

http://www.newjerseyhills.com/the_progress/news/wrecking-crew-claims-caldwell-motor-bank/article_16422b13-d650-5eb9-9aa7-7cef26adbee6.html

Wrecking crew claims Caldwell motor bank

By DEREK ALLEN Staff Writer May 22, 2018



The Caldwell motor bank, a unique architectural building located at 459 Bloomfield Ave., was torn down on Monday, N

CALDWELL – The Caldwell motor bank, a unique architectural building located at 459 Bloomfield Ave., was torn down on Monday, May 14.

“I was driving on Bloomfield Avenue and I pulled over because I saw the bulldozers and I thought ‘Oh no, they are tearing it down.’ I pulled over because I did not expect to see that,” said North Caldwell resident Irene Brandle. “I was a fan of the building. It’s a shame. They were

really pulling it apart.”

Brandle said that she has lived in the West Essex area for more than 40 years, living in Roseland and Caldwell before eventually settling down in North Caldwell.



“I liked that it has always been there, it was a fixture in town you just get used to,” she said. “I always liked the way it looked, I thought it was pretty and unique to the town. I’m just really disappointed that it’s gone.”

She had taken a lot of pictures of the building recently, she said, because she likes to paint and planned on creating some art based off of the motor bank.

“What I had planned to do was do a painting of it on site, across the street. But I didn’t get around to it,” she said. “I will still do a painting on it based off of the photos I have. I’m just really sorry I didn’t get there sooner.”

Some of her neighbors were disappointed to see the building go, she said.

“Even my daughters, you know... They are grown and older, but they were disappointed that it’s gone,” she said. “It was such a pretty structure, I’ve looked at this building so many times, just because I was planning to paint it. I would pull over and look at it when the sky was a certain way. Because the building was white, and if there was a beautiful blue sky behind it was just a white structure in contrast with a very blue sky. I thought it was quite striking. I just liked it a lot.”

Historic Preservation Commission Chairman Bob Kaplan said he was sad to see the building demolished.



“The Caldwell Historic Preservation Commission is disappointed at the demolition of the Caldwell motor bank,” he said. “The commission has been working for more than three years to save this architecturally distinguished building. The demolition of this modernist architectural gem is a profound loss to the community and to New Jersey.”

According to Keith Cimera, a Caldwell resident and the owner of the motor bank property, the bank was demolished to make way for retail storefronts with apartments above them, similar to the rest of Bloomfield Avenue.

“I think it was unique, but I don’t think it belonged in the town,” he said. “It doesn’t fit the landscape of the town. Ninety-nine percent of the people I deal with and talk to thought that it was an eyesore. Everybody has their own preference.”

The motor bank was on a list of the 10 Most Endangered Historic Places in New Jersey, compiled by Preservation New Jersey Inc. The list was put in place to spotlight historic, architectural, cultural and archaeological resources in New Jersey that are in imminent danger of being demolished or redeveloped.

In the listing, the building was described as a “striking 1963 mid-twentieth-century modernist bank in Caldwell’s central business district, featuring three pedestal-like pavilions connected by an undulating thin-shell concrete roof.”

Cimera said he bought the property in December of 2017, and had tried to work with the Caldwell Historic Preservation Commission to potentially save the building.

Kaplan said options were limited in terms of re-purposing the building, since the bank was built specifically as a drive-through bank, and cannot be used for much else. He said members of the commission have met with the previous owners of the property and the current owner several times to propose different ideas to save the bank from demolition.

Cimera said he did not want to build around the bank, and the borough of Caldwell was not interested in potentially moving the building to a piece of borough property. He said the building could have been loaded onto a flatbed truck and moved, but it would cost \$200,000 and would shut down Bloomfield Avenue for a day. Cimera said the borough would also have to pay for that move.

For her part, Mayor Ann Dassing said the main issue was that the borough did not have an appropriate area where the bank could be relocated to.

“Our Historic Commissioners have made us aware that it is on Preservation New Jersey’s 2017 10 most endangered structures list,” she said. “The issue is that we don’t have a piece of land for its relocation. There is no place for it to be relocated to, so that stops any further discussion.”

Anyone looking to do something creative with the property should have bought the property before him, Cimera said, since the bank was for sale for two years before he purchased the land.

For more information on Preservation New Jersey's top 10 list, visit preservationnj.org.

MORE INFORMATION



Motor Bank

 Motor Bank 2

 Motor Bank 3