed listing of the comments.

- **Open Space/Waterfront:** The greatest number of concerns about this topic were in reference to the accessibility of the waterfront for the public. Residents of the community want the riverfront to be restored for the public and to have amenities for public use. Another concern is the preservation of the views of the Hudson River.
- **History and Preservation:** Those in this break-out group were concerned with preserving the history and character of Yonkers. They would like to see Yonkers' history preserved and incorporated into the new development.
- **Development:** The comments in this group were diverse. Items of discussion included concern with overdevelopment of the Yonkers skyline; a mix of new retail stores; a new location of SUNY College established in Yonkers; and an increase in more affordable housing.
- **Traffic and Transportation:** Comments in this break-out group were mainly about making Yonkers a walking city. They would like to get rid of the congestion of cars and implement mass transit.
- **Arts and Culture:** Art comments focused on making sure that there is a commitment from the developers for funding the arts and an arts center as part of the development. In general, the group felt the arts is what makes a neighborhood one that people want to live in; the consensus of the group was that arts is good business. There was an emphasis on helping to create and fund an over-arching arts organization. There was also a concern on having enough affordable housing for local artists.

Open Space/Waterfront

- Maintain clear view of river
- There should be sufficient amount of access to the river/waterfront
- Question: What is the relationship to Prospect Ave?
- Multiple access to river - Ludlow, Buena Vista
- Historic buildings are valuable
- Question: What kind of security for riverwalk will there be?
- Create environment similar to Brooklyn Heights or London Embankment
- Public access is preferred over vehicular
- Keep natural landscape
- Make it welcome for people, a human landscape
- What will be the impact of development on Scrimshaw House?
- Consider previous studies/history
- Quality development
- Remove industry and oil storage from river- no more plastics plants that run 24 hrs (Tyco plant near Ludlow)
- Waterfront restored for people
- No 30-story building
- No buildings over 9 stories
- Low-rise buildings encouraged
- Natural buffer zone- marsh, natural habitats reclaimed shoreland
- Question: What properties are involved in the project?
- Separate storm drainage from sewage treatment
- Cover sewage treatment plant
- Question: Watertaxi- too much public space? Is this good for Yonkers?
- Relocate watertaxi to Ludlow
- Values/properties of starting point master plan
- Create a space that is livable. Balance open space, shopping, etc
- Community gardens are encouraged
- Create a basic town charm similar to Hastings/Sleepy Hollow
- Retain town character
- Activities at Marina, i.e. kayaking
- Document architectural ideas
- Respect of the area/people who live here
- Low-income/working class people
- Preserve view corridors
- Additional open space at the waterfront
- Activities for children at waterfront
- Sustainable community
- Improving quality of life for people living in the community
- 30% of the waterfront should be kept as open space

History and Preservation

- Question: What was Yonkers like in the past?
 - Yonkers Ferry- started in 1928
 - 20 years ago- National Economy Down and so was Yonkers
 - Segregation still looms through – housing projects
- Need to ensure public officials respect history
- Landmarking process needs to better recognize and respect
- Getty Square designed as walking environment
- Day lighting of river is important to history
- Getty Square history and architectural character should be celebrated and preserved
- Locally significant buildings should be considered
- Portland, Maine has respected its waterfront with history in mind- use those similar ideas
- Ridge Hill is also undergoing enormous development, city needs to consider balancing
- Consider examples of San Antonio, Rhode Island, etc
- Consider scale of buildings
- Trolley system is historic- Question: possibly bring it back?
- Mass transit could make Yonkers a walking city again
- Locate parking to benefit
- Downtown, without obstructing view
- Yonkers historically, seemed dark, very poetic (like an Edward Hopper painting)
- Question: How do we build upon ballpark?
- Development to ensure surrounding neighborhoods and businesses
- Scale of ballpark is very large - maybe put ballpark on street level
- Development could be modern with national retailers at a “smaller” scale
- Authenticity is key to unique quality and history
- Consider compromises, mixing smaller and larger scales- capitalize on opportunity for city
- Explore “economic alternatives” in order to save historic buildings
- Availability of funding, grants to help restore historic buildings
- Adaptive reuse is a viable route to preserve character
- There are 50 buildings that the city considers of valuable historic and/or architectural value. These should be preserved
- The Martin Building could be used for Target or a Target look-a-like
- Ballpark not beneficial to the public
- An arts center would be great for Chicken Island
- Preservation of culture and diversity is key to maintaining character
- New Main Street is a vital shopping district to those without cars
- Accessibility cultural and historical center (storefront) to tell Yonkers story

- Leverage- Mass transit funding
- Reuse Putnam R.O.W. for bus way (Park and Ride)
- Historic walk through downtown
- Nepperhan River key to Yonkers history and location
- Native American settlements should be acknowledged
- Bird Watch- consider connections to nature and environment
- Pedestrians first - cars in partnership with rapid transit to NYC

Development

- Previous successes:
 - Start of local businesses (restaurant, infrastructure, local character)
 - Mix of people socializing and contributing to downtown area- needs to spread
 - Area looks nicer and appears to be safer
 - More access to water for recreational purposes (fishing)
 - Create and expand along waterfront
 - Adaptive redeveloped architectural buildings in tact
 - Library
 - Landscaping around train station

- Yonkers Skyline:
 - Everyone enjoys the waterfront- reasonable height
 - Preserve view and sunsets
 - Hi-rises change the character
 - 6 stories on river should be max
 - Build to topography of land
 - Do not overdevelop
 - What will be the noise impact?
 - Be sure to include sewage treatment at sites

- Types of Retail Stores:
 - Mix of types: From Target to Five & Dime; National Retailers to Specialty shops and boutiques
 - Mix of type of stores: Gas stations, Book stores, Super markets, pet supply store, Plus-size Women's Store
 - National Chains: Trader Joes, Kohls, Whole Foods
 - Recreation fro children
 - Caution about national discounters
 - Jobs and stability
 - Small business development is encouraged

- Type of Business
 - SUNY Unversity- College of Technology
 - Office Space
 - BioTech (High Tech Jobs)
 - Library Expansion
 - Theatre Artist Galleries
 - Restaurants

- Type of Housing in the Downtown Area
 - Mix of type of housing: Luxury Housing; mixed income housing; Middle-class housing; Attainable housing; Fixed-income housing; Low income housing; Assisted-living and senior housing; Grandparent housing; Continuous Care housing; housing for the people that work in Yonkers (Teachers, Policemen, etc.)
 - “Market rate” is luxury in Westchester and needs to be adjusted to fit Yonkers.
 - More money for affordable housing
 - What percent will be affordable?
 - Housing that contributes to communities and variety
 - Hi-rise
 - More ownership
 - Housing needs to include Community rooms/amenity spaces

- Ball Park
 - Cost Analysis- what is benefit of using land in that way?
 - Estimated 1/3 of audience in break-out group in favor of ballpark while 2/3 of members of break-out group object
 - Question: Who will pay for project?
 - Small college would be preferred
 - Ball park can be used to hold concerts during off-season

Traffic and Transportation

- Traffic from and deliveries cause many problems
- Room is needed for buses to pull off
- Yonkers Ave exit off Saw Mill needs improvement
- Impact of school bus traffic
- Build monorail
- Take a real integrated look at mobility
- Look beyond cars
- Consider alternate fuel buses
- Roads should be implemented along waterfront but set back
- Additional crossing of metro north
- Pedestrian access to riverfront
- Scenic trail along riverfront
- Grading of Ashburton Ave. needs to be improved
- Bus depot traffic
- Integrate traffic with land use development
- Utilities and impact on roadways
- Traffic calming measures, i.e. speed bumps, in residential areas
- Fireboats
- Riverwalk along Saw Mill
- Bike racks and lockers at train station and other areas of development
- Zip cars (shared)
- Bike racks on buses (like in Atlanta, Philadelphia,
- Extend bus service hours
- Pedestrian safety improvements
- Articulated buses
- Establish truck routes for deliveries
- Improve handicapped buses and parking
- Excessive speeding in neighborhoods
- Speed of traffic on major corridors is a problem
- Small block sizes
- Well-connected street network
- Create looping trolley system
- Evaluate location of ferry service

Arts and Culture

- Seeing the impact on the community, preserving it for future residents
- Highlighting local residents/artists- have them involved in decision making from the beginning
- Define public art- for beauty, practical and functional art
- Funding for art - enhances, enriches sense of lasting cultural sensibility
- Physical needs include having creative outlets for youth and community; arts cut from schools can be reintroduced by this project
- Performing arts
- Coordinating various forms of “art”; maybe a central cultural center, attracts and develops new and existing talent, this arts center would have exhibits, and should also be open during business hours when people are out and about
- Art museum, workshops and artists space
- Having art shouldn’t be a question, it enhances a growing city—Art is good business
- The group questioned if the city has asked for any specific commitment of funding to be devoted to the arts the developers? What is the level of commitment from the developers to incorporate these important ideas?
- Create new arts organization to advocate the arts programming and artists in the community
- Group would like a piece of the pie in the way of a recovering grant/funding stream to facilitate such an arts organizations
- Will the developers give seed money to create new arts administration to facilitate an arts organization for the city?
- Include one or more kiosks for the cultural/arts info
- Affordable studio/loft arts space needed for live/work purpose
- Create an arts advisory group at act as a voice for this process. A credible founded group to ensure that the artist consistency is heard and taken into consideration
- Vinnie Badwell wants to create a sculpture of W.C. Handy (the father of “the blues”)
- Concerned about being “yes-ed”--- want real consideration