

## Heights sale gets council approval

NEW BRITAIN - After years of watching the Pinnacle Heights housing project go from a vibrant neighborhood to a deteriorating, blighted area that became an embarrassment to residents, the 63-acre parcel is set to rise from its own ashes.

In a well-attended meeting of the Common Council on Wednesday, the most anticipated resolution on the agenda was the sale of the property known as Pinnacle Heights to Centerplan Development Co. for \$6 million.

The 13-1 vote will allow the area to be redeveloped and hopefully expand the city's tax base and increase the grand list, the tally of all taxable property.

The sale, a project of Mayor Timothy Stewart for more than a year, came to fruition after Stewart entered into negotiations with at least two developers last year. The developers, Ceruzzi Holding LLD and Centerplan, bid \$4.5 million and \$6 million, respectively, for the property.

In February, the property was appraised at \$4.2 million, but Robert Landino, president of Centerplan, kept his bid intact.

Minority Leader Louis Salvio told the council that the sale of the Pinnacle Heights property was the best thing that could happen to New Britain.

"The city has spent considerable money," Salvio said, describing the tens of thousands of dollars spent on studies looking at the use for this property.

Salvio urged the council to vote to sell the property.

Although several residents - fearing the coming big-box retailers or other employers that pay primarily minimum wage - spoke against the sale of Pinnacle Heights without a specific use being outlined by the developer, only alderman Paul Catanzaro joined them in voicing his opposition to the sale.

"I do not believe that the pluses in this project outweigh the negatives," Catanzaro said, adding that not having specific restrictions on the developer might lead to the property being worse off than it is now.

Other aldermen, however, disagreed with his stand.

Alderwoman Lori Rocha said that the sale, along with the redevelopment of the downtown area, would lead to a better future for the city.

"We can start to see New Britain become a rising star," Rocha said.

Michael Treworthy, Democratic majority leader on the council, indicated he had concerns with the project, but believed it to be the best solution to a problem that has been with the city for too long.

"I wish [Centerplan] could be more specific," Treworthy said, acknowledging uncertainties in the economy that could muddle planning. "But I understand why they can't be more specific."

Stewart, who grew up in a Pinnacle Heights home, was visibly happy when the council voted to go ahead with the sale, and said the development in the area would bring a boost to the economy and make New Britain a better place to live.

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