

Proposed school on former Somers IBM property would prep students for emerging industries

[Michael P. McKinney](#), Rockland/Westchester Journal News Published 6:00 a.m. ET Aug. 12, 2019 | Updated 9:00 a.m. ET Aug. 12, 2019

SOMERS — A private high school proposed for the former IBM campus aims to compete with the nation's top prep schools by offering coursework that will prepare students for emerging industries.

Along with core curriculum and advanced-placement classes, the coed school would offer courses aligned with at least 38 "strong, relevant, emerging growth fields and industries," said Tim DiScipio, a member of the team working to create the school off Route 100.

"We've done some research and the top-25 ranked private schools in the United States don't offer the comprehensive elective track we're going to introduce," DiScipio, who leads Evergreen Ridge, the company developing the for-profit school, told residents and town officials on Thursday.



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

With plans to open in 2021, the school would emphasize science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) as well as arts instruction.

DiScipio said there will be a more specific presentation to the town in the fall on the academic and curriculum plans. He said an advisory team of people from leading public and private school backgrounds has been working on the academics.

Tuition up to \$49,000

Tuition could be \$49,000 for boarding students and \$37,000 for day students. The school could eventually have up to 1,800 students. Eighty-five percent are anticipated to be boarding students.

An estimated 20 percent of students would be from other countries.

The school does not yet have a name. DiScipio said the list has been narrowed to four or five possibilities. The school's planners are in the midst of seeking state approval for the school.

Officials and residents also got a look at a nearly 10-minute animated video of the planned school's exterior and interior. A flight simulator, robotic labs, state-of-the art science facilities and a host of luxuries for students are among the planned features.

I.M. Pei designed buildings

The school would reuse the five existing buildings, which incorporate pyramid shapes, designed by I.M. Pei for IBM on the property bordered by Routes 116, 100 and 138. IBM, which was the town's largest taxpayer, moved its last Somers-based employees 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 3.5 million square feet of commercial and residential space in the tri-state area.

The school, which would be operated by Evergreen Ridge, would be a tenant. The property would stay on the tax rolls.

The school would use about 345 acres of the property. There are no plans at this time to develop the rest of the land, said Mark Weingarten, lawyer for the applicant.

At the center of campus, one of the existing I.M. Pei buildings would hold a first-floor main office with a drop-off area as well as auditorium and music instruction space.

Other existing buildings would have academic spaces on the lower two floors and residence halls on the third and fourth floors.

When the buildings were occupied by IBM, the interiors were divided into small offices. For the school use, spaces would be opened up.

"We can actually take better advantage of the natural light that comes into the buildings," said Erik Kaeyer, the project's architect.

A field house would be built on the campus. And the more than 3,000 parking spaces designed for IBM would be reduced to 1,000 or 1,100, creating more green space. The former parking lot would be turned into athletic fields, one of them synthetic.

The additions to the school campus would be done in three phases. The first phase would include a baseball diamond, multi-use field and tennis courts. A field with a track and another multi-purpose field would follow. The third phase would see three multi-purpose fields created.

The Town Board will eventually decide whether to issue a permit for the school.

"I think we're very happy — the town has been extremely cooperative throughout the process," Roxana Girand, Sebastian Capital's founder, said in an interview. "We are very excited we are getting to this point."