

# Health care, retail debut in a remade Yonkers landmark

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**M**ore than two years after Simone Development Cos. purchased the long-neglected property in northwest Yonkers, the 85,000-square-foot Boyce Thompson Center is nearly ready for its Broadway revival.

The \$35 million mixed-use development that adjoins the South Westchester Executive Park and sits on a roughly 7-acre property at 1086 N. Broadway will be unveiled to the public on May 23.

Because the building sat vacant and crumbling for decades, Simone Development has given the historic structure an extreme facelift.

"I think every project you do has its own challenging features," said Guy Leibler, president of Simone Healthcare Development. "This had a number of them. The building is old. It's very delicate and you want to be respectful of its history."

Though traces of the building's former

derelict state are few and far between, some tenants are embracing certain aspects of the building's 40-year vacancy. Portions of the colorful graffiti that lined interior walls will be featured in the 6,000-square-foot space that will soon be home to Italian restaurant Fortina.

"Every building that we've gone into has been unique, but this one is by far the most incredible," said Christian Petroni, chef and owner of the restaurant. "Fortina has a very strong culture and a very strong identity, so we're excited to kind of take what we've cultivated over the last four years and put it into this beautiful building."

The new Fortina restaurant in Yonkers will mark the company's fifth eatery, following locations in Rye Brook, Armonk, Stamford and downtown Brooklyn. Set to open in June, it will also feature an outdoor garden and large wood-burning hearth.

"It's really going to be interesting to see the Fortina brand in such a beautiful, old, historic building," Petroni said on a recent weekday morning. He and Leibler had just met with an advance team for

Gov. Andrew Cuomo in the shell of the brick-walled restaurant space to plan an upcoming fundraiser there while contracting crews hustled to complete work on the center before the May 23 opening.

Across a fountain-adorned front plaza from Fortina, Starbucks will open a coffee shop in a 2,200-square-foot space on the south end of the building, said Leibler.

"They came in early and they weren't sure. The building was still in its early revival stage, so I think it was scary for anybody," he said. "They came back about three months ago and they were very interested."

Starbucks will adjoin a Japanese restaurant – whose operator the developer was not yet ready to announce – in a matching 2,200-square-foot space on the ground floor.

Other ground-floor retail tenants are Tompkins Mahopac Bank and The Taco Project, which are set to open later this month. Other retailers coming soon include specialty hair salon Plushblow, Family Wellness Pharmacy and Ultimate Spectacle.



Developer Guy Leibler, left in sunglasses, confers on the progress of work at the Boyce-Thompson Center two weeks ahead of its opening.

St. John's Riverside Hospital, which signed a 15-year lease to occupy a newly built standalone building on the north side of the site as the project's first tenant, began accepting patients at its two-level, 15,000-square-foot medical office in April, Leibler said.

Westmed Medical Group, the Purchase-based multispecialty medical practice,

» Yonkers, page 12

## Yonkers —

» From page 3

signed a long-term lease for a two-story, 20,000-square-foot addition on the south side of the original Boyce Thompson building. Westmed's building, constructed to look similar to the existing structure, is connected to the main complex by a glass-covered corridor. It will house a 3,000-square-foot urgent care center and 17,000 square feet of primary care space.

Other health care tenants at Boyce Thompson Center include Gastroenterology of Westchester LLC and Juvanni Medspace Spa, each expected to open later this month, and Fresenius Medical Care. Leibler said Simone Development also has lease deals in the works with a dental practice and a large cardiology practice.

Leibler sees multiuse developments that pair medical practices with retail and restaurants as the new model for health care delivery.

"If you had the choice, would you rather go to the hospital for a doctor visit or would you rather come here, where you can park — it's free and there's lots of it — there are restaurants, there's a pharmacy, there are other shops, you can get a coffee from Starbucks?"

Before it sat vacant and crumbling for nearly 40 years, the 52,000-square-foot Georgian Revival building for decades housed a nonprofit horticultural research center built by international financier William Boyce Thompson. A trip to Russia in 1917 as a member of the American Red Cross relief mission prompted Thompson to open a research institute that used plant sciences to help alleviate food supply problems that he foresaw arising with a growing American population.

The research center moved to Cornell University in 1978; Simone Development plans to create a public exhibition dedicated to the building's history.

"We had to create a project where both tenants would want to lease in and the community would embrace it, because we need their support to come here and call this their local neighborhood center," Leibler said.