



## Rebirth of the former Doyle Hardware building

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UTICA — Only a short time ago, the former Doyle Hardware building was full of dusty, worn-out floors and clutter.

And although the signs of decay and abandonment are still visible, a recent tour of the building shows it's moving toward rebirth.

"It's got incredible potential and could really be the catalyst to turn that side of Bagg's Square around," city Urban and Economic Development Commissioner Robert Sullivan said. "It's what people are looking for."

Proposed new developments include:

\* **Restaurant.** An 8,000-square-foot section of the building facing Main Street is slated to become a restaurant, open by December, run by building owner Stuart Bannatyne and Vinnie Ficchi of Anchor Heating and Air Conditioning. A large bar will sit in the center of the room and the menu will feature European and Asian cuisine, Bannatyne said.

\* **Census opportunities.** Bruce Kaminski of the U.S. Census Bureau said some managers will begin working at the building Tuesday. Large-scale recruiting for local employees is scheduled to begin in November. Bannatyne said he has a 16-month lease with the Census Bureau, but declined to discuss details.

\* **Entertainment.** Plans are also in the works to add a cocktail lounge similar to Space 26 in the building's basement and a small movie theater behind the restaurant for private parties, Bannatyne said.

\* **Office space.** The upper three floors of the building will be marketed toward local law firms, Bannatyne said.

City officials and local business owners said the building could be a catalyst for the rebirth of the historic neighborhood surrounding the Boehlert Center at Union Station.

"It naturally revitalizes that whole area," Utica Mayor David Roefaro said. "He's got all the components that will make it a nice attraction for business."

Local residents also welcomed the idea of a new restaurant and bringing new life to the neighborhood.

"It's a good idea," said Utica resident James Lewis. "Especially in this area."

### A changing building

Doyle Hardware closed in December 2006 after being a family-run business for nearly 135 years. An urban market study the city commissioned in 2006 recognized the building as a prime location for loft housing.

Bannatyne purchased the building for \$450,000 from N.A. Late, LLC and the adjacent parking lot for \$50,000 from the Utica Urban Renewal Agency, both on Dec. 27, 2007.

His plans initially included turning much of the building into apartments. But development stalled until earlier this year, when Bannatyne announced the pending presence of both the Census Bureau and a café run by Christian Garramone.

Garramone's café is no longer planned, though he and Bannatyne disagree about why. Bannatyne also expressed concern earlier this year about being left out of the city's Restore New York Communities grant application, which focused on clusters of buildings on Genesee and Bleecker streets.

Officials countered at the time that Bannatyne never supplied the necessary paperwork, despite months of requests.

City officials now appear fully supportive of Bannatyne's efforts at the building, as both Roefaro and Sullivan lauded the redevelopment effort.

The city is even installing sidewalks and streetlights on Broad Street for the building, near the Census Bureau entrance.

**Neighborhood revitalization**

Expectations have long surrounded the neighborhood near Union Station – also home to the Utica Children’s Museum. The station itself was acquired in 1990 by Oneida County, which subsequently spent millions to renovate and restore it.

Kids Oneida occupies a building on one side of the former Doyle Hardware building, while Jetnet LLC, occupies the second and third floors of a building on the other side.

Tony Esposito, who owns Jetnet and its building along with his brother, Vincent, said that if Bannatyne’s restaurant efforts come to fruition, he would think about putting a restaurant or bar in his building, too.

“It takes two to start,” Esposito said. “If he opens something, I feel almost obligated to do something and I think it will almost charge this area in the right direction.”

Although neighboring Lupino’s Trakside Tavern recently closed, Bannatyne said he is confident the activity in his building will lead to a new restaurant in that spot.

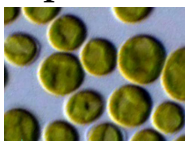


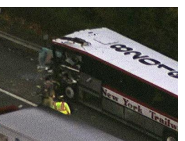

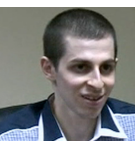
“This will be humming very soon,” he said.

More businesses would be a positive for the region, said Schuyler resident Mike Reinhardt. “If it’s built up, it could be a nice spot,” he said.

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