Supervisor Lesko and Councilman Mazzei Host the Plaza Theatre Demolition Celebration Event
posted on 9/14/2011 3:09:17 PM
September 14, 2011

Farmingville, NY - Cheered on by a large crowd of onlookers, Supervisor Mark Lesko and Councilman Tim Mazzei led the celebration of the demolition of the Plaza Theatre on Tuesday, September 13, 2011. The start of demolition was the culmination of nearly 25 years of work by civic leaders, residents and elected officials to rid the community of one of the most notorious "monuments to blight" in Brookhaven Town. Supervisor Lesko and Councilman Mazzei were joined at the event by County Executive Steve Levy, County Legislator Jack Eddington, State Senator Lee Zeldin, Assemblyman Dean Murray, Deputy Supervisor/Councilwoman Kathleen Walsh, Councilwoman Connie Kepert, Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld and Patchogue Village Mayor Paul Pontieri. Also at the event were members of FOCUS East Patchogue, including President Marita Morello and Secretary Tom Berger, who spearheaded the community effort to have the building demolished.

"Since my first day in office, the demolition of the Plaza Theatre has been a priority," said Supervisor Lesko. "It's been a long time in coming, and soon this 'monument to blight' will be gone, making room for the continued revitalization of the East Main Street Corridor. I commend all the residents, business owners and civic leaders, especially FOCUS East Patchogue, who were persistent for so many years and never gave up. I am happy that we were able to help them achieve their goal."

Councilman Tim Mazzei said, "The old Plaza Theatre will soon be just a memory and I am proud to have had the opportunity to help make this day happen. Now I look forward to working with the community, business leaders and other elected officials to develop the right project that will bring the most benefit to the area."

"Today is the end of an era of blight, and the beginning of a time of renewal for East Patchogue," said Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy.

"I am glad that the Plaza Theatre will not go down as the first building to ever be saved by a hurricane," Congressman Tim Bishop said. "Demolishing the Plaza is a major step forward in the community's efforts to revitalize East Patchogue. I am proud to have helped secure funding for this project and will continue to work with local officials to revitalize East Main Street and create jobs."

Suffolk County Legislator Jack Eddington said, "Six years ago I committed to the members of Focus East Patchogue that before I left office the Plaza Theatre would come down. I am happy to say that I have kept my word and I want to the Town of Brookhaven for helping make this day a reality and Focus East Patchogue for their dedication to improving their community."
Patchogue Village Mayor Paul Pontieri said, "The Plaza Theatre stands at the gateway to Patchogue Village, and with its demolition, we will see the revitalization of the East Main Street corridor continue at a more rapid pace. The impact on the local economy of the greater Patchogue business district will be felt throughout the community."

Marita Morello, President of Focus East Patchogue said, "Today is a day that I thought would never come, but the 25 year battle is almost over. No longer will the community have to look at this eyesore."

Tom Berger, Secretary of Focus East Patchogue said, "Speaking on behalf of all the members of Focus East Patchogue, the Swan Lake Park Civic Association and our community, we are grateful for all that our elected officials have done to help Focus achieve the goal of ridding our area of this terrible eyesore. More than any other vacancy, this abandoned theatre has discouraged business owners and would-be investors from locating in Patchogue. The past ten years since Marita began pushing civic groups, business owners and residents to get involved and improve or remove this theater, it has been a non-stop train to revitalization. She is the engine with an endless supply of steam. We thank you Marita and are very grateful to you."

Built in 1962, the Plaza Theater served the greater Patchogue community until the 1980's, when it closed due to the advent of multiplex theaters. Since then, the building has been a vacant, graffiti-ridden monument to blight, stalling the revitalization of the East Patchogue Corridor. The Town started condemnation proceedings against the property owner, East Main Realty Corp., in October 2009 and gained title to the property on March 4, 2011.

The Plaza Theater site was one of the first properties targeted for redevelopment in Supervisor Lesko's "Blight to Light" initiative, which focuses on redeveloping blighted properties throughout the Town.

The Town of Brookhaven competitively bid the asbestos abatement and demolition contracts and awarded them to the lowest bidders, JBH Environmental Restoration for asbestos abatement and Bove Industries for demolition. The asbestos removal began earlier this summer. Suffolk County loaned the Town $350,000 for asbestos removal and demolition, and if the Town realizes a profit from the redevelopment of the property for economic development purposes, the County will be paid back. The Town hopes to redevelop the property as part of the economic revitalization and blight remediation of the East Main Street Corridor.

The demolition should be complete within two weeks and then the Town's Department of Waste Management will remove the debris from the site, which will also take approximately two weeks.

For more information on Blight to Light, visit www.brookhaven.org and click on "Blight to Light" on the "In the Spotlight" section.
The demolition of the Plaza Theatre begins.

Pictured left to right viewing the demolition of the Plaza Theatre are Deputy Supervisor/Councilwoman Kathleen Walsh, Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld, Councilwoman Connie Kepert, FOCUS East Patchogue President Marita Morello, Supervisor Mark Lesko, Assemblyman Dean Murray, State Senator Lee Zeldin, Councilman Tim Mazzei and Legislator Jack Eddington.