

Feb 17, 2009

Norristown's movie debut delayed

Ground-breaking hasn't happened yet on a planned filmmaking facility, and space has been cut back.

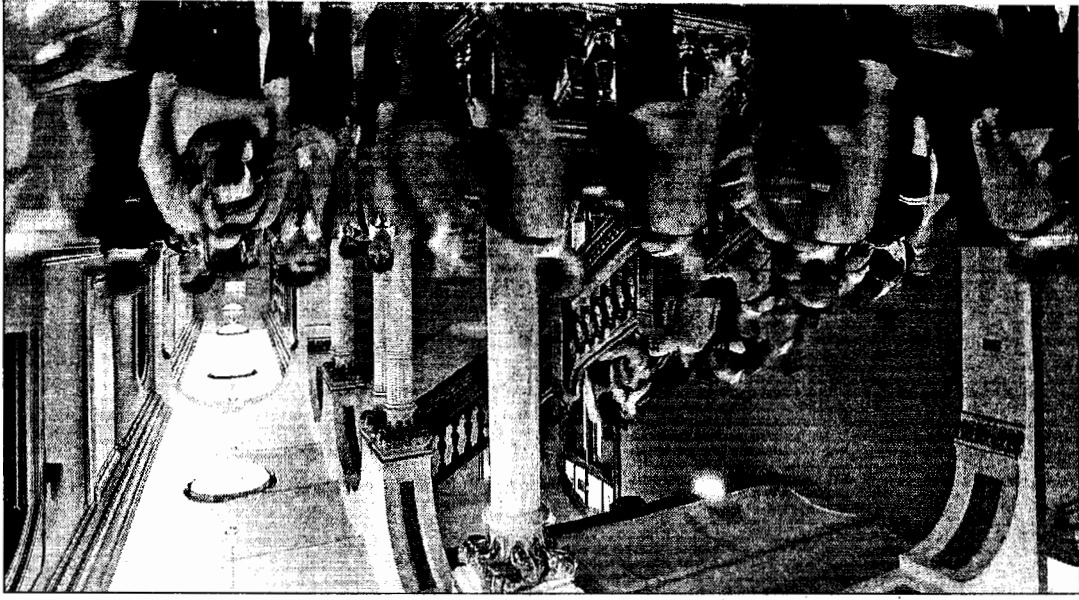
By Derrick Nunnally
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

But life hasn't followed the rags-to-riches script unveiled two summers ago. This was supposed to be the Hollywood ending for Norristown's decades of hard times: the construction of a big-time movie studio bringing money, hundreds of jobs, and glamour to revitalize the city.

tions of the project have been downsized even before construction starts. The promised 100,000 square feet of film-studio space has been cut drastically, with more of the site given to less-exciting retail and office purposes, including a grocery store and a fast-food restaurant.

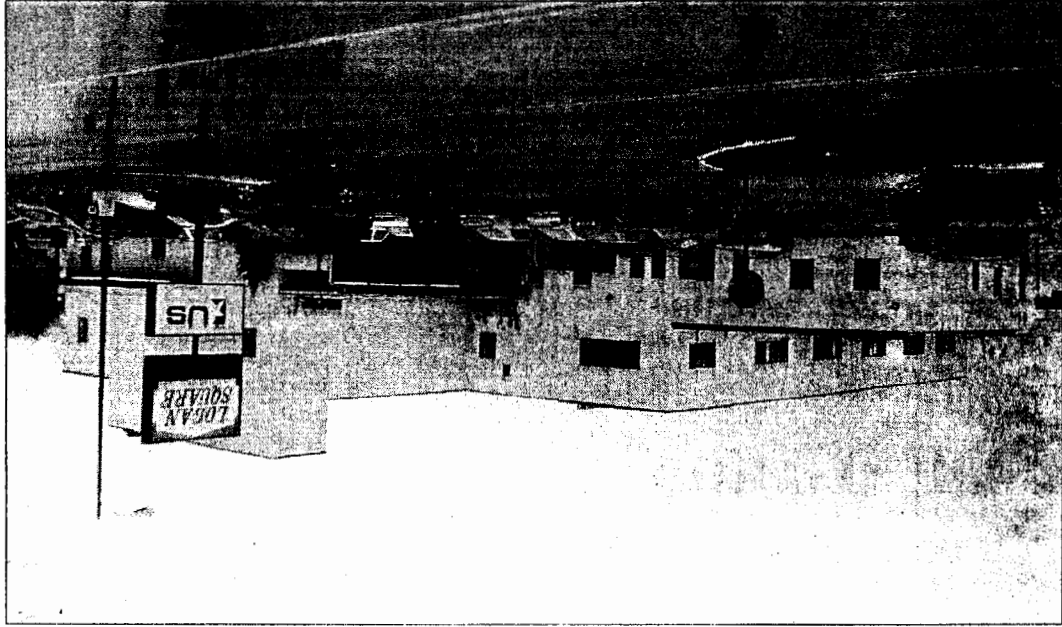
At the run-down Logan Square shopping center where signposts tout the coming studio development, at an eventual cost of about \$100 million, the promises of a glamorous overhaul have become less bedazzling as the months pass idly. "I think we all believe it's still going to happen," said Cathy Lawrence, the Norristown council president. "It's just going to happen on a smaller scale."

See **STUDIO** on B8



Slain officer is mourned by 1,000

After a community Mass, the family of Officer John Pawlowski thanked police



RON TARVER / Staff Photographer



Studio Centre Norristown, in an artist's depiction above, is planned for the run-down Logan Square shopping center, at left. Developers originally promised 100,000 square feet of film-studio space, but that has been cut drastically.

Norristown studio on hold

Gallub said Raleigh's staff helped revise the Norristown plans around both demand and company is scheduled to present in March.

Kelley and Gallub said current plans are for Studio Centre to open with more than 60,000 square feet of sound-studio space — enough, they said, to produce feature films, commercials, and other projects. Kelley said another 65,000 square feet will be used for related work.

"Our first plans were much more conceptual," Gallub said. Documents filed with Montgomery County in December

said the project would construct two new buildings with 45,000 square feet, though Kelley said the planned third studio isn't included in the filing. Norristown officials have

asked Develcom, Gallub's development company, to return a call. Kelley and developer Charles

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Lawrence, the Norristown council president, still hopes the revised project will be a boon for her borough even if a lower fraction of the property gets used for film purposes. That considerable studio space is still in the plans still comforts boosters of the "Phillywood" dream of an East Coast filmmaking hub. Studio Centre is as important to them as it is to backers of Norristown's revival.

"The sooner those guys get those stages up and running, the happier I'm going to be," said Sharon Pinkenson, executive director of the Greater Philadelphia Film Office.

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SOURCES: ESRI, TeleAtlas

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