

From the Pittsburgh Business Times:

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## Millcraft Investments to pursue Chateau landing project along riverfront

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With its latest project downtown, JLL Center at Tower Two-Sixty, all but completed near Market Square, **Millcraft Industries** is heading up river to pursue what looks to be its next major development project, a more than 13-acre parcel of Ohio Riverfront land just west of the Rivers Casino.

The board of the **Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh** voted Thursday afternoon to enter into exclusive negotiations with Millcraft Industries and two property-owning partners to sell the development group the former J. Allan Steel property and a neighboring parcel at 829 Beaver Street.

Brian Walker, CFO for Millcraft, said the company was approached recently by local developer Peter Smerd and Gregg Stein, both of whom own properties that total 7 acres next to the long-empty J. Allan site. Millcraft quickly established letters of intent to buy the neighboring properties while the three partners consider future business involvement in the plan, said Walker, who added other neighboring properties are also under consideration.

With the URA vote, Millcraft will intensify its efforts to pursue a new mixed-use development that's expected to extend the activity of the North Shore further up the Ohio.

While Millcraft has had early meetings with Riverlife and Allegheny County Chief Executive Rich Fitzgerald over the plans, Walker said the company is only just beginning to decide what kind of development mix to bring to the property.

He said: "This has to be developed in a way that's 100 percent special."

Working with an early project name of Chateau Landing after the largely industrial neighborhood in which it's based, Millcraft is considering a broad range of possibilities of retail and restaurants, a residential combination of rental and for sale housing, a hotel and perhaps some offices along with a new marina, said Walker.

The proposal faces some major transportation and access obstacles the URA has been working to overcome. That includes a Beaver Street that is a one-way road into the site as well as a Route 65 that largely barricades the Chateau neighborhood from the North Side's Manchester neighborhood of which it was originally included.

URA Board member Jim Ferlo called Route 65 the Berlin Wall for how it separates the land along the Ohio riverfront from the rest of the North Side and emphasized that Mayor Bill Peduto needs to lobby for

PennDOT's support to help to eliminate such obstacles.

As the city works to resolve the site's access issues, Walker said Millcraft has already begun working with Vancouver-based landscape architect Peter Sangha on a consulting basis to best understand how to redevelop and manage the property and its riverfront complexities. He added Millcraft has met with Fitzgerald about the possibility of extending the T one further stop to serve a redevelopment on the property.

Mark Fatla, executive director of the North Side Leadership Conference, told the URA board that how the site is handled could have a major impact.

"This property...getting it right is critical," he said. "That's the key that unlocks the Ohio riverfront."

The URA board's vote gives Millcraft six months to establish a development proposal for the site.

Added Walker: "Six months will go fast."

**Tim Schooley**

Reporter

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