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Stamford celebrates 100th birthday of Old Town Hall

By **Natasha Lee**
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STAMFORD – City officials celebrated the 100th anniversary of Old Town Hall yesterday with a small ground-breaking ceremony marking the city's latest plans to reconstruct the building's front plaza.

The construction is the third phase of a multimillion-dollar renovation project that includes rebuilding the historical front and adding lights and landscaping to the streetscape.

Standing on dirt and rubble in front of the building, Mayor Dannel Malloy and several other officials, including former state House Speaker Moira Lyons, shoveled and pitched small mounds of dirt to mark the occasion.

Malloy said the city secured \$6 million in state funds, and several million dollars from other donors for the project. The building's official birthday is today.

The landmark has been empty for 18 years while city leaders debated its fate.

"It's had fits and starts," Lyons said. "It's like the little engine that thought he could get over the hill and he did, and I think we've finally gotten over the hill."

A committee is working to secure commercial tenants to generate revenue and is discussing ways to keep a portion of the building open for public use as a museum or to display the work of local artists.

The building holds historical sentiment in a city that has demolished many of its older buildings to pave way for more modern developments, said city

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Rep. Maria Nakian, D-20, a committee member.

"It's such a beautiful building," Nakian said. "It could have very easily gone the route of all the other historical buildings in Stamford, but it didn't. It really looks better than I would have dreamt."

Crews have worked to restore the building's limestone, fix leaks in its roof and put in a new skylight.

The plaza project is estimated to cost \$1.4 million, and building renovations are expected to be completed by spring, city engineer Antonio Iadarola said.

A second project includes sprucing up Heritage Park behind the hall and restoring monuments. That plan is estimated to cost \$14.5 million, more than half of which will be covered by state grants.

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