

SLEEPY HOLLOW - New senior center expected to be key part of village revitalization

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SLEEPY HOLLOW - A former mobile sales office and a parking lot are expected to energize senior citizens and keep the village's revitalization efforts on the move.

Officials yesterday opened Sleepy Hollow's new senior center, a 1,400-square-foot building on Elm Street, next to Barnhart Park and the former P.R. Mallory Battery Company site. The center overlooks the Hudson River.

"It's a work in process. Maybe it's a work in progress," Mayor Philip Zegarelli said to the crowd of nearly 100 people, mostly seniors and public officials, at yesterday's ceremony. "The whole area is going through a rebirth. It's not done yet, but it's going in the right direction."

Zegarelli said the new building and park would complement other work in the village, notably the planned transformation of the 97-acre General Motors property into housing, commercial space and parkland.

He said it was particularly important that the village cleaned up nearby contaminated land and put it to a good public use with the help of private business and county, state and federal government.

"It's a whole conversion of people's attitudes," Zegarelli said. "This is going to become a whole area that is user-friendly. It's for kids and senior citizens."

Marilyn Helwig and Elizabeth Patyi said existing facilities were inadequate and seniors didn't really have a central place to go.

"You don't see your neighbors, so we come here," Helwig said. "This is our second home. ... You need friends to stay healthy."

The new senior center was donated by Ginsburg Development Companies, the developer of Ichabod's Landing on the river.

The center had been Ginsburg's sales offices for the Landing. The set of modular buildings were brought to the property and converted into permanent space, with an open area, offices, bathroom and conference room.

Bruce Lozito, a development consultant with Ginsburg, said donating the \$200,000 offices and an additional \$20,000 for interior renovations was a way to show older residents they remain an integral part of Sleepy Hollow.

"It's about good will," Lozito said yesterday. "We believe in giving to the community."

Lozito said he hoped Ginsburg's donation would encourage others to give to the next phase of building the senior center.

In that effort, the village also laid the foundation for phase two, which is to add 6,000 square feet and cost \$2 million more, said Sean McCarthy, the village's architect.

The village is seeking state, federal and private dollars to help pay for that, he said, and bids are expected to go out in the winter.

In her remarks yesterday, Rep. Nita Lowey, D-Harrison, said the government hasn't always succeeded in getting seniors affordable health care or medication and that it was necessary to support such centers.

"I think senior centers are absolutely essential. You have worked here your entire lives," Lowey said. "To me, what's great about senior centers, it's a critical part of keeping people healthy. ... Mental health and friendship is the key to keeping people well."