

Yonkers carpet mills transform into arts center



Ernie Garcia, elgarcia@lohud.com 7:29 a.m. EST January 14, 2016

The former carpet mill buildings date to the late 19th century and the produced carpeting until 1954.



(Photo: Ernie Garcia)

YONKERS - The owner of several buildings in the former Alexander Smith Carpet Mills complex has big plans for transforming the properties into an arts center.

In December, the Carpet Mills Arts District won a \$500,000 state grant to advance the transformation from drab brick warehouses to a regional destination for art lovers.

"The first thing we'll do is banners to delineate the area and to show people that they're entering a special area," said Randolph Rose, the grant applicant and owner of the buildings at 500-530 Nepperhan Ave.

"We'll put elegant up-and-down lighting."

The former carpet mill buildings date to the late 19th century and produced carpeting until 1954. They stretch from Axminster Street to Lake Avenue and from Nepperhan Avenue to Saw Mill River Road.

There is already a significant artist presence in the nascent district.

Rose uses his building to store merchandise for his antiques business, and he has about 30 arts-based tenants in his buildings. The YOHO Artist Studios at the neighboring 540-578 Nepperhan Ave. has about 80 arts-based tenants.

The district has enjoyed some success in becoming a public destination with an annual spring open studios event that often coincides with Yonkers Arts Weekend.

Rose recently bought 179 Lake Ave., which lies within the district. For this year's arts weekend, he's considering offering the walls of the seven-story building to artists for murals.

Rose envisions a landmark similar to the [5 Pointz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5_Pointz) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5_Pointz) building at 45-46 Davis St. in Long Island City, which was formerly covered with graffiti murals before its 2014 demolition.

Eleven landlords who own buildings in the district agreed to work with Rose on the transformation, he said. After the banners and lighting are installed, city officials will [change zoning rules](http://www.cityofyonkers.com/play/art-museums/carpet-mills-arts-district) (<http://www.cityofyonkers.com/play/art-museums/carpet-mills-arts-district>) to allow the district to become a regional destination for cultural tourism.

The CMAD grant was part of the state Regional Economic Development Councils awards. The Mid-Hudson region received \$90.4 million for [109 projects](/story/news/local/westchester/2015/12/15/trails-grants/77299502/) (</story/news/local/westchester/2015/12/15/trails-grants/77299502/>), including the Charles Point trail in Peekskill, a rail trail in Yonkers and the restoration of an 1840's path from the Lyndhurst mansion to the Hudson River. The Mid-Hudson region is a seven-county area that includes Putnam, Rockland and Westchester counties.

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An artist rendering of new banners for the Carpet Mills Arts District. (Photo: City of Yonkers)

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