

Springfield Plaza gets new facade, signage, lighting



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on June 30, 2016 at 11:50 AM, updated June 30, 2016 at 11:51 AM

SPRINGFIELD — Contractor **Vantage Builders** has revamped the signs and building facades, removed the walkway canopy and improved the lighting at the **Springfield Plaza shopping Center** on Liberty Street.

Vantage, based in Waltham, announced the completion of the \$1.5 million improvement project this week. Company officials said workers also poured new concrete sidewalks, widening the path by six feet.

The 1,300 linear feet of now-removed canopy over the sidewalk made the area seem dark, owners have said in the past.

These improvements are coupled with **more than \$1 million in roof repairs completed in 2015**.

Contractors installed new LED pole lights, wall sconces and strip lighting to improve visibility and safety, according to the release.

The facade improvements involved installing an exterior, water-resistant insulation and finishing system along the length of the building, with colors matched to the tenants' company logos or brand identities.

Stores in the plaza include Rent-A-Center, Kmart, Savers, Payless ShoeSource, H&R Block and RadioShack, the **famous Koffee Cup Bakery**, Dollar Tree, Ocean State Job Lot and Joey's Shopping Spree.

A Stop & Shop supermarket and a Rocky's Ace Hardware occupy stand-alone buildings at the site.

Investors **Davenport Companies** and **Albany Road Real Estate**, both based in Boston, bought Springfield Plaza in 2014 for \$35 million, promising \$4 million to \$5 in improvements over several years.

The 40,000-square-foot shopping center in Liberty Heights near the Chicopee line is a solid investment, the new owners said at the time, with just 7 percent vacancy and a loyal following of shoppers who live within 4 or 5 miles.

Their plans were to bring in more retailers and attractions that met the needs of neighborhood residents.

Bruce Nolen, managing director of asset and portfolio management at Albany Road said in a prepared release:

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"From the onset, we wanted to make improvements to the Plaza, for both the retailers and the neighborhood. The plaza had begun to look quite run down, which is unfortunate because it didn't reflect the excitement and interest that the retailers have for the city and its people. We wanted to create a more vibrant and inviting place for everyone."

In February, **Bounce! Trampoline Park** opened in the former movie theater adjacent to Springfield Plaza. That former theater building was and is under separate ownership from the rest of the plaza.

Springfield Plaza was Springfield Airport from 1929 to 1955 and home base for the Granville Brothers and their **Gee-Bee** Aircraft. Gee-Bees dominated high-speed air races in the 1930s and proved much of the technology that went into World War II fighters.

The plaza was built in the late 1950s as the city's first shopping center and once boasted a J.M. Fields department store.

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