

# Yonkers Free Press

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Mayor Mike Spano is not predicting a doomsday scenario for key Yonkers development projects.

## Mayor Spano's Seven Year Development Boom Won't Be Stopped By The Pandemic

By BRIAN HARROD

Yonkers Class A developers are not painting Domesday scenarios, because of the open-ended statewide construction halt ordered by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, and are optimistic that the crisis will not last enough to destroy their projects and investments in the city of hills.

The shutdown to protect thousands of construction workers from contracting the coronavirus puts into limbo thousands of well apartments in Yonkers that are in different stages

of construction.

Yes Yonkers developers are sweating out liquidity issues, but the projects in the city of hills are well financed giving owners enough capital for the short-term future of their downtown and waterfront projects..

No construction project is based on a perfect time frame.

Cushions are built into these Yonkers developments that have received assistance from the Yonkers industrial Development agency (YIDA), which is chaired by Mayor Mike Spano.

Last year Mayor Mike Soano and the YIDA brought in at least a dozen projects representing a total private investment of \$851 million. Among them:

Extell Development's Point Street Landing, a mixed-use project with 1,395 apartments and 48,280 square feet of retail space valued at \$502 million.

Rose Associates' 57 Alexander Street, which will have 440 apart-

ments.

The \$56.9 million Parkledge Apartments, which will have 311 units.

Some stymied projects are nearly finished like Sawyer Place, to others that are only approved like the new 400 unit Altman Lighting Apartment building.

Projects approved, underway or recently completed in the city are bringing 9,100 new residential units and 2.3 million square feet of commercial space.

They are creating an estimated 6,800 construction jobs and expected to create about 2,800 permanent jobs.

However, there are fears the pandemic could upend the Lionsgate project that is currently in the approvals process.

Elected officials are hoping the \$100 million movie studio keeps moving forward.

Empire City Casino And Yonkers Racetrack are currently shut down, but the City Of Yonkers is confident

that racino development will stay on track, as MGM moves towards a 2023 Full gaming and sports book licenses.

full gaming license leading to a sports betting license for Empire City could produce enormous financial benefits for the city.

Real Estate professionals seem to think that once the construction stoppage is lifted, Yonkers projects will quickly get back on track.

The financing is in place and this stoppage doesn't destroy those contracts.

Currently any visible, ongoing work is to secure buildings to protect the public during the shutdown.

However, Westhab can continue with its Dayspring development now underway in the Nodine Hill section of the city, which will create 63 affordable apartments, because its 100-percent affordable one of several exemptions to the stop-work rule.

The city's Municipal Housing Authority's \$300 million three-year program to renovate more than 1,700 units of public housing can continue in spite of Cuomo's construction ban.

Others exemptions are for "essential" work on schools, health care fa-

cilities and homeless shelters.

New York state also gave the Yonkers IDA authority to float bonds to help finance the building of schools.

More than \$600 million is needed to build new schools.

In 2016, the city released a conceptual plan to rebuild its schools with a price tag of about \$2 billion, but with the governor's 15 Billion dollar budget crises it is doubtful that Yonkers will get the help that Buffalo got from New York State.

Buffalo rebuilt every school for \$2 billion, and 90% of the funds came from Albany.

But there's some confusion over whether the affordable-housing construction exemption applies to projects with a mix of market-rate and affordable units, especially in Yonkers where new buildings are required to be 10% affordable.

Yonkers developers are looking for guidance from Governor Andrew Cuomo's office on this.

Small affordable housing rehabs in the city of hills are permitted by groups like Jim killoran's Fuller Center

Some say Yonkers developers

could face foreclosure efforts by lenders in the event of a prolonged pandemic, but most industry insiders think banks are not interested in taking over a half-built Hudson River residential project in middle of a pandemic.

The last fear is that Mayor Spano's vision of Yonkers development projects moving inland as the waterfront area continues to be built up might be upended in an economic downturn caused by the Pandemic.

Chicken Island was purchased, by AMS Acquisitions LLC, with a plan of building four massive mixed use towers that would revitalize the Getty square area.

Some wonder if this is now possible get financing for a multi-tower project in the current environment.

But most agree that there's is still a lot of potential in Yonkers and it can't be stopped by the coronavirus epidemic.

Mike Spano, a Democrat, has been serving as mayor in Yonkers since 2012. He had been elected to the New York State Assembly in 1992.