

Dozens swing hammers as Pentagon Park in Edina begins to come down

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There were an awful lot of people eager to see Pentagon Park in Edina come down — including the man whose father built it 46 years ago.

Mark Rauenhorst, son of the late Gerald Rauenhorst, was among the dozens who grabbed a hammer on Tuesday and took a swing in a demolition ceremony marking the beginning of Pentagon Park's redevelopment.

"This was one of the first office parks outside of downtown Minneapolis," said Rauenhorst, who remains a partner in the project. "It makes me feel good that there's an opportunity to see it redeveloped into something that will meet the needs of the community for years to come."

The 43-acre park, near the intersection of Interstate 494 and Hwy. 100, was a premier location when it opened in 1968. But it's deteriorated in recent years as changing ownership and the recession took a toll.

"For 20 years it was fantastic," said real estate developer John Hankinson, who has had an office in the park for 45 years.

Hillcrest Development of Minneapolis now owns the park and hopes to make it into a showpiece once again. Plans call for a mix of office, medical, retail and residential buildings, along with at least one hotel. The entire process will take years, but construction on the first phase should begin next year, said Scott Tankenoff, Hillcrest managing partner.

"A lot of people asked me if they could hit the button [on demolition]," Tankenoff joked.



Edina Mayor James Hoyland was among those taking a swing at the Pentagon Park office park demolition party. Hillcrest Development plans a mixed-use development with at least one hotel. The project could top \$500 million.

Photos by LEILA NAVIDI • leila.navidi@startribune.com,



Souvenir sledgehammers available for use during a ceremonial sledgehammer and graffiti party for local officials at a demolition site inside Pentagon Park in Edina.

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The project has received financial support from the city, the state and the Metropolitan Council. Officials from all those bodies were on hand for the ceremony.

“The price was right, the long-term interest rates were right, and the interest in developing the city was right,” said Edina City Manager Scott Neal. “It’s incredibly exciting to see something that’s not really contributing begin to contribute — not just in tax dollars, but in vitality and activity and aesthetics.”

The initial phase of development will focus on the South Tower area, site of Tuesday’s ceremony. It’s expected that a hotel will be one of the first new buildings to go up.

There’s one perk the developers won’t be able to offer new tenants. In the old days, Hankinson said, tenants got vouchers for free golf at the nearby Fred Richards Golf Course. But the Fred hosted its last round Oct. 5. It, too, is slated for redevelopment.

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