

What's up with the private STEAM academy proposed for the former IBM property in Somers?

[Michael P. McKinney](#), Rockland/Westchester Journal News Published 6:00 a.m. ET June 4, 2019 | Updated 6:07 a.m. ET June 4, 2019

Editor's note: We don't want to leave you hanging. "What's up with" is designed to update our previous coverage and keep you up-to-date on important projects around the Lower Hudson Valley.

PROJECT: A proposed co-ed, private high school focused on science, technology, engineering, arts and math — STEAM — would encompass about 345 acres of [the former IBM campus designed by the famed I.M. Pei](#).

IBM, which had been Somers' largest taxpayer, [moved its last employees based there](#) out of the 723-acre property a couple of years ago. The property, bought by 294 Route 100 LLC for \$31.75 million in 2017, is owned by Sebastian Capital, which owns more than 3 million square feet of buildings in the tri-state area, Mark Weingarten, lawyer for the applicant, told town officials. Sebastian Capital's parent company is a Mexico-based, family-owned business.

The for-profit school would be owned and operated by Evergreen Ridge, a limited-liability, school campus development company, and the property would remain on the tax rolls. Plans are to use all five Pei-designed buildings, about 1.2 million square feet, including the distinctive pyramid-shaped structures.



IBM Somers complex (Photo: Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News)

According to a presentation to Somers officials, opening the school would occur in three phases, with plans to add athletic fields and build an athletic facility/field house and an arts center as part of the second phase. At full capacity, about three years after opening, the academy could have up to 1,800 students, of which 85 percent are anticipated to be boarding students, plus 235 teachers and staff, according to the presentation. Tuition could be approximately \$37,000 for commuting students and \$49,000 for boarders.

More than 3,000 IBM employees once worked there. The school's parking needs are expected to be much less — town officials have been told 500 or 600 spaces compared to the 3,200 that IBM had.

LOCATION: 294 Route 100: A property in Somers, in northern Westchester, bounded by Routes 116, 100 and 138.

LATEST DEVELOPMENT: The school had targeted a September 2020 first-phase opening but the plan now is aiming to open for a summer program in 2021, which will allow time to meet the various requirements of the project review process, according to a spokeswoman for Roxana Girard, Sebastian Capital's president and chief executive officer.

The project's planners and consultants are in the midst of doing environmental review work, said Weingarten.

The town, as well as agencies such as the state Department of Environmental Conservation, will be part of the review.

"We are making great progress," Weingarten said.

UP NEXT: Eventually, the school proposal will go to public hearings. The Town Board will be lead agency considering the project.

Along with undergoing review for environmental issues, traffic, accreditation and other things, the school would need a zone change and special-use permit. The property is in an office business zone.

Town Supervisor Rick Morrissey said "we're excited about the project" and "it's the appetite of this (Town Board) that this use of the campus would be in the best interest of the town."