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East Hartford completes \$3.3m purchase of abandoned Showcase Cinemas site

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East Hartford, CT The town has completed its \$3.3 million purchase of the abandoned Showcase Cinemas along I-84 east, according to the mayor, who says the site will be razed and redeveloped.

Mayor Marcia Leclerc confirmed the town bought the “blighted structure” on Jan. 31, from Mass.-based National Amusements Inc., which closed the 14-screen movie complex in 2006 after operating it since 1973. The site includes 942, 944, 946 and 960 Silver Lane, and 285 and 291 Forbes St.

The town purchased the 25.6-acre site, and 66,000 s/f building, using state dollars previously allocated to redevelop the Silver Lane site.

The town now plans to demolish and clear the vandalized movie theater this summer with hopes of luring a new mixed-use development there.

Leclerc said it will go out to bid after its demolition plans are completed.

After several years of planning, Leclerc said the town has an “aggressive path” for the redevelopment. She said the area’s dense residential base could support several commercial uses, but didn’t offer any specifics.

The town will soon advertise a request for qualifications in search of a developer.

“We are looking forward to turning the page to the next chapter for this most important corridor in the town...” Leclerc said.

In recent years, the former movie theater site was being considered to house Connecticut’s first off-reservation casino.

In 2016, developer Anthony Ravosa Jr., a member of Silver Lane Partners LLC, submitted an application to use the former East Hartford movie theater site for a \$200 million casino with 2,000 slots, a 2,100-space parking garage, restaurants and bars.

The group’s proposal included leveraging then Hartford Radisson Hotel, which is now the Red Lion Hotel, for lodging.

In May 2017, Leclerc also pressed state lawmakers and the Mohegan Sun and Mashantucket Pequot tribes to build the jointly operated casino at the East Hartford site, but the tribes ultimately selected a vacant Showcase Cinemas property in East Windsor.

Meantime, another planned East Hartford mixed-use project fizzled last year, when Illinois developer Horizon Group Properties Inc. pulled the plug on a proposed \$105 million outlet mall near Rentschler Field, citing a rocky U.S. retail environment and lack of financing.

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