

Huge Turnout for Public Hearing on Development Plan; Majority of Residents Support \$1.5 Billion Project

By Dan Murphy

Hundreds of Yonkers residents overflowed the City Council chambers on Tuesday to give their comments on the proposed \$1.5 billion downtown redevelopment plan submitted by Struever Fidelco Cappelli (SFC). The City Council is currently reviewing SFC's Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the first phase of the project, which includes retail, commercial and residential redevelopment at Getty Square and Chicken Island (River Park Center), riverfront condominiums (Palisades Point) and the daylighting of the Saw Mill River at Chicken Island and Larkin Plaza.

Tuesday's meeting was the first opportunity for the public to comment, and more than 350 people showed up, with most being diverted to the ceremonial courthouse. Most of the 96 speakers were Yonkers residents, and the majority of speakers were in support of the project.

Yonkers resident Dennis Sheppard said, "To delay and do nothing is dangerous. This project will help keep property taxes down and reduce the burden on homeowners like me."

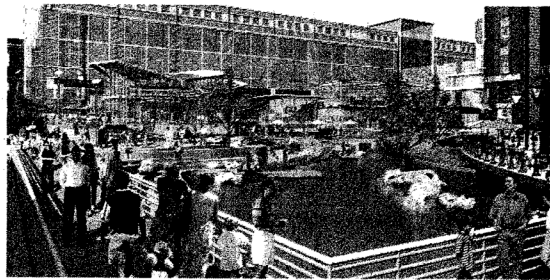
Richard Brant, a 35-year resident of Yonkers, said, "Finally, after many years, we have some momentum. I want to see this project moved expeditiously by the council, but don't give the developer carte blanche."

Yonkers resident Anthony Felissimo said, "I totally support the project, although I can't afford to live in the apartments on the river. I understand that it will help our tax base, and I want it to move forward without delay. We need this project."

The large crowd was broken down into three different segments. *Continued on Page 11*



Overflow crowd in Council chambers - Photo by Antoine Lovell



A rendering of SFC's plan

Public Hearing

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ments: union members (some from Yonkers) and business owners who support the project; Yonkers homeowners and taxpayers who support the project; and Yonkers residents who oppose the project and are calling for more community benefits to be diverted to lower- and middle-class Yonkers residents.

Ed Doyle, Sr., president of the Westchester-Putnam Building Trades Council, said, "I have been a Yonkers resident all of my life. This project will provide jobs and revenues for Yonkers. The developers won't wait around forever; let's not delay, and get this passed."

Kevin Cacace, president of the Yonkers Chamber of Commerce, said, "You are presented with the opportunity to remake downtown Yonkers. We

investment in decades. So far, the process has been slow, and needs to go quickly. Time is of the essence."

Yonkers resident Justin Tubiolo said, "As a property owner and taxpayer, we are in desperate need of this project."

Opponents of the project as proposed are comprised of two community groups called the Alliance for Community Benefits and Community Voice Heard.

Yonkers resident Andrew Simmons said, "We are excited for change, but we need affordable housing and job opportunities for Yonkers residents."

Yonkers resident Annette Anton said, "A project like this is long overdue, but there is nothing in it for low-income people to benefit economically."

Both groups are calling for SFC to negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement, which would include housing, training, jobs and education programs for the resi-

dents currently living in downtown Yonkers.

Representatives from American Sugar commented during the hearing and asked for an extension of the comment period so that they could study possible noise and air-quality issues. Their sugar refinery sits adjacent to where SFC has proposed building the riverfront residential units.

The comment period is set to end on May 13, after another public meeting that will be held at Roosevelt High School. SFC Principal Louis Cappelli attended the meeting and made brief comments.

"I look forward to hearing everyone's feelings, and why they support or oppose this project," Cappelli said. "Hopefully, this process can come to a conclusion and we can begin the revitalization of Yonkers."

Council members made no public comments at the hearing, which lasted well into the night.