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Developers begin renovating Gates plaza

A \$1 million to \$2 million redevelopment and expansion project is under way to transform the more than 50-year-old Chili Hinchey Plaza into a gateway development for the town of Gates.

Developers David Dworkin and John August, along with their partners, last month bought the aging, 67,000-square-foot strip mall in January for \$1.03 million.

The plaza, which was built in 1940, is located at 1295-1317 Chili Ave. in Gates, near the city's 19th Ward neighborhood and I-390. Tenants include Sunset Lanes bowling alley and a Rent-A-Center Inc. store.

Dworkin and his partners, under Chili Hinchey Associates LLC, hope to breathe new life into the plaza. Plans call for gutting large sections of the interior, building a 10,000-square-foot addition, in-

stalling new windows and a new brick facade and constructing a cupola that will tower over the plaza and attract the attention of drivers on the nearby I-390 overpass.

In addition, two new tenants are moving in: a Subway Restaurants franchise and a Game Craze store.

"It's got great visibility," Dworkin said. "We're excited about it. It's a nice little project."

Gates Supervisor Ralph Esposito this week said a redeveloped strip mall should have few problems attracting customers. Traffic from I-390, totaling 105,391 cars per day, feeds into Gates across the street from the shopping plaza. Traffic from the city and the rest of Gates, totaling 28,431 cars per day, feeds into the area along Chili Avenue. The roadway itself feeds into a

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. supercenter and a Wegmans Food Markets Inc. grocery store less than a mile away.

"That's a very visible point in the town," Esposito said. "We'll do whatever we can to make it a very successful project."

Esposito and other town officials met with Dworkin and his partners and are glad to see them bring investment and a long-term vision to the underdeveloped strip mall.

"We're very optimistic on the basis of their background," he said. "(The plaza) is clearly in need of upgrading, and that's what they bring to the table."

Dworkin and his partners redeveloped the historic Button Factory building in the city's High Falls district. Empire Brewing Co. restaurant is among their tenants.

—*Megan E. Connor*

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