

Yonkers Mayor Defends Brownfield Incentives

By JOHN JORDAN

ALBANY—With a more than \$3-billion waterfront redevelopment initiative in the approval process, including many endeavors expecting significant brownfield redevelopment incentives from New York State, Yonkers Mayor Philip Amicone testified before a joint session of the Assembly and Senate Environmental Conservation committees last month. The mayor noted those funds are critical to attracting investment to urban areas across New York State.

Mayor Amicone, along with Bill Struever, a partner in the multi-billion dollar Struever-Fidelo-Cappelli redevelopment project currently before the Yonkers City Council, submitted testimony to the Senate panel arguing against a plan forwarded by the Spitzer Administration that would eliminate brownfield incentives that reimburse developers of up to 22 percent of the project cost. Those incentives are currently granted in addition to tax credits given for the environmental cleanup of the brownfield site.

The Spitzer plan would ad-



Yonkers Mayor
Philip Amicone

ditions in the form of brownfield tax credits for reimbursement of costs associated solely with the environmental cleanup component of the project, city official say. They note that the current program has been a key factor in the attraction of private investment and the subsequent redevelopment of contaminated former industrial sites in Yonkers' downtown and waterfront area and therefore the development cost incentive component should be maintained.

Created by the state Legislature in 2003, the Brownfield Cleanup Program is administered by the

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and provides a process for voluntary cleanup of sites that are contaminated with hazardous waste or petroleum, rewarding the cities or local developers that perform the cleanup with economic incentives.

The program has played a critical role in redeveloping heavily contaminated former industrial sites in Yonkers' downtown and waterfront areas, bringing a surge of redevelopment interest that has already produced thousands of new jobs and millions in tax revenues to Yonkers, city officials said.

Mayor Amicone, who serves as president of the New York chapter of the National Brownfield Association, testified, "The Brownfield Cleanup Program is one of the most important factors that have contributed to our success in redeveloping the downtown. Without

it, most of the new projects that have been built or are being built would not have happened and that means the new jobs and revenues that come with those projects would not have happened either. Maintaining this program is absolutely critical to our continued vitality because we need the jobs and economic growth."

In testimony submitted to the state committees, Mayor Amicone stated, "The existing BCP program has worked and continues to work, and the ramifications of any amendments before they are made must be seriously considered because the costs far outweigh the perceived savings. ... Removing the redevelopment incentives in favor of a cleanup only program would not motivate the private sector to take on these costly and complicated projects. As a result, any changes along these lines would harm Yonkers and other cities struggling to revitalize their

urban cores."

The mayor stressed that cleaning up and reinvesting in brownfield properties takes development pressures off undeveloped open land, improving and protecting the environment while bringing in jobs and economic growth.

Mayor Amicone cited the Hudson Park rental apartment project and the Main Street Lofts development as two successful endeavors that were keyed by the state's brownfield program.

At a topping out ceremony for the second phase of the \$200-million Hudson Park project staged earlier this month, developer Arthur Collins, co-founding principal of Collins Enterprises of Greenwich, CT, called on state lawmakers to keep the brownfield program as is, asserting that without the brownfield credits and other incentive programs, developments such as Hudson Park North would not have been possible.