

## Developers keep river view

### Video, 3-D models let Yonkers public see downtown plans

Len Maniace  
The Journal News

YONKERS — The city's Deputy Planning Commissioner Sharon Ebert led her audience recently on a tour that was part computer game and part planning seminar.

On a screen set up in City Hall, apartment towers moved by as if viewed from a helicopter making its way up an imaginary main street. A turn to the left produced a glimpse of the Palisades and the Hudson River; a turn to the right showed the city's hilly nearby neighborhoods.

"Now we're going to take a drive down Alexander Street," said Ebert, and suddenly the audience was at street level, whizzing past pedestrians, storefronts and oncoming cars.

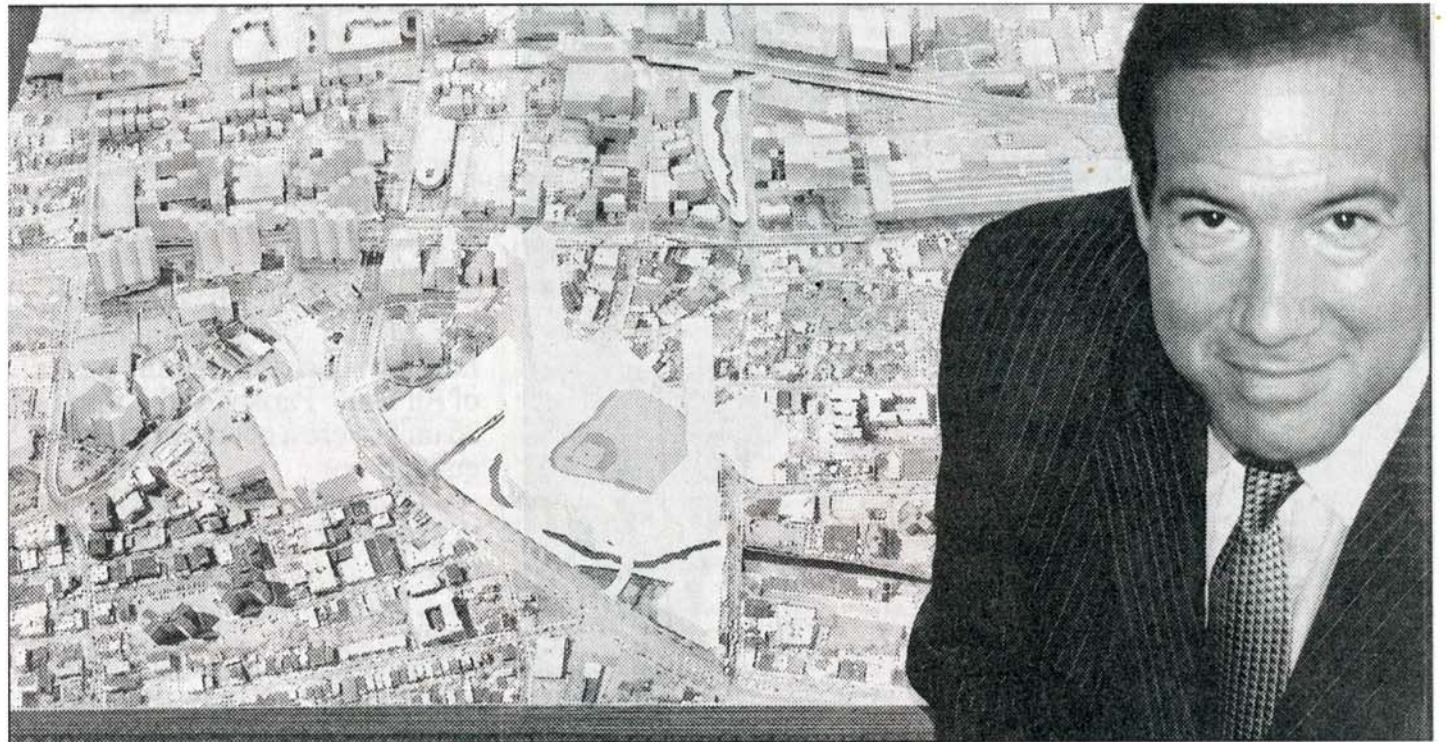
The tour was an interactive planning tool produced by Environmental Simulation Center, a Manhattan-based company. The software, adapted for Yonkers, showed the latest redevelopment plan for the Alexander Street corridor, an aging industrial waterfront that's only partially used.

The revised Alexander Street plan, a proposal for a largely residential extension of Yonkers' downtown, won good reviews late last month from several previously critical environmentalists who liked its expanded parkland and the transit-friendly layout. They also praised the software used to present the plan.

The tool helped citizens and planners get a better glimpse of how apartment towers — several reaching to 30 stories — would affect views from surrounding neighborhoods, several environmentalists said. That has been one of the major concerns surrounding future development on the site.

The interactive model of the Alexander Street master plan is periodically televised on Yonkers' municipal access station channel 78.

"I really like the technology. I thought it was a great way to look at the plan," said Terry Joshi, an organizer of the community group Yonkers Committee for Smart Development. "It was really kind of



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Project manager Joseph Apicella stands alongside a scale model of Struever Fidelco Cappelli's Hudson Park Center and surrounding downtown Yonkers. It's one of several models using different technologies designed to show how new developments would fit into Yonkers.

cool."

Another major Yonkers development is using a tried-and-tested method to show its proposed development: a scale model of buildings made from blocks of wood set on an undulating cardboard base that's been covered with a satellite photos of downtown Yonkers. The model is for the \$1.6 billion Struever Fidelco Cappelli development, whose most prominent element is River Park Center: an 11-story parking, shopping and entertainment complex topped by two 50-story apartment towers and a baseball stadium, all to be built alongside City Hall.

The roughly 4-foot-square model was produced by Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects of New York City and has been on display at the past few weekly meetings the City Council Real Estate Committee has held about the huge development.

City Council President Chuck Lesnick said the traditional model is probably more useful for the public, which gets an overall glimpse of the development, than it is for the City Council, which has been living with the project since it was proposed in early 2006.

Lesnick said he would have liked to see the SFC buildings also displayed with interactive technology like that used for Alexander Street.

"That simulation showed people that the views were still going to be spectacular," Lesnick said, re-

ferring to Yonkers' cherished panorama across the Hudson. He said the technology helped planners come up with a revised Alexander Street plan that better protects those views.

In the case of the SFC proposal, Lesnick said, the council accepted concerns by Mayor Phil Amicone's office that another model would complicate the review and ultimately delay and endanger the project.

The Environmental Simulation Center has been used previously in Yonkers. Several years ago, it helped planners picture how roads would scale the site's steep hillside

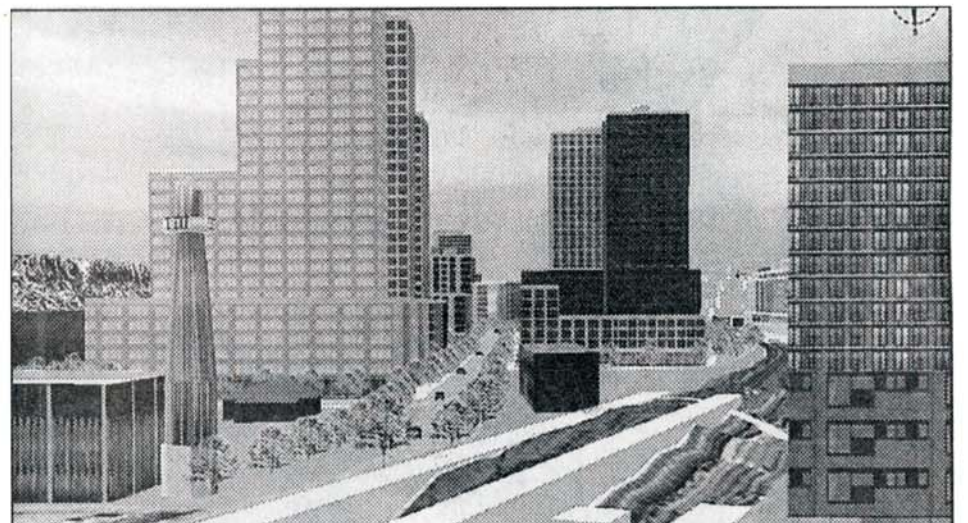
at the Ridge Hill retail-residential project.

The company also produced a more primitive model for Larkin Plaza in the mid-1990s, said the company's executive director, George Janes. It built models of existing and proposed buildings and pasted photographs on them.

"We took a small camera and ran it down the middle of the street so you could get an eye-level perspective of what it would be like," he said.

Several people said there was a place for both techniques. "I think there is something to be said for the old-fashioned 3-D model. I can see building heights and relationships among buildings better with a 3-D model," Joshi said. "Actually, I like them both."

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A view of the Alexander Street master plan along the Yonkers waterfront taken from an interactive 3-D model produced by Environmental Simulation Center.