

New Rochelle performance space may draw millennials



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A new downtown development will include a performance space that officials hope will attract millennials.



(Photo: RDRXR)

NEW ROCHELLE - A multipurpose performance space at the former Loew's Theater site could spark a nightlife revival that city officials hope will draw millennials to the city's downtown.

"This is the first thing that young people will say is a cool place to go to," said Councilman Ivar Hyden, whose district includes the city's downtown. "You can be standing around listening to indie music and having a beer or sitting down watching an off-Broadway play."

The 8,000-square-foot "black-box" theater would be built on the second floor of master [developer RDRXR's 28-story, mixed-use project at 587-599 Main St.](#), the home of the now-defunct 1920s movie theater.

The project will include a combination of 272 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments with 30,000 square feet of retail space and a 272-space parking garage, according to Luiz Aragon, the city's commissioner of development. There's yet no estimate for construction costs or monthly rents.

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Councilman Ivar Htden

Hyden said there will likely be events — such as small plays, dance and music shows, movies or spoken-word performances — in the performance center five or six times a week, and that space would be run by a still-to-be-selected professional management company.

Some events would be seated and some would be standing, he said. The performance space could seat 200 to 250 people. The only other theater in the city's downtown that's used for public performances is the library theater that hold 148 people. Arts groups would be able to use the space during the day.

The project will be the first proposed development under a [recent zoning change](#) that paves the way for developers to carry out RDRXR's plan to build new restaurants, hotels, stores and 5,500 residential units in the [downtown over a 10-year period](#).

"When we started this process, we were all asked to come up with a wish list. A performance space was the first thing on my list," said Hyden, whose sketched designs of the performance space were used by RDRXR. "This is something I've always felt strongly about, and I worked with the development department over the last nine months to get it."

Mayor Noam Bramson announced the performance space during his March 3 [State of the City speech](#). Standing alongside the six city council members, Bramson unveiled renderings of the proposed 28-story building and theater.

"This project is exactly the kind of marriage of private investment and public interest that our downtown plan is purposefully designed to create," he said.

Bramson said the developer's goal is to preserve the historic facade from Loew's. He expects a formal application to be submitted soon, and construction to begin next year.

The black-box theater will also be the center of an [arts and culture District that is being developed for the downtown](#). The city has been working with consultant CivicMoxie since September to establish the district.

"The performance center is critical to us because it's going to serve as the anchor to the Arts and Culture District," said Luiz Aragon, the city's commissioner of development.

Currently, the 53,000-square-foot site has retail on the ground floor and office space on the second floor. RDRXR is close to finalizing an agreement with ABS Partners Real Estate, which acquired the lot at an auction for \$2.6 million in 2011. Aragon said the city has been helping the existing businesses relocate.

The first millennial-targeted apartments are going up less than a half-mile from the planned performance center. Developer [East & Hudson's six-story, 71-unit mixed-use development at 165 Huguenot St.](#) was approved by the city Planning Board and construction is expected to begin in the spring.