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Yonkers complex signs Fortina, Taco Project, spa

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(Photo: Seth Harrison/The Journal News)

YONKERS — The rehabilitation of the former Boyce Thompson Institute is on track for a November opening and new tenants are signing up or looking at space.

The WESTMED medical group is in talks to open its second Yonkers location at the former botanical research center at 1086 N. Broadway. The medical group is discussing 20,000 square feet in a new structure that will be connected to the historic brick building, according to Guy Leibler, president of Simone Healthcare Development, which most recently built offices for WESTMED in Purchase.

The 85,000-square-foot mixed-use medical, retail and dining destination by Simone is an adaptive reuse of the formerly derelict and vandalized science center. The building was built by William Boyce Thompson, an industrialist and financier who also built Alder Manor across North Broadway.

The \$35 million complex is about 35 percent leased with seven tenants, including St. John's Riverside Hospital and Fortina restaurant. St. John's will occupy a 15,000-square-foot freestanding building.

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Leibler called the project a labor of love for his company, and chose to maintain rather than raze the property.

"Clearly it was a tear-down in every sense of the word," he said.



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Guy Leibler, president of Simone Healthcare Development, at the entrance to the former Boyce-Thompson Institute in Yonkers. (Photo: Seth Harrison/The Journal News)

Instead, Simone secured the aging structure, which originally opened in 1924. That meant reinforcing the brick walls, blasting spray paint off the columns and walls at the main entrance and installing a new roof.

Some parts of the complex, including the former glass greenhouses where plants were grown, could not be saved. Those are commemorated by the glass building that will be occupied by St. John's.

Leibler said the former institute's mission will also be commemorated in other ways.

"We're going to still grow some vegetables and some flowers on the property to keep the spirit of the property going, and the landscaping includes many of the plants and species that he planted," Leibler said.

The most buzz-worthy tenant is Fortina, the Italian pizza restaurant chain with venues in Rye Brook, Armonk and Stamford. Leibler said he doesn't expect Fortina to open until early next year.



The former Boyce-Thompson Institute in Yonkers is in the process of being redeveloped. The site will eventually house medical offices, stores and restaurants. (Photo: Seth Harrison/The Journal News)

"I'm doing my best to get them to open earlier, but they are in the midst of opening a Fortina in Brooklyn in the third or fourth quarter of this year," he said.

Besides commitments by WESTMED, St. John's and Fortina, five other companies totaling 10,800 square feet have signed leases with Simone. They include Gastroenterology of Westchester, Juvanni MedSpa & Anti-aging Center, Taco Project Yonkers, Mahopac Bank and PLUSH Blow Dry Bar salon.

Realtor Paul Enea of RM Friedland Commercial Real Estate Services in Harrison visited the site last week for a reception hosted by Simone. Enea said the rehabilitation of Boyce Thompson, along with other development in Yonkers, will enhance his ability to sell and lease properties in the city.

"The revitalization has kicked into a higher gear," said Enea. "This will, without question, increase property values and increase demand."