

Rand Building redevelopment planned

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Author: Laura E. Winchester

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A \$14 million redevelopment project was unveiled Wednesday that would turn the historic Remington Rand Building into 51 live/work lofts on three upper floors and an antique boat museum and restaurant on the first floor.

The developer is Anthony Kissling, head of Kissling Interests, which has 16 properties in Buffalo and 24 in Manhattan.

Mayor Lawrence V. Soos and Community Development Director James Sullivan told the Common Council, meeting in a work session, that the project would be the "keystone" to other downtown development, predicting "a lot of action in the next three years."

Redevelopment of the complex at 184 Sweeney St., fronting on the Erie Canal, would be the most "important project on the canal in 50 years," said Gregory Sehr, president of Buffalo-based Upstate Consultants, which is working with Kissling Interests. Council President Brett Sommer, R-at-large, said the building's residents will provide "a new market for existing businesses" and "spur more development."

The Council approved Soos' applying for a \$1 million grant toward the project from the state's Empire Development Corp. A public hearing is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Sept. 21 on that grant application in the Community Development Department offices, 500 Wheatfield St.

Sullivan said the grant does not require any matching local funds. The project, he said, would be "fully taxable."

The 167,521-square-foot complex, between Marion and Oliver streets just east of the Delaware Bridge, dates from 1890. Remington Rand, a leading manufacturer of office equipment and office supplies, closed in the 1970s. The building, assessed at \$335,000 and owned by Wurlitzer Park Complex, houses mostly storage and a handful of small businesses.

Sehr, who said construction could start by late next spring, said the 51 lofts would appeal to artists, high-tech entrepreneurs, incubator companies and "empty-nesters."

He said Kissling Interests anticipates a minimum of 30 new companies and 60 new employees within the first year.

A major component of the project, Sehr said, is the 10,000-square-foot antique boat museum that would be home to the Niagara Frontier Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society. In addition to being a major tourism draw, especially for boaters, the museum would host community activities including boat-building classes, he said.

The project will also offer indoor parking, a health club and a rooftop garden.

e-mail: lwinchester@buffnews.com