

# Opinion

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OUR VIEWS

## Reinventing Yonkers

### Makeover plan offers a sweeping new look for an old downtown

Count it as a good omen that the massive redevelopment plan for a large swath of downtown Yonkers was submitted on time yesterday. Would that future deadlines in the sure-to-be-long approval process be similarly met — and be transparent and inclusive of the public every step of the way.

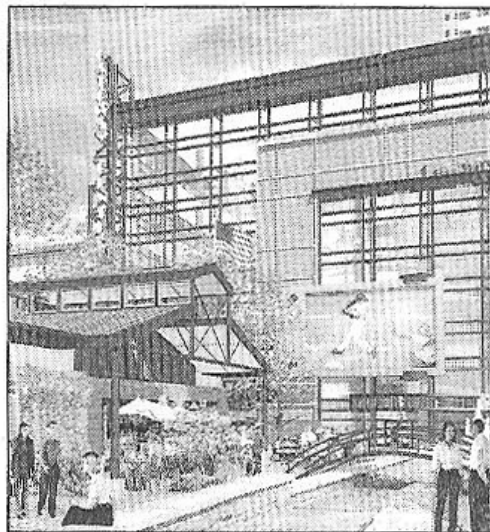
The development partnership behind the \$3.1 billion three-phase plan — Struever Fidelco Cappelli LLC — was given six months to prepare a master plan when the City Council granted exclusive rights back in May. The plan was delivered yesterday smack on schedule.

The makeover proposal — make that a “do-over” — offers sweeping changes in the downtown, bringing new names, and uses, to old places. For example, the Getty Square municipal parking lot, known for generations as Chicken Island, is to become part of the River Park Center in the Gateway District that will include not only a talked-nearly-to-death minor league baseball stadium, but retail, office, residential and restaurant space. Add to that a 15-screen multiplex; it’s been a long while since there were theaters downtown.

Fire Headquarters on School Street, the Health Center building on Nepperhan Avenue and the Government Center garage are all scheduled for razing, then reconstruction at an expanded Cacace Justice Center on South Broadway. Remember when the center was the original Saunders Trades and Technical High School? That’s old school now.

Palisades Point is another new name for old Yonkers. That’s the area south of the main Metro-North Railroad station, the future site — with City Council approval — of condos, restaurants, public open space and a boat launch. And there is Riverwalk, part of the proposed uncovering of the Saw Mill River from the flume that has encased it for decades. Imagine office workers taking a leisurely lunch along the walk as the river flows by.

Price tag for the downtown portion of the plan, called phase one, is \$1.6 billion-plus. Phase two along the Hudson water-



An artist's rendering of what an uncovered Saw Mill River and adjacent ballpark at Chicken Island might look like in downtown Yonkers.

front would comprise mixed-use housing, retail, office space and commuter parking. Phase three: residential and retail use in the Ludlow Metro-North Railroad station area, as well as the Nepperhan Valley industrial corridor, which includes the buildings of the former Alexander Smith & Sons carpet mills, once the world’s largest. It is a huge undertaking, one the developers bill as the largest in the Lower Hudson Valley.

Give the developers credit for involving the public early-on as the plan took shape. The partnership includes Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse, which made its name redeveloping Baltimore’s Inner Harbor as well as Camden Yards; the Fidelco Group of New Jersey; and Cappelli Enterprises, run by Yonkers native Louis Cappelli, who has had major redevelopment successes in downtown White Plains and New Rochelle. The partners apparently learned well the lesson of Yonkers’ proposed, and stalled, Ridge Hill Village, where civic groups felt they were deliberately shut out of a secretive process.

So far, the downtown developers have kept their word on community involvement. We expect they will continue to include the public as plans are fine-tuned, and approvals for financing, zone changes and the like come due.

### On the Web

To view the redevelopment plan for Yonkers, visit [sfcyonkers.com](http://sfcyonkers.com)