

News

# **Boston developer offers \$300,000 for Springfield land as part of downtown apartments project at Willys-Overland building**

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[Springfield offers 7 tax-title lots for sale and development in downtown off Worthington Street](#)

SPRINGFIELD -- A Boston company has offered to pay the city \$300,000 for seven tax-title downtown lots on Worthington and Winter streets as part of a \$13.8 million project for market rate apartments and retail space at the adjacent Willys-Overland building.

The offer made by Davenport Advisors LLC, of Boston, was the sole bid submitted for the city lots by Monday's deadline. The bid has been referred to a city review committee that will submit its recommendation to Mayor Domenic J. Sarno to accept or reject the offer, officials said.

Davenport Companies purchased the Overland building in December of 2017, announcing plans to convert the site to 60 loft apartments and some retail.

The building was badly damaged by the 2012 natural gas explosion.

Construction is planned this year, and will feature historic renovation of the Willys-Overland building, Davenport said.

Davenport Advisors, through the affiliated Davenport Companies, is proposing to convert the tax-title lots into the parking lot for future tenants, according to the submitted proposal. The conceptual development plan shows 69 parking spaces.

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The proposal says Davenport Advisors is the development entity for the Overland building property and also for the Springfield Plaza property on Liberty Street among other sites. Davenport Companies and Albany Road Real Estate, of Boston, bought the Springfield Plaza in 2014 for \$35 million, and invested in renovations and new signs.

The company and its affiliates own or manage more than 40 properties in the Northeast, the company said.

The vacant Willys-Overland building was built in 1916, and is the former Willys-Overland Motor Co., considered a significant part of the city's early automotive history. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The apartment project at the Overland site is a mirror of the rehabilitation completed at its twin Willys-Overland building in Detroit, officials said.

Davenport used the name Chestnut Acquisitions LLC. to buy the Overland building at 151 Chestnut St., for \$450,000 from Ciocca Construction Corp. of Wilbraham, according to documents. It was built in 1916 as a sales floor and regional office for its cars.

The sale of the abutting lots on Worthington and Winter streets will need approval from Sarno and the City Council.

The lots total 36,922 square feet and are located between Worthington and Winter streets, just north of Chestnut Street and the downtown dining district.

In advertising for proposals for the lots, the city said it was looking for a reuse of the property that is "beneficial too the concept of a Downtown Dining District, and the overall goals of the Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) district."

The TDI district "is focused on innovation -- whether it is the technology, food, retail, or housing fields," the city said in the advertisement for proposals.

Davenport, in its proposal for the lots, said it believes that "the successful absorption of market rate apartments in Overland will translate to further investment in the Innovation District. The property would be acquired as part of that vision."