

Revised Plan for River Park Center in Yonkers Is Unveiled

YONKERS—With signs that the national economy is on the upswing, strong new interest has emerged in the construction of River Park Center, the key element in the overall plan to redevelop downtown Yonkers.

The project's developer, SFC, recently announced that it has redesigned the project and is aggressively moving forward to build approximately 600,000 square feet of retail and entertainment space and 200 to 250 rental apartments.

SFC made the recent announcement as part of "Retail Day" of Yonkers' Annual Business Week.

Joined by Mayor Phil Amicone and other city officials, SFC unveiled the revised plans for River Park Center during a presentation at the Riverfront Library. The project will include street-level retail space along New Main Street and Palisades Avenue, a major supermarket,

anchor stores, a movie theater complex and a dramatic, 120-foot high atrium and pedestrian mall that will bisect the project. The plan also includes a parking garage with 2,400 spaces.

An Interest from the Retail Sector

"Based on extensive discussions with a broad cross-section of important retailers, we have modified our original plans to incorporate practical design suggestions that will foster strong interest from the retail community," said Joseph V. Apicella, project director for SFC, and executive vice president of Cappelli Enterprises, an SFC partner.

"We are very pleased with the extensive street-level retailing opportunities that will be part of the project as this will foster investment in improving the existing retail community that is adjacent to the site," Apicella said. "The concept is to have River

Park Center serve as the catalyst for an overall revival of the Main Street area from the Getty Square retail district to the waterfront."

Brian VonSchmid, Cappelli's director of retail leasing, said: "We have had extensive talks with major national retailers. Today 'Retail Day' in Yonkers was sponsored by the International Conference of Shopping Centers (ICSC) and their interest in the entire City of Yonkers as a retail destination is significant. We (SFC) will have a presence at the upcoming ICSC national conference in Las Vegas and we hope to come back from that with agreements with major tenants for our project."

VonSchmid said that the project has been designed with great flexibility to allow for many options for store layout. He said the complex can accommodate three to seven, large to medium-sized national retail stores and

between 20 to 35 smaller shops.

Key Adjustments

"This is a very exciting moment for our project and the entire City of Yonkers," said Marc E. Berson, chairman of Fideoco Realty Group, an SFC partner. "For the first time in nearly two years there is strong interest in new retail projects. We have been gratified with the extent and quality of the interest in our downtown project. The adjustments we have made to the plan are designed to position us as a premier location in the New York metropolitan area, and we believe that we will be ready to begin construction by winter."

"Ever since we signed the development agreement with SFC in 2006, the people of Yonkers have recognized this project as the most significant redevelopment opportunity in our city's history," said Yonkers Mayor Phil Amicone.

Amicone added: "In the years since, we have seen the development team interact with and respond to the community's needs, working closely with the city's team every step of the way. And today marks the next step in this crucial process. We're seeing for the first time what will actually be built and the plans are very exciting. The new design for River Park Center will accomplish all of the city's goals: bring in much needed tax revenues, provide thousands of new jobs for our residents, create new business and investment opportunities for the existing community, and help continue the renaissance in Yonkers with a true centerpiece development in our downtown. We're looking forward to breaking ground soon."

The Facts

River Park Center includes the development of 13 acres in the heart of the downtown adjacent to City Hall. The project is bounded by New Main Street, Nepperhan Avenue, Elm Street and Palisades Avenue.

The center will feature a mix of retail, restaurant, entertainment and residential components. The redesigned project will include two buildings separated by the atrium. A roof-top ballpark will serve as the roof above both buildings. The Saw Mill River, which flows across the south side of the site, will be incorporated into the design as a water feature and attractive landscaping and an extensive pedestrian promenade are also planned, officials said.

The building fronting on New Main Street will include street-level retail stores with enclosed parking. On the southwest corner of the building will be 200 to 250 rental apartments, officials added.

The second building on the Elm Street side of the property will be devoted to retail and entertainment. It will include 120,000 square feet of entertainment space including a 15-screen multiplex cinema and retail spaces to accommodate anchor stores of up to 135,000 square feet and numerous smaller retail shops.

The planned floor plates have the flexibility to adjust to retailers of varying sizes, from 75,000-square-foot supermarkets to 33,000-square-foot spaces for retailers such as book and music, sporting goods and electronics outlets, spokesmen said.

Smaller spaces have been designed to appeal to other national and local retailers, officials added.

The redesigned project brings on board the highly-acclaimed architecture firm of Greenberg Farrow, spokesmen said. The firm designed the striking new retail malls at East River Plaza on Manhattan's Upper East Side, The Gateway Center at the Bronx Terminal Market and Station Plaza at Sheepshead Bay in Queens. The firm specializes in the design of urban centers and has created projects across the U.S., project officials said.

John R. Clifford, principal, for Greenberg Farrow, said: "What we tried to do with the design was to leverage the existing wonderful historic aspects of downtown Yonkers, as well as some of the strength of the retail development that's already been done on Lower Main Street. We also wanted to insure that our redevelopment will tie into the day lighting of the Saw Mill River and integrate the new park into the rejuvenated new Main Street Corridor down to the Hudson Riverfront."

A Noteworthy Design Element

Project spokesmen said that, as it was in the earlier plan for the project, the creation of an expansive public park area around the Saw Mill River is a key design element. The plan calls for the waterway - which is already open in some areas of the site - to be entirely opened for several blocks on the south side, parallel to Nepperhan Avenue and an extensive walkway and pedestrian amenities to be created along its banks.

The concept of "daylighting" the river has been a major goal in the development of the downtown business district, officials added. The city plans to oversee this in the Larkin Plaza area leading down to its mouth at the Hudson River. The river was piped across the downtown area in the 1920's. Today's planners see great value in opening the river back up and using it as a design feature, spokesmen said.

The key features of River Park Center are:

- 480,000 square feet of retail space.
- A 120,000 square-foot entertainment complex, including a 15-screen movie theater.
- 2,400 enclosed parking spaces.
- A 120-foot Atrium and public promenade.
- 200 to 250 rental apartments.
- A 6,500-seat rooftop ballpark.
- The incorporation of the Saw Mill River as a major site design element.

SFC is a partnership comprised of Fideoco Realty Group and Cappelli Enterprises, officials said.