

HOME PAGE MY TIMES TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS

Get Home Delivery Log In Register Now

The New York Times

In the Region

N.Y. / Region All NYT

Ameriprise Financial

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

THE CITY IN THE REGION N.Y./REGION OPINIONS

ONLINE PROGRAMS Earn your degree while you earn a living.

University of Phoenix Thinking ahead.

Associate's Degree Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Doctoral Degree

Business Nursing Criminal Justice Technology

CULTURE

Redevelopment in Yonkers Spurs Public Art



Rob Bennett for The New York Times

SPLASHY Francesca Samsel finishing a mural in Yonkers in October.

By SUSAN HODARA
Published: December 30, 2007

Yonkers

In the Region

Long Island, Westchester, Connecticut and New Jersey

[Go to Complete Coverage »](#)

As developers pour tens of millions of dollars to help revitalize the waterfront and downtown area here, there is growing awareness about the value of supporting a vibrant art scene.

“This is an opportunity like never before, to get private money for public art and private performing and visual art,” said Philip A. Amicone, mayor of Yonkers. “Those investing in development have come to understand that it’s not just the stone, mortar and steel that make a building. It’s what surrounds it, what you see when you come outside.”

Public art is envisioned inside and outside residential and office buildings, along waterfront property that developers are required to dedicate for public use, and along

[More Articles in New York Region »](#)

Get UrbanEye by E-Mail

Sign up to find out all you need to know about New York, every weekday.

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

MEDICATION IS THE BEST WAY TO LOWER YOUR CHOLESTEROL.

A CHANGE IN LIFESTYLE WILL LOWER YOUR CHOLESTEROL.

In a world of second opinions, get the facts first.

The New York Times
nytimes.com/health
ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO CLICK

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL OR SAVE THIS

PRINT

REPRINTS

SHARE

MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED

1. David Brooks: The Two Earthquakes
2. Well: A Clutter Too Deep for Mere Bins and Shelves
3. Skin Deep: Short, Stout, Has a Handle on Colds
4. The Curious Cook: The Invisible Ingredient in Every Kitchen
5. Op-Ed Contributor: Bhutto's Deadly Legacy
6. Giving Disorganized Boys the Tools for Success
7. Paul Krugman: Dealing With the Dragon
8. Outposts: Two-Buck Huck
9. 'Miraculous' Recovery for Man Who Fell 47 Floors
10. Judith Warner: Outsourced Wombs

[Go to Complete List »](#)

riverwalk, a promenade bordering portions of the Saw Mill River that will be exposed as part of the plan. Performance groups will benefit from the \$25 million renovation of the century-old Proctor Theater near Getty Square into a performances space that will seat 1,800 and provide a permanent home for the Yonkers Philharmonic and a state-of-the-art stage for theater groups.

“We have incorporated a significant amount of art into our plans,” said Joseph V. Apicella, the executive vice president of Cappelli Enterprises and an executive project manager for Struever Fidelco Cappelli, one of the firms hired by the city. “We haven’t put a figure on it, but it is in the millions of dollars.” The firm has engaged JMC Art Partners, of New Rochelle, “to steward the integration of art throughout the project,” Mr. Apicella said, referring to a \$1.5 billion construction plan for the downtown area.

Though this level of corporate financing of the arts is new to Yonkers, appreciation for the cultural aspects of development is not. For decades, the city — the largest in Westchester and the fourth largest in New York — has been home to numerous artists and arts organizations that have been funded through a variety of city, county, state, federal, private and corporate sources.

This support has enabled the creation of public art pieces like Vinnie Bagwell’s 1996 statue of [Ella Fitzgerald](#) in Yonkers’s MetroNorth Plaza and Richard Haas’s trompe l’oeil murals, “Gateway to the Waterfront,” painted in 1997 on the facades of several downtown buildings. It has also contributed to the creation of Sculpture Meadow on the Hudson, a sculpture park completed in 2003 along the waterfront, and “Muhheakantuck,” two 72-foot-long aluminum waves adorning both sides of the viaduct over Main Street, designed by Barbara Segal, a Yonkers sculptor, in 2005. Blue Door Artist Association, a collective founded in 2002 that now has more than 60 members, has relied on these varied sources to mount its exhibitions, and, in 2005, to initiate a program providing money to artists to decorate concrete planters and garbage receptacles downtown and along South Broadway.

In recent months, the pace has accelerated. Awareness of the potential of developers’ dollars, before they have been put on the table or even specified, is spurring increased funding from traditional sources.

“Art is no longer considered a perk, but a necessity,” said Steve Sansone, who is president of the Untermyer Performing Arts Council, which presents an annual series of cultural programs in Untermyer Park, and a board member of Youth Theatre Interactions, a performing arts school for children. “People are thirsty for it, and the city is adapting accordingly.”

In April, Blue Door instituted a changing exhibit of outdoor sculpture in front of City Hall.

In May, the city announced the winner of a public art competition it sponsored. Stacy Levy, a Pennsylvania sculptor, was awarded \$200,000 for “Tide Poles,” which will consist of 20-foot poles along the waterfront, each with light-emitting diodes programmed to change color with the shifting Hudson River tides.

Also in May, six garbage trucks from the Department of Public Works took to the streets in colorful “wraps” designed by the winners of another city-sponsored competition.

In October, Francesca Samsel of Yorktown completed “Woven Gifts,” a 20-foot-by-85-foot mural on a wall bordering a parking lot off South Broadway.

Last month, Blue Door received \$15,000 from Yonkers-based Domino Sugar to launch



IN A WORLD OF SECOND OPINIONS, GET THE FACTS FIRST.

The New York Times
nytimes.com/health
ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO CLICK

ADVERTISEMENTS

NYC and beyond.

50% off Times delivery.



The New York Times STORE



Bucket in Pink - Eastman Theatre,
Rochester, NY, 1983
[Buy Now](#)

Yonkers Green Wall, in which high school students will create environmentally themed murals on plywood to be mounted on park fences in the spring. Earlier this month, the [Westchester Arts Council](#) announced the recipients of its first Yonkers Cultural Initiative grants program, which distributed \$50,000 to eligible Yonkers-based nonprofits. The grantees were Blue Door; the Yonkers Philharmonic Orchestra; the Untermyer Performing Arts Council; Youth Theatre Interactions; and Hamm & Clov Stage Company, which produces community-based theater.

“With this initiative,” said Janet T. Langsam, the council’s executive director, “the Board of Legislators has made a statement that arts and culture are a vital part of Yonkers’s growth, and that they need to keep pace.”

The Initiative also serves as an example. Spearheaded by a county legislator, Kenneth W. Jenkins, its secondary intent was to prompt comparable funding from the city. According to Patricia D. McDow, the majority leader of City Council, Yonkers is rising to the challenge. “We’re looking to match the initiative that the county has so graciously provided as part of our capital improvement budget to be presented in March,” she said.

This fall, seven key players in the city’s cultural scene formed Yonkers Arts to serve “as an advocate for all the arts,” said one of the organizers, Luis Perelman, Blue Door’s co-founder and director. The group has already established a Web site with a calendar of local arts events. Its mission statement speaks of “encouraging the public and private sectors to support the city’s artists and arts organizations.”

Michael Botwinick, director of the [Hudson River Museum](#), on the northern end of the city, said he “feels the energy reaching up from the development downtown,” with talk of public riverfront access and an amphitheater on its grounds.

“For a long time, Yonkers has been a no-go zone for the rest of Westchester,” he said. “The master plan for the future is changing that.” As for gentrification threatening artists currently living in the city, Mr. Botwinick’s perspective was reassuring. “Unlike SoHo,” he said, “Yonkers is fairly aggressive in its commitment to affordable housing. Compared to New York City, Yonkers will always be a significant value.”

Artists have already discovered inexpensive studios in parts of the former Alexander Smith carpet factory on Nepperhan Avenue, which at its peak in the early 20th century encompassed over 45 buildings. In one of those buildings, an artists’ community called YoHo consists of 26 resident artists and seven guest artists who rent renovated studio space there. Three other mill buildings are being converted into loft units by Randolph J. Rose. Mr. Rose, whose Asian antiques business has been located there since the 1980s, bought the five-story, 170,000-square-foot property in March.

Looking ahead, Holly Villaire, artistic director of Hamm & Clov, dreams of the riverfront neighborhood becoming a “mini cultural center,” she said, “with a small theater, comedy club, jazz club, and art galleries, where people could come by ferry and walk along the water.”

Mr. Perelman has identified at least 20 more walls throughout the city that would lend themselves to murals. “There’s so much more to do here,” he said.

Ms. Segal, another Yonkers Arts organizer, hopes for the chance to work with more substantial financing. “There is potential to have a real impact if the level of funding is appropriate for the site under consideration,” she said.

From where she stands, at least some of these dreams can be realized. “It’s all about to happen for everyone as long as we can all work together,” she said.

[More Articles in New York Region »](#)

Need to know more? 50% off home delivery of The Times.

Ads by Google what's this?

[Yonkers Maps & Weather](#)
Find Local Info Including Maps, Driving Directions and More!
www.HelloYonkers.com

[Yonkers People Search](#)
Find anyone in Yonkers, NY. Easy to use, search for free.
www.usa-people-search.com

[NY Airport Transportation](#)
Travel In Style To the Airport. Call M & N Limousine Today!
MandNLimoService.com/home.nxg

Tips
To find reference information about the words used in this article, double-click on any word, phrase or name. A new window will open with a dictionary definition or encyclopedia entry.

Past Coverage
[YONKERS JOURNAL; Gobbling Up Garbage, And Looking Good Doing It \(June 28, 2007\)](#)
[THE WEEK; Yonkers to Restore Historic City Hall Murals \(July 9, 2006\)](#)
[Metro Briefing | New York: Yonkers: Art And Music To Be Restored To Schools \(April 21, 2006\)](#)
[COUNTY LINES; In Yonkers, Where Fame Is Life-Size \(April 2, 2006\)](#)

Related Searches

Yonkers (NY)	Add Alert
Art	Add Alert
Area Planning and Renewal	Add Alert

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



[ART & DESIGN »](#)

[ESCAPES »](#)

[OPINION »](#)

[WORLD »](#)

[OPINION »](#)

[BUSINESS »](#)



[Tumultuous Mind, Spread Across Canvas](#)



[Camping Under a Mantle of Snow](#)

Jet Lagged: A User's Manual to Seat 21C
An all-too-typical flight experience, from the vantage point of a single seat.



[Eager South Koreans Tour a City in the North](#)



[Op-Ed: Bhutto's Deadly Legacy](#)



[Economy and Geopolitics Decide Oil Prices](#)