

Ironworks Square Will Be Asset To Erie's Emerging Economy



The Erie County Redevelopment Authority (ECRDA) is spearheading the transformation of Erie's West 12th Street Corridor with the new Ironworks Square.

If you've been paying attention, you know that the Erie region has been steadily reinventing itself — from a hub of traditional manufacturing to a home for innovation and technology.

Nowhere, perhaps, is that revolution as publicly visible as at the southwest corner of West 12th and Cherry Streets, where the Erie County Redevelopment Authority's (ECRDA) new Ironworks Square is helping to transform the city's gritty, historic industrial corridor.

For generations, workers labored behind the thick brick walls of Erie Malleable Iron. They were part of the heyday of Erie industry, when foundries and factories provided steady paychecks and produced goods shipped around the world.

But in 2001, that legacy came to an end for Erie Malleable Iron on West 12th Street. And for two decades, the building stood shuttered, a

Rust Belt relic of a manufacturing legacy long past.

Until now. Until the ECRDA purchased the property — for \$375,000 in 2021 — with the vision of melding the past and future, and with the intention of helping to spearhead a transition of the entire West 12th Street corridor.

Half of the former EMI complex of aging brick is now gone, fallen victim to the demo crews that spent most of this year clearing the site. The demolition work — and the site remediation before it, which cleared out tons of debris, caustic chemicals, coal

ash, and other toxic substances — already has given a new look to the familiar corner at West 12th and Cherry Streets. But the transformation is just beginning.

The next steps will reveal the new use for the 5.4-acre site finally taking shape — both the renovation of a fortress of brick and steel that remains at the eastern edge of the site, and construction of new structures that will rise on

Shown here are the former EMI complex and the demolition under way along West 12th Street.)



the shovel-ready west end of the property. Plans from Bostwick Design Partnership show a marriage of old and new, preserving the industrial charm of the historic 70,000-square-foot building while seamlessly integrating modern design.



“Modern” will be key to the future of Ironworks Square.

While the exact specifications of the completed site will depend on the needs of tenants, the site will be a mixed-use facility, and the most advanced business park in the city. Think high-tech offices sharing space with technology driven manufacturers. Employees making use of a conference center while visitors enjoy a public green space and a food establishment — and it will all be wired to meet the latest tech needs of tenants and guests.

A big part of that high-tech feel will be the way Ironworks Square will embrace green technology —

an essential element of modern, innovative design. Electric vehicle (EV) chargers will be present on site, and solar panels are being considered. But the green strategy goes beyond what’s visible to visitors — it is in the site’s very DNA, buried beneath the surface where new structures will soon stand.

In a move that proved to be both environmentally sound and financially smart, ECRDA chose to reuse materials where possible in the process of preparing the site. That started with the decision to renovate, rather than replace, the original four-story structure on the east end of the property. It continued in the moves to salvage brick and steel where possible. And it culminated in the reuse of concrete — hundreds of tons, broken into fine bits of rubble — to use as fill in the foundation, saving both landfill space and about half a million dollars.

Construction is being led by the experienced team at EE Austin and once completed, Ironworks Square promises to be an asset in Erie’s emerging economy. It represents the dichotomy of old and new — a



blue-collar manufacturing heritage and an innovative, high-tech future. And, vitally, it serves as an anchor in the broader revitalization of the entire West 12th Street corridor — where public and private investments are transforming a former stretch of run-down road into a showcase of what perseverance, \$100 million in investments, and good old-fashioned Erie ingenuity can build.

While the foundation is in place and the blueprints drafted for Ironworks Square, its final formation will depend on the needs of its tenants. This is build-to-suit space for businesses savvy enough to get in on the enterprise from the beginning. If you are looking to join the West 12th Street renaissance and be part of Ironworks Square, contact the ECRDA. Space is leasing now.



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