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By Mark Sommer

Architectural center envisioned for Richardson

A state board wants to put an architectural center in the former Buffalo State Hospital's signature Gothic towers.

The Richardson Architecture Center Corp. board, meeting for the first time, also agreed by consensus to have part of a nearby wing restored in order to show how patients once lived.

"We have an exciting road ahead of us," said Peter Atkinson, an Orchard Park native and capital projects manager for Harvard University's art museums in Cambridge, Mass. ". . . [This] can put Buffalo on an international platform to display its wondrous architecture and, specifically, the Richardson-Olmsted Complex."

Both the Richardson Architecture Center and Richardson Center boards were established in July 2006, but until now only the latter group had met. That board is responsible for overseeing redevelopment of the entire historic complex designed by Henry Hobson Richardson and landscaped by Frederick Law Olmsted.

The architecture center is expected to be a major visitors site.

Last month, the preservation board announced that Goody Clancy, a design firm, and Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, an engineering firm, will be evaluating the historic landmark for future reuse possibilities, a necessary first step for redevelopment.

In May, the nonprofit Urban Land Institute crafted a possible development strategy for the complex, recommending restoration of the buildings and landscape, along with new structures featuring mixed housing and commercial development, including a hotel.

Officers for both boards are Chairman Stanford Lipsey, publisher of The Buffalo News; Vice Chairman Howard Zemsky, president of Taurus Capital Partners, a private real estate investment firm, and former president of the Martin House Restoration Corp.; and Treasurer Paul Hojnacki, president of Curtis Screw Co. Monica Pellegrino is project coordinator.

The Richardson Architectural Board members are Atkinson; Anthony Bannon, director of the George Eastman House in Rochester; Clinton Brown, former president of the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier and an architect specializing in historic revitalization; Barbara

Campagna, executive director of the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier; and Louis Grachos, executive director of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

Also, Christopher Greene, chairman of the Damon & Morey law firm and former chairman of the Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute; attorney Robert Kresse, chairman of the Niagara River Greenway Commission; Lynn Osmond, president of the Chicago Architectural Foundation; Chase Rynd, president of the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C.; and Richard Tobe, commissioner of the city Department of Economic Department, Permits, & Inspections. Brian Carter, dean of the University at Buffalo's School of Architecture and Planning, is an ex-officio member.

Richardson Center board members, in addition to Lipsey, Zemsky and Hojnacki, are Brown; Greene; Tobe; Carol Ash, commissioner of the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; Paul Ciminelli, a developer whose work has included renovation of the historic Cyclorama building; Eva Hassett, a Savarino Cos. executive vice president and chief of staff and finance commissioner under former Buffalo Mayor Anthony M. Masiello; Muriel Howard, president of Buffalo State College; and Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, D-Buffalo.