



Philly Live! talking

Comcast-Spectacor trim the size of its latest entertainment project, eyes 2012 opening

By Joseph Myers

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An artistic rendering of the originally proposed Philly Live! project included a plethora of options for residents to make visits to the sports complex more entertainment friendly. (Photo provided by The Cordish Co.)

If good things truly come to those who wait, entertainment enthusiasts in South Philadelphia will become supreme revelers in 2012.

It's the targeted date Comcast-Spectacor and the Baltimore-based Cordish Co. hope to have the newly proposed phase one of the much-hyped Philly Live! entertainment district completed. Dating back to January '08, developers had envisioned a 350,000-square-foot wonder — stretching from the Wachovia Center, 3601 S. Broad St., to where the now-shuttered Wachovia Spectrum sits — offering pre- and post-game options for sports fanatics, quality cuisine for gastronomes and standout wardrobe selections for clothing connoisseurs.

In separate interviews with the Review last week, the business behemoths confirmed that economic troubles have necessitated a reconsideration of the project's size and construction.

“Phase one will start with an approximately 40,000-square-foot marketplace featuring the best of Philly foods in a broad main concourse and meeting area, surrounded by up to four distinct dining and

entertainment venues,” Jeffrey M. Snyder, who is overseeing the Philadelphia project for Cordish, said.

The venture has yet to yield any commitments, but Snyder is not panicking.

“It is too early to tell how many independent tenants will be added to the phase one marketplace. Interest from excellent tenants has been extremely strong,” he said.

According to published reports, the proposed building would be square-shaped and occupy parts of 11th Street and Pattison Avenue. An architectural rendering of a scaled-down Philly Live! has yet to be presented to the City Planning Commission.

The number of potential phases and the initial cost remain unknown, but Comcast-Spectacor spokesman Ike Richman noted his company’s confidence has not diminished.

“We are very excited for the project and can’t wait for it to begin,” Richman said.

Hoping to add retail and dining options to a stadium-heavy tract, Comcast-Spectacor and Cordish unveiled plans for the entertainment district at a January ’08 press conference. Last July, the Cordish Co., presented its proposed Philly Live! plans to the City Planning Commission. The concept included an assortment of restaurants with outdoor seating, a hotel along Pattison Avenue where the Spectrum still sits, as well as a spa or health club.

More than 300 nights a year, the sports complex — also home to the Flyers, Sixers, Eagles and Phillies — is entertainment central for concerts, games and family shows.

“The Philly Live! project would give people more options for shopping and dining. With this building, they would be able to come early and stay later,” Richman said.

First, however, the Spectrum, which debuted in September 1967, must go. Comcast-Spectacor Chairman Ed Snider has said in published reports that the Spectrum will be gone within the next few months, a relative time period that has stalled the Philly Live! project’s structure.

To date, the proposed entertainment area has received mixed reviews from residents, including those residing within the Sports Complex Special Services District (SCSSD), 3300 S. Seventh St. Through four districts, the 7-year-old nonprofit serves approximately 9,000 residents occupying 4,200 households surrounding the sports complex. To uphold its belief in promoting community interests, it has had correspondence with both partners to discuss community concerns. The introduction of phases has won its approval.

“The phased approach makes sense given today’s financial challenges,” Shawn Jalosinski, executive director for the SCSSD, said in last week’s interview with the Review. “It will better allow the Sports Complex to incrementally adjust to the new conditions resulting from the Philly Live! project.”

Lydia Mongelini, a resident of the 1500 block of Hulseman Street — within SCSSD’s District 2 — expressed mixed feelings on the project.

“I’m a sucker for tradition, so I’ll miss the Spectrum. I’m eager, though, to see what the next complex does for our economy,” she said.

Jeremy Frye, of the 800 block of Oregon Avenue — within SCSSD’s District 3 — said he finds the project useless.

“I go to Center City for everything other than for sports. What could they possibly put there, another sports bar? The whole idea bores me,” he said.

According to Cordish, the building’s offerings remain variable.

“Some of the types of venues being discussed are an upscale dining experience, a casual dining area, an entertainment venue such as a dueling piano concept and a sports bar,” Snyder said.

Not waiting for the economy to attempt to improve to go forth, the partners want “to move forward to start the transformation of the Stadium Complex from a solely event-driven location to one of Philadelphia’s best dining, retail and entertainment destinations,” he added.

“The partners believe that phase one will be a great success that will lead naturally to completion of the full Philly Live! project,” Snyder said.

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