

# Akron Beacon Journal

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## NEWS

# Former East Akron YMCA building is getting torn down



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Akron Beacon Journal

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The former [East Akron YMCA](#) is getting its final workout.

An [Eslich Wrecking Co.](#) crew began demolishing the 75-year-old building June 4 at 110 Goodyear Blvd.

Heavy machinery is pulling down the brick-and-steel structure, grabbing pulverized materials with a giant claw. A worker hosed down the debris to keep the dust to a minimum.

Murals of children playing basketball, swimming and painting would soon be smashed. The words “respect” and “faith,” written on front windows, would soon get shattered.

This used to be a center of recreation programs, fitness classes, club meetings and teen gatherings.

Now it’s turning into rubble.

The YMCA began construction on the two-story branch in 1950 after [Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.](#) donated three lots on Goodyear Boulevard. The East Akron YMCA, which dated back to 1918, had outgrown its headquarters on Kent Street near Arlington Street.

Tens of thousands of Akron residents donated to the YMCA building fund. The East Akron and Firestone Park branches were the first major YMCA projects since the construction of the 16-story downtown headquarters in 1930.

Architect John F. Suppes designed the Goodyear Boulevard structure and contractor Lindstrom & Swanson Inc. built it for about \$96,500 (nearly \$1.28 million today).

Officials broke ground May 8, 1950, and dedicated the complex May 20, 1951. Several hundred people crowded into the social room for the opening ceremony.

Goodyear President E.J. Thomas, who grew up in East Akron, gave the keynote address. It was during the Cold War and Red Scare, which were weighing on the executive's mind.

"This new edifice takes on something more than passing importance," Thomas told the crowd. "The building of sound bodies, minds and morals is the prime interest of the YMCA.

"So what we dedicate here today is more than just another social community center. It is actually another bastion in our defense system on the important moral front in the war against godless communism."

The United States faced "grave uncertainties and dangers" unlike any previously encountered in the nation, he said.

"This is communism," he said. "We fight this monster on many fronts, we fight its invasion of our government, of our labor unions, of our schools and social organization. Yes, even our patterns of thought."

The YMCA served as a social center for generations of children.

The East Akron location operated for over 60 years, working to build healthy bodies and minds. In 1992, it welcomed the Phoenix School, a behavior-modification program for troubled youths.

After outgrowing its space, the YMCA moved in 2014 to the former Barrett Elementary School on Jonathan Avenue. Akron bought the vacant property a year later for \$100,000.

In 2018, East End developer [Industrial Realty Co.](#), or IRG, paid the city \$35,000 for the 17,127-foot lot.

A contractor removed asbestos from the building, a final step before demolition could proceed.

## What's planned for the former East Akron YMCA site?

Now the bricks are falling. What will happen next?

“There are no plans for the YMCA site post-demolition,” East End General Manager Paul Harris said. “We will certainly consider it for any future development, whether by us or an interested party. Its removal will certainly help reduce the blight in our neighborhood and make the site ready for future use.”

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