

NORTH TONAWANDA: Remington Lofts project advances

By Neale Gulley
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— Architects handed over renderings for the proposed ground-floor restaurant included in an overall \$15 million renovation of the Remington Rand building on Sweeney Street.

The Carmina, Wood and Morris PC architectural firm is now well into the design phase of the project, which is ultimately supposed to include a health club, lofts designed to integrate a combined living and working environment, as well as a “working museum” to showcase the restoration of antique boats.

Because work on what is now called the Remington Lofts on the Canal is still shy of producing final blueprints, no contractor has yet been named.

“The hope is to get the restaurant portion done first,” Economic Development Coordinator Chuck Bell said.

Developers say work should begin this summer with an eye toward completion sometime in the fall.

The restaurant, to be called “15 Mile,” presumably from the popular folk song “15 Miles on the Erie Canal,” will feature a central bar, general and outdoor seating areas according to artist’s renderings. An upper-floor balcony could overlook the establishment.

Its proprietors have not officially been named, but developers say it is a couple from New Jersey, one of whom is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, located in Hyde Park, N.Y. He is expected to become the future establishment’s executive chef.

The proposed 2,000-square-foot lofts are planned to occupy the second through the fourth floors of the building. Bell said the concept of a mixed living/working area has become popular in New York City, where the owner of the property, Kissling Interests LLC, is located. Plans call for about 55 such lofts, with apartments adjoining a common workspace.

That phase of the project is tentatively slated for completion by year’s end.

The boat museum may come to involve the Niagara Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society, which should find a niche with more nautical enthusiasts stopping at the Gateway Harbor Marina now that the city has finished installing about 800 feet of wharfage along the Sweeney Street section of the canal.

The work was started in January, with the new boat platform completed last month.

“The timing was great, that the city was able to get those docks in,” Bell said.

The city received a viable bid for the water and electrical components of the dock project Tuesday, in order to install boater service pedestals similar to those already lining the western section of the park.

The bid is expected to go before the North Tonawanda Common Council at its next regular meeting.

A major challenge to the work, said city Engineer Dale Marshall, was to reduce the canal wall from its previous 7 feet to something like 3 1/2 feet off the water, in order to accommodate small to medium sized vessels.

Engineers achieved this by pouring a cement platform several feet below the wall.

Around the turn of the century, canal walls were raised and the canal widened to make navigation by barges or larger craft possible. The high walls of the canal now obstruct efforts by many public interests to make it a recreational waterway.

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