

Westchester Plaza razed, yielding prime footprint for development

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Westchester Plaza, built to great anticipation in 1951 as a luxury apartment building overlooking downtown Fort Worth, was reduced to a pile of rubble in the length of a regulation bull ride on the morning of March 18.

Crowds gathered outside the police safety lines for the 8 a.m. demolition, overseen by Dallas Demolition. The controlled implosion using about 300 pounds of explosives collapsed the building into its own footprint at the corner of Summit and Pennsylvania avenues – in eight seconds.

“Dallas Demolition is the best in the business,” said Austin T. Reilly, a broker with the Land Advisors Organization, which was retained by the building’s owners to oversee the process of getting the land ready for sale.

What was left of the 12-story building is more than 17,000 tons of rubble that will be cleared away in the next six weeks.

The building was owned by Fort Worth-based 554 S. Summit 1 LLC, which decided that renovation was not practical and that clearing the land was the best option. A future use has not been determined.

The building – styled by architects as mid-century modern – most recently was an assisted-living and retirement center.

In August 2017, the residents still in Westchester Plaza were told to move out of the building, which had a long history of financial and regulatory problems. It was licensed for 275 people and mostly served elderly and disabled individuals. It had been in that business since 1998 and operated as the state’s largest assisted-living facility for Medicaid recipients until it closed, the City of Fort Worth said on

the city’s website.

At a little over four acres, the land has easy access to Interstate 30 and could be sold for a variety of uses ranging from apartments to a hotel or perhaps a new hospital building in the Medical District.

Reilly previously told the Fort Worth Business Press that the property had been appraised at \$13,394,245, which included the building even though the real value is the land.

He said his organization will broadly market the property via a nationwide campaign in the coming months but no other details were available.

But there is a lot of buzz.

“We continue to receive a lot of interest from the development community,” he said. “The site represents one of the best redevelopment

opportunities in all D-FW. The proximity to the city’s largest employment hubs – the Medical District and downtown – as well as very good access and visibility along I-30 contributes to the overall attraction of the site.”

Fort Worth resident Sheila Worthey watch the implosion with her son, who lived in the building for 17 years, from a church parking lot on the north side of I-30. She had nothing kind to say about her son’s experience with the assisted-living facility.

“We just want to see the damn place go down. It’s just a symbol of all that has been harmful,” she said. “It could have been so much better. I don’t think you will find one person who said it was good.”

Paul Paine, president of Near Southside Inc., told the Business Press for an earlier story that he expects the site to draw great interest and would personally like to see some kind of mixed-use development

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