

Fan Pier builder's strategy: Show off

By Thomas Grillo, Boston Herald

Wednesday, May 19, 2010

It might have seemed strange to see a juggler on Fan Pier tossing yellow spools in the air yesterday, but to Joseph Fallon it made sense.

Fallon, whose \$3 billion Fan Pier project is stalled, will temporarily transform one of his vacant parcels into the summer home for Cirque du Soleil. The Quebec-based troupe will set up its big top in the parking lot next door to Fallon's 18-story office building in the hopes of luring people to the waterfront location.

French juggler Tony Frebourg gave a crowd that included Mayor **Thomas M. Menino** a preview yesterday.

The addition of Cirque du Soleil is the latest effort to fill spaces that await development of 21 acres of Fan Pier spanning nine city blocks. While one 500,000-square-foot office tower has been completed, Fallon has city approval for two more office buildings and a 20-story, 175-room luxury hotel with 100 residential units overlooking the harbor, as well as marinas and green space.

"I know once people come to visit this location they will want to live here," said Fallon. "I've already heard from many people who come to shop or eat here that this is the place they want to call home."

Earlier this month, luxury retailer LouisBoston moved from the city's chic shopping district on **Newbury Street** to Fan Pier. The boutique will temporarily occupy 20,000 square feet of prime waterfront space behind One Marina Park Drive.

Filling these vacant parcels with temporary structures is a good remedy to a down economy and gets people to the site, which will bring success in filling these buildings later, said William McCall, a commercial real estate broker at McCall & Almy.

"Activity begets activity," he said. "When the economy improves, the fact that people are more familiar with the location will get people to live and rent office space there."

Benjamin Heller, a senior vice president at Jones Lang LaSalle, said Fallon is thinking creatively to draw attention to the waterfront.

"Any way to get people down to Fan Pier will only help," he said. "Joe hosted the Volvo Ocean Race last summer and that was a unique event. He's thinking outside normal marketing."