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800 Merrick Road, Baldwin / Google Maps image

## Long-vacant Baldwin site gets mixed-use approval

By: David Winzelberg © October 20, 2016

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The owner of a long-vacant commercial property in Baldwin has received approval to redevelop it into a retail and residential use.

The Town of Hempstead Board of Appeals granted retired radiologist Dr. Dennis Rossi the green light to create two retail stores and four rental apartments above them at the 800 Merrick Road property.

Once featured in LIBN's Abandoned Long Island series, the site at the southwest corner of Merrick Road and Foxhurst Road was originally a service station called Richie's Esso, which occupied the site from the 1930s through the 1950s. After the gas station was razed in 1962, it was paved over to serve as a parking lot for the two-story building behind it.

The last business to occupy the corner building was a printing shop that closed in 2003 and it's been vacant ever since.

Rossi bought the property for \$735,000 in 2003, according to Nassau County records, and he's been trying to sell it for several years.

Attorney Christian Browne of Sahn Ward Coschignano represented Rossi's entity Baldwin Medical Realty LLC in the application to the town's Board of Appeals, which gave its approval for the proposed mixed-use project on Oct. 5.

"The building has been on the market for 13 years with no interested buyers," Browne said in a written statement, adding that his client had sought to place a medical practice in the building but the plan never came to fruition.

Browne helped Rossi obtain parking variances for five parking spaces on the property. As part of the project, the building will undergo major renovations of its exterior and the conversion of the existing upstairs office space into apartments.

"This area of Baldwin has been the site of a promising renaissance and renewal, and our client is a pioneer in that revitalization," Browne said in the statement. "This will be the first new building of this type to be located in the heart of downtown Baldwin. We are taking a vacant structure and restoring it to good use."

The area is primed for a long-awaited revitalization. The Hempstead Town Board unanimously voted last month to select a team of Garden City-based Engel Burman Group and Bassar Kaufman of Lawrence as master developers for a 6-acre, mostly blighted section of Grand Avenue, just across the street from Rossi's property.