

City announces demolition plans for local "eyesore" Alton Cine

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Weeds are overtaking the cracks in the parking lot surrounding the former Alton Cine, but the property will not continue its descent into disrepair for much longer, city officials say.

Alton Mayor Brant Walker announced the demolition of the theater, which closed in 1998, at the [Alton Main Street Alton mayoral candidate forum](#), held on March 15, 2017. That announcement was confirmed by Walker, Alton Public Works Director Bob Barnhart and Alton Building and Zoning Director Greg Caffey on March 21, 2017. Each of the men said the demolition would be done by the property owners - the Sakelaris Trust, which once owned Piasa Lincoln Mercury.

Once a movie theater housing as many as 300 people, the former building has sat vacant since its closure, despite many Altonians wishing it could be everything from a music venue to an art studio. Walker received a round of applause from the crowd at the Riverbender.com Community Center after making the announcement. Caffey described it as "an eyesore."

When asked about the timing of the demolition, neither Walker nor Barnhart could answer, the latter saying the process was being handled by the property owners. Caffey, however, said the property owners will have 60 days to demolish the property following an asbestos abatement.

"It honestly shouldn't take too long," Caffey said Tuesday. "After they do asbestos checking and remediation, it should go down within 60 days."

With that timetable, the building could finally be demolished by the end of summer after sitting abandoned for a year short of two decades. When asked if the vacant lot would continue to collect weeds and remain empty, Caffey said he was working on replacing it with something else.

"We've been talking to a local business, looking to expand somewhere," Caffey said. "I'm not going to say who it is, but I'm working on putting them in contact with the property owners, so maybe they can come to the table and work something out."