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## **PUBLIC LIVES; A Green Developer, in More Ways Than One**

By **LYNDA RICHARDSON**

NED SULLIVAN, the president of the environmental group Scenic Hudson, is an earnest, intense man who looks most at home in the country, in running sneakers. That's where he was on a recent morning, in a field, getting a tour from an ecologist about expanding a park in the shadow of Storm King Mountain in Orange County, picking a tick off his pants leg.

But by late afternoon, Mr. Sullivan is sitting in a somber suit at an Upper West Side cafe. He wants to talk real estate, for a development. This is curious. He runs a conservation and land trust group, based in Poughkeepsie, that is battling a proposed cement plant in Columbia County, tussling with General Electric to clean up its Hudson River PCB's, and snatching up land to protect the cultural landscape of the Hudson Valley.

Mr. Sullivan sips a strawberry milkshake and explains.

His nonprofit group is embarking on its first real estate enterprise, the creation of a \$40 million development in the former factory town of Beacon. It will include a 100-room hotel, a conference center, restaurants, shops and hiking trails on 23 acres along the east bank of the Hudson, and it is next door to the new art museum, Dia:Beacon. Scenic Hudson had wooed the Dia Center for the Arts to move a collection of works by artists who became popular in the 1960's and 1970's to the gritty town.

"I feel good about it," says Mr. Sullivan, who is lanky with lean, sharp features. "Development is intense in the Hudson Valley; it's going to happen. The question is not whether it's going to happen. It's how we can shape it so that it serves the interests and desires of the people from the Hudson Valley. The development pressure is moving up the valley like a wave."

So if you can't beat 'em, join 'em? Mr. Sullivan, 48, looks a little crestfallen at the comment. The project makes perfect sense to Mr. Sullivan, who came to Scenic Hudson four years ago after serving as commissioner of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. The group has been buying property in Beacon for a decade.

Mr. Sullivan refers to the project as "a green development," and says even Pete Seeger, the folk singer and a Beacon resident, seems to like it, especially plans for a boat-building program for young people. (Mr. Seeger says he also wants Mr. Sullivan's help in building a swimming pool floating in the Hudson River.)

"We decided it wasn't enough to stop bad projects, but that we should be daring enough to sponsor positive developments that would be sustainable," he says. "We are going to make this a state-of-the-art, cutting-edge, environmentally sound, energy-efficient development."

Mr. Sullivan uses a lot of adjectives, but he doesn't seem defensive about the development. Scenic Hudson does have credentials. It has created 38 parks and preserves encompassing 18,590 acres. It began in 1963 with its fight to save Storm King Mountain in the Hudson highlands from a Con Edison proposal to build a

massive hydroelectric plant. Its legal victory established the principle that citizens may intervene and be heard in cases about environmental resources, Mr. Sullivan said.

Mr. Sullivan has a reputation for balancing demands of business interests and environmentalists.

"I think it's the ability to bring people together and structure transactions that meet multiple and often competing goals," he says.

He is a registered Republican, but says he sees himself as nonpartisan. He points out he will pose the environmental questions to Democratic presidential candidates at a Lake Placid forum later this month.

Mr. Sullivan says that in Maine he was most proud of persuading New England states and eastern Canadian provinces to slash mercury emissions. Before that, he was deputy commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, starting a program to clean up 1,000 toxic waste sites, including Love Canal. He also was an investment banker at the Bank of Boston, developing the blueprint for a multimillion-dollar cleanup of Boston Harbor.

Mr. Sullivan, who grew up in Mount Kisco, has master's degrees in management and forestry from Yale. His father had wanted him to take over the family real estate business years ago. He had no interest. "That's what kids do sometimes," he says, laughing. "They do the opposite." As it turns out, he came to real estate on his own terms.

He says he returned to the Hudson Valley because he and his wife, an admissions office manager at Bard College, wanted their 6-year-old daughter to be closer to her cousins and grandmothers. (He also has an 18-year-old stepdaughter.)

Mr. Sullivan also had some crazy notion that he would be spending more time with his family. Wrong! He is giving more speeches than he did as Maine's environmental chief and has the added job of fund-raising. The organization has a \$100 million endowment from the founders of Reader's Digest, but he says the money does not pay for advocacy work or his 45-member staff. "I'm very much in the thick of public policy debate."