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VALLEY NEWS DISPATCH

Ches-A-Rena soon to be only a memory

TRIB LIVE MATTHEW MEDSGER | Thursday, May 31, 2018 4:54 p.m.

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JACK FORDYCE | TRIBUNE-REVIEW

The Ches-a-Rena building being demolished on Thursday, May 31, 2018 in Cheswick.



After Friday, the Ches-A-Rena will be no more.

The last standing portions of Cheswick's surplus World War II era airplane-hangar-turned-roller-rink were due to be torn down by crews from Pittsburgh-based Noralco Corporation by noon Friday. The majority of the structure was removed beginning in April.

In its place along Pittsburgh Street sits a pile of rubble and mangled steel girders. The building had stood there for more than 70 years.

An unoccupied row of store fronts adjacent to the skating rink remains for the moment, though crews say that will most likely come down early next week.

Developer Brian Clark said the building, first opened in 1947 by Elmer and Victoria Dattola, couldn't be repaired because of wear that had occurred as the years crept on and the skating rink fell into disuse.

The building was remodeled in 1957, and an addition — the now empty storefronts — was built onto it.

The skating rink moved to the second floor, and a grocery store, a Thorofare, moved into the bottom. Over the decades, it evolved to have multiple businesses on the bottom floor, most recently a Goodwill store, and a daycare upstairs.

Except for a day in late March, when Clark opened the building to the public for one last chance to skate and a shot at grabbing a pair of Ches-A-Rena roller skates, the rink hasn't been used for its original purpose in more than 20 years.

The Dattola family would eventually sell the property, though new owners never really had much success making the space work as a music and event venue in the early 2000s.

What will come next is hard to say, according to Clark.

"We've got to get the arena down before we start looking at tenants," he said. "We are currently negotiating with a few possible tenants, but you really need to have the site cleared to show them its potential."

Clean up of the building debris is expected to take a few more weeks, according to demolition crews.

When that work is done, there will be nothing left of the Ches-A-Rena except memories.

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