

## Yonkers: A City on the Move

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Yonkers is a city on the move. From a massive \$5 billion urban renaissance project to public schools, we can once again be proud of a successful public safety effort; signs of progress are evident all across Yonkers.

Four years ago, determined to bring about a resurgence and end years of unfulfilled promises, Mayor Philip Amicone introduced a new, business-like approach to governing, particularly when it came to the economy. Recognizing that large-scale developers and companies have many options in choosing their locations, Yonkers took a proactive, competitive stance.

The city declared its eagerness to work in partnership with the private sector toward growth projects that would benefit taxpayers and residents, as well as those businesses willing to step forward. The new administration also adopted a policy of forging inter-governmental relationships that would provide substantial amounts of public seed money for new development.

Most critically, Mayor Amicone set in motion a master planning process to renew the city through massive redevelopment. The plan was sweeping but simple: Redevelop the city's key areas and restore to past glory its greatest assets: large swaths of downtown and the waterfront.

Four years later, a new downtown is taking form, waterfront development and rebirth is at last a reality, and a 21st century tech industry hub is rising.

Among the major projects carried out since 2004:



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- The \$17 million relocation, with 700 jobs for Yonkers, of leading plastic display manufacturer Diam International.
- The start of a revitalization of the entire Nepperhan Valley district, the historic but seriously underutilized 110-acre industrial site situated strategically between downtown, the waterfront and Ridge Hill. Nepperhan Valley was rechristened as nValley — a high-tech corridor for the cutting-edge businesses that are creating tomorrow's technology future.
- The relocation of Atlantis Worldwide, a manufacturer of medical imaging and radiology technology, to the nValley area.
- Completion of major new residential, commercial and public developments in the southwest quadrant, the oldest part of the city.
- Completion of a 600-car parking garage adjacent to Station Plaza.
- The launch of direct high-speed ferry service to and from Manhattan's Financial District.

- 66main, a \$45 million project that transforms Main Street with a 10-story building combining residential, commercial and retail space. The project includes a health club and a 154-space parking facility.

- The nearly completed \$185 million rebirth of the Yonkers Raceway complex into Empire City Gaming at Yonkers Raceway.

With all this activity, unemployment in Yonkers is low — the lowest in New York state. Five thousand more residents are now employed than four years ago. Yonkers is the state's only major city, along with New York City, that can boast both job and population growth in recent years.

Central to the emerging new Yonkers is a \$5 billion dollar master plan encompassing 500 acres of land. It will reinvent downtown and send waves of redevelopment across the city to trigger waterfront-area revitalization and accelerate the rebirth of nValley.

The heart of the plan is a new downtown focal point, reborn as River Park Center. The largest development in the city's history, River Park Center is a \$1.6 billion, 2-million-square-foot mega-project that includes an 11-story retail, entertainment and parking complex capped by two 50-story apartment towers and a minor league baseball stadium designed by Struever Brothers, the same team that invented inner-city rebirth with Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

Struever, Fidelco, Capelli is primarily responsible for the project's development. Winding through River Park Center, the Saw Mill River will be uncovered and "daylighted" with landscaping, to create a pedestrian-friendly

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Riverwalk.

Reinvigorating the downtown Main Street area is a key element of plan. "A true downtown provides options," said Amicone. "We're bringing in big-time entertainment and retail options, but we're also being very careful to hold on to the small businesses that have anchored Yonkers for many decades."

Change is palpable today at Ridge Hill Village, a billion-dollar mega-project now under construction. Commercial and residential buildings will encircle a town square, just minutes from the New York State Thruway and 30 minutes from Midtown Manhattan. The Village will feature a 175-room hotel, 1,000 market-rate condominium units, a 20,000-square-foot conference center and 160,000 square feet of renovated research and office space, as well as 1.2 million square feet of retail space — all perched on a hilltop.

Among the retailers that have already signed leases are National Amusements, Whole Foods

Market, L.L. Bean, Banana Republic and New York & Company.

Evidence of a new era can also be spotted nightly on the once-ramshackle Hudson River waterfront, where Peter Kelly's restaurant, Xaviars X20, soars atop a landmark Victorian-era pier, attracting visitors from all over the region. Also elevating the waterfront is Hudson Park North, a 294-unit, one- and two-bedroom rental project on the waterfront that opened in June.

Developers and city planners are eyeing several other waterfront locations for an expansion of the renaissance. At the northern waterfront will soon rise Point Street Landing, a \$900 million project that includes a network of apartment towers, stores and public parks spanning 16 acres between the Metro-North railroad tracks and the Hudson.

Other major projects now underway or in the advanced planning stages include The Cross County Shopping Center's \$250 million facelift; plans for \$160 million in public improvements; the upgrading of Ashburton Avenue; the continuing evolution of the

nValley area; and the enhancement of the area surrounding Metro-North Ludlow Station, with new residential and retail uses that would not affect the exiting Ludlow Park residential neighborhood.

The Yonkers re-emergence runs deeper than a development boom. Equally impressive improvements have taken place in a formerly ineffective municipal function — education — as well as in public safety and overall quality of life.

"Yonkers is already well on its way to becoming the next great city in the state of New York," Amicone said.

"The best thing about our city is its people. We have one of the most vibrant and diverse populations of any place. Everything we're doing now to grow our city — the reinvigoration of the economy, the expansion of our work force, the continuing improvement of our school system and anything else that we'll experience in the future — is due to the strength and imagination of our people," he said. "The future is brighter for Yonkers than at any point in our city's history."