

# The New York Times

Westchester

## Handling the Hudson Boom

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The wave of housing development up and down the Hudson Valley could solidify the region's revival or wreck it. Old industrial sites and other open spaces are proving irresistible to builders, and the number and scope of the proposed projects have stirred legitimate worries that poorly planned growth could end up replacing the Hudson's industrial wasteland with a suburban one.

There are few places where the perils and possibilities are being considered more intently than in the City of Kingston, in Ulster County, where a developer, AVR Homebuilders, wants to build one of the region's biggest projects in years: The Landing at Kingston and Ulster, 2,100 apartments and condominiums, plus offices and retail shops, on 524 acres of old quarry land. That an unrelated project called Sailor's Cove has been proposed on 75 acres next door has only added to the jitters of residents and environmental advocates who want to make sure that any development is done right the first time.

City officials have so far shown an admirable commitment to public involvement in considering The Landing. Their approach could be an example to other communities on the river, like Yonkers, which has just unveiled a \$3.1 billion redevelopment plan of its own. Although Kingston's Mayor, James Sottile, has made it clear that economic revitalization is an urgent priority for his city, which was devastated by the departure of I.B.M. in the early 1990's, he and city planning officials have also made sure that public voices have been heard.

They have certainly gotten an earful. Members of Friends of Kingston Waterfront, a broad coalition of advocacy groups, have denounced the developer's original plan as unbearably massive and environmentally unsound. Worries about traffic and congestion have received much attention. But as Kingston's Planning Board prepares to hear from outside consultants, it should be ready to focus attention on the full range of potential problems, including:

¶Wastewater. Mayor Sottile says he is confident that Kingston's sewage system can

easily handle The Landing. But that point is intensely debated.

¶Public access. A core responsibility of civic leaders in the Hudson Valley must be to get people back to the riverfront. One development in Kingston, in a historic district called the Rondout, is a stellar example of this. The Landing should be another.

¶Aesthetics. These are not trivial concerns in a region whose beauty fuels a thriving tourist economy. Bulky townhouses straddling a ridgeline in massive rows may not be eyesores to the strivers who buy them. But for everyone else, they are awful.

Friends of Kingston Waterfront has addressed an impressive range of these and other issues in offering its own proposal (see [www.fokw.org](http://www.fokw.org)), which is smaller than AVR's but seems much gentler on the landscape, the wildlife and the eye. It may be, as Mayor Sottile has suggested, unrealistic as a business plan. But as a distillation of residents' concerns, and a blueprint for sensible growth in the rest of the Hudson Valley, it is worth the closest of looks.