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## Yonkers poised to give key approval to redevelopment project

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*The Journal News*

YONKERS - The City Council late last night appeared poised to turn down the landmarking of an Art Deco city office building on its way toward a key approval of a massive downtown redevelopment project.

The landmark designation would have protected the city's former Department of Health building at 87 Nepperhan Ave., which sits on a corner of the footprint for River Park Center. That is the signature piece of Struever Fidelco Cappelli's \$1.6 billion project containing an 11-story shopping and entertainment complex with parking, topping by an independent league baseball stadium and two 50-story apartment towers.

With the expected approval of the environmental findings, the City Council would ratify the key components of the SFC development that's long been under review.

Along with River Park Center, the plan includes: Palisades Point, two 25-story apartment towers to be built on the Hudson River; Cacace Center, a city office building/hotel, garage, and fire headquarters; and Larkin Plaza Park, which would be formed by uncovering the Saw Mill River, which is buried under an existing parking lot.

Last night's vote was set for the final day of a deadline extension allowed by SFC's main financier, the Bank of Scotland, according to developers. SFC faced a \$2.2 million penalty from the bank if the City Council had not approved the environmental findings by yesterday, according to SFC project manager Joseph Appicella. The developer has declined to release any documentation to support the existence of a deadline, saying it is proprietary information.

Final details of the environmental findings were being negotiated late into the night. At issue initially was the amount of affordable housing to be included in the project and the environmental standards of the new construction, said City Council President Chuck Lesnick. The big holdup came over a call for additional fire protection that was made by the Yonkers Firefighters Association.

The council met before a standing-room crowd of supporters and critics of the plan. Yonkers resident Taffy Williams, who proposed the landmarking of 87 Nepperhan Ave., asked for the council to put off a decision to allow for further study. The building could be preserved without jeopardizing the development by shifting a garage north, she said.

"This building is really a treasure," she said.

She cited a Nov. 3 letter from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation that said 87 Nepperhan Ave. is eligible to be listed in state and federal registers of historic places.

The project has long been cited as a key to Yonkers' economic recovery, although the development is expected to produce less tax revenue for the city than the Ridge Hill project, a large commercial

residential development alongside the New York State Thruway that has been under construction for more than a year.

Yonkers Mayor Phil Amicone has said that the development will stimulate other construction downtown - ultimately producing additional revenue.

The next step in granting SFC the right to develop the four sites is what's known as a land disposition agreement, a detailed contract for the sale of city-owned land upon which most of the redevelopment would be built. That contract would also include the sales price to the city for the municipal office building that the developer would build at the Cacace Center. That structure would replace the city offices at 87 Nepperhan Ave., which would be demolished to make way for River Park Center.

The sales price is still subject to negotiation, Appicella said in an interview.

The land disposition agreement would end the City Council's normal development approval process, but the SFC plan calls for one more step: the approval of a plan to pay for extensive infrastructure needed to support the project by tapping future tax revenue produced by the development. This measure would require the approval of not only the City Council but also the Westchester County Board of Legislators, because it would divert county property taxes to pay for the downtown Yonkers infrastructure improvements.

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