

Demolition starts on Saint Mary Magdalene's rectory, convent in Willowick

PHOTOS: St. Mary demolition 2018

Lake County Commissioner Dan Troy, who attended school at Saint Mary Magdalene's stand with Parish Priest, Father Steve Breck and State Representative John Rogers in front of the Saint Mary Magdalene's Rectory before the construction crews started demolition on it June 11.



By [Kristi Garabrandt](#),
The News-Herald

POSTED: 06/11/18, 6:08 PM

EDT | UPDATED: 17 HRS AGO

Demolition begins on the rectory at Saint Mary Magdalene's in Willowick on June 11. Demolition began June 11, on the Grove convent and rectory at [Saint Mary Magdalene Church](#) in Willowick.



The rectory at one time housed up to six priests and the convent housed up to 12 nuns.

“The nuns were used to educate the kids and the priests in large measure were used to administer to the parish,” recalled state Rep. John Rogers, D-Mentor-on-the-Lake.

“Unfortunately, as the schools and numbers of enrollments are declining the number of priest are declining too and so, this building has sat dormant since 2006.”

According to Rogers, he was approached several years ago by former Willowick Mayor Richard Bonde about the possibility of the [Lake County Land Bank](#) helping the city do something with the properties. And current Mayor Rich Regovich, who views the buildings as a blight to the community and an eyesore, also contacted him also regarding doing something with the properties.

“Finally, between the fathers, the Catholic diocese and the mayors, the land bank acquired the property and we are using our funds and some other funds to help demolish the property,” Rogers said.

Regovich’s concerns were not only over the properties being an eyesore to the community but also with the roof falling in and rats, other rodents and stray cats, being attracted to the dormant buildings.

Rogers who estimates the rectory to have been constructed somewhere around 1961, noted that when he entered it on a previous occasion he not only saw the collapsed roof but also black mold.

He also noted the buildings had undergone asbestos abatement before demolition began.

Regovich said that neighbors near the property are happy to see it’s being torn down.

He also notes that to repair it would probably cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and that money could be better used on new homes.

The mayor is hopeful this will produce some new houses and encourage families to move to Willowick.

According to Rogers the parcel of land at the intersection of East 321st and Willowick streets with the rectory on it is large enough to have two separate homes on it.

“We would split the lot and sell it as two parcels so you could have two houses on it,” Rogers said. “The other parcel (where the convent is located) on the other side of the building, that whole area is still owned by the church except the commercial area on the corner (Vine Street and Willowick Drive). It is a very heavy trafficked area, and I think it certainly would be an opportunity for the right developer that comes along.” .

“The Grove hopefully can be used for retail space,” Regovich said. “There is also a lot of space right next to there that could also be used for retail space and would fit right into our plans for the Vine Street Corridor.

Regovich said that if grant money is used to pay for the demolition the property has to be held for three years. However, it could sometimes take that long for plans to come together for a retail business.

He is already looking for a retailer or business that would suit that location.

“I don’t know that we’ve torn down many church buildings in Lake County in years, certainly not a rectory or convent,” Rogers said. “This is kind of a unique situation. These two building have sat dormant and haven’t been in use so the idea is to return the land to productive use and generate funds and tax revenue from them.

“It’s a sign of the times. It’s a sad sign of the times but, hopefully something good can come of it.”