

Huntley trustees to decide whether to rehab or demolish Catty Corp. property

By **MEGAN JONES**[Email Follow](#)

Feb. 14, 2018

[HUNTLEY](#) – The Village Board is seeking development proposals for the Catty Corp. property to see whether the 100-year-old building should be demolished or restored.

The village bought the property in February 2017 for \$425,000 as part of its effort to revitalize the downtown area. The property, which sits near the railroad tracks south of Main Street, is composed of 2.8 acres and a 33,000-square-foot building.

More than \$5 million in overall improvements to Huntley's downtown square were completed in 2016.

"The property had sat for so long and nothing was happening with it," Assistant Village Manager Lisa Armour said. "It was becoming a property maintenance issue, and the board determined it probably had more of a chance of being redeveloped into something if it came into the village's hands."

Trustees now have to decide what to do with the space, and they hired Dewberry Architects to conduct a structure and building assessment to identify options and costs associated with redevelopment.

The study laid out three options. For one, a developer could renovate the original building and demolish building additions south of it for \$5.8 million.

Second, developers could demolish the building and all on-site structures and construct a new two-story, 24,000-square-foot commercial/retail building for \$7.6 million.

Finally, developers could demolish everything on the property and construct a two-story, 33,000-square-foot building for \$9.9 million – this is the largest building size the site could hold.

Those are only three possible options Dewberry put together to give developers an idea of how much it would cost to redevelop the space, Armour said.

Parking and stormwater detention basin costs were not included. The costs do not include buildup, and a retail/commercial company would have to pay for its own customization, architect Daniel Atilano said.

Atilano said the overall structure of the building is in fair condition, but the exterior building enclosure needs immediate repairs. Continued water infiltration into the exterior masonry walls will lead to increased brick cracking, according to the report. As the water intrudes further, it could begin to damage the wood floor and roof framing.

The building has sat vacant since 2006, and mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection systems are nonoperational. The plumbing system is in poor condition, restrooms must be redone, and the building would need to become compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The building dates to before 1900, and it would need a new heating, ventilation and air conditioning system, as well as roof and exterior doors and windows.

Trustee Niko Kanakaris said remodeling costs of \$6 million to \$9 million are not practical because no developer would be able to get a return on the investment. He said the building should be bulldozed, and he would like to see the downtown area expanded with more businesses, offices and loft-style residential living.

"I think it would be more functional to knock it down and start over than to redo a building over 100 years old," Kanakaris said. "If it's not practical, it's not practical."

Kanakaris said he envisions retailers such as a brewery, bakery, butcher shop or office spaces on the first floor, and then lofts and one- to two-bedroom studio apartments on higher floors.

"There is a big need for apartments in Huntley, and waiting lists for them," Kanakaris said. "We want to bring more foot traffic and help all businesses downtown."

Trustee Tim Hoeft said he would like to see a mixed-use development that includes a restaurant or retail space.

"I think whatever goes on the property should be a destination-type of development to draw people from outside Huntley to our entire downtown district," Hoeft said.

Hoeft said he would consider keeping the original building and razing the additions to the north and south. He said the cost of reconfiguring the original building versus starting over will depend on what type of development is proposed.

He also proposed documenting exact dimensions of the present building and creating a new structure that keeps the look and feel of the exterior of the original structure.

Village President Charles Sass challenged members of the Huntley Preservation Commission who were in attendance at Thursday's board meeting to start a GoFundMe or fundraising

campaign to redevelop the property.

"Instead of sitting back and taking shots at us, I'd challenge you and see if you guys can get some money," Sass said. "You've seen some figures, and it's not cheap to fix it up, but if you guys could do that, it would be time well spent on your part."

The request for proposals will be released by the end of February, and the village will wait for interested parties to come forward with ideas, Armour said.

Businesses that have occupied the building include Hezel's Creamery, Cornell Brothers' Milk Factory, Jelke Milk Co., Huntley Brewing Co., William Fencil Gasket Co. and H.D. Catty Corp., which was there from about 1945 to 2006 before moving to [Harvard](#), Nancy Bacheller of the Huntley Area Public Library's local history department previously said.

Editor's note: The name of the Huntley Preservation Commission was corrected in this story.

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