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FEATURED TOP STORY

Ventnor Plaza owner plans revitalization for the offseason

Selena Vazquez

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The Acme supermarket is one of the popular businesses residents frequent in the Ventnor Plaza at 5100 Wellington
Selena Vazquez, Staff Writer

Selena Vazquez

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VENTNOR — The Ventnor Plaza will get a much needed facelift during the offseason, as its new owner plans to add restaurants, new tenants, solar panels, electric car charging stations and more landscaping in an effort to beautify and revive the languishing shopping center.

Real estate developer and local resident Mark Greco said he bought the 15.3-acre plaza, located at 5100 Wellington Ave., with partners this June, but he declined to reveal the sales price.

Atlantic County tax records show the land and buildings are valued at a little more than \$9.5 million, \$3 million less than their 2020 valuation.

The plaza, which is home to an Acme, an AutoZone, a liquor store, dollar store, gym and other businesses, is more than 40% vacant, but Greco said he has big plans for it.

Costs for improving the plaza total several million dollars, said Greco, who will split the bill with his partners.

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Greco owns many other shopping centers in South Jersey through his real estate company MLG Realty, but buying the Ventnor Plaza was important to him, he said.



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“This one is right in my backyard, and I’ve been watching it for years,” said Greco. “I’m a frequent shopper at the plaza. I’ve been going to Acme as long as I’ve been here. The entire property needs attention.”

Some of the renovations Greco plans include repaving the parking lot, adding ornamental lighting and giving the largely barren property “a touch of green.” He said he also wants to add solar panels to generate renewable energy for the shopping center, as well as three electronic vehicle charging stations.

Site plans for the plaza showed a Burger King and Starbucks to be built in the underused parking lot across from Island Gym, as well as an unnamed restaurant adjacent to the AutoZone.

Greco said three new restaurant pad sites would be included in the revitalization project.

City Commissioner Lance Landgraf said the new owners are already making some renovations to the plaza, like redoing old water lines, a step in the right direction.

“He really wants to see Ventnor do well economically, and see it do well in general,” said Landgraf of Greco. “And he lives in Ventnor, so that’s even better.”





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Shoppers here welcomed the news of improvements.

“It’s absolutely great,” said Danette Ruzzo, of Ventnor. Ruzzo shops at Ventnor Plaza, frequenting the Acme, Buy Rite Liquor Store and the Dollar Store.

Ruzzo said she hopes the renovations breathe “more life” into the shopping center.

“Now it’s desolate and depressing,” said Ruzzo.

Ruzzo said she would like to see another supermarket or grocery store, like a Trader Joe’s or Whole Foods Market.

Kevin Palmer, of Atlantic City, said it would also be nice to see more food places at the plaza, considering the rising cost of food prices due to inflation.



Weather: Autumn equinox brings warmth, rain Thursday, 60s on Friday

“There used to be a Checkers fast food place a few years back at the Ventnor Plaza, and a Chinese buffet, but I don’t know why they didn’t last,” said Palmer.

Palmer said one of the main attractions at the plaza was stores such as Acme, especially for Atlantic City residents who have no major grocery store of their own, apart from the Save A Lot discount grocer in Renaissance Plaza.

Atlantic City residents like Renee Braxton said they don’t like going to Save A Lot.

Braxton, 64, said she doesn’t feel safe going there as an almost senior, and the store is usually empty.

Paul Vogt, 69, of Atlantic City, said he takes the bus to get to Ventnor Plaza, which is an inconvenience, but he wouldn’t know where else to shop for food.

Vogt said the plaza is kind of an odd place since it splits Atlantic City and the Downbeach area of the island, so making it more accessible to all was important to residents.



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“They have to make it more convenient,” said Vogt, who suggested more bus routes or jitney stops to help people shop there.

Greco is working on improving access and said the upgraded plaza will have three entrances that will make getting in and out easier.

Palmer welcomed the news of the improvements, saying he’s watched the property decline.

“I’ll believe it when I see it,” said Palmer, who is still skeptical about new ventures happening on the island, considering the ShopRite that was supposed to be built in Atlantic City has yet to materialize. “But if it does happen — which I hope it does — it’ll be great.”

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By Selena Vazquez
