

Developer plans Ferris wheel, 13-acre mixed use project on North Side

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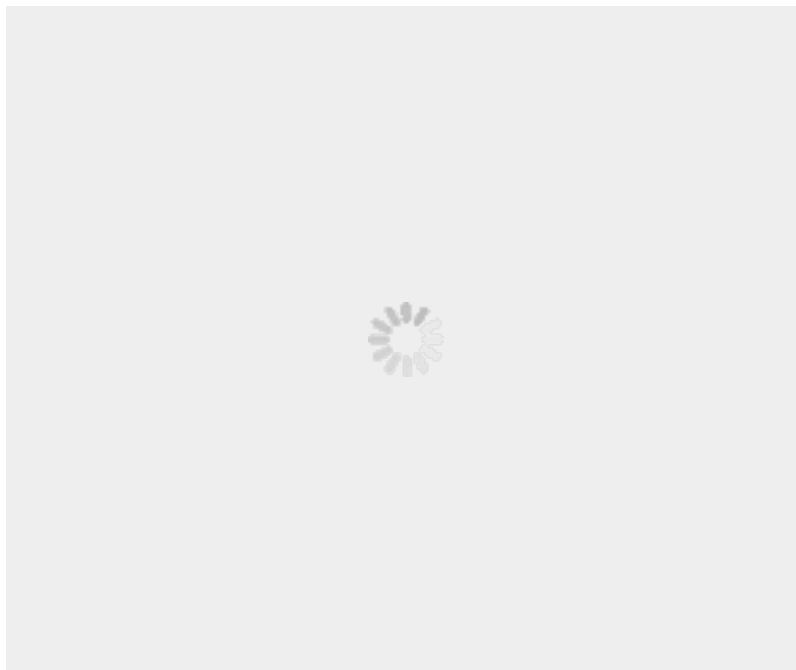
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DEC 14, 2017

An old industrial site on the Ohio River may become Pittsburgh's version of Chicago's Navy Pier, or at least part of it.

Developer Millcraft Investments is planning a giant Navy Pier-like Ferris wheel with LED lighting as a first-day attraction as part of a 13-acre mixed use project on the North Shore riverfront that also would include offices, housing, and destination retail.

Lucas Piatt, Millcraft president and chief operating officer, said the Ferris wheel would be similar to those operating at Navy Pier, the National Harbor near Washington D.C., and Pier 57 in Seattle.



Those rides reach heights of nearly 200 feet with gondolas that can hold as many as eight people each.

The Pittsburgh wheel, Mr. Piatt said, would pay homage to George Washington Gale Ferris Jr., the inventor of the ride who lived on the city's North Side and died at Mercy Hospital in 1896.



Source: Esri

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Proposed Chateau Esplanade site
(click to enlarge)

His first Ferris wheel, built for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, was 264 feet tall and had 36 cars, each with the capacity to hold 40 to 60 passengers. The ride lasted 20 minutes.

“Pittsburgh has to have a Ferris wheel. George Ferris lived and died in Pittsburgh,” Mr. Piatt said.



The Ferris wheel planned for the site would operate year round. Like those in Chicago, Seattle, and Washington D.C., the gondolas would be enclosed and climate controlled.

Millcraft is working on the final details of the ride with several potential operators.

Mr. Piatt said the Ferris wheel would be “one very small part,” albeit a highly visible one, of a much larger development centered on the former J. Allan Steel site situated on the Ohio riverfront in Chateau west of Rivers Casino.

Millcraft also is considering the potential for a small “Pittsburgh Firsts” museum at the site that would highlight inventions and inventors from the Steel City.

The old steel site and the former Eles Concrete Facility that also is part of the development are owned by the Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority. Millcraft also has negotiated control over other adjacent privately owned parcels.

On Thursday, URA board members authorized up to a year of exclusive negotiations with Millcraft to complete the acquisition of the publicly owned parcels.

The development, dubbed Esplanade, would highlight the riverfront with plans for a marina and watercraft and kayak

rentals.

“Our goal is to bring as much of the river and the river life into the project as possible,” Mr. Piatt said. “We really want it to be interactive.”

Millcraft also has plans for condos, apartments, a hotel, and some offices on the property. In addition, there would be what Mr. Piatt called “destination” retail and restaurants.

He said there could be potential for a Target-like store as part of the mix, noting that such a retailer not only could draw from those living at the site but also from the nearby Route 65 corridor.

“Overall, it’s a destination project, although it will also have a neighborhood feel to it,” he said.

Millcraft hopes to break ground on the development in about two years. It is seeking specially planned district zoning for the project from the city. It also is working with city and neighborhood stakeholders to get support for the effort.

The developer has its sights set on the North Side after being a major player in the transformation of Downtown, where it redeveloped the former Lazarus-Macy’s store into condos, offices, and retail; the old G.C. Murphy’s store and surrounding properties into apartments, retail, and fitness space; and the former State Office Building into apartments.

It also built the Tower Two-Sixty office, hotel, and retail complex on Forbes Avenue and just completed in partnership with McKnight Realty Partners a 580-space parking garage with retail at the former Saks Fifth Avenue site on Smithfield Street, with plans for condos above it.

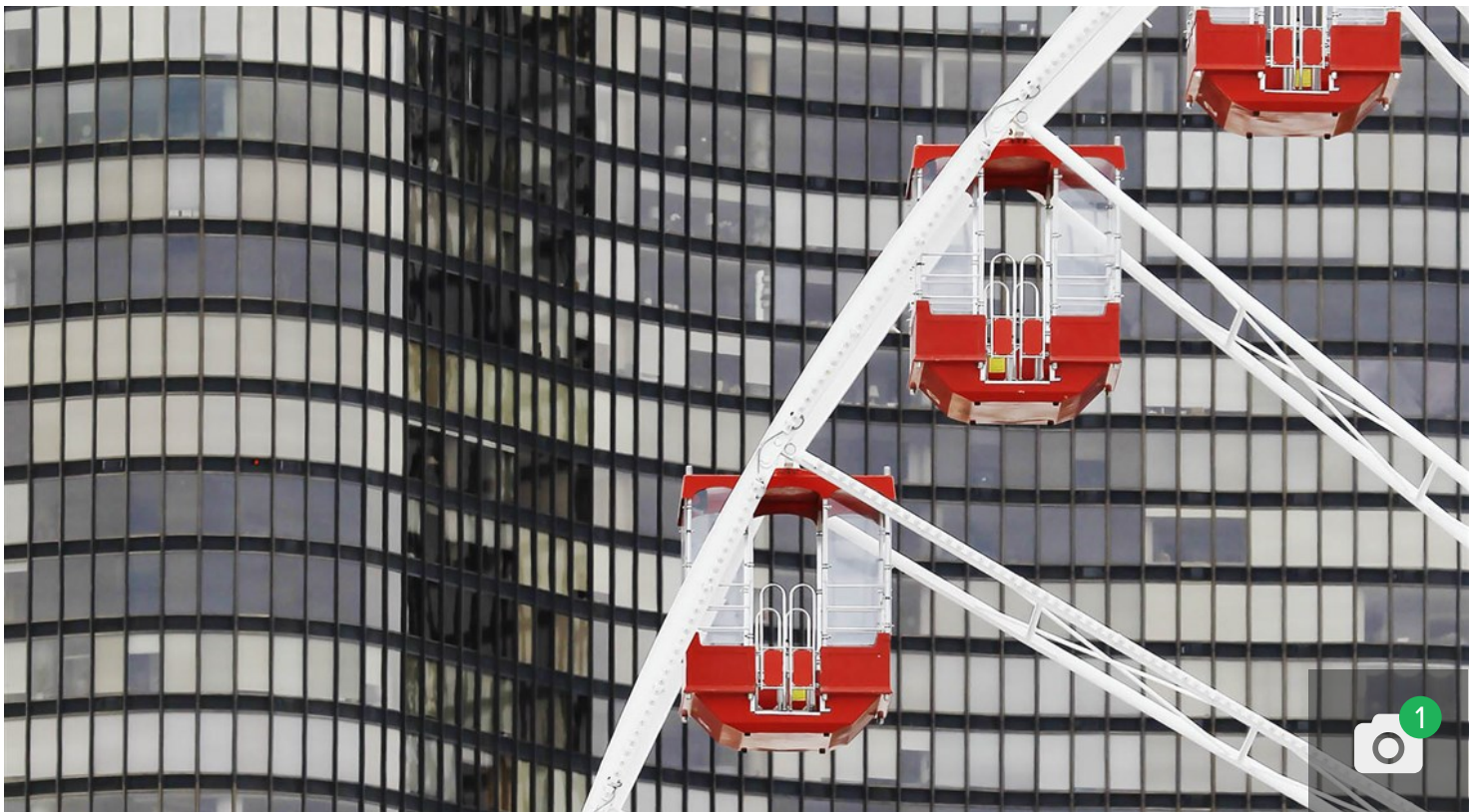
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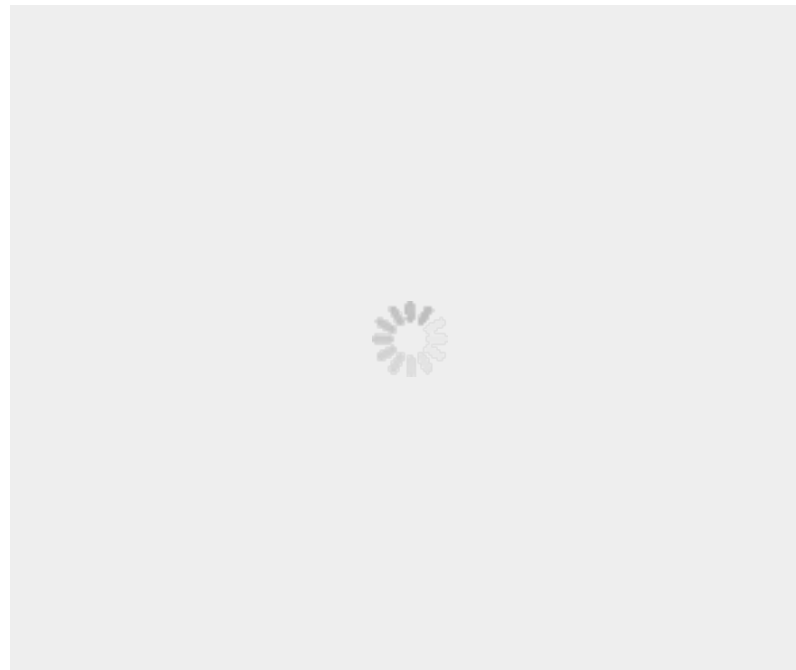
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Fetching questions...



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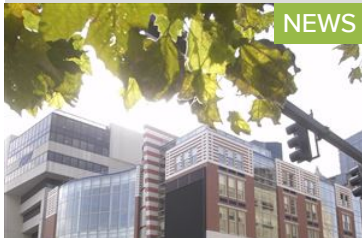
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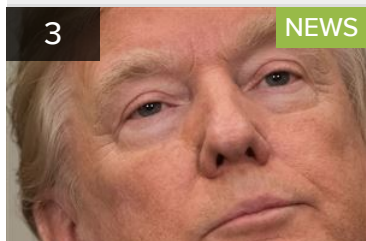
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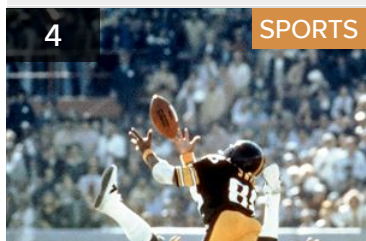
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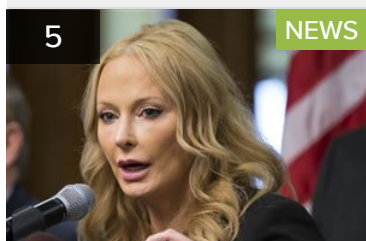
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