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A demolition crew takes down the main building on a 25-acre property that once held a petroleum tank farm.

Derek Gee / Buffalo News

Demolition under way at former tank farm in Tonawanda

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Demolition under way at former tank farm in Tonawanda

Demolition is under way at a former petroleum tank farm in the Town of Tonawanda in an effort to beautify the area along River Road area and attract new business.

"This eyesore is about to come down," Erie County Executive Chris Collins said this morning. "Nobody wants to develop next to this atrocious building, so we're tearing it down."

The site, located at 5335 River Road, is just one mile from I-190 and the Grand Island bridges. It once held 12 large above-ground storage tanks, which were mostly removed. One five-million gallon tank remained since the site was abandoned in the early 1990s. That tank has been demolished and is being removed.

The vacant building holds the same fate.

Construction workers this morning started clawing away at the building with heavy metal equipment, tearing out a width of about 20 feet of the building, two stories high in just five minutes.

"This marks another waterfront and greenway improvement project and is another item on my administration's checklist to set Erie County on the road to a bright future," Collins said.

Erie County took temporary incidence ownership of the 25-acre property to allow the demolition to move forward. The town is owed more than \$1 million in back taxes for the parcel.

Collins said the back taxes are the town's taxes owed to the county, and that there is no write-off residents need to worry about.

"That million is part of tax residue left over that was owed to the county," Collins said. "It will have no impact whatsoever to the county taxpayers."

The demolition is estimated to cost \$130,000. The county will pay for \$50,000, while the town will pay \$80,000. The project is estimated to finish within two months.

Following demolition, the state Department of Environmental Conservation will perform environmental tests on the site to determine if any additional remediation is necessary.

Kevin Montante, vice president of TM Montante Development, owns Commerce Park, and welcomes the demolition. He said this sets an example of Erie County's commitment to improving its waterfront and attracting new business.

"Private investment aligned with state and local support has greatly enhanced the region's natural beauty and the results have brought more than 120 new jobs to Riverview Commerce Park and to Erie County in just over two years," he said.

Town officials hope to reuse the property for light industrial and office space similar to the Riverview Commerce Park down the road.

"This is a great opportunity for our town to help us regain valuable property," Tonawanda Town Supervisor Anthony Caruana said. "Look around you now. This was a prestigious farmland once. Although the demolition of this one building seems small, it will have a great impact on River Road's economic development. There's so much potential here."

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