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New Britain closes deal on Berkowitz Building

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Lisa Sanchez Gonzalez | Special to the Herald

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NEW BRITAIN — The keys to the Berkowitz Building are in the hands of its new owner, Hartford developer Douglas Bromfield, who will transform the eyesore into retail and apartment space.

"It's an incredible feeling," said Mayor Erin Stewart, who worked to get the deal completed. "Everyone has known for years that this has been an eyesore. It goes to show you that transit-oriented development opportunities can happen. This is definitely tied to CTfastrak."

Berkowitz Building

Retail space and apartments are planned for the Berkowitz Building on Main Street in New Britain.

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The building, which sits at the gateway between Main Street and Little Poland, has been vacant for years. Bromfield and the city closed on the property last week, turning over the keys to the developer who is known for his restoration work in Hartford.

The plan for the building is to include retail space on the first floor and 27 apartments on the upper floors. The building and two additional related parcels stretching to Beaver Street were sold to Bromfield for \$130,000. Bromfield did not return phone calls Friday.

"Finally!" said Bill Carroll, the city's business development director, who will likely be working with the project when it comes time to get new businesses in the building. "It was one of the biggest eyesores, if not the biggest eyesore, coming in as the gateway to Little Poland. I know this was a priority of Mayor Stewart's, and she should be congratulated for closing the deal. She got the job done."

Bromfield will renovate the building while retaining its original heritage, Stewart said. The location is important for the city since it's within walking distance of CTfastrak and at the start of Little Poland, which has been revitalized in the past decade and is now home to booming shops and restaurants.

Bromfield will also develop the other parcels with retail and housing. The entire project will be done in stages, with the 100-year-old, 24,500-square-foot Berkowitz Building at 608 Main St. on tap first for development.

"It's great news," said city council member Michael Trueworthy. "It's not just about the Berkowitz Building. It's been 20-plus years of blight and three years of mayoral and city council involvement to finally make this happen. That building by its location is a pivotal spot for economic development because of the location between Main Street and downtown."

Stewart said she anticipates that Bromfield will start work on the building fairly soon, with the possibility of a transformation by next summer.