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## Demolition first step in site's transformation

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CHRIS STEWART

Tony Sculimbrenne, left, executive director of the National Aviation Heritage Alliance, pictured Tuesday, May 21, in a building at the former Wright Airplane Co. plant. The plant sits among former Home Avenue Delphi plant buildings currently being demolished in the West Third Street and Abbey Avenue areas. The 54-acre site is being cleared of buildings with a \$3 million Clean Ohio grant from the state, some \$1 million from Delphi Holdings and further investment from Hull & Associates, which formed Home Avenue Redevelopment LLC to execute the project. CHRIS STEWART / STAFF

BY THOMAS GNAU - STAFF WRITER

**Dayton** – The transformation of a blighted area of West Dayton is underway, and by year's end, motorists traveling on U.S. 35 may not recognize the 54 acres where former Delphi auto parts plants stand, proponents of the redevelopment project say.

Home Avenue Redevelopment LLC – owned by principals of Columbus-based brownfield developer Hull – are pursuing dual goals: Creating a haven for new businesses in an area that could use them, and eventually relinquishing historic Wright Co. property to the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park.

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The hangar-shaped Wright buildings south of West Third Street, where the nation's first aircraft production workers once built airplanes, will be preserved. What form the Wright buildings eventually take – museum, interpretive center and something else – will be up to local supporters and federal budget writers. It won't be up to the federal government alone, said Tony Sculimbrenne, executive director of the National Aviation Heritage Alliance.

"Partnership parks are the wave of the future," he said.

Demolition of 1.2 million square feet of former Delphi plants should be finished by the end of 2013, said Brad White, a principal of Hull and Home Avenue Redevelopment. Hull is spending \$1.8 million on asbestos abatement, \$1.1 million on structure demolition and \$270,000 on dealing with soil contamination, he said.

Home Avenue Redevelopment won a \$3 million Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund grant last May to help pay for the work. The company also invested \$260,000 and DPH – an entity responsible for holdings Delphi discarded in bankruptcy – committed \$590,000 in private matching funds, \$150,000 in donated property and \$1 million in "future investments," according to the the alliance.

Demolition work east of South Upland Avenue started earlier this month.

The 12 to 15 acres east of Abbey Avenue along U.S. 35, with a good view of the highway, have commercial potential, perhaps a supermarket and other uses, White said. Part of the area between the former Wright Co. buildings and Abbey may also have commercial potential, he said.

"It will look like a very interesting piece of real estate to people who develop real estate," White said.

The area where demolition is occurring now, near Upland and Maywood avenues, could become a site for manufacturing, White said. "We would entertain anything there," he said. "We would be happy to have anything."

That area is less accessible from U.S. 35, has a neighborhood to the north and has its challenges, White said.

"That particular piece of real estate has a difficult imagination factor," he said.

He expects Home Avenue Redevelopment will focus on marketing the sites, and working with the U.S. National Park Service, once demolition is complete.

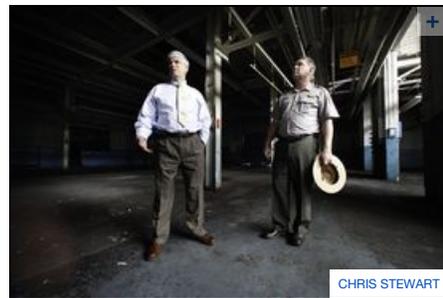
Sculimbrenne and Alliance Chairman Tony Perfilio met last week with Victor Knox, the National Park Service associate director of park planning, lands and facilities. They discussed a plan that entails escalating levels of development, Sculimbrenne said.

First, the alliance wants to get the park service into the most historic

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Plans are in the works for buildings of the former Wright Airplane Co. plant to be preserved and eventually made accessible to the public by the National Park Service. The plant sits among former Home Avenue Delphi plant buildings currently being demolished in the West Third Street and Abbey Avenue areas. The 54-acre site is being cleared of buildings with a \$3 million Clean Ohio grant from the state, some \$1 million from Delphi Holdings and further investment from Hull & Associates, which formed Home Avenue Redevelopment LLC to execute the project. CHRIS STEWART / STAFF



Tony Sculimbrenne, left, executive director of the National Aviation Heritage Alliance, and Dean Alexander, superintendent of the National Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, are seen in one of the buildings that will be preserved as part of a new National Park Service site featuring the former Wright Airplane Co. plant. The plant sits among former Home Avenue Delphi plant buildings currently being demolished in the West Third Street and Abbey Avenue areas. The 54-acre site is being cleared of buildings with a \$3 million Clean Ohio grant from the state, some \$1 million from Delphi Holdings and further investment from Hull & Associates, which formed Home Avenue Redevelopment LLC to execute the project. CHRIS STEWART / STAFF



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Wright buildings, buildings 1 and 2, he said. Then, the alliance would like to see some "complementary" aviation activities in the remaining three buildings.

Redevelopment LLC to execute the project. CHRIS STEWART / STAFF

Of the remaining acreage around the Wright buildings, Sculimbrene said that responsibility will lie with Home Avenue Redevelopment.

"It's a tough project," he said. "It's a very complicated site. I've been working in the environmental aviation heritage business for 40 years. This is the most complicated piece that I've had to work on."

Dean Alexander, superintendent of the national park, envisions a time when the public will be able to stroll through the Wright buildings. "That's certainly the hope," he said. "The reason for putting it into a national park is to make it available to the public."

Possibilities include a museum, education and exhibit centers, space for aviation training programs and more, he said.

"There could be other things going on here," he added. "This is a 100,000-square-foot blank canvas."

In 2009, Congress expanded the park's boundaries to encompass the Wright buildings and Hawthorn Hill, the former Wright family mansion in Oakwood. But that by itself does not make the Wright buildings part of the park.

"Authorization and appropriation are two different things," Alexander said with a smile.

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